

John on Jesus - One Desperate Dad

Sign Title: One Desperate Dad

August 19, 2012

Good morning Faith Church. For those of you who are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are studying the Gospel of John. Today we finish the fourth chapter.

In chapter three, Jesus was in Jerusalem for his first Passover. In chapter four, he works his way north as he heads home to Galilee. He went straight north through the region with a reputation as the bad side of town, Samaria. Most of chapter four is about Jesus' time in Samaria with a Samaritan woman. He told her the truth about her sin and God's love for her in spite of it. From those conversations, she comes into a relationship with God. Unlike Jerusalem, where Jesus was run out of town, the whole Samaritan village welcomes him and will not let him leave. They see Jesus as the Savior of the world. This all goes to show you never know how God can use your potty breaks on a road trip. That is how revival started in that town.

As we pick up chapter four, Jesus is on his home turf by the Sea of Galilee. The story picks up in the rural town of Cana, where he turned the water to wine in chapter two. Nazareth, where Jesus went to high school, was less than 10 miles south. Capernaum, which plays an important part of this story is 18 to 20 miles east on the Sea of Galilee. As we put our finger in the text, we find one confusing statement. Let's read it.



One confusing statement

After the two days he departed for Galilee. (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast. John 4:43–45 (ESV)

This doesn't make sense. Jesus told us he would have no honor in his hometown. When he arrived in the region he grew up, people welcomed him. They were thrilled to see him. Which way do you want it? We can't have it both ways. Either they honored him or they didn't honor him. The two statements are contradictory. What is happening?

The answer is that the welcome Jesus received is not what it looks like. These folks were at the feast in Jerusalem. In chapter three, we learned Jesus performed miracles during the Passover. The hometown folks were excited to see Jesus because he was a small-town boy who made it big in the city with his miracles. They were excited that somebody from the country had his name on the front page of a big city paper.

We just finished the Olympics. What would happen if a Spirit Lake athlete, in the sport of wrestling, made the Olympic team? What if he not only made the team but they won an Olympic gold? What kind of reception would be given to him when they came back to town? We would mob them with attention! This is the same situation. These country folks were particularly excited about Jesus' miracles. They couldn't wait for him to do some miracles for their entertainment. They were excited about Jesus but they were excited about him for the wrong

reason. They missed the whole point of the miracles that should have told them Jesus is God.

Think of it this way. Pretend there was a quaint resort community. At a city council meeting, it is decided to update their road signs. Since it is a quaint tourist town, rather than go with standard road signs, the council hires an expensive artist to paint new and creative ones. The road signs arrive and are put around town. They are works of art. The vacationers stop to take picture of them. Art groups gather to admire them. The road signs are getting attention but people miss the obvious. They are so busy admiring the signs they are ignoring the messages on the signs!

It is the same way with Jesus and the hometown crowd. People are excited about Jesus' miracles. They want Jesus to perform a circus act. They are missing the obvious. Miracles are things only God can do. The miracles are not for entertainment value. They are there to show Jesus is who he claims to be, the very son of God.

We see the same thing with Jesus' brothers later in the Gospel of John.

So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." For not even his brothers believed in him. John 7:3–5 (ESV)

Jesus' brothers saw Jesus' miracles. They believed in him as a miracle worker. They even wanted him to take his miracle show on the road, head to bigger cities, find bigger venues. Try Las Vegas because every act gets its start in Las Vegas. The problem was they completely missed the whole point of the miracles. They didn't believe in him.

So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. John 4:46 (ESV)

John wanted us to notice Jesus is in a particular part of his hometown area. He was in the city where he changed water to wine at a wedding feast three months before. When we studied Jesus' changing of water to wine at Cana we learned Cana was a small rural town. After Jesus performed that miracle, the word spread. Everybody had a chance to get his or her haircut at the local barber. The barber told them the water to wine story. Everyone was talking about Jesus. Cana was the epicenter of the miracle seekers who did not understand the identity of Jesus.

