



ON THE WAY | SHAWN JOHNSON

START

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

What is one word that sums up your week? It could be a theme, an emotion, or a description. Share with the group why you chose that word.

SHARE

Throughout this series, we wanted to change it up, to be a little unpredictable. As a leadership team, we prayed and decided that instead of packaging a series together, we could 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 continued the story from last week about the royal official who went to Jesus in a panic because his son was sick. We looked at the other angle to this story—the struggle between how we think God should do things and how He actually chooses to do them. In our lives we have this “space between” how we think things should happen and the reality of what takes place. It is in this space that God is active, even when we don’t see it. God is working in the mess, in the late hours when everything seems to be falling apart, and when we are struggling to make sense of the situation and the prayers that seem to be falling to the floor.

The good news is that He is at work even when we don’t see it!

Let’s refresh our memories and read John 4:46-53

Remember the royal official from last week? He was an important man, successful, self-sufficient, had servants ... yet he found himself at the feet of Jesus. He was not a believer, but pain drove him to run to God. We all can relate to confusing times. This man is at his wits’ end and needs help. He is so desperate for a miracle that he runs to Jesus and addresses him incorrectly. He calls him “sir,” not understanding who he is really talking to, and then tells Jesus what to do next. The amazing thing is that Jesus just loves hearing from this official and responds to his request; even when he isn’t addressed as the creator of the universe. Jesus is “for” this man, even when the man doesn’t understand his true identity and gives orders to the God of the universe.

The official was bold enough to tell Jesus what he needed to do in his situation. What exactly did the official have in mind for Jesus to do?

How did Jesus ultimately respond to this man?

Can you remember a specific time when God responded to your prayer, but in a very different way than you expected?

G R O W

Last week we talked about how 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 in the man's own heart to give him and his family eternal life. God allowed this pain to bring salvation to this man's home. How often do we think the same way? We order God and expect for him to answer, and it needs to look a certain way. In reality, God sees the big picture when we don't. God is omniscient – He knows everything – and is not surprised by the prayers we pray. God is compassionate and completely loving. He is not double-minded, and is wholly pure and good. The difficulty for us is trusting God in that space between how we think He should act and how He actually responds.

In John 4:50, Jesus tells the man to “go ... your son will live.” In that moment, the man needs to decide whether to trust His word, or beg Jesus to do it the way he wanted Jesus to do it. Remember this royal official was a little king; an important man who is used to people doing things his way, so this moment was a big change for the man who has it all.

Let's re-read John 4:51-53

In *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, he explains how even though this official was a little king, he had no power to help his son.

Observe, 1. Who the petitioner was, and who the patient: the petitioner was a nobleman; the patient was his son: There was a certain nobleman. Regulus (so the Latin), a little king; so called, either for the largeness of his estate, or the extent of his power, or the royalties that belonged to his manor. Some understand it as denoting his preferment —he was a courtier in some office about the king; others as denoting his party —he was an Herodian, a royalist, a prerogative-man, one that espoused the interests of the Herods, father and son; perhaps it was Chuza, Herod's steward (Lu. 8:3), or Manaen, Herod's foster-brother (Acts 13:1). There were saints in Caesar's household. The father a nobleman, and yet the son sick; for dignities and titles of honour will be no security to persons and families from the assaults of sickness and death.

As this little king was on his way, what kinds of things do you think he could have been struggling with or thoughts he would have had after this encounter with Jesus?

Have you had moments where you just had to trust what Jesus said, even when it was quite different than what you had in mind?

This royal official was important, but he was only a little king.

MOVE

As Shawn mentioned, when we read this story we can easily find ourselves in the emotions of the king—in his thoughts, desires, and in the glaring needs that could not be ignored. His son was dying. His only option was to trust a man he could not fully understand. What he most likely didn't understand was that his reliance in something (Jesus) he could not control was the best thing for his heart. When we release our need to understand, to control, and to drive, we open our hearts for a deeper and more intimate connection with the Lord. And that is one of the best things that could ever happen to us.

Just as we have read, and some of you might have heard hundreds of times, the Bible explicitly tells us that we will have troubles in this world. And as we read last week, we have to “take courage,” for we serve a God who has overcome the very world he created.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

The royal official in this story had a son who was dying. What dreams of yours are on the verge of death? Which relationship needs new life breathed into it before it is extinct? What hardship feels as though it might diminish the very life out of your heart?

Take courage. God has already spoken his promises. He desires for you to live the life he has planned for you to the fullest. He understands that we will never be able to fully grasp his ways. Aren't you glad that we get to serve and love a God that our fickle minds cannot fully understand? It is easy to say that we serve a “big” God, who does things greater and grander than we could ever imagine. Yet sometimes we struggle to trust that God when he moves outside the walls of our understanding. Let's celebrate this; not be frustrated. Together, we can let our excitement bleed into a faithful trust in our immensely powerful and kind God.

What is the most difficult piece for you when it comes to trusting God with the things you can't see, control, or understand?

The official had to trust Jesus with his son, his own flesh and blood. We can all relate to how hard that must have been. What does it take to come to the place where you can trust the Lord with something important to you?

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.

Reflect on an area of your life that you need to trust God in. If you are comfortable talking about it, share that area with your group and spend time praying for each other.

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.