

Lesson 7 – The Official’s Son (John 4:43-54)

It must have been in desperation that the royal official set off from the sea shore of Capernaum to the hill country of Cana, in Galilee. The report said Jesus had traveled from Judea and was coming to Galilee. It was there he had turned the water to wine, or so it had been said. People in Jerusalem knew there was something special about Jesus. Word had been circulating among those who attended the Passover feast that Jesus had performed some astonishing signs (John 2:23; 4:45). In fact, the disciples of John were diminishing in number and more people were following this man, Jesus (John 4:1-2). Maybe this man can do what the physicians have been unable to do, heal my son.

Can you relate to a father that is in this situation? I remember very well having to plead with a doctor to try something else, when a loved one was desperately ill. You understand the situation is dire and you will attempt anything that might help. Begging is something any father would do in a circumstance where his son’s life was at stake. But, this man chose to travel a fair distance, leaving his dying son, to find Jesus (John 4:46, 47). The story implies that the fame of Jesus was already circulating throughout the region. Yet, those of Jesus’ own country, Galilee, had their doubts (John 4:44, 45). After arriving in Cana, the royal official sought an audience with Jesus and implored him to come to Capernaum and heal his son (John 4:47).

The story doesn’t add any details about the prominence of this royal official. Time must have been critical for the official to leave town himself and not send one of his servants to summon Jesus. The author does not give any of the details about what was involved in the begging or bargaining with Jesus about a house call in Capernaum. But, I am sure, every effort was made by this official to convince Jesus to stop what he was doing and attend to this urgent need. “Name your price, anything, just give me a number,” isn’t this what we would envision today if we were in a similar position. There is no value we can place on the life of a loved one, especially our own son.

It is obvious from this story that the royal official believed that Jesus was capable of doing something positive for the health of his son. I don’t think, as some may conclude, that he was grasping at straws. The nature of illnesses that produce high fevers require observation and examination by a physician to determine the proper remedy. What has been reported, about this man, is that he can affect extraordinary results (John 2:23; 4:45).

Jesus understands that this official has more at stake than just the health of his son (John 4:48). Jesus understands how to strengthen both this man and his son. It is with seeming assurance that the royal official accepts Jesus’ soothing command, “*You may go, your son will live.*” (John 4:50). It would have to be with utmost confidence that one would accept another man’s plan to heal your son and go away without accomplishing your intended goal. Yet, the official accepted Jesus’ word and returned home (John 4:50, 51). This man saw something in Jesus that calmed his fears and offered him hope or he would not have returned back down to Capernaum. It was a joyous occasion when he met his own servants coming to find him with the good news about his son (John 4:51, 52).

Questions:

1. This episode in the life of Jesus represents the second occasion that someone had come to Jesus under dire circumstances. Since Jesus did not live in Cana, explain what is implied by the official leaving Capernaum and seeking Jesus in Galilee (John 4:47).

2. After referring to a bible atlas, what is the distance from Capernaum to Cana? _____

3. Jesus stated that unless people see signs and wonders they would not believe (John 4:48). Explain what was required for Jesus to heal the official's son.

4. What is signified by this second action of Jesus from Cana, in Galilee (John 4:54)?

5. Considering the details of this story, would you consider this a sign that Jesus performed publically or privately?

6. What is the reader of John's gospel learning about the popularity and ability of Jesus at this point in the narrative? (Chapters 1 thru 4)
