

## PREPARATION

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Spend the week studying John 4:46-54. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

**DETERMINE** | which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

**PRAY** | for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

**LANDING POINT** | Humility, faith and obedience put you on the path to experiencing God's supernatural power.

### ◦ Remember the 4 Rules for Small Group Discussion

- 1. Confidentiality.** What's said in the group stays in the group.
- 2. No cross-talk.** Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- 3. No fixing.** We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- 4. Sharing.** Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

## INTRODUCTION

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*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

Last week your group discussed Jesus' first sign in John's Gospel when Jesus turned water into wine. This miracle showed that the life Jesus offers is new and better than your old one. It's a supernatural life, which gives you access to God's power and direction in your life. Obeying God (like the characters in the story) is the key to living this supernatural life.

This week you will discuss the second sign in John's Gospel – the healing of the nobleman's son. Through the miracle Jesus shows us His ability to do the things only God can do. He is God's Son and He has power and authority over this world. Like last week, you will also see God working miracles for someone who responded to Him with faith and obedience.

**In what ways do you see God's supernatural power in your life? Where is it lacking?**

**Do you think God still does miracles similar to what we read about in the Gospels? Why or why not?**

## LEARN

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*Select 2-3 questions to discuss as a group.*

### ◦ Another miracle in Cana

Not long after turning water into wine, Jesus returned to Cana. A Gentile official (or nobleman) heard that Jesus was coming and sought Him out. You see, some twenty miles away in Capernaum this official's son was ill. He was dying and the official was desperate. So he asked Jesus to heal his son. Jesus responds with a challenge: "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." Many people that Jesus encountered were fascinated only with seeing a miracle happen. Sadly, they missed the real purpose of the miracle – leading people to faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

Split the group into pairs. Take turns telling the story in your own words.

What stands out to you in the story? Why?

### ◦ The official's faith

But this official was different. And he was persistent; he believed Jesus could do something, because He was unlike any other. "Please! Come before my child dies!" Jesus assured the official by saying, "Go home. Your son will live." The official took Jesus' words to heart. On his way home, the official got word that his son had been healed. Not only that, but he was healed at the very hour Jesus spoke to the official.

When's the last time you felt helpless in a situation and came to God? What did God do in response?

What are some of the enemies of faith? How do they keep us from believing God's Word and the promises in it?

## LIVE

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*Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.*

### ◦ Supernatural power - available here and now

What does this story reveal about Jesus? The main thing it reveals is that Jesus' power is limitless. Notice how the official's son was away in Capernaum. And, yet, when Jesus declared that the boy would be healed, it happened that very moment. At Jesus' word, God moved to intervene in this man's life supernaturally.

 LIVE [CONT'D]

Jesus' word still has power today. As a child of God, His supernatural power is available to you here and now. Regardless of what you are dealing with or going through, Jesus can speak truth and power into your situation. All God asks you to do is believe. That's why Jesus told His followers, "All things are possible for one who believes." Whether you feel close or far from God spiritually, His power is still available to you.

**If Jesus' power is limitless, how might that change the way you see circumstances and problems in your life?**

**What would it look like for you to live with more of God's supernatural power?**

## ◦ Miracles and providence

As we move along in the study, let's look at the difference between miracles and providence. A 'miracle' is an event where God intervenes supernaturally to bring about an outcome that is abnormal to the behavior of the natural world. 'Providence,' on the other hand, is the way God continually interacts with His creation as a good and benevolent (or well meaning) Caregiver and Sustainer. The term is one that's not often used today, but it's one that captures how God is intimately acquainted with His creation and with us. Think of providence as God's "seeing to" (or "providing for") His universe.<sup>1</sup>

The difference between miracles and providence is that miracles don't happen every day in our lives. They are possible and sometimes happen, but God more often works through providence. This is something we can see in countless areas in our daily lives.

**What does God's providence reveal about His character?**

**Where do you see God's providence in your life?**

 LEAD

*Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.*

How could you apply this story to your life? Let's look at three ways the official's response put him on the path to experiencing God's supernatural power.

