



LESSON 5

Jesus commends the Centurion's faith

MATTHEW 8:5-13



Because Jesus has all authority, only those who come to Him by faith are saved.



“But the centurion replied, ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority’” (Matt 8:8–9).

Supporting Truths

1. Have faith because Jesus has authority.
2. Have faith because Jesus has compassion.
3. Have faith in order to enter the kingdom of God.
4. Have true faith.
5. Do not have misplaced faith.

Objectives

1. Compare Jesus’ authority to the centurion’s.
2. Explain how Jesus showed His compassion.
3. Describe what the kingdom of God will be like.
4. List several characteristics of the centurion’s faith.
5. Explain how “Christians” today can make the same mistake the Jews did.



Lesson Summary

A Gentile centurion asked Jesus to heal his slave, and Jesus agreed to do it. But what the centurion said next showed amazing faith: the centurion believed that Jesus could heal his slave simply by speaking the words. He recognized Jesus' absolute authority and humbly trusted Him. In response, Jesus explained that only those who have true faith would enter God's kingdom. To prove that His words were true, Jesus healed the slave from a distance.

Spotlight on the Gospel

It is common for those who grow up going to church to believe they will go to heaven simply because they belong to Christian families or know much about the Bible. However, when Jesus responded to the centurion's faith, He explained that only those who trust in Him will enter God's kingdom. Christian parents are a great blessing; so too is knowing the Bible. But only true faith—faith that submits to Jesus' absolute authority—can make you acceptable to God.

LAST WEEK



Jesus calls the disciples
Mark 1:16-28

THIS WEEK



Jesus commends the Centurion's faith
Matthew 8:5-13

NEXT WEEK



Jesus forgives sin
Luke 5:17-26

Lesson Commentary

Because Jesus has all authority, only those who come to Him by faith are saved.

Jesus was proving to be the *Messiah*, but not the Messiah the Jews expected. His birth, His forerunner, His temptation, His baptism, His authoritative teaching, and His powerful miracles all pointed to Him as *the promised Savior and King*. But His teaching clashed with both the Pharisees' and the Sadducees' understanding of Scripture (Matt 5–7). And Jesus did things many Jews considered unacceptable, like touching the unclean (8:3). Similarly, Jesus' next miracle—the healing of the centurion's slave—again showed His authority to go against human expectations as well as His love and care for rejected people. Because of His authority and compassion, He welcomes all those who come to Him by faith but rejects those who do not.

Faith trusts Jesus to show compassion (8:5–7)

The miracle began when a *centurion* came to Jesus (8:5). A centurion was *a Roman soldier who usually commanded about 100 men*. These soldiers usually looked down on the Jews. They could not understand why the Jews were so unwilling to change and adapt to Roman ways. But this centurion was unusual. Not only did he come to Jesus—a Jew—for help, but he had already shown great kindness to the Jewish people, even paying for a synagogue in Capernaum (Luke 7:5). Yet even though this centurion enjoyed the favor of the Jewish people (7:3–5), he would have still been considered an outsider. He was, after all, a *Gentile, a non-Jew*. Even though many Gentiles lived in and around Capernaum, faithful Jews considered them unclean, and it was not lawful for a Jew to associate with or enter the home of a Gentile (Acts 10:28).

What broke through the barrier between Jew and Gentile here? It was *compassion*. First, the centurion felt compassion for his sick slave (Matt 8:6). That was highly unusual, since slaves in those days had no real rights or protection against abuse. Slaves who were too old or sick to do their jobs were often

abandoned. But in this case, the centurion allowed himself *to feel the pain of another*. Second, Jesus had compassion too. He set off at once, intending to enter the Gentile house Himself (Luke 7:6).

Faith understands authority (8:8–10)

But the centurion felt unworthy to welcome Jesus into his home (Matt 8:8), not wishing for Jesus to defile Himself just for his sake (cf. John 18:28). From Luke's Gospel, we also learn that the centurion did not even feel worthy enough to speak to Jesus himself, choosing instead to speak to Jesus through others (Luke 7:3–6). The centurion had a profound understanding of who Jesus is. In addition to recognizing his own unworthiness, he twice referred to Jesus as “Lord,” a clear reference to Jesus' authority. He even believed that Jesus could heal his servant simply by speaking a word (Matt 8:8). He understood that Jesus was the master; the one who is in charge (Matt 8:6, 8).

So why did the centurion say that both he and Jesus were “under” authority (8:9a)? As a commander in the Roman army, the centurion had firsthand knowledge of how authority works. The centurion was under the emperor's authority, so when he gave his soldiers a command, it was as if the emperor himself was giving them a command. So also with Jesus. Jesus perfectly submitted to the Father's authority, and He spoke and acted with the full authority of God. That's why the centurion believed Jesus only had to say the word, and his servant would be healed.

Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith (8:10a). Never had He met anyone with faith so strong (8:10b). There were others who believed, but none who understood Jesus' absolute authority as this centurion had. So Jesus encouraged His followers

THINK ABOUT IT

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (Matt 5:7).



THINK ABOUT IT

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:3, 5).



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON



Jesus commends the Centurion's faith • Matthew 8:5–13



THINK ABOUT IT

Like the centurion's faith, true faith selflessly cares for others (Jas 1:27, 2:21, 25).

own disciples, fellow Jews and members of Jesus' inner circle, had not yet fully grasped the reality of Jesus' unrivaled authority (8:27).

Faith—and faith alone—saves (8:11–13)

It is likely that Jesus' praise of the centurion's faith upset many of the Jews listening to Him (8:10). But what He said next offended them even more: Jesus declared that Gentiles, like this centurion, would enter God's kingdom, but many Jews would not (8:11–12). This was shocking news to the Jews, since they believed they were guaranteed a place in God's kingdom just because they were physical descendants of Abraham. Most Jews did not expect Gentiles to enter the kingdom of God, even though the Scriptures predicted this (Gen 12:3; Isa 49:6).



THINK ABOUT IT

By faith Abraham's blessing extends even to Gentiles (Gal 3:7–14).

to learn a lesson from this Gentile: that **faith** involves complete submission to Jesus' authority. Even Jesus' own disciples, fellow Jews and members of Jesus' inner circle, had not yet fully grasped the reality of Jesus' unrivaled authority (8:27).

But what is the **kingdom of God**? It presently exists in God's rule over the hearts of Christians. However, in the future this invisible, spiritual kingdom will become visible when Jesus returns to reign over this earth for 1,000 years (Rev 20:4). Even that will give way to the final form of God's kingdom: the new world (21:1), the new Jerusalem (21:2, 9–21) and the new Eden (22:1–5). Everything lost through Adam's disobedience will be restored. There will be no more sin, curse, death, or pain (21:4; 22:3). Instead, there will be peace and righteousness (Isa 9:6–7), joy and prosperity (65:17–25), like a great feast (Matt 8:11; Isa 25:6–9; 65:13–14). But the best part is that we will always be with God (Rev 21:3). We will belong completely to Him, shining with His glory (22:4). When we enter God's kingdom, we will finally be what we were made to be, living where we

were made to live, doing what we were made to do. We will finally be home.

The Jews assumed they automatically qualified for this kingdom. They were, after all, "sons of the kingdom" (Matt 8:12). But while God has not completely rejected Israel (Jer 31:35–36), He curses and casts out any individual Israelite who refuses to trust Him for salvation (Deut 28:15–68; Heb 3:19). Unfortunately, even though Israel had more opportunity to respond to the truth than any other nation, God's chosen people were faithless from the very beginning (2 Kings 21:15). And apart from faith, even the "sons of the kingdom" will be cast out of God's kingdom and into eternal darkness (Matt 8:12).

It is likely that many who heard Jesus speak that day wondered what right He had to say such things. But Jesus proved His authority by instantly healing the centurion's slave (8:13). In the process, Jesus also proved the centurion's faith: "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed" (8:13). In other words, Jesus did exactly what the centurion believed He could do. While faith was sometimes involved in Jesus' healings (9:2; 15:28), other times it was not (8:14–16; Luke 22:51). Jesus' words to the centurion are not a universal promise to all believers, since God often allows even faithful believers to suffer for their own good (2 Cor 12:7–9). But what we can believe is this: He will make all the pain totally worth it (Rom 8:17–18).

So do you believe? How would Jesus respond to your faith? Would He "marvel," like He did with the centurion (Matt 8:10)? Do you believe that Jesus will have compassion on all those who come to Him? Have you submitted to Jesus' authority, surrendering every portion of your life to Him? Do you believe that the reward—being with Jesus in His kingdom—is worth it? Do not be like the people in Jesus' hometown who knew Him well but still refused to believe (Mark 6:1–6). Instead, trust in Jesus, for He alone has both authority and compassion to save.

Lesson Outline

Because Jesus has all authority, only those who come to Him by faith are saved.



AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

Believe in Jesus.