One desperate dad

And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. John 4:46–47 (ESV)

Capernaum was 18 to 20 miles to the east. It was a busy fishing village with a growing economy. Because it was a city with growing influence, Herod, the Roman ruler, stationed his governmental presence for the region in the city. Unlike the governmental offices in our town, the governmental offices in these towns were not a welcome site. Rome was seen as a despised occupying force. There was bad blood between Roman and the Jews. The country hicks were not excited about rich big-city Romans meddling in their lives. The Roman official was not loved by the Jews.

This Roman official was a powerful man. He had servants. The Greek word used to describe him can be translated “mini-king.” He was a man with

great power and influence. He could buy whatever he wanted whenever he wanted it, but the one thing he couldn't buy was the one thing he needed: Healing for his son. No doubt, he took his son to the best hospitals and doctors. He willingly paid the costs for the best doctors money could buy.

I like this father. He was personally involved in the care of his son. He didn't delegate it to a servant while he went to work.

Apparently, word about Jesus' miraculous changing of water to wine in Cana and his miracles in Jerusalem were circulating. This father, having lost all hope and with his son hanging on the edge of death, set out to find Jesus and ask for a miracle.

I can understand his feeling of desperation. When our boys were younger, we visited Cindy's grandmother in a small town on the Georgia-Florida border. During our stay, Daniel began to vomit. No matter what we fed him, he chucked it up. This went on throughout the weekend. We took him to the town doctor. He wasn't much of a help. He simply told us to keep feeding him and let him vomit. One night, I picked Daniel out of bed to hold him in my arms. As I held him in my arms, I suddenly realized how emaciated he was. I burst into tears because he was weak and sick. There was nothing I could do for my son. I exhausted all the help I could find. It was a frustrating and terrifying moment.

That night, I made a big leadership call. We cut vacation early. The next morning we set a non-stop route to Michigan. If we couldn't make it, we would pull over in a big city hospital for intravenous fluids. We strapped the boys in their car seats and told Daniel to hold his sand bucket in his lap to catch the

vomit. We were going home and maybe the hospital. Thankfully, he recovered. We believe he suffered from the roto virus. Many of you have experienced worse. I know there are few feelings more desperate than watching your child suffer and knowing there is nothing you can do to help them. That is the feeling this man experienced.

This nobleman was not a Jew. He didn't have an orthodox religious background. He was simply a father desperately trying to help his son. When he found Jesus, he begged him to save his son. One thing we miss in the English, that is apparent from the tense in the Greek, is the intensity of the asking on the father's part. Some versions translate the word ask as begging. From the tense of the verb, we also know this was not a simple beg. This was constant desperate begging. This was a father who was on his knees desperately asking Jesus for a miracle. Now, the story takes a strange turn.

Do you want me or a miracle?

Jesus turned to this wealthy, powerful man, who was on his knees begging Jesus for a miracle, and said some of the weirdest stuff.

**So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."
John 4:48 (ESV)**

Why did he say that? It doesn't seem to fit. As we study it, there are some subtle clues. To begin with, the word "you" is in the plural in the Greek. Jesus was not simply addressing the rich guy begging for a miracle, he was addressing the entire crowd.

Maybe a better way to read it is to use the southern term "y'all" because that is what Jesus said.

So Jesus said to him, “Unless y’all see signs and wonders y’all will not believe.”
John 4:48

Remember, everyone around Jesus said they believe in Jesus, but their belief was based on miracles. It was not a belief in Jesus’ word, because they wouldn’t believe his word unless he did a miracle. They were interested in him as a miracle worker for their pleasure and amusement.

What about this rich and powerful official? Was he coming to Jesus begging for a miracle so he could brag to his friends that he witnessed one? Was he looking for Jesus to serve his curiosity, or was he coming to Jesus because he believed only God could heal his son?

After Jesus rebuked the nobleman and the crowd, the man continued to persist.

