

# The Word Heals

Bible Background • John 4:46–54

Printed Text • John 4:46–54 | Devotional Reading • John 4:31–34

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will UNDERSTAND the definition of faith and how Christ honors faithfulness, ACCEPT that faith in Christ strengthens the relationship between Christ and the believer, and TRUST Jesus, by faith and action, to do what we cannot do.

## In Focus

Thomas, who was partially blind, walked into HOPE church on a Sunday afternoon. Visitors often walked in off the street at HOPE church. During this special time at HOPE, Pastor Hill was teaching on miracles. As Pastor Hill ended his teaching, he made the call for salvation, and Thomas walked to the front of the church. The pastor asked him his name as he was a visitor. He said, “My name is Thomas. I need food to feed my daughters; my wife died, and we are having a hard time.”

Pastor Hill responded, “We have a food kitchen that will help you with food. Is there anything else we can do for you?” he asked.

Thomas responded, “Just pray for me!” Since Pastor Hill had been teaching on miracles, he prayed to God for a miracle on Thomas’ behalf. The congregation had been seeing them manifest in their own lives. Their faith was activated to believe God for miracles.

Pastor Hill prayed specifically for Thomas’ eyes, “Father, we know You are a miracle worker, You have restored sight to the blind, and that nothing is impossible for You. God, we believe that Thomas’s eyes are healed. We believe by faith, that when he opens his eyes that he will be able to see.”

When the pastor finished praying, the man opened his eyes. He began to cry and blink several times. Thomas said his eyes did not burn, and he could see. The congregation, pastor, and man all rejoiced because God had performed a miracle!

*In today’s lesson, believers testify that faith in God’s Word produces healing. Can you recall your faith in God’s Word producing healing in your life and others?*

## Keep In Mind

“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.” (John 4:53, KJV)

## Words You Should Know

**A. Believing** (John 4:48) pisteuo (Gk.) – To trust, have faith in

**B. Amend** (v. 52) kompsoteron (Gk.) – To be good, well, glad

## Say It Correctly

**Cana.** KAY-nah

**Capernaum.** kah-PER-nay-um

## KJV

**John 4:46** So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.

## NLT

**John 4:46** As he traveled through Galilee, he came to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a government official in nearby Capernaum whose son was very sick.

47 When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, who was about to die.

48 Jesus asked, "Will you never believe in me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?"

49 The official pleaded, "Lord, please come now before my little boy dies."

50 Then Jesus told him, "Go back home. Your son will live!" And the man believed what Jesus said and started home.

51 While the man was on his way, some of his servants met him with the news that his son was alive and well.

52 He asked them when the boy had begun to get better, and they replied, "Yesterday afternoon at one o'clock his fever suddenly disappeared!"

53 Then the father realized that that was the very time Jesus had told him, "Your son will live." And he and his entire household believed in Jesus.

54 This was the second miraculous sign Jesus did in Galilee after coming from Judea.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Capernaum.** Located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, a city in the Galilean province, was a central location for Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus lived in Nazareth until He came to Galilee and was baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:9). After John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus returned to Galilee and resided in Capernaum (Matthew 4:12–16). Here, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the Lord called His first disciples— Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Matthew 4:18–22). Peter's home in Capernaum became the residence for Jesus and the apostles when they were not traveling (Mark 1:29; Luke 4:38). The Lord often preached in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21; John 6:52–59) and performed many miracles in the city. These miracles included the healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5–13), the healing of the man with palsy (Mark 2:1–12), and the casting out of a demon in a man in the synagogue (Luke 4:31–36). Even though Jesus performed so many miracles in Capernaum, the people still had not repented (Matthew 11:23–24).

*Why do people who have so much evidence of God's work refuse to see it?*

## Background

Cana of Galilee is the birthplace of miracles in Jesus' ministry. The healing of this nobleman's son is notable as Capernaum is approximately 16 miles away from Cana. This miracle is not only notable because of the geographic distance but because it marks Jesus' return to Galilee.

