



Unit 3

Responses to Jesus, Part 2

Week 10

Luke 7:1–17
Compelling Faith

Week 11

Luke 9:28–45
The Inspiration of Hope

Week 12

Luke 10:25–42
(Lent 1)
Stop, Look, and Listen

Week 13

Luke 13:1–9, 31–35
(Lent 2)
Time Runs Out

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Week 10

Bible Passage

Luke 7:1–17



Compelling Faith

Desired Outcomes

1. To study Jesus' healing of a centurion's slave and his raising of a widow's son.
2. To learn about the roles of faith and compassion in the healing process.
3. To consider Jesus' power to heal and the role of our own faith in the process.

Session Key Verse

When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her.
—Luke 7:13a

Optional Materials

- Internet access
- *For free digital resources to enhance this lesson, go to <https://www.warnerpress.org/life-mosaic-resources>*

Sneak Peek

Jesus found incredible faith in a centurion when he healed the man's slave, and he raised a widow's son from the dead.

1 Get Acquainted



Is anyone new to your group? If so, take a few moments to introduce yourselves. If there were prayer requests or other concerns expressed last week, share with the group any changes or updates.

How many different ways can you think of that people use to express love or compassion? Work with the others in your group to see how many you can come up with. **Can you list at least fifty different ways? How about 100?** It shouldn't be difficult once you get on a roll, but here are some thought-starters if you need them:

- The love of parents for their children
- The love of someone for his or her spouse
- The love of a child for his pet
- The love of a teacher for her students
- The love of a congregation for their pastor

Can you think of other relationships in which people express love? Dr. Gary Chapman has identified five general ways in which to express love (see the link at <https://www.warnerpress.org/life-mosaic-resources>): speaking words of affirmation, doing acts of service, giving gifts, spending quality time, and physical touch. **What are some examples of each?**

2 Discover



Read and discuss Luke 7:1–17. The commentary sections can be used to generate dialogue, or for study prior to your meeting.

Luke 7:1–10

Commentary

The story of the healing of the centurion's servant deals with people enjoying power and status both from the Roman realm and the Jewish



hierarchy. We are fully engaged in the sphere of first-century patronage with an authority figure dispatching representatives who broker the exchange of benefactions. How much is the life of a precious slave worth? About the cost of a synagogue and other demonstrations of love for the Jewish nation. Depending on one's own social location, it might be surprising that Jesus was willing to help a Roman centurion. But Jesus didn't bother with such distinctions.

We should not let ourselves be distracted by the social status of the characters in this story. The centurion and his slave are not named. The focus really needs to stay on Jesus. The centurion had it right. He understood how to use the system to get things done. If he needed a providential healing, he solicited the help of the one who had the divine authority to make miracles happen.

This story is told in such a way that Jesus' final statement is the intended climax: "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith" (v 9). This saying is what we tend to remember from the story, and it may implicitly serve as an incentive for us to think that all we need to do for miracles to happen is just have a little more faith. But such a conclusion would be wrong. Jesus talked about the centurion's faith, not his slave's faith. The critical factor here is Jesus' compassion.¹

1. Adapted from "Commentary on Luke 7:1-17," accessed on May 24, 2016, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1610.

Questions

- When the Jewish elders asked Jesus to heal the centurion's slave they said, "He [the centurion] is worthy" (v 4). However, the centurion later said, "I am not worthy" (v 6). **Can someone be *worthy* or *unworthy* of being healed?** Explain.
- **What kind of faith did the centurion have? Did he have faith that Jesus was the Son of God? that Jesus had the power to heal? that Jesus had the *desire* to heal? Did the Jewish elders exhibit faith? What difference does it make?**
- The centurion sent the Jewish elders and then sent another group of friends. **What does that tell you about the centurion's desire to be in the presence of Jesus?**
- **What do you think caused Jesus to comment about the centurion's faith? Was it the *amount* of faith? Was it the *type* of faith?** Explain.

Luke 7:11–17

Commentary

Jesus went to Nain in the company of his disciples (not referring only to the Twelve) and a great crowd. Many of the people who saw the miracle at Capernaum would now see the miracle at Nain. There were also local people who witnessed this event.