The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” John 4:49 (ESV)

You can sense he didn’t know much about Jesus but he had great reverence for him. He called Jesus “Sir.” He told Jesus that what he was concerned about was his child. He didn’t want him to die. He was not begging Jesus to see a miracle, like everyone else. He was begging Jesus to perform a miracle and save his son.

Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. John 4:50 (ESV)

This is interesting. Everybody wanted to see a miracle before they would believe. Jesus flipped it around, “If you believe in me, I will perform a miracle.” Jesus did the miracle long distance. That way none of the miracle seekers got to see it.

Imagine what it was like for this man as he walked home. Jesus was his last hope. He was desperate for Jesus to return with him to heal his son. Then, he had no Jesus. He only had Jesus' word. Each step toward his home was a step away from Jesus, his final hope for a cure.

Thankfully, his faith was well-placed.

As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. John 4:51–53 (ESV)

This is a pretty simple story, but I want to make a few observations from it as we look to apply this story to our lives.

Observations

Miracles do not create our faith, they happen because of our faith.

In the Bible, we learn Jesus often doesn't perform a miracle to create faith. It is because of faith that Jesus did miraculous things. Let me give you another example.

And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Matthew 13:53–58 (ESV)

I know many people have asked God for a miracle to prove his existence. Are you one of them? How many have asked God to heal someone they loved and promised God that if he performed the miracle, you would believe? How

many kids have asked God to help them ace a test they didn't study for? If God allowed them to ace it, that would be a miracle. They would believe.

We want Jesus to prove himself to us then we promise to believe in him. That isn't the way it works. God won't miraculously prove himself to create faith. If he did, we would have faulty faith. Our faith would fail the next challenge we faced that God did not provide a miraculous solution.

Think of it like an adopted child. The adopted child can approach his adoptive parents two way. He can tell them he will only believe they love him if they buy him a pile of toys. If they buy him a Nintendo and a car, then he will believe they love him. I hope his parents don't buy him anything. What happens when the parents stop buying stuff for him? He believes his parents don't love him anymore. The other way for him to approach his new adoptive parents is to believe their word. He can take their word on faith that they love him. He can delight in the relationship with his new parents. What do you think will happen on his birthday? Since he believed their word and delighted in them, they will delight in him and with joy bless him on that special day.

It is the same way for us. If we try looking for a miracle from God to prove his love for us, forget it. It doesn't work that way. If it worked that way, we would be spoiled brats. It is when we believe and trust Jesus' word that God delights in us. Sometimes that manifests itself in miraculous ways.

Faith in Jesus is coupled to obedience.

There is no such thing as belief without behavior. Let's put our finger in the text. First, the Roman dad expressed *belief* in Jesus. Then he had to *obey*

Jesus. Jesus told him to go home. He had to walk away without the miracle he was desperate to obtain. That walking was accompanied by *waiting*. Put yourself in this man's shoes as he walked home. He was thinking about his son. He believed Jesus' word but there was still an uneasiness in his heart. Each step he took was a step away from Jesus. It was the next day when he finally saw the results of his belief and obedience. His servants met him on the road telling him that his son was recovering.

Belief → Obedience → Waiting → Seeing

I think this gives us a pattern we often see in the Christian life. True belief in Jesus will be followed by obedience to Jesus. That will usually be followed by a hard time of waiting. Sometimes it is a long time of waiting before God honors obedience. That honor for obedience may not be seen until eternity. Let me give some examples.

Let's talk about dating. Many young adults feel pressure that they should be dating somebody. Hormones are good. God gave them to us. They should lead to marriage. The Scriptures tell us to only date the kind of person you could eventually mate. Only date people who love Jesus more than they love you. The Bible doesn't simply tell us to be careful who we date but how we date. The Bible tells us to only do with our date what we would do with our brother or sister. That raises the bar high. Remember, God only says what he does out of love for us, not because he wants to spoil our fun.

If we believe God's Word in this area, it will be followed by obedience to God in this area. That is usually followed by a time of waiting. Your friends are

sexually active but you are not. The best part is your wedding night. On that night you see the payoff of purity.