Prior to Jesus' arrival in Cana, Jesus had taken a journey through Judea and Galilee. Jesus was compelled to go to Samaria. Historically, the Samaritans were condemned by the Jewish people. Yet, Jesus needed to go to Samaria. Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1–6). Jesus' natural thirst was used to fulfill the spiritual thirst of the Samaritan woman, leading Jesus and the Samaritan woman to have a life-altering, life-changing exchange.

Jesus revealed His identity to the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman found saving, believing faith in Jesus. Her encounter with Jesus caused a revival in Samaria. The Samaritan woman was the first recorded female evangelist in the Bible (John 4:39–42). Jesus was recognized as the Messiah and was honored accordingly.

Yet, Jesus' next journey was into Galilee. Jesus was received though not accepted or honored (John 4:43–45). In Galilee, belief was challenged, and miracles were hindered. The miracle healing of the nobleman's son was an announcement that Christ was in Cana and He was indeed the Messiah.

### At-A-Glance

1. Flawed Believing Faith (John 4:46–47)
2. The Challenge of Faith (v. 48)
3. Dismantling Earthly Expectation (vv. 49–51)
4. The Healing Word of Jesus (vv. 52–54)

## In Depth

### 1. Flawed Believing Faith (John 4:46–47)

The very existence of Jesus is a manifestation of the power of an unhindered and unrestrained spoken word. The nobleman was familiar with Jesus' miracles and believed in what Jesus could do. When the nobleman learned that Jesus was in Cana, he traveled for an entire day uphill to beckon Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son.

The nobleman had the faith to approach Jesus knowing He could heal his son, but his faith was flawed because he believed the healing required His presence, believing Jesus' authority and power was relegated to His bodily form. Oftentimes, our faith can be flawed in desperation indicating the need for the flaws to be worked by our faith being challenged.

*Have you encountered times in your walk of faith, when your desperation revealed the flaws in your faith?*

### 2. The Challenge of Faith (v. 48)

It is evident that the nobleman had believing faith, yet his faith was hindered by his thinking and experience. The nobleman believed the sickness of his son is what brought him to Jesus, but Jesus

knew that the nobleman needed to be challenged in his faith to accept the reality of Him being Messiah and to demonstrate that His Word is as powerful as His presence when believed.

The nobleman's faith in Jesus was sparked by what he heard, but his faith needed to mature so that it could be strengthened by his own experience with Jesus. The challenge of his son's illness brought him to Jesus so that his reality of Jesus could be challenged.

*How many times have we hindered God, because we were unwilling to allow God full access to move in a situation?*

### **3. Dismantling Earthly Expectation (vv. 49–51)**

Often crisis reveals our expectation of God. Jesus' encounters on earth were designed to shift our perspective from the earth to heaven. The nobleman had an earthly expectation of what Jesus could do: heal. It could only happen if Jesus came in person. Jesus needed the nobleman to understand that the power of God is unhindered by time or space. Jesus gave a direct order that dismantled the nobleman's expectation and increased his faith, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." The nobleman believed what Jesus said and obediently followed His directive (John 4:50).

The obedient response indicates that his faith increased. The nobleman journeyed to Capernaum and was met by his servant to confirm the words of Jesus, "Thy son liveth."

*What can we do to dismantle our earthly expectations and exchange them for the answered prayer?*

### **4. The Healing Word of Jesus (vv. 52–54)**

The power embedded in the spoken word of Jesus shines out when the nobleman inquires at what time his son became well. The servants confirmed the exact timing of the word of healing that manifested for the son. The nobleman immediately recognizes the power in the healing word of Jesus, and the faith of the nobleman matured. The timing of healing words, "Thy son liveth" showed the nobleman the correlation between faith and miracles. He believed, his household believed, and his son lived.

*Can you identify times when your faith and the word of God worked together to produce miracles?*

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. Why did Jesus challenge the nobleman regarding signs and wonders (John 4:48)?
2. Compare and contrast the centurion's (Matthew 8:5–13) and the nobleman's encounters with Jesus and the sending of the word to heal.

### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. Why is it important to examine our expectation of healing?
2. How does what we believe impact what we receive from God?

### **Liberating Lesson**

Many of us have had desperate situations when we needed God to heal us or someone that we love. Often times we have responded desperately to those needs and were often left defeated because we did not receive the answer we had hoped for. The result of unanswered prayers pushes believers into a posture of begging, even though God does not require that or even want that from us. God desires our prayers to be fervent and persistent which results in mature faith. Mature faith is what gives glory

to God. Answered prayer also gives glory to God and serves as a testament to God’s faithfulness to us. Not only does answered prayer witness God’s faithfulness to us, but it also demonstrates to unbelievers the reality of God. God is trying to shift our expectation of Him. Earthly expectations of heavenly encounters would often weaken the demonstration of God’s power in our lives.

### **Application for Activation**

“Jesus heals” is an infallible truth. The Word’s ability to heal is not bound by time, distance, circumstance, or the grave. We need to shift our perspective for the reality of these truths to manifest in our lives through Christ Jesus.

- Ask God to reveal to you areas of flawed faith.
- When you pray, are you begging or persisting in fervency?
- Discern whether your expectations of God are earthly focused or heavenly focused.
- Examine whether you are responding to God in obedience only or is your obedience coupled with faith and trust.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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### **Remember Your Thoughts**

Special insights I have learned:

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## **More Light on the Text**

### **John 4:46–54**

The Bible provides the faithful accounts of Jesus’ ministry, including His marvelous miracle working. Although most of the time He healed by touching the person, sometimes all He used was the power of His Word. With that Word, He created and ordered the world in the beginning, and with that Word, He could continue the work of bringing order to chaos.

This account of Jesus healing the nobleman’s son has some similarities to Luke’s account of Jesus healing a centurion’s servant (Luke 7:1–10). Both occur in Galilee and feature Jesus curing people from a deadly illness without touching them. While there are similarities between these two healings there are substantial differences including where it occurred, who was requesting the miracle, and for whom the miracle was requested. John tells about the time Jesus healed a nobleman’s son while in Cana. Luke tells about a different time that Jesus healed a centurion’s servant in Capernaum. In Luke, Jesus goes toward the centurion’s house, but is stopped from going inside, while in John Jesus

makes no motion to go to the nobleman's house. Jesus is impressed by the centurion's faith, but chides the lacking faith of the nobleman and inhabitants of Cana.

While sometimes it is helpful to compare the way different Gospel writers share the same story of Jesus, it is also important to remember that, as John says at the end of his Gospel, no one would be able to record every one of the amazing things Jesus did. Usually when Gospel writers differ in their tellings of Jesus' actions, they differ only in the details or timing of events, not in such major elements and themes of the accounts. It is entirely possible—and as we have seen likely—that John and Luke are recording different events.

**46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.**

After a long time down in Jerusalem for Passover and a detour through Samaria, Jesus has returned to the area of Galilee. He does not go to his home in Nazareth, where He is not welcome (v. 44), but instead goes to Cana. This village is about 8 miles north of Nazareth and 12 miles west of the Sea of Galilee. He has already been in Cana before, where He performed His first public miracle by turning water into wine at a wedding (John 2:1–11). People are excited to see Him in the area again, hoping for more miracles (v. 45).

The Greek word for “nobleman” (v. 46) was basilikos (bah-see-lee-KOCE) and means “royal” or connected to the king. He has come all the way from Capernaum, where his son lays ill. Capernaum is a fishing town on the Sea of Galilee, about 15 miles from Cana. This man has traveled all that way, up into the Galilean hills, to see Jesus. He is wealthy or influential enough to have access to many things, except the one thing he wants—a cure for his son's failing health.

