

4Ws The Gospel of John: So That You May Know The Signs

John 4:43-54
Dgroup's Curriculum: Leaders Copy

WORSHIP

Consider reading Psalm 70 together, taking turns reading a verse at a time, or reading responsively with the leader reading a verse and the group responding with the next verse. You can discuss the Psalms you read and share what they mean to you.

WELCOME

Questions. Have you ever been to a magic show? Which of the magician's tricks did you find most amazing? Can you do any magic tricks? Tell us the story.

WORD

Discussion Questions:

1. We said in the message that Jesus healed two people: The son of the Royal Official and the servant of the Roman Centurion, and that Jesus was disappointed with one of the men, but amazed at the other. With whom was he disappointed and why? At whom was he amazed and why? What lesson can we learn from this about prayer?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 4:46-49.) Jesus was clearly disappointed with the people in Galilee, which was his home area. To them, Jesus was little more than a guy who could be counted upon to do some pretty amazing tricks and offer a remarkable favor or two to people who were in need. They saw Him as someone who could DO amazing things and didn't realize that He already WAS amazing without doing anything! The Royal Official is the poster boy for that attitude. He came to Jesus to tell him that his son was sick and dying and then he proceeded to tell Jesus that he should come to his house – right now – and heal his son before he dies. Jesus was saddened that the people from this region – including the royal official – would not believe until they saw an amazing sign. Jesus would have clearly preferred that the royal official believe FIRST and then make his request. On the other hand, the Roman Centurion came to Jesus to tell him that his servant was paralyzed and suffering greatly. The Roman Centurion left it at that. "Here's my need, and it's up to you how you respond to that," he seems to be saying. The centurion believed in Jesus, but he also trusted Jesus to respond to his need in a gracious and good way. Beyond that, the centurion went as far as to worship Jesus. The centurion said that he was unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof and then extolled the authority that Jesus had. He pointed out that Jesus had so much power that he could merely speak the word, even at a distance, and the servant would be healed. Clearly, the opinion that the centurion had about Jesus was much higher than the opinion the royal official had about Jesus. We can learn a lesson from this: It's much better to allow God to game out how things will turn out when we bring our needs to Him. Letting God game things out is always better than gaming things out ourselves and TELLING God what to do.

2. We said in the message that in the case of the Royal Official, a miracle (a sign) led to faith, but in the case of the Roman Centurion, faith led to a miracle (a sign). Why did we make this point and how is it illustrated? What does it say to us today?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read John 4:50-53.) The Royal Official made it clear that he wanted Jesus to DO something for him before he would believe in Jesus. In fairness, the royal official and his family really did believe in Jesus once the official's son was healed, but that is the backwards way to approach Jesus. In the case of the centurion, it's clear that he believed in Jesus long before he came to tell him about his paralyzed servant. Jesus responded to the centurion's faith by performing a miracle (a sign). It's clear from the reaction of Jesus to these two different approaches that Jesus prefers that we have faith BEFORE we get the answer we're hoping for, rather than have faith in RESPONSE to the answer. We sometimes bargain with God when we pray and tell Him that we will do such-and-such if only He will... God prefers that we come to Him in prayer with our hearts full of who God is, ready to be thankful and worship Him even if God doesn't do what we ask. Let's be clear here: Approaching God in this way is NOT a guarantee that we will get what we want. Approaching God in this way is merely our attempt to approach God in the way He wants to be approached, in the way that Jesus found amazing while he was here on earth. Help the group to understand that it's not wrong to ask God for things or suggest to Him how He might answer our prayers, but it is far better in any circumstance to let God be God. He deserves our faith, trust, thanks and worship even when He DOESN'T do what we want Him to do. He knows best, after all, and it would do us well to remember that when we pray.

3. We said in the message that the Roman Centurion offered Jesus more than faith, he offered him absolute trust. How do we know that this is true? How might knowing this affect our prayer lives?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Matthew 8:5-9.) This goes back again to the 'prayer' of the Roman Centurion. He didn't tell Jesus what to do, and in fact, he didn't even make a request. He simply told Jesus of his need. His servant, a man that the centurion clearly respected, was paralyzed and suffering. He told Jesus about the need and then silently and patiently waited for Jesus' answer. He trusted Jesus to know, not only the RIGHT thing to do, but the BEST thing to do as well. This has real implications for our prayer lives. We often go to God to ask Him for things, and more-or-less insist that He work things out in the way that we want Him to work them out. We act as though WE are in charge and expecting that God will serve us. The Roman Centurion is clearly a man of faith, but he also clearly knows his place in this universe. He surrendered to the authority of Jesus and made it clear that he trusted Jesus to use His authority to bring about the very best outcome, even if it wasn't the outcome the centurion had in mind. Faith is always important, but faith to which trust is added is faith that has become more valuable. When we add thanksgiving and worship to our trust and faith that becomes the sweetest way to pray. It may not feel like the most effective way, but it is the way that will tend to amaze God as we serve Him rather than asking Him to serve us.