1. "God never simply sees without acting. He is God. He is not a passive participant in a world that exists without his sustaining it. Wherever God is looking, God is acting. If God perceives, he performs. If he inspects, he effects. In other words there is a profound theological reason why 'providence' does not merely mean 'foreknowledge,' but rather 'the active sustenance and governance of the universe.' When God 'sees,' he 'sees to.' His seeing is always with a view to doing. Where he patrols, he controls." John Piper, "The Providence of God" [sermon, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, September 5, 1995], accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-providence-of-god>.

## LEAD [CONT'D]

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Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

### ◦ Humility

The official in the story had authority. He was likely a civil or military officer. He had access to men in high places. However, no amount of power or privilege could heal this man's son. By coming to Jesus, the official was admitting his own powerlessness to change the situation. God moves supernaturally when we submit to Jesus' authority. When we let go and let God, we're telling Him, "You're in control, Lord. What's impossible for me is possible with you. I need you, and I'm asking you to act."

**Describe someone you know who is humble. What are they like? What can you learn from them?**

### ◦ Faith

Second, the official believed what Jesus said. He didn't ask for proof. Nor did he question Jesus' ability. He simply believed before he saw any evidence that what Jesus said was true. To have faith is to believe in God's promises and what He has declared will come to pass, even if you haven't seen it happen yet. It's a sure confidence that what God says is true, despite circumstances and events that say otherwise.

**Recall an experience when you had to exercise a lot of faith? Share it with the group and what you learned as a result.**

### ◦ Obedience

Faith and obedience go hand-in-hand. You can't have one without the other. The official didn't hesitate to act once he put his faith in Jesus. Jesus said, "Go," and he went. Most often, we see God work supernaturally when we "go" in obedience to God. We can learn much from the official's simple, obedient faith.

**What's something you could do to help you live out humility, faith and obedience in your life?**

## PRAY

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Spend time praying through the three areas mentioned in the Lead section. Pray specifically for humility, faith and obedience in your life and group. Ask God to work on your heart, and root out any sin, doubt or lack of faith that's keeping you from experiencing God's supernatural power. Finish by praising God for his faithfulness and provision in your life.

## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Romans 8:28-30 and consider how Paul sees God's activity and supernatural power in the life of the believer.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.

## COMMENTARY

- **Setting of the miracle: Galilee** Galilee is situated in the northern part of Palestine above the hill country of Ephraim and Judah. Most of Jesus' childhood and public ministry happened in Galilee. Almost all the apostles were from that region. Important locations in Galilee where Jesus taught and did ministry include: Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida and Magdala. Many of the important towns in the Galilee were located on the Sea of Galilee, a lake that plays a major role in Jesus' ministry.<sup>2</sup>
- **Jesus in conversation in John's Gospel** Early in John's Gospel we see Jesus engaging in conversation with people from different backgrounds. He speaks to Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher, about being born again (3:1-21). He discusses true worship with a Samaritan (4:1-42). This conversation was controversial, because the woman was an outcast in society. And Jesus talks with a Gentile official who worked for the Roman government (4:46-54).<sup>3</sup> Jesus often crossed social boundaries to engage others where they were. As His followers, we should be unafraid to cross boundaries in our own culture in order to reach the lost and share the good news of the Gospel.
- **Jesus on God's providence** When Jesus taught about worry and anxiety (in Matt. 6:25-34), He referred to birds and flowers and how God cares for them. Jesus was showing His followers God's providence; that God causes tiny worms to go into the beaks of little birds and makes a flower more beautiful than a king in all his glory. Jesus' argument is that, if God is concerned for these small—seemingly insignificant—things, how much more valuable are you to Him? God knows what you need and He providentially works in your daily life to provide and care for your needs. God sovereignly controls all creation. He oversees major, world-changing events as well as that which seems unimportant or mundane. Kings and rulers rise and fall under His watchful eye, but the King of the Universe is also concerned for the lowly and meek. Nothing happens by chance in God's universe.<sup>4</sup>

2. Chad Brand et al., eds., "Galilee," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 615; J. Carl Laney, "Galilee," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016); F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 653.

3. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2029.

4. Douglas Blount, "Providence," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1340-1341.