

Miracles and Belief
John 4:43-54
November 9th, 2025

1. _____ People (4:43-45)

2. _____ People (4:46-49)

3. _____ People (4:50-54)

4. Applying the Word

- a. Are you now _____ in Jesus in saving faith?
- b. Don't despise a belief based on _____, but pray it would lead to greater belief in Jesus.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 4:43-54

1. What is it about a sick child that still makes a parent feel helpless and desperate today?
2. Why would Jesus say a prophet has no honor in his own country? How does that play out not only in Galilee but in Judea? How does that contrast with the Samaritans in ch. 4? How is this similar to the account recorded in Mark 6:1-6?
3. Look ahead to John 12:36-43. How does John summarize and explain the belief and unbelief that Jesus encountered?
4. Chapters 3 and 4 have featured interactions with Nicodemus (3:1-21), the Samaritan woman (4:1-42), and a royal official (4:46-54).
 - a. List the defining characteristics of each individual. How are they different from each other? What do they have in common?
 - b. How would you describe Jesus' response to each of them?
 - c. Why do you think John stacks these stories back-to-back at this point in the gospel? What is he emphasizing?
5. Why might Jesus' response to the official in v. 48 seem harsh or uncaring? How does the broader life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus correct that view? What is Jesus getting at in His response?
6. As you consider your own experience as a Christian, what are some ways that your "belief" has deepened, strengthened, expanded, been confirmed, etc. over time?

Miracles and Belief

John 4:43-54

November 9th, 2025

Big idea: Miracles may lead to a type of belief, but superior belief takes Jesus at His word.

Intro

In this part of John, Jesus heals a sick child who was on the edge of dying. Most people in our time, thankfully, may not resonate with this passage the way that every other time period would.

The global child mortality rate today is about 3.7%. In many developed nations it is less than 1%. That means that for every 1,000 children who are born, 990 will live until their 5th birthday. Just 200 years ago the child mortality rate was between 40-50% everywhere in the world, including “developed” countries. For every 1,000 children born, only 500 would make it to their 5th birthday.

The author Bill Bryson put it this way: “The world before the modern era was overwhelmingly a place of tiny coffins.”

I came across the personal diary entry of a Puritan pastor named Ralph Josselin from May 1650 that captures some of the heart ache that was sadly common: “May 26: This morning all our hopes of Mary’s life were gone. To the Lord I have resigned her, and with him I leave her, to receive her into his everlasting arms when he sees best. She rests, we hope, free from much pain, for she shows no sorrow. The Lord makes us willing that she should be out of her suffering. Lord, Thy will be done. Thou art better to me than sons and daughters, though I value them above gold and jewels.”

“May 27: This day, a quarter past two in the afternoon, my Mary fell asleep in the Lord. Her soul passed into that rest where the body of Jesus and the souls of the saints are. She was eight years and forty-five days old when she died. My soul had abundant cause to bless God for her, who was our first fruits ... She was a precious child, a bundle of myrrh, a bundle of sweetness. She was a child full of wisdom, woman-like gravity, knowledge, and sweet expressions of God; apt in her learning, tender-hearted and loving, obedient to us. She was free from the rudeness of little children. She was to us as a box of sweet ointment, which, now it is broken, smells more deliciously than before. Lord, I rejoice I had such a present for Thee. She was patient in her sickness, thankful beyond admiration. Thy memory, my child, is and will be sweet unto me.”

Too quickly and flippantly we can read through a handful of verses in which a child is sick, the father implores Jesus, and the child is healed and miss the desperation that would have stood behind it.

And yet this miracle only serves as the backdrop to the continual emphasis in John on the nature of true belief.

In the first message on John, I presented the following diagram that traces the development of belief and unbelief in John:

Prologue 1:1-18

Beginnings of belief 1-4 – John’s testimony, wedding at Cana, Nicodemus, woman at the well

Development of unbelief 5-12 – plan to kill because of Sabbath and making self equal w God, feeds 5k, teaches, light of the world, heals the blind, Lazarus, enters Jer.

