



OVERVIEW SECTION

How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

How to Read This Lesson Plan (defines all components of the lesson plan)

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation (a reminder of why we do this)

Scripture(s) for the Session (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

Key Verses & Theology (background for teachers to ponder)

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

Preparation (including supplies needed)

Classroom Statement (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

Step-by-step process of the lesson (including the scripture to be read)

Suggested variations for age groups (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

Scripture(s) for the Session: Matthew 8:5-13

Please READ this aloud in every class you teach. The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

Key Verses & Theology: These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

6...a centurion came to Jesus, appealing to him... 7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and cure him." A Centurion is a Roman soldier. A Roman soldier with some clout. He's a big wig. He's also part of the conquering empire that is occupying Israel. His approaching of Jesus is absolutely backwards of all expectations. Anyone living during that time hearing this story would hear the role-reversal immediately. This is like a four star general stationed in Jamaica asking the local voodoo witch doctor to help heal his servant. If his friends heard about this, they would mock the Centurion. If Pharisees or the crowd saw Jesus agree to come in to the Centurion's home, it would be scandalous. And yet...the Centurion appeals to Jesus and Jesus offers to go to the man's home. The fear of common perceptions does not play a role in this story.

9 For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, "Go," and he goes, and to another, "Come," and he comes, and to my servant, "Do this," and the servant does it." Not only are the roles reversed in this story, but the Centurion also places his and Jesus' actions at equal levels (also scandalous – how *crazy* must a Roman be to think that an Israelite is equal to him?). He's saying that those who have authority can make things happen from a distance. In saying this, he's saying that he knows Jesus has an authority that is just as great as his, only greater, since the Centurion is appealing to Jesus

10 When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, no one in Israel has shown such faith..." Throughout Jesus' ministry, he comes across Pharisees and people in the crowd who question him, who doubt him, who undermine his ministry. This centurion has been just the opposite *than those who should know better* and is a breath of fresh air for Jesus. The Centurion is not afraid to go against the social conventions of the day, he's not afraid to admit his own limitations and he's not afraid to ask for help. These lack of obstacles make it easy, it seems, for Jesus to offer healing to the man's servant due to the fact that it is one of only a very few long-distance healings by Jesus. This is a story that points out how familiarity breeds contempt. The people of Israel are familiar with God, but because they think they are, then they are not nearly as bold and humble as this Roman soldier who is able to ask for and therefore receive wholeness.

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture: Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

Complacency/Familiarity – When you hear something, or know about something all your life, sometimes the actual meaning of it can escape you. Like how microwaves work. Or the how electricity gets into our homes. To keep us reminded of the danger of power lines, power companies from time to time advertise warnings about downed wires: DO NOT TOUCH THEM. Why do they tell us that? Because we are so familiar with power lines that we don't actually know much about power lines. So it can be with us and God, especially when we grow up hearing about God and the

faith stories on a regular basis. We can begin to forget the power that is so close at hand and start to treat God with nonchalance. The Israelites certainly seemed stricken with this malady. The Centurion's response towards Jesus is in stark relief to the Israelites' complacency towards God that comes with familiarity.

Humility – No matter how powerful we are, there will always be something that we cannot control. To be able to admit this and ask Jesus for help with what we struggle with is to invite God's healing into our lives. But inviting by itself isn't enough. We also have to receive the healing. And often times it is our sense of importance or power that gets in the way of receiving healing. The Centurion drops whatever arrogance he could have. He admits that Jesus has a great power. And he places himself at the mercy of that great power.

Distance – Some problems are small and others are big. The bigger the problem -- and if we want help with the problem -- the closer we want our help(er) to be. Sometimes the help(er) needs to be in the room to see the problem. The Centurion thought Jesus competent enough that he did not think Jesus needed to be there. Jesus saw that the Centurion trusted enough that God could be at work without Jesus being present. And thus, a long-distance healing takes place. What is important to note, though, is the Centurion, even though he believes in Jesus'/God's authority, he still goes to ask. Asking/crying out for help is an essential and shared component of all healing stories.



THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: Costume for storytelling.

Classroom Statement

The components in this class include: Reading the scripture story, telling the story of the servant's family, and participating in two drama activities that help to underscore the idea of sequence.

Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

Shepherd comes in with students

SHEPHERD ASKS "Question of the Day."

INTRODUCE yourself

Hi, my name is ____ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

PRAY (Short and simple is perfect)

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

TELL

- The story we're going to hear today is about a Roman soldier, called a Centurion, who asked Jesus for help.
- The Centurion was a very powerful person because he was a high-ranking officer in the Roman army.
- And Rome was a very powerful country. During Jesus' life, Rome controlled Israel.
- But despite all this power the Centurion had, listen for what he does in the story.

READ Matthew 8:5-13

5 When Jesus entered the town of Capernaum, a Roman soldier, a centurion, came to Jesus to ask him for help. The soldier said, 6 "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in terrible distress." 7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and cure him." 8 The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also

am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, "Go," and he goes, and to another, "Come," and he comes, and to my servant, "Do this," and the servant does it." 10 When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, no one in Israel has shown such trust as this centurion. 11 This man shows how those who are not from Israel will soon be coming from all directions, from the east and the west, all to sit at God's banquet alongside Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 12 But those who grew up "in the faith" and do not have such trust as this Roman soldier will find themselves missing out on the party." 13 And to the Centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the Centurion's servant was healed in that hour.

ASK

- Who was sick? (the servant)
- Who asked for healing? (the Centurion)
- Who did the Centurion ask? (Jesus)
- Then what happened? (The servant got better)

TELL

- I'm going to tell the same story to you again, only this time the story will be told from the perspective of the servant's child.

DO Storytelling

My name is Aaron and I am 8 years old. My family and I belong to Julius, a Roman Centurion. We are servants for him and his family. My dad has been with Julius' family his whole life. In other families, servants are not treated very well. But Julius is kind to all of his servants, and he is especially kind to my dad. He and Julius grew up together and so they are best friends. Because they are good friends, Julius trusts my dad to pay attention to his family's business while he does his work for the Roman army. My dad runs the house, keeps track of the money, helps with the upkeep of the animals, and has helped Julius' family become even more successful.

Last week a very scary thing happened. My dad became very ill. He couldn't get out of bed. He was very weak. And he had a fever. His whole body radiated with heat. Then he became what my mom called "delirious." That meant he was loudly saying things that didn't make any sense to people who weren't in the room. He was tossing and turning. Julius had all the best doctors come over. But they all said the same thing to Julius: Your servant is going to die.

Julius was furious at the doctors and yelled at them and threw them out of the house. He didn't think they were trying very hard to heal my dad since he was "just" a servant. And then Julius wept. My mom approached and asked Julius if she might say something to him. He said, "Of course." She told Julius about the stories she had heard about a man named Jesus, who is said to be a man of God who has healed many people. She told him about how Jesus forgave sins and was even said to cast out unclean spirits from people. Julius stopped crying and said, "I must go talk to this man at once." My mom who wasn't supposed to talk to Julius at all, asked once more if she might speak. Again he said, "Of course." My mom then asked Julius if he was embarrassed of asking a Israelite for help. And I'll never forget what Julius said next. He told my mother, "I am a powerful man who cannot heal my

best friend. If talking to an Israelite will heal my best friend, then what do I care about what others say of me?" He left soon after to talk to Jesus.

About an hour later Julius returned. He went straight in to see my father. But this Jesus man was not with Julius. I thought that meant Julius had at the last minute decided to not ask an Israelite for help, because really...how *could* an Israelite help? But no! Julius *had* spoken with Jesus. And now Julius was talking to my father. He was telling my dad how he had met this rabbi (that's a Israelite word that means "teacher") who was amazed by Julius' faith and had told Julius that because of this faith, what he was asking for (my dad's recovery), would happen. And as Julius spoke to my dad, my dad stopped tossing and turning. He stopped speaking to people who weren't there. And his fever broke. His body became cooler. Within a half-hour of Julius coming home, my dad was sitting up in bed and was eating and talking.

This was an amazing thing that had happened! I went and found this Jesus to thank him. But it was hard to get to him, because there were so many people around him. But the things that he was saying made me curious. When I finally did get close enough to Jesus to thank him, he thanked me for coming to find him. And he said, "Keep listening to my words so that you can share what you hear with your family and with Julius." And so I have been doing just that. And every time I come home, my dad is there to listen to what I have to say, thanks to Jesus, thanks to God and thanks to Julius.

