**Live in Community**



Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Navigate Hardship**

The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time. ([Psalm 34:19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps34.19))

*Life is hard, even for believers. We all know it or discover it soon enough. Life tests our patience, our hope, and our sense of God’s presence. But we are not left hopeless in our challenges. God’s presence is more certain than even our hardships. Still, there are times in life we need to be reminded that He is present. It’s in hardships that we learn to recognize it. We also learn to depend on God, to wait, and to look forward to His rescue.*

**Session Overview**

**Look Forward**

**Biblical Encounter:** A Father’s Journey for His Son’s Healing ([John 4:43–54](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.43-54))

**Outcome:** Believe for God’s presence and power as you move where He directs.

*In this session, we’ll see a man come to Jesus in the middle of what might have been the worst hardship he had ever faced. Desperate for a miracle, this man showed us a shocking display of faith when he returned home, believing for his miracle without seeing it. Having only Jesus’ words of assurance, the man’s behavior showed that he trusted in Jesus’ word more than he trusted in his own experience.*

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| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**  What is the longest journey (geographically or otherwise) you’ve ever gone on for a medical need for yourself or someone you love? |

We would all probably go to great lengths and great expense when it comes to the health and wellness of someone we love. When we begin a journey toward physical healing, we don't always know where it will lead or when it will end. But we move forward trusting medical science and the professionals who devote their lives to studying it.

Doctors are problem solvers. And they often have to treat people with unexplained illnesses by process of elimination. But the One who knows the number of hairs on our head ([Luke 12:7](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk12.7)) and keeps track of each tear we cry ([Psalm 56:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps56.8)) can surely diagnose our need and speak the perfect healing remedy into existence.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What miracle would you like to see God do for someone else?



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| **QUESTION**  What miracle would you like to see God do for someone else? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

In this session, we catch up with Jesus as He had just returned to Galilee after the Passover celebration. Jews from all over had come together in Jerusalem to celebrate. Many of the Galileans had also just returned home and were likely talking about the new Teacher who had made a splash at the celebration by performing miraculous signs ([John 2:23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn2.23)). For a certain government official, the arrival of this Teacher and Miracle Worker couldn’t have come at a better time.

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| **QUESTION**  Imagine you’ve just returned home from the Passover celebration. What kinds of comments might you have heard about Jesus? |

**The Talk of the Town**

Read [John 4:43–45](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.43-45).

It’s not too difficult to imagine that those who had gone to Jerusalem and witnessed Jesus’ miraculous signs would have told fellow travelers about it on the way home. Then once back in the region of Galilee, travelers would have likely told their first- or secondhand accounts to those who had stayed behind at home. Eyewitnesses may have even compared their recollection of accounts for eager listeners as they worked in the fields. Even government officials in the area would have heard about this Man who could do miracles. So it must have created quite a buzz when Jesus, the larger-than-life Prophet, showed up in their hometown of Cana.

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| **QUESTION**  Do you think the people welcoming Jesus understood who He really was or were they just excited about what He had done? |

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| **QUESTION**  Relate this to yourself or others today. Why is it important to understand who Jesus is and not just focus on what He can do? |

Throughout His ministry, people compared Jesus to the prophets of the Old Testament. But He was about to confront them with the reality that He was so much more.

**A Deeper Understanding**

Read [John 4:46–49](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.46-49).

At first, Jesus’ response may seem harsh. Was He saying this to others around Him who were following only because of the miraculous? It’s likely. Was this also in response to this man’s desperate plea? It’s possible. After all, the official’s son was dying. Most parents would go to great lengths to save their child. Is it possible that Jesus wasn’t rebuking the official’s request for healing, but rather his request that Jesus go to Capernaum? Maybe. Jesus was not an ordinary prophet who needed to go to Capernaum in order to perform a miracle to heal this man’s son ([Matthew 8:5–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt8.5-13)). Instead, He was the One through whom all of creation was made ([John 1:1–4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.1-4)). Surely, He could also speak to sickness, and it would obey. But we have no way to know for sure if this father understood the full extent of Jesus’ power.

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| **QUESTION**  Look back at verse [49](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.49). At this moment, do you think the man was more worried about his immediate need or his eternal need? |

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| **QUESTION**  How has God used an earthly need in your life to refocus your understanding of eternal things? |

**An Obedient Risk**

Read [John 4:50](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.50).

The man believed and started home. Wait! What? In less than a minute, we can read verses [50–54](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.50-54) and learn the outcome. But this father faced far more time to ponder Jesus’ command over a trip from Cana back to Capernaum. Depending on the route taken, it was about twenty miles from Cana to Capernaum. That’s a lot of time to think, wonder, and worry. It had to feel like the longest trip of his life. Yet, the man obeyed Jesus and moved in the direction of faith.

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| **QUESTION**  What kinds of doubts do you think the father wrestled with on his way back home? |

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| **QUESTION**  At what moment(s) do you think this man’s understanding of Jesus changed? |

**A Promise Fulfilled**

Read [John 4:51–54](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.51-54).

We don’t know how long the man walked before he was met by one of his servants. But we do know that he was moving forward in obedience to Jesus’ command. Sometimes in our walk toward God’s promises we second-guess what God has told us. We may go back to Him and say something like, “I just want to make sure that I heard Your instructions clearly, because they don’t really make sense to me.” We may take a detour toward our backup plan. Or we may take a break from our journey to seek advice from others. But this man trusted what he had heard from Jesus and was steadfast in following Jesus’ instructions to move toward the promise of his son’s healing.

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| **QUESTION**  How do you think the father’s understanding of Jesus continued to change throughout these final verses of [John 4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4)? |

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| **QUESTION**  How has trusting Jesus through times of hardship changed your understanding of who He is? |

Don’t miss the graciousness of God having the servant come out to meet the father with the good news. This distraught father’s agony of waiting was shortened. A welcomed messenger arrived to tell him that his worst fears had been avoided, and Jesus’ promise had come true.

**Reflect**

**Believe for God’s presence and power as you move where He directs.**

The sick boy’s father traveled miles believing what he could not see. He had to trust the promise of Jesus and move in the direction of that promise. That trust in Jesus was the only thing he had to sustain him as doubts probably crept in during his journey home. But God graciously sent him the proof, even before he made it back to his home.

Today you may find yourself begging Jesus to come and meet your need. Or maybe you’ve already felt the Holy Spirit whisper promises to your soul. But when you are waiting for that need to be met, it can feel much longer than a twenty-mile walk before God’s promise is fulfilled. In those times, we must remain steadfast in our faith in God, believing that our gracious Father is working on our behalf and will send the answer we need at just the right time.

**Did You Know?**

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| *The Book of John is the only Gospel that explicitly names the village of Cana. Two of the occurrences are connected to miracles of Jesus—this healing of the official’s son and His first miraculous sign at a wedding there. Since John only lists seven miracles, that means more than 25 percent of the miracles listed in that Gospel are connected to this location. The other time Cana is mentioned in John is as the hometown of the disciple Nathanael.* |

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**  Are you currently facing a hardship that is causing you to second-guess your faith in who God is, His character, or His promises? Explain. |

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| **QUESTION**  Have you wavered in your steadfastness and taken a detour away from pursuing God in any area of your life? |

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| **QUESTION**  What specific thing might you need to do to get back on the road toward His promise? |

**Activate**

The father in this account journeyed a long way to bring his desperate need to Jesus. But his physical journey paled in comparison to the spiritual journey that Jesus would take him on. Through his son’s sickness, journey of faith, and then miraculous healing, the father gained a greater understanding of who Jesus was.

**Challenge**

In your journal or on a sheet of paper, write out your current faith journey using the same steps that this father took.

1. Write out your need. Tell God what you are desperate for Him to do in your life.

2. Recognize God’s nature and character. This could include searching for some Bible verses that remind you of who He is or recounting times that He has already fulfilled His promises to you.

3. Record His promise. Write down what you feel like God has told you concerning this situation.

4. Move forward in His direction. Ask Him what you can do this week to move in the direction of the promise.

5. Pray for His Word to go ahead of you. Ask and believe that He’s moving in the supernatural realm to bring about the answer even before you see it. Be specific about the obstacles that need to be moved, the things that need to come about, and the hearts that need to be changed for you to see the promise fulfilled.

