



## 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.



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## 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: Cardboard strips (I took cardboard boxes from a local cardboard recycling dumpster and cut them up using a large paper cutter – each strip was about the size of a rule in width and length, maybe a little bit shorter than a foot – you need about 6 per expected student), paper clasps/brads, scissors, sharp pencils, stapler, and many amounts of printed small pictures for the flip book.

### Classroom Statement

Class consists of reading the bible story of Jesus' long-distant healing of the Centurion's servant and two loosely-based science principled projects to help demonstrate the importance of sequence. The first project consists of putting pictures in a certain sequence so that they tell a story. The pictures are then "flipped" through to create an animated story. The second project is the creation of a simple moving machine with cardboard and paper clasps to demonstrate how one action can put a whole sequence of actions into motion. Both these projects are to help demonstrate how the Centurion asking Jesus for help lead to a sequence of events found in many healing stories that led to healing.

### 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**

- In the story I'm going to read to you, there is a series of events that happen in a certain order that results in healing.

### **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/TELL**

- When things happen in a certain order, we call that a sequence.
- The days of the week can be named in any order, but if we named them in sequence, what day would we start with? (Sunday) What day would we end with? (Saturday)
- The same thing happens with the months of the year. We can name them in any order, but if we named them in sequence, how would that go?
- In the story we just read, there was a sequence of events that lead to the healing of the Centurion's servant.
- Let's name those events: What's the first thing that had to happen for the servant to be healed? (the Centurion's servant had to be sick)
- In order for the Centurion's servant to be healed, what was the second thing that had to happen? (Jesus had to be in the right town).
- What was the third thing? (The Centurion sought Jesus and asked for help)
- What was the fourth thing? (Jesus and the Centurion spoke)
- And the final thing? (the servant was healed)

### **TELL**

- There are lots of stories of Jesus healing people.
- And there are many different ways those healings happen.
- But there is a sequence of events that hold true for most of these healing stories:
  - Someone is sick
  - The sick person or a friend of the sick person comes to Jesus
  - They ask Jesus for help
  - Jesus talks to them
  - The sick person is healed.
- When we say healing, think of the word "whole" as in "made whole."

### **EXPLAIN**

- We're going to do two activities today that help us to think about sequence and how, if we follow the sequence, we then experience a wholeness.

- The first thing we're going to do is put together a flip book.
- The pictures are already made for us.
- We just have to put them in the right order so that they tell a story.
- Once we have them in the right order, we can flip the pictures quickly with our thumbs and the pictures will be animated.
- Once we're certain the pictures are in the right order, we can use the stapler and staple the pictures together in the top right-hand corner.

## **DO Flip Book arrangement**

### **EXPLAIN**

- Next, we're going to make an "extending arm" out of cardboard.
- The extending arm shows us that one simple action can put a whole series of events in motion.
- First, you take two strips of cardboard and you lay one strip over the other to make either an X or + sign.
- Second, you take a scissors or a sharp pencil (pencil works better than the scissors) and make a hole in the middle of each cardboard strip).
- Then put the paper clasp/brad into the two holes so that your two strips make an X.
- Do steps 1 and 2, 2 more times.
- Now we're going to connect the 3 X's together, end-to-end.
- Take the sharp pencil and make holes at the end of the X's and then line up the ends of two X's and put the brads in.
- Do the last step twice so that all three Xs are connected end to end to end.

## **DO extending cardboard arm activity**

- So, if you move to close one end of the extending arm, the other side will close too.
- One action puts into motion a whole sequence of actions.
- This is what happened when the Centurion asked Jesus for help.
- A whole set of actions were put into motion by one request for help that eventually led to healing.
- In order to receive healing, we need to ask God for help.
- When we do this, then a sequence of events is started.
- The next part of the sequence is usually that God (in the case of this story, Jesus) talks to us.
- In that conversation, things become clear as to what we need/want and how God will work with us and through us.
- That is the Good News for today.
- You may now proceed to pick things up with your extended cardboard arm.

## **CLEAN UP**

## **DISMISS FOR SINGING**

## **Suggested Variations for age groups**

You might want to make some holes in the cardboard arms ahead of time for the youngest ages.