Strengthening of belief 13-17 – washes feet, teaches, prepares, prays

Jesus seeks to strengthen and confirm the belief of His followers in preparation for his death. Key idea is that of relationships

Consummation of unbelief 18-19

Rejection and crucifixion

Confirmation of belief 20

Resurrection

Responsibilities of belief 21 – feed my sheep

1. **Unbelieving** People (4:43-45)

- a. Jesus leaves Samaria and continues north into Galilee.
 - i. The response in Samaria was remarkable. Many people in one village believed and he stayed with them for two days teaching.
 - ii. But it was time for Him to continue into Galilee.
 - iii. We're presented with a difficulty
- b. "A prophet has no honor in his own country, so when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him."
 - i. If a prophet is without honor in his own country, and Jesus goes to His own country, and they receive Him...that doesn't seem to make sense, especially when you add in the transition words "so" and "therefore."
 1. "A prophet has no honor in his own country, therefore his own country received him and therefore he went to his own country."
- c. "His own country" translates the word *patris* that can mean native country, fatherland, homeland, hometown.
 - i. It is being used not just of Galilee, where He was raised in Nazareth, but His Jewish people as opposed to the Samaritans in Samaria that He just left.
 - ii. In Jewish regions, the response was mixed and increasingly negative, whereas in Samaria it was entirely positive.
- d. The welcome He received was not the welcome of true belief in Him as the Messiah, but a superficial belief that wanted to see more miracles.
 - i. John has already tipped us off to that concern in ch 2
 1. **John 2:23-25** Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.
 - ii. We see this unfold in this section with the royal official's sick son.
 - iii. We see it develop in the chapters that follow.
 1. In Ch 5 there is rising opposition back in Jerusalem
 2. In ch 6 the crowds misunderstand His messiahship and many abandon Him.
 3. Culminates in ch 12 where John states in v. 37 "though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him."
 - iv. DA Carson: "While once again Jesus is presented as the one who gives life, the dark colors that surround this healing, projected forward by the account of the Samaritan woman (4:1-42) and by the proverb that opens the pericope (v. 44), anticipates the rising polarization in Israel, the multiplying animus that ultimately drives toward the cross."

2. **Desperate** People (4:46-49)

- a. The royal official was desperate so this point might be more accurate to say “a desperate person” but by extension his household becomes involved and the desperation likely included them all.
- b. Royal official
 - i. The term can mean nobleman. He was in some way attached to King Herod. He would have been a person of privilege, power, and wealth, but none of that stopped his son from getting sick. As one author says, he is powerful but also powerless. Few things make a parent feel as helpless as a sick child.
 - ii. His son is sick, near death, has a fever and the father is desperate.
 - iii. When he heard that Jesus was in Cana, he made the 15-20 mile journey from Capernaum and begged him to come down and heal his son.
- c. We need to see the backdrop of a superficial faith that Jesus continually encountered if we are to understand Jesus’ response in v. 48.
 - i. In response to the desperate father, Jesus says, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”
 - ii. NASB says “you people” where the ESV says “you” to help us see that “you” is plural.
 - iii. He isn’t just saying this to the father but to the people He keeps encountering in His own country to call them to a deeper belief in Him as Messiah not just a miracle worker.
 - iv. Kent Hughes: “Christ’s words here are mercifully surgical. When he said, “Unless you [plural] see signs and wonders,” he referred not only to the nobleman but also to the Galileans whose tendency the nobleman represented. Jesus’ words would lift the man to new levels of faith—and likewise anyone else who would listen and respond.”
- d. The official is still understandably relentless, “sir, come down before my child dies.”
- e. Compare this to a similar but distinct encounter in Matthew 8:5-13.
 - i. Once again someone was sick and an official (in this case, a centurion soldier) came to Jesus imploring him. Jesus healed in this case also, but instead of chastising he praises the centurion. What’s the difference?
 - ii. The centurion realized Jesus’ authority and power and his own unworthiness, while the royal official implored Jesus to just come down and heal his son. The centurion knew Jesus could heal from a distance. The official pleaded with him to come down.
- f. Sometimes desperation drives people toward God –
 - i. God, fix my marriage and I’ll do anything.... Heal my cancer ... relieve my depression ... heal my child.
 - ii. That may bring someone through the door of a church and we should welcome them, and help them see the ways in which God’s word absolutely speaks to their need, but we should also help them to see as Jesus helped this man to see, that their crisis is not actually their biggest problem.
 - iii. In His compassion, Jesus cares about all suffering, but He cares the most about eternal suffering, so even in the most excruciating need Jesus is aiming higher than our felt need to our greater need.