1. Believe in Jesus because He cares (8:5–7).
2. Believe in Jesus because He is in charge (8:8–10).
3. Believe in Jesus to enter His kingdom (8:11–13).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. Faith trusts Jesus to show compassion (8:5–7).
 - The compassionate Gentile came to Jesus, a Jew (8:5–6).
 - Jesus had compassion on the Gentile's slave (8:7).
2. Faith understands authority (8:8–10).
 - The centurion humbly trusted Christ's authority (8:8).
 - The centurion knew that Jesus acts with the authority of God (8:9).
 - Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith (8:10).
3. Faith—and faith alone—saves (8:11–13).
 - Jesus promised salvation to believing Gentiles (8:11).
 - Jesus said unbelieving Jews would be cast out (8:12).
 - Jesus healed just as the centurion believed He would (8:13).





Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who asked Jesus to heal his slave?**
A centurion, a commander of 100 soldiers in the Roman army.
- 2. Did Jesus say He would come do it?**
Yes. Jesus said He would heal the centurion's slave.
- 3. What did the centurion call Jesus?**
Lord. That means “master” or “boss.” Jesus is in charge.
- 4. Did Jesus heal the slave?**
Yes. He proved He is in charge.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did the centurion want Jesus to do?**
Heal his slave.
- 2. What was the centurion like?**
He was compassionate and kind to the Jews and to his slave.
- 3. Why did the centurion not want Jesus to come?**
The centurion knew he was not worthy. He knew Jesus had God's authority.
- 4. To what did the centurion compare Jesus' authority?**
To his own. Since he gave commands with the emperor's authority, he knew Jesus gave commands with God's authority.
- 5. How did Jesus react to the centurion's faith?**
Jesus was amazed and said no one in Israel had such great faith.
- 6. Who will be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God?**
Many people from east and west (Gentiles).
- 7. Who would not enter?**
Many “sons of the kingdom” (Jews).
- 8. What makes the difference between one who enters and one who does not?**
True faith that recognizes Jesus' authority and compassion to save.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

COMMON DENOMINATOR

Bring in pictures or objects to represent the following: Police officer, firefighter, military officer, teacher, and parent. Using these visuals, talk about each group and how they interact with those in their care. Then ask the child to identify the one thing all these different groups have in common: they all have authority (power or control) over others. However, explain that all these are also under authority themselves. There is only one who possesses all authority: God Himself.

JESUS HEALS FROM A DISTANCE

Bring to class some Band-Aids, bottles of medicine (empty), stethoscope, First Aid kit, etc. Ask the children what their parents would do if they were seriously ill. What would they think if their father or mother went to the doctor without them? How would they get well if the doctor did not see them and if they were not there to take their medicine? Tell the children that in today's lesson we are going to meet a man who had faith that Jesus could heal his slave from a distance. And because of this man's faith, his slave was instantly healed!



ILLUSTRATE

JEWES AND GENTILES

Jews and Gentiles were not normally friends. To help the children understand how the Gentile centurion might have felt going to a Jew for help, explain the centurion's actions in terms familiar to their world. If they were playing a game against another team, how would they feel about going to ask someone on the other team to help them put their shoes on?

TICKETS TO THE BANQUET

Bring a ticket to class and show it to the children. Explain how a ticket is often needed to get into an event or go somewhere (movie ticket, concert ticket, sporting event ticket, theme park ticket, plane ticket, train ticket, etc.). In our lesson today, Jesus describes heaven as a glorious banquet we share will all those who have trusted Him for salvation. Tell the children that there is only one "ticket" that provides entrance into God's kingdom where this banquet is held: faith in Jesus. There is no other way to enter God's kingdom. No other "ticket" (Christian parents, going to church, trying to be good, etc.) will be accepted.



APPLY

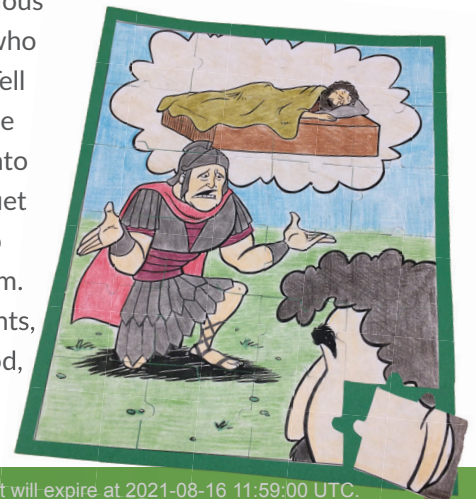
CENTURION'S PLEA PUZZLE

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, construction paper, scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Draw a puzzle grid over the craft sheet, and make a copy for each student. Cut the pieces apart, and give each student a set to assemble and glue onto a sheet of construction paper. Once their puzzles are complete, the students can color the picture.

Centurion's Plea Puzzle
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

Jesus commends the Centurion's faith • Matthew 8:5–13



AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE



ILLUSTRATE



APPLY

FAITH

Throughout Jesus' ministry, many people flocked to hear His teaching and to benefit from His miracles (Matt 15:29–31). However, not all these people trusted Jesus as their Savior (John 6:26–27), and many ultimately stopped following Him (John 6:66). Thus, while great multitudes were attracted to Jesus, not all these people had biblical faith. Jesus declares the centurion in today's lesson to be a noticeable exception. Ask the children to list some things they know about Jesus. Then ask them how they have responded to those facts. Explain that faith involves knowing the facts and responding appropriately. In today's lesson, we will see how a centurion responded appropriately to what he knew about Christ and was commended for his faith.

KARATE BELTS

In Karate, the standard belt color system is white, yellow, gold, orange, green, blue, purple, brown, red and black. Make some different colored "karate belts" before class. Ask the children to order the belts from the lowest degree of authority (white) to the greatest (black). Explain how someone with a black belt has more knowledge and power than someone with a white belt. Use this activity to introduce the idea of authority prominent in today's lesson.

AMAZING FAITH

The centurion understood something about Jesus that even Jesus' own disciples did not yet completely understand: Jesus has absolute authority. Not long after Jesus healed the centurion's slave, He and His disciples were caught in a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matt 8:23–24). Before calming the wind and the waves, Jesus asked His disciples, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" (8:26). The disciples, those closest to Him, didn't yet understand what this Gentile soldier did: Jesus has authority even over the winds and the sea (8:27). Biblical faith recognizes that Jesus has all authority.

FAMILY HEIRLOOM

A family heirloom is something that has been passed down for generations through different family members. Common heirlooms include: jewelry, antiques, coins, etc. You might consider bringing in a family heirloom to show to the class. Tell the children this is how the Jews thought about salvation. The Jews believed they would enter God's kingdom simply because they were Abraham's children—they believed salvation was an "heirloom," something passed down from parents to children. But salvation is not passed from parents to children. Salvation is received when we personally trust in Jesus.

LESSONS CONCERNING GENUINE FAITH

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, hole punch, yarn, glue, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Have children color and cut out the objects on both craft sheets. Use hole punch on all circles on the objects. Use yarn to connect the strips to the rectangle that says "Faith." Then connect the circles to the strips with yarn.

Lessons Concerning Genuine Faith
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE FAITH, PART 1

We encounter dollar bills all the time, yet how many of its features can we identify without looking at it? Try this activity with the children, asking them to describe or draw a dollar bill from memory. Now what about faith? Can the children identify different aspects of genuine faith [Jesus as object of faith (Matt 8:5–6), humility before Jesus (8:8a), submission to Jesus' authority (8:8b–9)]? Tell the children that in today's lesson we will meet a centurion with amazing faith and discover characteristics of true faith.

A ROMAN SOLDIER'S REPUTATION

Ask the children to imagine that a foreign country has invaded their country. This country has removed their government and established their own in its place. This country has even placed soldiers in each neighborhood to ensure that everyone follows their rules. Ask the children what they would do if one of these foreign soldiers came to them for help. This imaginary scenario may help the children understand why the Jews would be surprised that the Roman centurion in today's lesson comes to Jesus—a Jew—for help. The Jews would have hated the centurion because he represented the occupying Roman government!



ILLUSTRATE

ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY

In this lesson, Jesus demonstrates His authority by healing the centurion's slave. However, Jesus' authority is not limited to healing. As God, Jesus possesses all authority. A powerful statement concerning God's authority is found in Job 38 and 39. In these two chapters, Job is humbled as he learns of God's great power—from God Himself!

COMPASSION: A ONE WAY STREET?

Both Jesus and the Gentile demonstrate great compassion. Yet compassion is easier to receive than give. In the book of Jonah, Jonah initially refuses to go to the wicked city Nineveh. Later Jonah explains why: Jonah knew God was gracious and compassionate, and he didn't want his enemies to experience God's compassion (Jonah 4:2). Ask the children what they would do if they were in Jonah's place. What are some ways the children have experienced compassion? What are some ways they have shown compassion.



APPLY

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE FAITH, PART 2

After the lesson, give the children another opportunity to identify the characteristics of genuine faith. How many can they remember from the lesson? Next, ask the children to examine their own lives. Do they believe that Jesus is the only way to God? Do they humbly serve God and others? Do they demonstrate compassion? Do they seek to obey what the Bible says in every area of their life? Finally, ask them how they think Jesus would respond to their faith. Would He marvel as He did with the centurion?