**47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.**

After witnessing Jesus' first miracle in Galilee—turning water into wine—and the miracles He performed in Jerusalem during the Passover (2:23; 4:45), the Galileans were happy to receive Him again. The nobleman wasted no time presenting his request. The nobleman did not let his title or position keep him from going to and begging the One with a higher calling to heal his son. However, the nobleman's faith was limited by earthly thinking. With a son so close to death, he believed he needed Jesus closer. Thus, he asked Jesus to travel back down to his home in Capernaum. In all fairness, all of Jesus' miracles so far have been conducted onsite, and could have led the nobleman to believe that Jesus needed to be in his home in order to heal his son.

The nobleman was desperate because of his son's deadly sickness. He “besought” Jesus' aid. The Greek word here erotao (air-oh-TAH-oh) means “to ask,” and is used when asking a person to do something. The nobleman is not asking for a thing, like health or a miracle. He is asking for Jesus to do something, to use His power. He knows he needs Jesus Himself.

Today, we know specific goods or services sometimes require us to go to specific people. You might have traveled miles to attend a certain event or meet a famous person. When the need is greater, our willingness to go further is greater too. We might feel desperate when a loved one is ill or in distress. God has provided us with many specialists to help problems, whether medical, financial, personal, or academic. He also provides Himself to us, to hear and respond to any request or worry we present to Him. Christians can feel confident that God will hear our prayers for healing of those close to them. Christians should also practice coming to God as a first response rather than a last resort during trials.

#### **48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.**

As indicated by the use of “ye,” Jesus was not only speaking to the nobleman but to those around him. If He had only been speaking to the nobleman, the King James English equivalent would have been “thee,” the singular form of the second-person pronoun. This accurately translates the plural subject recorded in the Greek.

Contrasted with the faith of the Samaritans who readily believed after the testimony of one woman (see v. 39), the Galileans on the other hand, even after witnessing the first miracle needed to see more. Commentators point out that this is the only time that John used the words “signs and wonders” together, although the phrase is often seen elsewhere (Mark 13:22, Acts 4:30, Romans 15:19). The word “wonders” here is *teras* (Gk. TEH-ross) refers to extraordinary occurrences and unusual manifestations. John spends more time focused on Jesus’ teaching and only includes a handful of miracles, so he does not discuss signs and wonders as often as the other Gospels. One commentator emphasized that Jesus’ miracles are signs that show a glimpse of what heaven is like, of what God made the world to be, rather than just wonders whereby witnesses are awestruck.

Jesus challenged the people’s faith with these words, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” It is natural for people to want further proof of a remarkable report. Those who trust in Jesus, however, know that a mature faith is more than mere affirmation of God’s nature; it is a bold trust in God’s power regardless of circumstances. John speaks of the importance of “believing” (Gk. *pisteuo*, peece-TEW-oh) far more than any of the other Gospel writers. Notably too, John only speaks of believing, and never of belief. For John, faith is an action—something you have to do—not a noun, something you can passively have. Instead of doing the work of going out on a limb and holding simply to faith itself as the evidence of things unseen, the people of Galilee want a different concrete example to cling to. They will believe Jesus if He proves Himself by performing miracles. Capernaum had become intoxicated with signs and wonders to prove the reality and deity of Jesus. The nobleman would be changed and his native Capernaum could see that signs and wonders should not dictate belief. Signs and wonders should be a by-product of belief (Acts 4:30), not a pre-condition for it. The focus should be the belief, not the miracles.

#### **49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.**

Adults know that distance from a source of power can decrease its potency. The nobleman fears that Cana’s distance restricts Jesus’ power. Even after Jesus issued the verbal rebuke, the nobleman still requests Jesus’ presence in Capernaum. He believed that Cana’s distance would restrict Jesus’ power. This is what happens with normal physical powers. Voices are harder to hear from afar, words are harder to read, so the nobleman does not realize that Jesus’ word would be so powerful even from 15 miles away.