4. We said in the message that the Roman Centurion declared the worth-ship of Jesus. What does it mean when we say that are declaring the worth-ship of God? Of what things is God worthy in our lives today?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Matthew 8:8 again.) "Worth-ship" is simply another way to say "worship". Worship is declaring the worthiness of God. He is worthy of our faith. He is worthy of our trust. He is worthy of our thanks. He is worthy of our worship. Remind the group that we THANK God for what He DOES; we WORSHIP God for who He IS. This means that God deserves our worship and thanks even when He doesn't do what we ask Him to do. What God DOES doesn't change who God IS. There may be things in our past that didn't turn out the way we hoped they would, but those things are not an indication that God is angry at us or looking for a way to punish us. God does what He knows to be best, and we don't always understand His choices, and, what's more, we don't always AGREE with His choices either. When that happens, that leaves us with a choice of our own. Are we going to choose to complain

about God's choice for us, or are we going to give Him thanks for what He has done and worship Him for who He is? Help the group to understand that it's not bad to be sad or even grieve when we lose something or someone that we love, but as we grieve, let's not forget that God still deserves our thanks and our worship because we are always better off when things turn out the way that HE chooses than when they turn out the way WE choose. This would be a great time to get the group worshipping in real terms during your time together. We don't have to LIKE what God does, but we LOVE God and we know that He never hurts us unless it's part of a much larger, much better plan for our lives.

5. We said in the message that we could become the kind of people to whom God would say, "You amaze me". What are some of the things about our lives that could amaze God? What kind of things do we plan to put in place to make that happen?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Matthew 8:10-13.) Jesus was amazed at the Roman Centurion. He was amazed at his level of faith, his level of trust, and his expression of worship. We can learn to approach God in the very same way. Some are in the habit of dictating to God and treating Him as though He is our servant. There are even some movements in the church in the U.S. that teach people to treat God that way. Unfortunately, there is an inherent pride in taking that approach to God because it leads us to TELL God what to do as though we have authority over Him. In short, God can't be manipulated, so it's time for us to stop trying to manipulate Him. We serve Him, and when we approach him as His servants, our lives are in greater balance than they are when we expect Him to serve us. So, instead of coming to God as though we have authority over Him and grieving and disappointing Him in the process, let's learn to approach Him as our King – our King who knows best – and let's trust Him to do not only what's right, but what's best. Jesus was amazed when the centurion approached Him that way, and God the Father finds it amazing when we are wise enough to let Him be God. Let's work on that new habit beginning today!

WORK

The lesson this week hasn't been so much about reaching into the lives of others as it has been about reaching into the heart of God. We've learned a lot about prayer, and how to approach God. We've learned how to amaze Him. As we've learned this, we should be growing in our understanding of the things that are on God's heart. He wants people to come to know Him. He wants them to hear about what Jesus has done for them, just as we have heard about what Jesus has done for us. What would happen if we were to spend more time asking God for the courage and wisdom we need as we reach into the lives of others with the Good News? What would happen if we spent as much time praying for our neighbors as we do praying for ourselves? What would happen if we loved our neighbors as ourselves? We all know that there are things that we need personally from God, but let's learn to be more others-focused and more balanced when we pray.

Those of us who lead should remember that there is no better way to motivate others to share the gospel than to set an example for them. Speak to others about Jesus when you have the opportunity and set an example of ***lifestyle evangelism*** for the members of your group. They will be much more likely to follow your example than they will be to simply do what you tell them to do. Ask the group to discuss this and then ask them to think through the list of people you have been praying for each week. Discuss how we can be more aggressively involved in sharing the good news with these folks for whom God has burdened us. We will pray for these people tonight and each night we're together until they come to Life Group, or come to Christ through some other means. Have each couple or individual share the name of one couple/person to pray for and then ask one of the other people in the group to pray for them.

Close your time together in prayer

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Singapore Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Core, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Singapore Facilities

- CCF Singapore Center
- Equipments

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends