THE ROMAN CENTURION ENCOUNTERS JESUS  LUKE 7:1-10

For the leader:

WHAT’S THE CORE MESSAGE?

Jesus is amazed by the centurion’s faith. This Gentile recognizes Jesus’ power and authority while others see Jesus as merely a healer or rabbi. For Jesus’ help, no other “merits” are required, though the centurion, his servants and the Jewish elders—and maybe us—expect that to be the case.

SHARE CONTEXT  (1 minute)

After calling the disciples, Jesus moves throughout Galilee healing the sick, often by touching the afflicted person. As he travels and heals, he also teaches on topics such as fasting, his authority over the Sabbath, love for enemies, and the significance of obedience. The setting now is the Jewish town of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the home of Simon and some of the other disciples.

ENTER THE TEXT  (10 minutes)

Read the passage out loud.

After reading the text, draw stick figures representing each of the characters in his story. Pick one point in the encounter and write thought bubbles for each character. Remember, “best illustration” is not what you’re going for, but the ideas and attitudes. Share in pairs.

ASK & ANSWER QUESTIONS  (30 minutes)

1. This centurion is part of the Roman occupation army in Israel. He had authority over 100 men. How do the people in an occupied country usually feel about the occupying army? How is this centurion unusual?

2. Why do you think he would ask for help from Jesus? Why would he involve elders of the Jews?

3. Which words and phrases in verses 4 and 5 indicate the regard of the Jewish leaders for the centurion? Why do you think Jesus goes with them?

4. Consider the centurion’s request in verse 3. Then look at his request in verses 6 and 7. What is the difference in the two requests? Why do you think he changes what he asks?

5. Why do you think there is a contrast between the elders’ view of the centurion (verse 4) and the centurion’s view of himself (verse 6)?

6. Contrast the authority of the centurion and Jesus in terms of origin and extent (verses 7 and 8).

7. What does the centurion believe about Jesus?

8. Why is Jesus amazed by the centurion’s faith?

9. How might the different characters in this story be affected by Jesus’ affirmation of the centurion?
SUMMARIZE (3 minutes)

This story has all sorts of unique situations: a centurion loved by the Jewish people because of his unusual devotion to them, his seeking out Jesus for help, and Jesus’ amazement. The centurion understands Jesus’ power and authority in a way that God’s own people don’t. To receive help from Jesus no other good works are required; though the centurion, his servants and the Jewish elders expected that to be the case.

PROCESS & APPLY (10 minutes)

1. Where are you tempted to think that God will only bless you because of your good works? That God only wants to bless you if you go to church, have a big small group, or work hard to live morally? Jesus shows that the only thing he is assessing is whether or not you have faith. In partners, share the things you’re tempted to think you have to do for God to bless you, and pray that you can choose faith instead.

2. The Jewish leaders didn’t think Jesus would help a gentile soldier unless they proved that he was good to the Jews. What kinds of people do you think couldn’t possibly please God with their impressive faith? What might that reveal about your attitudes toward people? About your understanding of God? Spend some individual time reflecting on this and then briefly share with a partner and pray with one another for God to change your heart.