**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 that 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 look at a father and his journey to get Jesus’ help for someone else. At times, God will ask us to step out on behalf of others. It’s during their hardships of life, not just our own, that we can see God show His power. God calls each of us to move forward into what He is doing and the recognition of who He is. Watch how a father’s love for his son shows us what an encounter with Jesus can do.*

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| ***You Will Need**** *No supplies are needed.*

***Getting Ready*** *• Before the session begins, choose a few volunteers for special roles. Tell 1–3 students, depending on group size, to not follow your instructions during the activity. They are to do their own thing loudly while pretending to follow your instructions.* • ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for 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**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God for bringing everyone together. Pray for students who are new in their faith that they will be encouraged by God’s Word. Pray for all who are facing difficult situations and are having a hard time moving forward. Pray that everyone would be open to hearing from God during this time together.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**What app or feature do you use the most on your phone besides texting, calling, or the Internet? |

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| **QUESTION**How many of you use your phone’s GPS or map app? |

You’ve grown up always knowing how to get somewhere because of GPS technology. Every smartphone has a built-in map app to help you find your way. But there was time when no one had a tool like that. People had to rely on others to give them directions. This meant you had to both listen and follow directions very carefully. There were times when someone would get lost, so they would have to call, check a map, or just wait until someone came by to help. That probably seems hard for you to imagine!

In this session, we get to see what it looks like to move forward during a hardship. We’ll read a true story of how a father’s trust in Jesus helped him move forward. It’s during difficult times that we need to know He is always with us. When He leads us, we must continue to move in the direction He has called us. This is true even in the hard situations of life.

**Group Activity**

**Listen Up**

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| ***You Will Need**** *No supplies are needed.*

***Getting Ready*** *• Before the session begins, choose a few volunteers for special roles. Tell 1–3 students, depending on group size, to not follow your instructions during the activity. They are to do their own thing loudly while pretending to follow your instructions.* |

Before we get started, let’s see how well you can follow directions. You need to listen and follow everything I say. I’ll give you instructions, and you must quickly do what I’ve said. If you miss an instruction or mess up, catch up on the next instruction. Let’s play.

• *As you give instructions, say them only once and say them faster as you go through the list.*

 • Touch your nose with your right index finger.

 • While touching your nose, use your left hand to tap the top of your head three times.

 • Now lift your right leg and put it down as you shout your favorite color and number.

 • Place your right hand on your left ear. Then shout out the month of your birthday.

 • Put your left foot in front of your right foot.

 • Slide your left hand down your left leg and touch your knee.

 • Spin around in a circle one time and say, “Whee!”

 • Turn around as you shout out your favorite meal.

 • Sit down and then stand up.

 • Turn around and take off your left shoe.

 • Jump up three times and shout out one thing you love.

 • Lift your right leg and grab it with your left hand as you shout your name.

 • Shout out the names of your siblings and pets as you clap your hands seven times.

Wow! Those were a lot of instructions for you to follow!

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| **QUESTION**What made following these directions difficult? |

In this activity, you had to listen and act at the same time. Sometimes, others were distracting you. Maybe you even missed some instructions and got frustrated or felt like giving up. Life can be like this too. As we follow God, He will give us instructions to follow that make life better.

But at the same time, we may get distracted or encounter opposing directions from others who are trying to get us off course. It’s important that we do our best to continue listening to God and following Him regardless of how difficult it may seem. He will help us to continue to move forward. Here’s today’s video before we move into our discussion.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

We’re reading from the Book of John, which is one of the four Gospels. The Gospels tell us about the life of Jesus. In today’s passage, Jesus was traveling with His disciples through the region of Galilee to the city of Cana. About twenty miles away in the town of Capernaum, a government official was going through a difficult time. He heard about Jesus being in the area, so the official traveled to meet Him. Perhaps you or someone you care about is going through a difficult time right now. Let’s see what we can discover from this encounter.

**Jesus Went to Galilee**

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

In the verses just before these, Jesus had enjoyed an amazing reception in Samaria. The people of that region and the Jews, which Jesus was, typically didn’t get along. But Jesus broke down racial and cultural walls which led to gaining lots of new, Samaritan believers. After that, He returned to a region of His own Jewish people, some of whom didn’t like Him very much.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Jesus left a successful place of ministry in Samaria to return to a Jewish area? |

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| **QUESTION**What caused the people of Galilee to welcome Jesus? |

While it might have been appealing to stay where He was just successful, Jesus traveled back to a Jewish area. From passages like [Matthew 15:24](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt15.24), we learn that Jesus’ main focus during His time on earth was Jewish people. That certainly didn’t keep Him from helping others, but it was probably the reason He left Samaria to return to the Jews. Thankfully, the people of Galilee welcomed Jesus because they saw what He had done in Jerusalem.