Let's try another example, the offering. Where we put our money shows what we believe is important. In 2 Corinthians 9, the Bible says our offering is to be generous, proportionate, sacrificial and joyfully. Many people give 10 percent. That is known as a tithe. The tithe is more of a floor than a ceiling. If we believe God's Word, the proof of our belief is seen in our obedience to God in this area of our lives. If you are new to Christ, joyfully giving may be new to you. It might be tough to give 10 percent of your income. There will be times when we obey God financially and it is hard. Many times God will honor those who honor him and we see the blessing of believing and obeying God in this area of our lives.

Sometimes we will not see those blessing until eternity but those blessings are guaranteed to come.

God tests our faith to grow our faith.

It is easy to think of our faith in Christ as static, like a light switch. We either have it or we don't. That is not the way faith in Christ works. Salvation is like a light switch. We are either saved by Christ or we are not saved by Christ. Faith is similar to a rheostat. Sometimes our faith is strong, other times it is weak. Because God loves us he will strengthen our faith. The way he does that is called crisis. It is when the world falls apart and only Christ is holding us up that our faith grows. It is when we lose a job but God carries us through. It is when we need God to come to our rescue that we learn he does come to our rescue. We learn to trust Jesus and our faith grows.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2–4 (ESV)

In this story, we see it was the crisis of the nobleman's son that God used to form his faith. When the nobleman was told to walk home without a cure, that was hard. When he finally saw his servants, his faith grew because he learned that Jesus' word could be trusted. Many times we go through similar situations in life. We have periods of time when we walk by faith until we find God's Word can be trusted.

Nobody likes a crisis, but when we are in a crisis, thank God for the crisis. He is using it to make us mature and spiritually complete.

WARNING - Familiarity with Christ can morph into false faith in Christ.

This is a word of wisdom to those of you who have been around the church for a while. If we are familiar with Jesus, it is easy to make too little of Jesus. It is easy to become just like the Jews of Jesus' hometown and not see him for all he is. Don't you find it amusing that the Samaritans believed he was the savior of the world after only being around him for two days? Don't you find it amusing the gentile nobleman was willing to believe Jesus and walk away from Jesus trusting his own son's life in Jesus hands after only meeting him briefly? Those familiar with Jesus saw him as a form of entertainment. It was only after he performed miracles for their amusement that they would believe.

Conclusion

Why are you here? I mean why do you come on Sundays? Is it the coffee and free cookies? Is it the worship band? Is it the friends you haven't seen since last week? Why are you here? It is easy to say we are here to worship Jesus. Have you become so familiar with Jesus that Sunday worship is for your entertainment? Who is Jesus to you? Is church worship of the savior of the world or is it just a form of entertainment?

Miracles and moments of divine providence are not everyday occurrences, but they do happen. They only happen because of our faith; they never happen to create our faith. Is your life missing those miraculous God sightings? Have you become too familiar with him? If there are no times when God has touched your life miraculously or providentially, that is a yellow flag of faith. It may be you look at Jesus like the Jews of Galilee rather than the Samaritans or the gentile nobleman. Jesus may be your entertainment rather than your lord and king. If that is the case, this morning repent and turn to Jesus.

My Christ Story --- John Wienke

Throughout this series, we are sharing Christ stories. These are stories of how Christ has changed a life. This morning, we have the story of a broken relationship between a father and son. We have the story of someone who walked away from Jesus but has finally come home. John Wienke's Christ story can be found at <http://www.johnonjesus.com/stories/index.html>.



Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for dying for us. Thank you for bringing great glory to your name by working in all the unlikely places, people and times. This week, show us the people who are like the Samaritan woman that you bring into our lives. Give us the courage to build a relationship with them. Give us the wisdom to know what to say and the clarity to know how to speak about Jesus' love in a way they will understand. Amen.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching. Feel free to contact him at ktruck@gmail.com or visit his web at www.christ2Rculture.com

© Dr. Kurt Trucksess. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web site address (<http://www.christ2Rculture.com>) on the copied resource.

