

HE SHALL BE CALLED

"OUR MIGHTY GOD"

JOHN 4:43-54

John tells us why he wrote his Gospel: "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). Jesus performed "signs," and John recorded those "signs" in his book to persuade people to believe—more specifically to believe in Jesus for eternal life. On the difference between a "miracle" and a "sign," one commentator writes: "A miracle underscores power and is generally received with awe (cf. Mark 6:2) . . . A sign is revelatory, disclosing something from God, something hidden before. The signs are not merely acts of power and might, they unveil that God is at work in Jesus and indeed is present in him. Thus John remarks that through this sign [Jn 2:11] Jesus reveals his 'glory'" (Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John*, 92).

John's Gospel describes how Jesus evangelized people by talking about himself and inviting them to believe in him for eternal life (3:15-16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-26). "Jesus did not call people to repent, to believe in the cross and resurrection, or to believe in his deity to be born again—*although John uses those as apologetic evidence to persuade people to believe in Christ for eternal life*" (Shawn Lazar, "Genuine Disagreements in the Free Grace Movement," *Grace in Focus*, November/December 2018, 36). From John's perspective, the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and the

Jesus evangelized people by talking about himself and inviting them to believe in him for eternal life.

— Shawn Lazar

Son of God—evidenced by his "signs"—is sufficient reason for believing in him for eternal life.

To be saved one must believe in Jesus for the salvation he promises. Some believe that Jesus existed, died, and perhaps, even believe that he rose again, but they wrongly believe salvation is by works, and that it is not available by grace alone apart from keeping God's commandments. Others believe in Jesus for *material* blessings like the necessities of life or beyond that, prosperity in life, or they believe in Jesus for *physical* wellbeing like healing from illness and disease or emotional trauma without believing in him for salvation. But there is no biblical evidence for thinking that anyone can be saved by believing a *false gospel* or *no gospel* at all. One must believe in Jesus for eternal life to be saved.

This Week's Core Competency

Personal God – I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

We have a Savior, Jesus Christ, whom Isaiah identifies as "Mighty God" (Isa 9:6). John's Gospel certainly confirms that fact. He records seven "signs" to demonstrate that "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you [namely, any unbelieving reader] might have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). The seven include: 1) changing water into wine (2:1-11); 2) healing an official's son (4:43-54); 3) healing a disabled man at the Bethesda pool (5:1-15); feeding the 5,000 (6:1-14); walking on water (6:16-21); healing the man born blind (9:1-12); and 7) raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44).

It would be wrong to conclude that John's purpose was merely academic. He wanted his unbelieving readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God, so they might believe in him for eternal

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life. Believing that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God is an apologetic of sorts for believing in him for eternal life. One commentator writes: "John's purpose was not academic; it was not simply that people might believe intellectually that Jesus is the divine Messiah. It was rather that they might believe those foundational truths, so they might receive salvation and experience the life of God fully (cf. 10:10)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on John," 2017 ed., 386, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/john.pdf).

Believing in Jesus amounts to taking him at his word with respect to what he says about receiving eternal life. According to Jesus, eternal life is his to give and he gives it to those who believe in him for it (Jn 10:28; cf., 6:27, 40; 17:2; 3:15-16, 36). Think of it this way. I believe in John F Kennedy. I know a lot of facts about JFK and believe that what I know about him is true, but I'm not expecting anything from him. I don't believe in him for something. I believe in Jesus, too; the difference is I am expecting something from him. I believe in Jesus for eternal life.

That said, the content of saving faith nevertheless remains a debated question. What does "believe in" mean? Here's one analysis of the problem: "Some critics say that saving faith is simply faith 'in Christ' (without explaining what that actually means—does that faith have content or not?). Others clarify that in order for faith to be saving, you must believe in certain facts about the person of Christ (e.g., His deity, sinlessness, virgin birth, etc.), as well as facts about the provision of Christ (e.g., that He died, rose again, His post-resurrection appearances, coming again, penal substitution, etc.)" (Lazar, 36). Critics aside, in the same way that Jesus healed the paralyzed man to demonstrate that he has the authority on earth to forgive sins with a view to people asking him for forgiveness (Mk 2:10), he performed signs to demonstrate that he is the Messiah and the Son of God with a view to people believing in him to receive eternal life.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Isaiah 9:6

*For unto us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God**,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

John 4:43-54

43 After the two days he left for Galilee. 44 (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) 45 When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

46 Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain

royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

48 "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

49 The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

50 "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. 51 While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. 52 When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

53 Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

54 This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * After/above the word "left" in v. 43, insert the words "Sychar in Samaria."
- * In the margin next to v. 45, write, "See 2:23."
- * In the margin next to v. 46, write, "See 2:1-11."
- * Circle the term "royal official" in v. 46.
- * Highlight Jesus' statement in v. 48.