The woman who had lost her son would now have no means of economic support: both her husband and her only son were dead. She was bereft not only of a son, but of any means to sustain her own life.

Verse 13 says that the Lord was moved with compassion. This is the first time Luke uses the word "Lord" in relation to Jesus. Jesus was at his most "lordly" as one who showed mercy. This is a very powerful message indeed. Compassion describes the reaction of the Samaritan in Luke 10:33 and the father in 15:20. Both of these parables are unique to Luke, suggesting the high importance of compassion and mercy as qualities of the Lord and of his disciples.

Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead. This event was not seen as a singular occurrence, but as a sign that God was "among his people" in Jesus,

highlighted by Jesus in Luke 7:22. Jesus is indeed a great prophet; he is in continuity with the prophets of old in bringing God’s great gifts and mercy to surprising (and surprised!) recipients; he is truly “God with us.”²

Questions

- **How was the “large crowd” following Jesus different from the “large crowd” following the widow and her dead son?**
- **When Jesus raised the widow’s son from the dead, who was exhibiting faith? Can God heal even when no one exhibits faith? Explain.**
- Verse 16 says that “fear seized all of them.” **Why do miracles sometimes create fear?**

3 Experience



Option 1

Select one person in the group to be a reporter and another person to play the role of the centurion. The reporter should ask questions of the centurion that aren’t addressed in the passage. Members of the group should help think of these questions. Here are some suggestions to get things started and some space to write down additional questions:

- **Why does the servant mean so much to you?**
- **Have you ever witnessed Jesus doing miracles?**
- **How did you first hear about Jesus?**
- **Why do you feel that you are unworthy of even having Jesus come to you?**



2. Adapted from “Commentary on Luke 7:11–17,” accessed on May 24, 2016, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=597.

Option 2

Divide into two groups. One group will represent the group that was following the widow and her dead son. The other group will represent the group that was following Jesus after he had healed the centurion's servant. Discuss what you were feeling, thinking, and experiencing before your group met up with the other group. Then discuss what you were feeling, thinking, and experiencing when Jesus stopped the funeral procession.

4 Apply



Spend some time in self-examination by considering your answers to the following questions. Responses can then be discussed with the rest of the group or kept private:

Do you know anyone who is (or was) seriously ill and close to death? Do you feel that this person is (or was) “worthy” of being healed? Why or why not?

Do you feel as if you deserve (or deserved) for Jesus to answer your prayers for this person who is (or was) ill? Why or why not?



Do you believe that God looks at your life and feels compassion for you? Why or why not? What else does God feel?

The widow in today's story must have felt that her situation was totally unfixable. She had lost her husband and now her only son; she had no companionship or means of support left. **Is there a situation in your own life you feel is unfixable? If so, what would need to happen to provide the impossible "fix"?**

5 Conclude



All of us will eventually experience a moment when a friend or family member becomes seriously ill and needs a miraculous touch from God. Many will even experience a moment when it seems all is lost and there

is no solution to the problem at hand. In those moments, we need to remember that God’s love for us is unchanging. There is nothing we can do that will make God love us less. And there is nothing we can do that could make God love us more than right now. God's love for us is greater than we could possibly imagine or understand.

Thinking about what you have studied and discussed today, consider how you might ask God to work in your life and in the lives of those you love—for *any* reason. Nineteenth-century preacher Charles H. Spurgeon said, “God is too good to be unkind and...too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace [God's] hand, we must trust [God's] heart.”

Close your time together in prayer for those in need of God’s touch, knowing that God loves them beyond measure.

Daily Bible Readings Week 10	<i>Sunday</i> Luke 7:1–17 <i>Compelling Faith</i>	<i>Monday</i> Exodus 23:23–33 <i>Worship Brings Healing</i>	<i>Tuesday</i> Psalm 30:1–12 <i>A Cry for Healing</i>
	<i>Wednesday</i> Psalm 107:4–32 <i>Cry Out and Be Healed</i>	<i>Thursday</i> Psalm 147:1–11 <i>God Heals Hearts</i>	<i>Friday</i> Jeremiah 17:14–18 <i>Only God Heals</i>