



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: Blindfold & CD player.

Classroom Statement

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

- We're going to hear a story today about Jesus healing someone from a long distance away.
- The man who asks Jesus for help is a foreigner.
- And yet, he shows more trust in Jesus than the people who have been surrounding Jesus.
- Let's listen to what happens.

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 centuriou. 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/TELL

- Did you catch the part where Jesus was amazed because "no one in Israel has shown such trust as this Centurion?"
- Sometimes, we can get used to something or someone and forget or take for granted what they can do.
- This can happen to us with God.
- To show how being used to someone or something can cause us to not pay as much attention as we should, we have a short game to play.
- I need one volunteer.
- OK...you.
- (have volunteer stand up)
- I will ask you a series of questions and I need you to answer them quickly, ok?
- You ready?

DO Familiar Question Game by asking:

- How many toes do you have?
- How many fingers do you have? (if they say eight, have them include their thumbs).
- What's $5 + 5$?
- What's $9 + 1$?
- What's $8 + 2$?
- What's an aluminum can made out of? (most likely they'll say "tin" even though you said the answer in your question...what's an "aluminum" can made of?)
- You got a little familiar with the word "Ten," didn't you? So much so that it caused you to transfer it to another word.
- Ok, let's try another one of these.
- I need another volunteer.
- Ready?
 - Say "Silk" 10 times. As a class we'll count for you.
 - (after 10 times say) Good job, now tell me, what does a cow drink? (most likely, they'll say "milk" even though the answer is water).
- Looks like you got a little familiar with the word "silk" and it influenced your answer.
- Anyone else out there who thinks they can keep from getting tricked by being familiar with the answer?
- I need one last volunteer...

- Ready?
 - I need you to spell:
 - Most
 - Roast
 - Coast
 - Post
 - Boast
 - Very good. Now tell me what you put into a toaster? (Most likely they'll say "Toast" but that's what comes OUT of a toaster. You put *bread* INTO a toaster)
- The brain is so easily fooled when it gets comfortable.
- And this is what can happen to us with God.
- It's what happened to the Israelites too, which is why the Centurion's response to Jesus was so surprising – because the Centurion did not mistake God's power as common or familiar, but understood it to be powerful like himself, only moreso.

TELL

- In order for the Centurion to receive help, he had to ask for help.
- For God to help us, we need to ask God for help because God will not force his help on us.
- We have to ask.
- We're going to play a game now that helps at least one of us practice calling out.
- It is called Marco Polo, only we're not going to play it in a pool.
- One person is it.
- That person gets blindfolded.
- Everyone else keeps from being tagged.
- Every time the blindfolded person says "Marco," then everyone else MUST respond with "Polo."
- This is how the blindfolded person is calling out for help, by trying to figure out where you are at.
- If you get tagged, then you are it.

IF THERE'S TIME:

TELL

- We're going to play another game now, that helps us to practice calling out for help.
- The game also helps us to respond to those who are calling out for help.
- I need the class split into three groups (count off by three)
- REMEMBER THE NUMBER YOU WERE GIVEN
- Once I start playing the music, walk, dance, hop around the room.
- When I STOP playing the music I will yell out one of the three numbers.
- If you are that number, you will put up your hand and say, "HELP ME!"
- If you are NOT the number that I have called out, you are to immediately look for and go to the one's who have their hands up and are saying "Help me!"

- If you were of the number I called, after you yell out “Help me” AND you see that people are coming to you, it is now time to fall over as slowly and stiffly as you can. Like a tree would fall down...
- The idea is that the other teams will catch you.
- Other teams, you are to catch the members of the team I call out.
- Any questions?

DO activity: Collective powerlessness

CLEAN UP

DISMISS FOR SINGING

Suggested Variations for age groups