3. **Believing** People (4:50-54)

- a. Once Jesus said, “Go; your son lives” – the official believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and left.
 - i. There’s a partial granting and a partial refusal – He grants the request to heal but does not go down in person.
 - ii. At this point the official only has Jesus’ word that his son is healed. There is no evidence and yet he believes.
- b. On the way there his servants met him.
 - i. We can piece together that it is the next day because they say he was healed “yesterday.”
 - ii. Imagine that journey on foot. He started off right away on the way home and he “believed” but he wouldn’t know for sure until he got home. How much sleep would he have gotten that night?
- c. When he learns that his son was healed at the very moment Jesus had pronounced him well, “he himself believed and his whole household.”
 - i. How is this belief different than the previous belief?
 1. V 50 was believing that Jesus could heal
 2. v. 53 is believing IN Jesus
 - ii. His belief continues, grows, and deepens.
- d. This is what we see with Jesus’ own disciples in John – they continue to believe, and their believe finds new and deeper levels.
 - i. **John 2:11** This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.
 - ii. **John 2:22** So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.
 - iii. **John 6:68-69** Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."
 - iv. **John 13:18-19** "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' ¹⁹ "From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*."
 - v. **John 14:29** "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe."
 - vi. **John 16:29-33** His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. ³⁰ "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."
 - vii. **John 20:8** So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.
 1. They “believed” but with each new realization they “believed” – their trust continued to grow and deepen and solidify.
- e. If you’ve been a Christian for a while, you’ve probably experienced this.
 - i. You “believed” – may there was a conscience response to the gospel at summer camp or talking to your parents or as an adult when someone brought you to church, etc.

ii. But over time your belief grows in depth.

1. You read an apologetic book and realize the Christian faith is solid and defensible and sensible, and you “believe.”
2. You pray something bold and risky, and God answers and you “believe.”
3. You come across a rich doctrine that you had formerly overlooked and it stirs your heart, maybe it is a renewed appreciation of the depths of God’s grace as you work through Ephesians 1 and wrestle with the language that He chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world and freely set His adopting love on you – and you “believe.”
4. Participate in a men’s study and learn that your ultimate joy is found in Christ, and you “believe.”

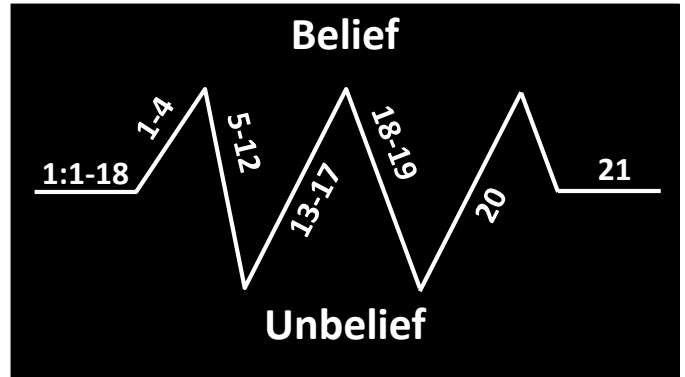
iii. There’s a reason that a synonym for a Christian is a “believer.” We believe and we keep believing and we grow in our believing.

4. Applying the Word

- a. Are you now ***believing*** in Jesus in saving faith?
 - i. If not, what are the barriers?
 - ii. If yes, continue to grow into deeper belief.
- b. Don’t despise a belief based on ***desperation***, but pray it would lead to greater belief in Jesus.

MIRACLES AND BELIEF

John 4:43-54



1. Unbelieving People (4:43-45)

John 2:23-25 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

DA Carson: “While once again Jesus is presented as the one who gives life, the dark colors that surround this healing, projected forward by the account of the Samaritan woman (4:1-42) and by the proverb that opens the pericope (v. 44), anticipates the rising polarization in Israel, the multiplying animus that ultimately drives toward the cross.”

2. *Desperate* People (4:46-49)

Matthew 8:5-13

3. *Believing* People (4:50-54)

John 2:11 This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples **believed in Him.**

John 2:22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they **believed the Scripture** and the word which Jesus had spoken.

John 6:68-69 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ **"We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."**

John 13:18-19 "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' ¹⁹ "From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, **you may believe that I am He.**

John 14:29 "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, **you may believe.**

John 16:29-33 His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. ³⁰ "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; **by this we believe** that You came from God."

John 20:8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he **saw and believed.**

4. Applying the Word

a. Are you now **believing** in Jesus in saving faith?

b. Don't despise a belief based on **desperation**, but pray it would lead to greater belief in Jesus.