TELL

- In the story, there is a sequence of events that happen.
- The word "sequence" means that a number of events happen in a certain order.
- In the story, the sequence that starts it all is that there is a problem (someone is not well).
- Then the Centurion asks Jesus for help.
- And there is a conversation between Jesus and the Centurion.
- All these events lead to what? That's right! To the healing of the Centurion's servant.
- Most of the healing stories work have this sequence in them:
 - Someone is sick, and that sickness is recognized.
 - That someone or someone who knows the sick person goes to find Jesus for help
 - Jesus talks to those who come to him
 - And then there is healing
- If we followed these events out of order, we might find ourselves being disappointed.
- If we just thought God should just heal us without our being aware of our sickness or without our asking for healing, then we might end up being a little disappointed.

EXPLAIN

- So to help illustrate how a sequence of events works, we're going to build a machine with our bodies on stage.
- It starts with one volunteer on stage.
- That volunteer begins a repetitive movement of their choice – for example: doing a fist pump.

- Then when someone gets an idea about how to join that person, they go and stand next to that person and add themselves to the machine by doing their own repetitive movement, like jumping up when the fist pump comes down.
- Whatever you choose to do, remember you have to be able to sustain the movements.
- Once everyone is on stage being part of the machine, we can all stop and try to figure out what machine we just built.
- Don't take too long joining the machine. If you hold back, I'll start sending you up there by pointing at you.

DO the Machine activity

- **OPTIONS:** After the first time, do it again, but this time encourage the class to use sounds and to think about how to interact with the movements of the person before them (for example, let the other person's fist pump hit their own hand which then falls down, hits their knee and pushes out a foot).

TELL

- One of the reasons we learn the Bible stories is so that we can copy some of the behaviors of the people in the stories as a way to help us experience more of God.
- So now we need two lines.
- (make two, equal in number, lines)
- Now this line is going to make another machine and this other line is going to copy the first machine.
- The 2nd line is going to make the same movements as the other line. Think of yourself as being the mirror, and you are reflecting the movements of this machine.

DO mirror the machine activity.

If there's time...Create a Rainstorm

TELL

- We're going to make a rainstorm.
- The rainstorm doesn't have anything to do with the story that we just heard.
- But a rainstorm does have a sequence to it, usually, right?
- First there's a little bit of rain and then a lot and then a little and then none.
- So we're going to make the sounds of a rainstorm.

EXPLAIN

- Let's get in a semi-circle.
- We begin with me. I'll introduce an action.
- As soon as I point at you, you should begin the action I'm doing.
- Do NOT change the action you are doing until I point at you again, then switch to whatever I'm doing.

- Before doing the activity, I want to show you the different sounds we'll be making.
 - Rubbing hands together
 - Snapping fingers
 - 2 finger clapping
 - Hand clapping
 - Thigh clapping
 - Thigh clapping and stomping.

STEPS:

- Start the activity by rubbing your hands together and as you do that, point with your hands at the start of the semi-circle and sweep your hands around the semi-circle.
- Go at a steady pace.
- Then start snapping your fingers. Then point at the first person and sweep your arms in an arc that mirrors the semi-circle, pointing at everyone until all are snapping their fingers.
- Repeat this process each time you introduce a new "sound".
- At the end stop your action and then look at everyone until each person has also stopped.

The order is:

- Rubbing hands
- Snapping fingers
- 2 finger clapping
- Hand clapping
- Thigh clapping
- Thigh clapping and stomping
- Thigh clapping
- Hand clapping
- 2 finger clapping
- Snapping fingers
- Rubbing hands
- Then hands open and away from each other for silence.

Hopefully you will hear the building up and diminishing of a rain storm.

CLEAN UP

DISMISS FOR SINGING

Suggested Variations for age groups

The younger kids don't often understand the machine activity, therefore it's better to assign them movements and then tell them that whenever you point at one of them, to have them do the movement you told them to do. So with the younger kids, you really become both the engineer and then operator of the machine.