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| **Question**How does seeing or hearing that Jesus did something for someone else increase your faith? |

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| **QUESTION**Does reading examples of how Jesus went out of His way to help others encourage you? If so, how? |

**The Official Went to Jesus**

Read [John 4:46–47](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.46-47).

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| **QUESTION**Why did the government official come to Cana after hearing Jesus was there? |

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| **QUESTION**What does the determination of this father to find Jesus suggest to you about his faith? |

The government official took a step of faith and went to Jesus, trusting that Jesus could do something for his son. Unexpectedly for someone in his position, the man begged Jesus to heal his son.

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| **QUESTION**What advantages do we have today that the official didn’t have when it comes to encountering Jesus? |

I’m glad we don’t have to travel for most of the day to find Jesus like this father did. We can call out to Jesus from any location. Although Jesus is not physically here, He is always with us through His Holy Spirit who lives in every Christian. We can call on Him during the most difficult of times and keep moving toward Him as we grow in our faith.

**The Official Trusted Jesus’ Words**

Read [John 4:48–50](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.48-50).

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| **QUESTION**Do you think the father was fully convinced that Jesus would heal his son from a distance? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some ways to approach Jesus when someone is in a desperate situation? |

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| **QUESTION**If you had a friend going through a difficult time, how would you encourage him or her to go to Jesus? |

Most people like to see for themselves if something is true. We can have a hard time trusting in others—even Jesus. But this father took Jesus at His word and started toward home.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think Jesus meant when He asked, “Will you never believe in me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?” (verse [48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn4.48)) |

It’s unclear exactly who Jesus made that statement to. It seems likely that He was speaking to the Galileans who were quick to welcome Him because of the miracles He performed. It also could have been to that father. Either way, it’s a good reminder not to connect with Jesus only when you want Him to do something. Your relationship with Him needs to be deeper. Jesus doesn’t want us to believe in Him only if He does miracles when we want.

**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. |

**The Official Returned Home**

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

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| **QUESTION**Before meeting his servants, do you think the father had any doubts about his son’s healing while walking back home? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**Why might we doubt that Jesus can bring us through difficult circumstances? |

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| **QUESTION**How can our faith affect our family and those close to us? |

Sometimes the only thing we have when we move forward is the assurance that God’s presence goes with us. The miracle that Jesus did for the father happened as soon as the man listened to Jesus—even though he didn’t find out about the miracle until almost a day later.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think is the main point of this story? |

Moving in the direction that God wants us to go takes faith. This is true especially when hardships are happening to us or people we care about. The official chose to believe in what Jesus told him. And as Jesus promised, the official’s son was healed. Not only that, but everyone in the official’s household believed in Jesus.

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| **QUESTION**How do you think this outcome compares to what the official thought would happen when he left home to look for Jesus a couple of days earlier? |

**Reflect**

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

It’s easy to trust God and move forward when things are going great. It’s a lot harder to continue to keep our eyes on Him and move forward in our faith when tough situations come our way.

When the official found Jesus, He first responded with a question. Then Jesus tested the official’s faith by saying his son would live instead of Jesus traveling to heal the sick boy. The official trusted Jesus and moved forward, choosing to believe that what Jesus had told him was true. Moving forward in times like this means we have faith that God’s presence is always with us, and we will follow His leading.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection after reading the questions. Then ask students if they want to share. Sharing your personal response may also be helpful to the students.*

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| **QUESTION**Is something causing you to have a difficult time trusting God? If so, what is it? |

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| **QUESTION**What will it take for you to completely trust God and begin to follow His leading? |

**Activate**

This week, start your day by going through the personal devotions we’ve provided on the Bible Engagement Project app. You may have to wake up a few minutes earlier. Use that time to align your will and desires to what God has for you. Set yourself up to move forward with Him throughout your day by spending time with Him first.

**Conclusion**

God’s presence and power will go with us as we follow Him. He has gone out of His way to meet us. In response, we show faith in who He is and what He says when we go to Him. We must choose to trust Him and have faith in all situations, just as the father in this story did.

There will be moments in life when we won’t see His action right away. In those times, we simply need to trust Him and live with faith. That’s how we demonstrate our faith in Him. Though we won’t always *see* the miracles, we can believe that God still *does* the miraculous.

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*To follow Jesus is to continually move forward. Following Jesus means we allow Him to be the Lord of our life. God sent Jesus because He knew we would need a Savior. Jesus promises to forgive our sins, help us when we make mistakes, and encourage us to continue moving forward in any situation we face. Have you given your heart to Jesus yet? If not, this is an opportunity to go to Jesus and trust Him with your life.**Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Prayer**

God, thank You for Your Word that shows us how to live. We trust that Your presence and power are always with us as we follow Your Son, Jesus. Help us to remember that You direct our steps, and we can always trust You no matter what we face. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

**Dismissal**

Remember the challenge this week. Every day for five days, do the personal devotions and spend time with Jesus. Let’s see if we can get every single one of us to do all five devotions this week.