

Title: Living Word**[Slide 1]****Text: John 4:46-54****Seeing is Believing?****What kind of a "believer" are you?**

What does it take for you to believe something? Are you a Super-Truster or a Super-Skeptic? Do you go with your heart or demand hard evidence?

Remember Doubting Thomas? When his fellow disciples told him that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, Thomas replied:

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John 20:24 NIV

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

For Thomas it all came down to "seeing is believing." In that sense, he would fit right into today's world. He was no "Super-Truster"! He wasn't going to pin his hopes or his future on somebody else's fantasy. He had to know for himself. Seeing was believing.

Super-Truster or Super-Skeptic: where do you fit in?

A life or death moment:

Jesus made quite a stir when He came home from the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. John tells us:

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John 4:45 NIV

When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

The news even reached King Herod's court. One of his royal officials had a very sick child. The court physicians had been unable to cure him, and now he lay close to death. With Jesus back in Galilee, the man sprang into action:

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John 4:47 NIV

When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

Super-Truster or Super-Skeptic? What do you think?

Seeing is believing?

The royal official had the kind of trust that would allow him to leave his son's bedside and travel the 15 miles from Capernaum to Cana in order to find Jesus. Nor did he have any doubt at Jesus' ability to heal his son.

So why on earth does Jesus answer him the way He does?

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John 4:48 NIV

"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

Part of the answer has to do with the fact that when Jesus says "you people," He uses the *plural*, meaning that He is talking not only to the royal official, but to a crowd of bystanders as well. Jesus had sized up the people in Galilee and could see that they were Super-Skeptics: they had to see a sign or a miracle *before* they would believe in Jesus. His *word* wasn't worth trusting in.

But Jesus' critique of "you people" doesn't do anything for the royal official! His son is still dying down in Capernaum. All he wants is for Jesus to come and heal the child! Imagine how he must have felt at that moment! He had climbed up the long road to Cana with such high hopes. Now this!

Hearing is Believing?

"Your son lives."

Instead of giving up on the whole thing and going back home, the royal official hangs in there:

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John 4:49 NIV

The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

His faith is still strong. But does he really know who Jesus is, or is he simply trying to resolve the crisis of his son's terrible illness?

Jesus dares him to take the next step in his faith journey. He simply says:

John 4:50

"Go," Jesus replied, "your son lives."

That's it. A healing in a word. But would it be enough? The royal official, after all, had already decided *how* Jesus would heal his son: "Sir, come down to Capernaum with me before my son dies. Come into his sick room and raise him up."

Instead, Jesus sends him away with a declaration: "Go, your son lives."

Going in faith:

Isn't there a little bit of this royal official in all of us? I know that when I pray, I all too often offer God *my idea* of how He should do His work. I can be very specific, actually. "God, please do this and this and this to solve my problem. Thank you in Jesus' Name, Amen."

Could it be that there's a little of the Super-Skeptic, "seeing is believing" in offering God *my version* of how He should do His work? Telling God how to fix the problem takes some of the uncertainty out of the mix. It makes us feel more in control. All God has to do is follow our instructions.

But God doesn't work that way. Jesus simply told the royal official to go home to a little boy who was already all better! No need for the two of them to hike down to Capernaum. No time wasted in another journey.

John tells us:

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John 4:50b

The man believed the word which Jesus said to him and went.

He dared to believe that if Jesus said the boy was healed, then that was good enough. He went to Cana with one kind of faith; he went home with a different, more complete faith.

Believing is hearing?

Paul writes:

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Romans 10:17 NIV

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Real faith comes not from *seeing*, but from *hearing*. The royal official thought that the only way to be sure that God healed his son was if Jesus came down and did it right in front of him. Jesus dared him to put his *full trust* in Him based solely upon His Word: "Go, your son lives."

Remember Doubting Thomas? Jesus made a special visit to Thomas and told him:

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John 20:27 NIV

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Then Jesus said to him:

John 20:29 NIV

"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Real faith doesn't come by seeing; faith comes from hearing the Good News and believing.

Living Word

As good as His word:

Think of that long walk from Cana to Capernaum! I wonder how many times the official was tempted to ask himself: "What was that all about, anyway? 'Your son lives.' That's it? No prayer of healing? No laying on of hands? Just 'Your son lives; go home.' That's nothing like what I thought would happen."

And then he sees some familiar faces coming up the road. They're breaking into run with huge smiles on their faces. Now they're shouting something. What are they saying?

"Your child lives!!!"

The man asks the servants, "When did he get better?"

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John 4:52-53 NIV

"Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

Now, all of a sudden, Jesus wasn't just a miracle-worker. He was Someone he could trust forever and ever. He was the Word made flesh.

Living Word:

God isn't asking us to be either Super-Trusters or Super-Skeptics. He doesn't give us what we ask for based upon the *quantity of our faith*. Nor does He offer visible proof of what He is going to do before He does it.

Instead, He talks to us. He meets us where we are and hears our prayers. He dares us to seek *Him* first. He dares us to trust what He says to us. He dares us to trust Him even when He isn't talking to us. He wants to be so

much more than a miracle worker. He wants us to know and believe that He is the Word made flesh – God with us.

Every step of the way.