

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Conquering
Doubts &
Cultivating
Faith

INTRODUCTION

John 4:43-54

We've all heard stories of men who had "foxhole" conversions. The man was on the front lines in battle. Bullets were flying and mortars were exploding all around him. He feared that he would die. Suddenly, his partner was hit and killed right next to him. In his panic, he flashed back to the Sunday school upbringing from which he has strayed. He thought about his godly mother, who prays for him every day. He cried out, "God, get me out of here safely and I will follow You the rest of my life!" The Lord answered his prayer and brought him safely through the battle.

The real test of that man's faith, however, is not how sincere he may have been in crying out to God in the heat of the battle. The real test of his faith is rather measured by what he does when the pressure is off. Will he forget God and go back to his old ways? Or, will he go deeper and develop genuine faith in the person of Christ that is not just a response to his immediate need? Will he repent of his sins, trust in Christ as his Savior, and follow Him as Lord after his crisis is over?

This also applies to everyone who has cried out to God in an emergency. Maybe you or a loved one was facing a serious health problem. You cried out to God and promised that if He brought healing, you would follow Him. Maybe it was a financial crisis or the need for a job. Perhaps you were lonely and praying for a wife or husband. The Lord does not want us to seek Him merely for deliverance from some crisis, and then to put Him back on the shelf until we need Him in the next crisis. Rather, He wants us to go deeper in our faith and to trust and follow Him because of who He is, not just because of what He can do for us.

This is the central point in John 4:43-54, where Jesus heals the son of a royal official who is near death. The lesson is: The Lord wants you to move from the foxhole faith that solves your crisis to the mature, saving faith of eternal life.¹

OPEN IT

1. What is your favorite place to visit? What makes it such a special place to you?

¹ Cole, Steven J. Accessed April 29, 2020. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-25-foxhole-faith-saving-faith-john-443-54>.

APPLY IT

The Longest Time

God often uses the crises in our lives to get us to seek Him in ways that we never would have done if the crisis had not occurred. But we need to understand that seeking the Lord in a crisis is not automatic. Many curse God and grow bitter when trials hit. We should follow this man's example by seeking the Lord when trouble strikes.²

7. **If it weren't for the near death of his son, this official may have never sought out Jesus and ultimately realized He is the Son of God and been saved. How have you seen God use trials in your life to increase your faith?**

8. **How should we, as disciples of Jesus, view trials and hardships in our lives?**

² Cole, Steven J. Accessed April 29, 2020. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-25-foxhole-faith-saving-faith-john-443-54>.

The Entertainer

These Galileans do not really believe in Him as the Messiah. They simply know of the signs He has performed elsewhere and want to see if He will do the same (or even more) for them. Jesus rightly rebukes them for being interested only in His miracles and not taking to heart what these signs signify.³

- 9. While we may not always seek signs and wonders today, no doubt there are still great benefits and blessings to being around Jesus. What benefits and blessings might someone experience simply from being around Jesus and His disciples today?**

A Matter of Trust

Note also that the man's faith at this point was quite limited. He thought that Jesus had to make the journey to Capernaum in order to heal his son. And it never occurred to him that even if his son died, Jesus could raise him from the dead. But it was sincere faith, even though limited. He didn't try to convince Jesus that he was worthy of this miracle because he was a royal official or a man of means. He didn't take offense at Jesus' rebuke. He just pathetically cried out (4:49), "Sir, come down before my child dies."⁴

- 10. In the days we are living in, it's good for us to be reminded of the power of Christ that transcends immediate proximity. In what ways does our faith resemble that of the official's faith?**

³ Deffinbaugh, Bob. Accessed April 29, 2020. <https://bible.org/seriespage/11-jesus-heals-royal-official-s-son-john-443-54>.

⁴ Cole, Steven J. Accessed April 29, 2020. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-25-foxhole-faith-saving-faith-john-443-54>.

- 11. In this miracle, Jesus demonstrated that physical presence isn't always a requirement for ministry. In what ways can you continue to carry out Jesus' work "from a distance" as it took place in this miraculous event?**

The Ballad of Billy the Kid

Some of the official's servants met him on his way home with great news that his son was going to live! I'm sure after the initial excitement of hearing this news, he had some questions. Did Jesus really heal his son or was it just some strange coincidence? There was one simple way to figure this out. So, he asked his servants what time it was when his son got better. Their answer was enough to confirm that it was at that same time Jesus had told him, "Go; your son will live." So it was Jesus. He had miraculously healed his son!

- 12. God doesn't always bring about his answer to our prayers as quickly as he did in this situation. What truths and promises from scripture can you hold on to as you wait upon on the Lord?**

- 13. It's common to want to know if and how Jesus is at work in your life. How can you confirm the work of Jesus in your life when it isn't always as simple as checking the clock?**

Keeping the Faith

This resulted in his believing in Jesus to an even deeper level, though he may not have understood that He was the Son of God. The members of his household believed in Jesus too. He learned that Jesus' word is powerful to save even at a distance. His faith grew from "crisis faith" (John 4:47), to "confident faith" (John 4:50), to "confirmed faith" (John 4:53), to "contagious faith" (John 4:53).⁵

14. How would you describe the difference between this official when he first encounters Jesus with the verses at the end of this experience with Jesus? Which do you most resemble?

15. It took this official witnessing this miraculous healing of Jesus to believe that He really is the Son of God. What convinced you that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”?

16. How would you encourage someone who is struggling to believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁵ Constable, Thomas. “John 4 Commentary - Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable.” StudyLight.org. Accessed April 30, 2020. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/john-4.html>.

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