

Home Group Leaders' Notes
Week of March 14, 2021
John 4:43-54

NOTE TO SHEPHERDS: There is a new look to our notes this week. Learning is a lifelong part of growth. While our groups are much more than learning, it is an important piece in our pursuit of being Christ's community. I am trying to include the different learning styles (visual, aural, reading/writing, and kinesthetic). You know your group – use what is helpful.

YOUR STORIES

Learning to trust starts as an infant and continues throughout our lives. When was a time when you remember learning trust? Where is a place in your life where you regularly need trust? What makes trust a challenge?

NOTE: This week's passage is a contrast of "interest" vs. "following" Jesus. The "Story" portion of this time should introduce the topic of real faith.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS WEEK'S PASSAGE

NOTE: I am including commentary some weeks for those who like the details.

This week's passage finishes a loop of stories of Jesus' early works that reveal who He is, Messiah and Lord. The author selected episodes to reveal that there were (and are) different attitudes toward Jesus. The author was giving examples of those who truly believed. Check out the loop that begins and ends in a village named Cana.

3 - Jesus performed the **first SIGN** in Cana by changing water into wine. This revealed that He has power over creation. The result: His disciples believed in Him. (Side note: This water was used for purification, no longer needed because Jesus would provide purification for those who believe. Some also believe that this was a preview of Jesus providing joy in His future kingdom).

2 - Jesus went to Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. He represented God and had authority over their religious institutions. He was met with hostility instead of belief.

1 - Jesus met with a leading Jewish rabbi, Nicodemus. Jesus said that Nicodemus need to be "born again, born from above." Jesus had insight that could only come from God. Though Nicodemus' should have understood what Jesus was teaching, His immediate response was one of puzzlement or skepticism. (Later, Nicodemus believes.)

PURPOSE: The author then unveils the purpose and importance of Jesus' mission – He has come to save the world. (3:16-17). John the baptizer understood, proclaimed, and believed in Jesus as the Messiah, the Lamb of God.

1 - Jesus intentionally went to non-Jewish Samaria. There He demonstrated omniscience into a woman's personal life. She believed Him to be the Messiah who could give us living water. She hurried to share and bring back people from the town.

2 – Samaritans from the town encountered Jesus. They then believed Him to be "the Savior of the world."

3 - Jesus returned to Cana and performed the **second SIGN**. What was their response? From this summary, we recognize that the author is contrasting the responses of people. He selected stories which funneled into His purpose for recording the signs: “These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

LEARNING FROM GOD’S WORD

Read through this week’s passage: John 4:43-54.

In the previous passage, Jesus was in Sychar, Samaria. “After the two days, he left for Galilee.” He was returning to His own country, specifically Galilee, where he lived prior to beginning his traveling ministry in Israel. (Galilee was a region of Israel).



Why might the author have included Jesus’ statement about a prophet in “his own country?”

NOTE: Jesus is putting the disciples on watch for real faith. They just left Samaria where they saw real faith. Jesus didn’t do powerful visible miracles. However, throughout much of Jesus’ ministry, people were intrigued by acts of power. His miracles often resulted in wonder or marvel, but not real faith.

What kind of reception did Jesus receive? Why? What were they hoping to see? (45-48)

NOTE: People from Galilee saw or heard about Jesus actions in Judea. They were hoping to see miracles, acts of power.

How is this similar to the weak faith of John 2:23-25?

NOTE: People saw the signs and appeared to believe. However, Jesus knew that their faith was premature, based on miracles.

The “royal official” would have served Herod Antipas of Galilee. How does it season the story by pointing out that he was a person of position? How would others view him?

NOTE: Especially in those times, officials carried weight and used their position to get their way. To see a “royal official” beg and call Jesus “sir” was an unusual act of humility before a peasant like Jesus.

How did the official approach Jesus? What specifically did he ask Jesus to do? Did Jesus fulfill his request? (47, 49)

NOTE: The official approached with respect and passion. He asked Jesus (twice) to “come” (20 miles) to heal his son. Jesus wanted the official to go beyond his immediate need to the greater need – to see Jesus. He did not go with him but He did instantly heal his son.

Jesus' response seems out of character until we know that he was addressing the crowd by saying, "you [plural] people." (Jesus also included the word "wonder," which means an act of power that would cause people to marvel.) What was Jesus' purpose for this statement?

NOTE: Jesus wanted the official and the people to look into their hearts and see that the miracles should cause them to observe who He is (Messiah, Son of God, Lord) and put their trust in Him.

How did the official respond to Jesus' rebuke and promise? What were his actions steps? How is this an example of true belief?

NOTE: This is an critical part of the purpose of this story. The Official responded in true faith by the following:

- He acted with humility
- He listened to Jesus
- He took Jesus at His word
- He believed his son's healing was of Jesus, not coincidence
- He shared about Jesus with his household and they believed

JUST FOR FUN

Perform a "trust fall" in your group meeting to see who truly believes the others will 'save you.' What does the person who falls have to 'believe?'



NOTE: This is for fun - especially our kinesthetic learners

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Which of Jesus' miracles cause you to marvel? Which ones do people talk about? What was the purpose of His miracles?

NOTE: Even today, we often marvel without real faith.

In the message on Sunday, Pastor Todd contrasted "interest" and "followership." What are the differences? How might a person detect which is true in one's own life?

NOTE: This aims at the purpose of this encounter: to illustrate that real faith results in following Jesus. Do I really follow Jesus? The book of "1 John" can help one answer that question.

What were the faith actions of the royal official? What does it mean to take "Jesus at His word" in our lives? What are some areas where this is challenging for us?

NOTE: (See the faith actions above.) When we "take Jesus at His word" we obey, trust Him, and follow Him in character and mission. In our culture, we are challenged to humble oneself and follow Jesus' call: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

Perhaps listen to this song together, "Is He Worthy" by Andrew Peterson. Hear it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olahc83Kvp4>

NOTE: Why we can trust in our "worthy" Lord.

LET'S TRUST OUR LORD IN PRAYER

Prayer is faith, trusting God with our needs and desires. Like the royal official, let's come to God with a humble heart and trust Him.

- Pray for God's honor and glory, that His love and goodness is known through us
- Pray for burden-bearing love and unity in our church family
- Pray for your friends in stressful and difficult times (illness, family, job, relationships)
- Pray that our watching friends come to know Jesus as Messiah and Lord

Love and grace to you,

Steve

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 Feast, 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 miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." ⁴⁹ The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "You may go. 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, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." 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 all his household believed. ⁵⁴ This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.