**Prayer Requests**

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| *Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week.* |

The encouragement of fellow believers can be a vital part of staying steadfast while we’re waiting on God’s promises to be fulfilled. But daily personal time in God’s Word is also important to give us assurance and build our trust while we wait on His promise. Devotions have been provided to help you do more of that this week.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: A Father’s Journey for His Son’s Healing**

Read [John 4:43–54](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.43-54).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**  What is God saying to you about trusting in His presence and power as you move forward as He directs? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: Listening Intently**

Read [Matthew 16:13–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt16.13-23).

People misunderstood who Jesus was. Even Peter, one of His closest disciples, declared Jesus to be the Messiah in one breath, but then later revealed that he misunderstood His mission. Notice that verse [21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt16.21) begins with a transition statement. The disciples had finally understood the truth of who Jesus was, and now it was time for Jesus to start teaching them about what He must do.

Even today, God’s Holy Spirit and Word have many things to teach us about His nature, His power, and His mission. And He wants to teach us even greater things as we are ready. But we have a choice to make about whether we will listen and absorb these truths or simply live in a shallow understanding of who we think He is.

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| **QUESTION**  How does verse [17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt16.17) encourage and challenge you at the same time? |

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| **QUESTION**  What is God currently teaching you about His presence, His power, or His mission? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: Understanding Deeply**

Read [2 Kings 4:8–36](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Ki4.8-36).

The government official from Capernaum and the woman from Shunem both had sons facing death. Yet, the woman’s son actually died. If you are a parent, then you probably understand that there would be nothing more tragic than the loss of your child. If you’ve known someone who has lost a child, then you may have seen firsthand the devastation that it can bring to an entire family. Both of these parents were persistent and unwavering in pursuing the answer to their need. They were willing to do whatever it took to get what they were desperate for. Notice that unlike the miracle Jesus performed from a distance in [John 4:43–54](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.43-54), both Elisha and his servant eventually went to this boy’s home.

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| **QUESTION**  Contrast the actions of Elisha and Jesus in response to the desperate pleas of these parents. |

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| **QUESTION**  What does this say to you about Jesus in comparison to the prophets? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Following Precisely**

Read [Acts 8:26–39](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac8.26-39).

This awesome story is about how the gospel spread to all parts of the world as a result of the Jerusalem church being scattered. But even though the believers were scattered, the gospel being shared wasn’t simply a passive byproduct. Notice in verse [26](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac8.26) that an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. And in verse [29](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac8.29) we see that the Holy Spirit told Philip to go and stand near the chariot.

It’s important to notice that those instructions didn’t come in a step-by-step list for the outcome. But God’s presence and power were there to guide Philip and impact the heart of the Ethiopian official as they spoke. This may not have happened if Philip had been unwilling to obey the first instructions without having the full understanding. Similarly, God wants us to move in the direction of obedience, and trust that His presence and power are available to those of us who act in faith.

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| **QUESTION**  Describe a time when you took a step of obedience without fully understanding where it would lead. |

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| **QUESTION**  What was the result in your life and the life of others? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Trusting Completely**

Read [Hebrews 11:8–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb11.8-16).

Abraham and his family left their home and their community—without having a guide, printed maps, or GPS! Not only that, but they didn’t know where they were going or when their journey would end. People must have thought Abraham was crazy!

Today, we have the benefit of hindsight, and we know that God’s promises to Abraham came true. Not only did his descendants become large nations, but Jesus was a direct descendant of Abraham through his son Isaac. Yet these promises of God weren’t all fulfilled in Abraham’s lifetime. In fact, [Hebrews 11:16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb11.16) gives us a clue that what Abraham was truly searching for could not be fully realized on earth.

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| **QUESTION**  Have you ever believed God for something that you never saw happen? |

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| **QUESTION**  What kind of hope can you take from knowing that Abraham dedicated his entire life to following God toward a promise that wouldn’t be realized in his lifetime? |