



RUN TO HIM | SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Shawn told his story of falling off a ladder this week and the humiliation involved in that ordeal. Have you ever been injured doing something fairly routine?

SHARE

As a leadership team, we prayed and decided that instead of packaging a series together, we would do a series of individual messages. Our prayer has been that these messages would be timely and allow those teaching to have the flexibility to talk about whatever they feel led to talk about from their own individual time with Jesus. Our hope is that first we would all grow deeper in our relationship with God and with each other. Second, that we would really allow God to speak to us individually about our lives, and third, that we would then be in a position to respond and take action.

This week, Shawn returned from some well-deserved down time during which he was able to reflect, study, and meet with other lead pastors to refresh his soul and vision for yet another season of ministry. Besides a couple visits to the ER, his sabbatical was incredibly productive and needed. This week's message is titled, "Run to Him," and that makes perfect sense as we go through the story of a Father pleading for Jesus to heal his dying son.

Read John 4:46-53

This royal official was an important man – successful, self-sufficient, servants – yet he found himself at the feet of Jesus. He was not a believer, but pain drove him to run to God. We should never be surprised when we face difficulty in life; Jesus even told us in Scripture that we will have trouble in this life! But God's love, peace, and presence is greater than the troubles we face.

What are a few reasons you think people run 'away' from God?

In the same way, what are a few reasons you think people run 'to' God?

In this story, the man who ran to God was a highly regarded, powerful and successful man ... why do you think this was a big deal for this royal official to push pride aside to talk with Jesus?

What things tend to prevent you from running to Jesus in difficult times or what lies do you tend to believe about God that can keep you from bringing things to Him?

GROW

God is at work, even when we don't see it. The royal official had no idea that behind the scenes God was working in the lives of his son, family members, servants, and ultimately in his own life to bring him and his family eternal life. God allowed this pain to bring salvation to this man's home. This official realized that success, wealth, and accolades meant nothing compared to knowing Jesus and his power, and that his entire family would spend an eternity together. The hard part is believing in God's goodness when we don't know the ending to the story. What do we do when we are right in the middle of the pain with little light at the end of the tunnel? We need to trust that God is good and working even when we don't see it.

Let's re-read John 4:50-53

In *The New American Commentary of John*, G.L. Borchert explains the great distance of the royal official's trip and the nuances related to his personal journey of belief:

As a result of believing/obeying the word of Jesus (4:50), the man experienced the delight of receiving a confirming word from his servants. They came up to meet him as he was on his way "down" ("was ... on the way" translates *katabainontos*, which means "coming down") to Capernaum. As anyone knows who has lived in Israel and walked the hills of Galilee, the trip from the hilly plateau of Cana is definitely down to the town of Capernaum (4:49, 51), which is situated on the shore of the Sea of Galilee/Tiberias about seven hundred feet below sea level.

The man's journey probably would have been between eighteen and twenty-two miles depending on the exact route and site of the Cana encounter. The fact that the servant reported the healing as being on the previous day would certainly suggest a walking trip rather than a riding trip by the official. The healing event would seem to have taken place either in the early afternoon at one o'clock (if according to some by Hellenistic time the seventh hour were counted from 6:00 a.m.) or about sundown (if counted by Roman time from noon).

The time confirmation meant that the father/official "realized" or knew (4:53, a Johannine theme) the healing was directly connected with Jesus. This confirmation of the healing led the man to believe (4:53). The mention of a multistage believing pattern on the part of the man ("believed," 4:50, and then "believed," after confirmation of the time, 4:53) should not trouble western readers because the evangelist was fully aware of stages within the believing pattern of persons related to Jesus. Many Christians have developed single-dimension theories of believing that in fact contradict growth patterns of believing in personal experience as well as biblical perspectives. Theology must be related to actual life patterns if it is to be authentic.

The royal official had many steps in his journey of putting his faith in Jesus. In this story, can you point out a few of these faith steps?

Thinking about your own story, what has your journey of faith been like and where do you think you are on that journey today?

MOVE

When we look at this man's story, it is plain to see that he went to Jesus in the midst of tragedy. The man went to Jesus not entirely sure of what he was going to do, but knowing it was the only solution he hadn't tried yet.

Was he a committed believer? No.

Was he a church guy? No.

Were all of his motives perfect? No.

Did Jesus know all of this and still listen, love, and respond? Yes.

This royal official was not looking for a relationship with God; he was looking for someone to heal his son. He loved his son and all that mattered was finding someone to help him. *He went looking for a miracle for his son and returned home to realize that the real miracle was what God did in his life in the midst of the pain.*

Hebrews 4:16

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

As sons and daughters of the King, we can approach God with the very real confidence that He will be merciful and full of grace and we will real help when we need it most. Instead of running from God when difficulty hits, run to him where we can lay our burdens at his feet.

Do you tend to run to God or run from God more when life gets difficult, and why?

Have you ever experienced a painful time when you went to God but didn't get the answer or help you thought you needed?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

Is there an area of your life, past or present, that you know you need to approach God with? If so, would you be willing to share about it so that others can pray with you?

TO GO

1 Peter 5:6-7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.