- * Circle the term "begged" in v. 47.
- * Underline what Jesus said in v. 50a.
- * Underline what the official did in v. 50b.
- * Circle the term "the seventh hour" in v. 52.
- * Box the word "so" indicating result in v. 53.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How do you reconcile Jesus' statement, "a prophet has no honor in his own country" (v. 44) with the fact that the Galileans welcomed him (v. 45)?
2. What did the royal official assume Jesus would need to do to heal his son?
3. What does the fact that the boy "was close to death" add to the story?
4. How would you describe the *tone* of Jesus' statement in verse 48?
5. The official "took Jesus at his word" (v. 50). What exactly did he believe?
6. What did the *timing* of his son's healing (vv. 52-53) indicate?
7. *Contrast* what the official believed in verse 53 with what he believed in verse 50.
8. How do you suppose all his household believed?
9. **Discussion:** John alludes to believing in Jesus seventeen times in chapters 1-4 (1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22, 23; 3:12, 15, 16, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41, 42, 48, 53). Talk about what believing in Jesus means.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Changing water into wine was the first of Jesus' miraculous signs according to John 2:11. John 4:43-54 records the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed. It must have been the second one performed in Cana in Galilee rather than the second one he ever performed because John indicated that he was doing miraculous signs earlier while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast (2:23). That's why the Galileans welcomed him; they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem (4:45). Apparently, they welcomed him not as the Christ, the Son of God, but simply as a miracle worker, which might explain in part how Jesus could say that "a prophet has no honor in his own country" (v. 43; cf., v. 41).

While visiting Cana, an unnamed royal official begged him to come with him to Capernaum to heal his son, who was near death. Jesus was irked not by the man's request but by the fact that it would take this kind of wondrous miracle to persuade the Galileans to believe. "'Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,' Jesus told them, 'you will never believe'" (v. 48). Jesus' insinuated that the official did not believe at the time he begged for help. This makes sense given the purpose for signs, which is to inspire faith, not to reward it.

In response to the official's persistent pleading, Jesus assured him that his son would live, and the man took Jesus at his word (v. 50). Apparently, he believed that his son would recover and not die. He was so confident that he did not return home right away. An important feature of this sign was the significant distance between Jesus' location, in Cana, and where the official's son lay ill, thirteen miles away in Capernaum; distance, it seems, was no impediment to Jesus' healing power. When he did head home, his servants met him with the news that his son had recovered at the exact time Jesus had said, "Your son will live." Then he realized that Jesus' word had reached the boy and healed him even though Jesus himself was not

there with him. At that point, he and his servants believed that Jesus was more than a miracle worker; they believed that he was the Christ, the Son of God (cf. 20:31). One commentator writes: "When the father considered the details of his meeting with Jesus and the good news concerning his son's recovery, he was convinced that it was more than coincidence at work. The timing was miraculous, and the boy's recovery was more than even circumstances could have brought about. 'So he and his household believed'" (Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary*, 9:60).

One writer describes a number of different stages in the official's faith. "This man began with crisis faith. He was about to lose his son and he had no other recourse but the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people came to Jesus with their crises, and He did not turn them away. The nobleman's crisis faith became confident faith: he believed the Word and had peace in his heart. He was even able to delay his trip home, knowing that the boy was out of danger. His confident faith became confirmed faith. Indeed, the boy had been completely healed! And the healing took place at the very time when Jesus spoke the Word. It was this fact that made a believer out of the nobleman and his household. He believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God; and he shared this faith with his family. He had contagious faith and shared this experience with others" (Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:303).

Jesus is "Mighty God" (Is 9:6), which is in itself sufficient reason to believe in him for eternal life. It's also sufficient reason to turn to him at any time of need.

The *upper story* is about Jesus' identity. The *lower story* is about what Jesus can do for us because of who he is.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Jesus is Mighty God, whose power knows no limits, which is sufficient reason to believe in him for eternal life and to turn to him for help in times of need.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Elaboate on the *upper* story of this narrative about Jesus healing the official's son.

Elaborate on the *lower* story.

Describe how Jesus' identity as the Messiah and the Son of God influenced your decision to believe in him for eternal life.

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 43 **welcomed** The major interpretive problem concerns the incongruity between what Jesus said in v. 44 and the reception of the Galileans in v. 45. Possible solutions include: 1) Jesus' own country was Judea rather than Galilee. One commentator explains: "Jesus has left Judea, not only his 'spiritual' homeland in that Jerusalem is the centre of inherited Jewish religion but also his birthplace . . . He has left because of rising opposition of 'the Jews' (7:1-3), often a category for 'Judeans' or for Jewish leaders in Judea (cf. notes on 1:19). He could expect no honour there, for 'a prophet has no honour in his own country'. By contrast, the Galileans received him gladly" (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, 235); 2) Jesus own country was Galilee and Judea rather than Samaria. According to the same commentator: "A more plausible interpretation identifies patris with Galilee—indeed, not just with Galilee, but with Galilee as it represents Jewish soil over against Samaritan soil. Jesus' 'own country', then, is Galilee and Judea, Jewish turf, as opposed to Samaria, from which he has just come. This obviously suits the immediate context; there is no need to pit Galilee (v. 45) against Judea, not mentioned since 4:3. In Samaria Jesus has just enjoyed his first unqualified, unopposed, and open-hearted success. Now he returns to his own people (cf.1:11), and, consistent with the pattern developed so far, the response is at best ambiguous" (235-36). However, the welcome was somewhat superficial. "The Galileans did welcome him, but their welcome was to prove a superficial response based on what they had seen him do at the feast. There is no indication that the signs they saw brought them to place their faith in Jesus any more than Nicodemus did on the basis of the signs. But a superficial welcome based on enthusiasm for miracles is no real honor at all" (the NET Bible, 96sn on Jn 4:44-45).

v. 45 **done** Jesus performed who knows how many miracles (21:30) in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast (2:23), miracles that John omitted from his Gospel. His purpose was not to chronicle each and every miracle that Jesus did but to selectively report those that might persuade his readers to believe in him.

v. 46 **royal official** Probably a Jewish officer of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, who is sometimes called "king" (see Mt 14:1; cf. 14:9, Mk 6:14). He was one of four sons among whom their father's kingdom was divided when Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. "Unlike the Gentile centurion in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:2-10 to which he is often compared, it is his son, not his servant, who is at the point of death" (Carson, 238).

v. 46 **Capernaum** A town located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee twenty miles or so from Cana that was a major trade and economic center in the region.

v. 47 **begged** The imperfect tense of the Greek verb probably connotes a persistent request. "The request was not casual but insistent" (Tenney, 9:60). "Kept on asking him" captures the sense.

v. 48 **believe** Jesus addressed the official, but his lament was directed at people in general and Galileans in particular. Clearly, he was irked by their need to see signs and wonders. Nevertheless, he was willing to perform miracles in order to inspire belief. Belief is the end; signs and miracles are merely a means to that end.

v. 49 **child** "The word for 'child' is not that used in vv. 46, 47, but a term more expressive of affection (Barclay, 'my little lad')" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, 290-91).

v. 50 **will live** The official "took Jesus at his word" ("believed what Jesus said," lit., "believed the word Jesus spoke to him" NASB) and hence believed that his son would live. When he spoke with his servants the next day, he realized that Jesus had in fact healed the boy (cf. v. 53) so "he and all his household believed" in Jesus. Christ did more than forecast the boy's survival; he healed him.

v. 52 **seventh hour** Either 1:00 p.m. by normal reckoning or 7:00 p.m. by Roman reckoning. In the first case, the official didn't return home until the following day although he could have made the twenty-mile trip the same day. In the second case, the official would have delayed his return until the next day seeing it was late in the day when Jesus healed his son. In any case, that the boy was healed simultaneously with Jesus' statement is what mattered most to John.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

There I was doing normal parenting stuff, changing a diaper to be exact, and just like that, the bottom dropped. My baby's tongue began to swell and before I knew it, he stopped breathing. I remember the slow-motion action of handing him to my husband and calling 911. I remember hearing my husband cry out to the Lord while I tried to communicate with the dispatcher. I remember my son's giant gasp of breath right before the paramedics arrived. I remember falling to my knees in praise and thanksgiving. I wish I could tell you this was a one-time event, but it wasn't. From severe allergies to driving, parenting has been a series of letting go and letting God; a daily, open-handed prayer offering my children to Him. Quite honestly, I often teeter on the edge of complete control (if they would just do what I tell them to do!) and releasing them to God's will. It's hard to reconcile. To watch these small humans make their own decisions and become the people God created them to be is a scary blessing, but I know God has a plan for them. The official in this week's passage had absolute trust and confidence in Jesus. He asked boldly and persistently. I pray the same for us, that our confidence in Jesus would be complete and that we pray boldly and persistently on behalf of our children, trusting Him to do more than we can hope or imagine.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Isa 9:6, Jn 4:43-54

1. What did the royal official want Jesus to do?
2. What was interesting about the timing of the official's son's healing?
3. What did the official and his house believe?

What Do You Think

Do you think the official was a sign seeker or truly believed Jesus could heal His Son?

What R U Going To Do

Draw the story in cartoon format.

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

Isaiah 9:6 - *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

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Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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