

THE CENTURION

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 8:4-13; Luke 7:1-10

QUESTIONS

1. The centurion sought the help of Jesus on the behalf of his sick servant with the belief that Jesus had the power to heal him. Have you ever sought after Jesus for healing on behalf of a friend?
2. What Christian characteristics did the centurion display in his desire to have Jesus help his sick servant?
 - a. Are these same characteristics revealed in you and your caring for others?
 - b. What does the presence or absence of these characteristics say about your relationship with Jesus?
3. Do we reveal an unbiased and non-judgmental attitude towards those around us? Are we willing to intercede for others who are different than we are?
4. Do we intercede and believe that Jesus can help others even if we don't know if they have a relationship with Him?
5. The centurion recognized Jesus' power and displayed great humility in his asking for His help. What does this mean?
 - a. What role does humility play in our prayer life?
 - b. Do we make humble requests or demand God's help?
 - c. Why is humility so important in our relationship with God?

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6. The Bible says that Jesus marveled at the faith of the gentile centurion. At another place in Scripture it says that Jesus marveled at the lack of faith of the people of Israel.
 - a. Consider your relationship with Jesus today. Do you think He would marvel at your faith or would He marvel at your lack of faith?
7. Jesus said that "but without faith it is impossible to please Him." What are the characteristics of a faith that pleases God?
8. As the result of the answers you have received to your prayers, how has Jesus been revealed to you?
9. As result of our experiences with God, we can grow to believe that God can do anything.
 - a. Do we find ourselves ever making requests to God for a specific miracle or sign to prove to us something about Him?
 - b. What does this say about our faith in God?

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SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SCRIPT

Hi and welcome back. Let's start today's session by reading the story of the Centurion in Matthew 8:4-13 before watching the rest of the video.

Now we'll take a look at the story of the Centurion of Capernaum. In Matthew 8 we see the centurion's servant was sick and ready to die. We find an indication that the slave must have been dear to the centurion because his master intentionally sought out Jesus to heal him. Furthermore, there must have been a mutual respect between the centurion and the Jews. This is based on the fact that the Jewish elders testified of the centurion's love for the Jewish nation, and additionally that he had even been instrumental in building their synagogue.

The centurion requested the elders to go on his behalf and ask Jesus if he might be willing to heal his dying servant. Jesus agreed, and immediately went to see the centurion. What an honor to get a response so quickly from Christ! When the centurion finally met Jesus, though, he showed great humility, telling Jesus he wasn't even worthy enough to receive Him under his own roof.

The centurion displays great faith in Jesus' power to heal when he says, "but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus marveled at the centurion's faith, saying "Truly I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Remember the Canaanite woman's story from Session 1? Here's another gentile who shows unshakable belief in Jesus.

Now, there are two main points from this story that we're going to focus on: one, that Jesus' miracles always served God's purposes; and two, that faith is an essential characteristic of a Christian's life.

Jesus' miracles always served God's purpose, and each gospel speaks of these miracles as real events. Through them we know Jesus is the Messiah, and that God cares about us as human beings. The miracles which the Son of God performed, primarily in the earlier half of His ministry, were many and diverse: He healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, and raised the dead. In this instance where the centurion's servant was healed, as in many other instances, the purpose was to reveal Jesus' deity as the Son of God. God is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is God.

So why is faith such an essential characteristic of a Christian's life? I think the centurion is a model example of why. You see, He wasn't the type of guy to sit around and wait for God to act. He sought to experience God's power firsthand. We also have to have that kind of experiential faith rather than a passive faith. We need to keep Mark 9:23 in mind, "If you can believe, all things are possible..."

Jesus' response to the centurion, who was a Gentile, reveals that God doesn't look at our outward appearances, but is more interested in the salvation which comes by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:6 reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." The servant was healed based on the centurion's faith in Jesus' power to heal. Interestingly, we don't know whether the servant had faith in Jesus, or not.

Similarly, the church extends an invitation to all mankind, both living and dead, to place their faith in Jesus Christ as their healer and redeemer. Those who believe in Jesus as their savior and who profess their faith in Jesus Christ to others and intercede for them can experience His saving grace, so that they can continue to grow in their spiritual development.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

Centurion

An officer in the Roman army, nominally in command of one hundred soldiers. In Matthew 8:5, a centurion who lived at Capernaum approached Jesus on behalf of his ailing servant. In Mark 15:39, a centurion who witnessed the crucifixion identified Jesus as the Son of God. In Acts 10:1, the conversion of the centurion Cornelius marked the beginning of the church's outreach to the Gentile world. In Acts 27:3, the centurion Julius treated the apostle Paul with courtesy. These passages illustrate the generally favorable impression made by the centurions who appear in the New Testament. They were usually career soldiers, and they formed the real backbone of the Roman military force.

Perspective on miracles

God gave man laws and rules and He acts according to them. God gave natural or physical rules. God acts within the framework of these rules, i.e. the law of gravity: when an apple falls from a tree, it always falls to the ground, it never floats in the air. On occasion, God acts outside these natural,

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