Perhaps the nobleman had seen or heard about how patient Jesus could be with people, and felt the need to hurry Jesus along to his house. It is possible that Jesus was already two days later than one would expect for someone journeying from Judea to Galilee, as the Samaritans had urged him to stay with them for two more days (see v. 40). For the nobleman’s son, time was of the essence and he repeated his request, “Sir, come down ere my child die.” Thus, we find a man whose faith was not only limited by space, but also by time. Jesus later shows His mastery over sickness no matter the time when He waited to heal Lazarus until he had been dead for three days (John 11).

#### **50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.**

**51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.**

It must have been something about the way Jesus spoke those words that led the nobleman to believe. Upon hearing one sentence, he stopped trying to re-route Jesus, and changed his own direction. To walk away from faulty and religious thinking, and to renew his mind with just a few words was a major step in the right direction. To leave Jesus' side was the utmost demonstration of faith. Jesus had rebuked him and the other Galileans about their reticence to believe without miracles. Now the nobleman trusts Jesus enough now to leave and start his 15-mile journey back toward his son even before seeing any proof of this miracle. His faith was met with evidence when on his way home. His servants meet him and repeat Jesus' words almost exactly: "Thy son liveth." God's word never returns void.

The nobleman's expectation needed dismantling because it limited the healing power of Jesus to Capernaum. Now that he has seen the fulfillment of Jesus' healing word, his earthly expectation has indeed been dismantled. There may be areas today where God is trying to shift your expectation. Christians can trust Jesus' word and leading completely, knowing that He is able to do infinitely more than we could ever think or imagine!

**52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.**

**53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.**

The nobleman is not anxious or afraid of time. In fact, he is seeking confirmation that time was on his side. This time stamp proved that the power he felt when Jesus spoke was the same power that healed his son in the selfsame hour. Jews of this time counted hours after sunrise, making the "seventh" hour around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The Word of His power is not limited by time or space.

Everyone who was affected by the child's illness believed in Jesus because of the nobleman's testimony. There are several examples in the Bible of the entire family converting to the religion of the head of the household. All of the centurion Cornelius' relatives and servants became Christians along with Cornelius after they spoke in tongues by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). Likewise, the prison guard of Paul and Silas's cell in Philippi was just about to kill himself, when Paul stops him and shares the Gospel. Jesus' word brought healing, and the nobleman's word brought salvation (Acts 16).

**54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.**

It appears that John is taking readers on a journey, marked by the miracles and deep theology of Jesus. He emphasizes that this part of the journey is denoted by the second miracle. Commentators have used this verse to contrast the two miracles: the first miracle took place at a wedding—a joyous occasion, and was done to bless a husband and wife; on the other hand the second miracle demonstrated the complexity of life was related to a house of mourning and enacted on behalf of a father. Jesus was drawn to the second miracle by intercession, the beginning of someone else's faith, but his mother drew him to His first miracle, the beginning of His own ministry. One reason for John's inclusion of this miracle was for the audience to understand the progression of faith from its weak and sensuous stage, to a tested and strengthened stage, to a final crowned and rewarded stage.



One of the reasons Jesus came was to heal the sick. We limit His purpose in healing either because of flawed faith or flawed expectation. God promises that He will do exceedingly abundantly more than we can ask or think, through the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20). We must strive to mature in faith, dismantle our earthly expectations, and ensure our expectations are congruent with heaven. We must ensure that we are both believing and obedient to all of God's orders in our lives.

# Daily Bible Readings

## **MONDAY**

Jesus Reveals His Glory  
(John 2:1-11)

## **TUESDAY**

O Lord, Heal Me!  
(Psalm 6)

## **WEDNESDAY**

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant  
(Matthew 8:5-13)

## **THURSDAY**

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man  
(John 5:1-9)

## **FRIDAY**

Jesus Heals a Blind Man  
(John 9:1-7)

## **SATURDAY**

God Heals Their Infirmities  
(Psalm 41)

## **SUNDAY**

Jesus Heals a Royal Official's Son  
(John 4:46-54)