

Devotional Guide Week 6: Face to Face with Jesus: Say the Word: Faith, Grace and Trust

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

we come before you recognising that we are not worthy to claim anything from you, yet you invite us to come to you in faith. Quiet our minds and open our hearts as we read your Word. Help us not simply to learn something about the centurion, but to hear what you are saying to us today. Teach us to recognise your authority, to receive your grace with humility, and to trust your word even when we cannot see what you are doing. Show us how this faith should shape the way we live, work, serve and relate to the people among whom you have placed us.

Holy Spirit, help us to listen, reflect and respond.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Read the Scripture Slowly: Luke 7:1–10

Before discussing anything, **read the passage slowly**. If you are on your own, read it two or three times. If you are in a group, one person could read it aloud, followed by a short period of silence. After reading, sit quietly for a moment.

What word, phrase or image stays with you?

A Short Summary of the Scriptures

Luke introduces us to a Roman centurion whose servant is seriously ill. Although he is part of the occupying Roman force and is a Gentile, the centurion has developed a remarkable relationship with the local Jewish community. The Jewish elders describe him as someone who loves their nation and has even built their synagogue. When the centurion hears about Jesus, he asks for help. Yet he does not consider himself worthy for Jesus to come into his house. He understands authority because he exercises authority himself. He believes that Jesus has such authority over sickness and death that Jesus does not need to be physically present: **“Say the word, and my servant will be healed.”**

Jesus is amazed by this man's faith and declares that he has not found such great faith even in Israel.

The wider biblical picture reinforces the same message. Jesus commends the humble rather than those who rely on their own goodness (Luke 18:9–14). Peter calls God's people to humble themselves before God and to cast their anxieties upon him because he cares for them (1 Peter 5:6–7). Paul reminds us that salvation is by grace through faith, not something we earn by our works (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Together these Scriptures point us towards a faith that is humble, dependent and trusting: **we do not come to God because we have earned his favour; we come because of his grace.**

Summary of the Sermon

The centurion is an unusual person to become an example of faith. He is a Roman officer and therefore represents the occupying power. Yet he has learned to love the Jewish people and has used his position and resources for their good. More importantly, he has come to recognise something extraordinary about Jesus. The centurion understands authority. He knows that when someone with genuine authority gives an order, that order is obeyed. He therefore trusts that Jesus has authority which extends far beyond anything he has experienced himself. Jesus does not need to be physically present. He only needs to **say the word**. The centurion also understands grace. While the Jewish elders tell Jesus that the centurion deserves his help because he is a good man, the centurion himself says that he is unworthy. He makes no claim upon Jesus. His confidence therefore rests not in his own goodness but in **who Jesus is**.

This is the heart of the message for us.

We can do good things. We can serve others. We can be faithful, generous and responsible. But none of these things gives us a claim upon God. Our hope rests upon the grace, goodness, love and authority of Jesus Christ. The centurion did not yet know the whole story of the cross and resurrection, but he knew enough about Jesus to trust him. And Jesus was amazed by that faith.

Look More Closely at the Centurion

Read Luke 7:6–9 again.

The centurion says:

“I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.”

And then:

“But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

There is a striking combination here.

He has **humility about himself** and **confidence in Jesus**.

These two things belong together.

Christian humility is not constantly thinking that we are worthless. It is recognising that our relationship with God rests on grace rather than achievement.

And Christian faith is not confidence in ourselves. It is confidence in Christ.

Reflect

1. When you think about your relationship with God, are you more conscious of what you have done for him or of what he has done for you?
2. Are there times when you feel that you need to make yourself “good enough” before coming to God?
3. What would it mean for you this week to come to Jesus simply as you are and trust his grace?
4. The centurion recognised the authority of Jesus. What does it mean in practical terms for Jesus to have authority over your life?

Faith When We Cannot See

The centurion appears not to have needed physical evidence or personal contact with Jesus before trusting him.

Compare his response with:

Luke 18:9–14 — the Pharisee and the tax collector.

John 20:24–29 — Thomas and the risen Jesus.

1 Peter 5:6–7 — trusting God with our anxieties.

The Bible gives us different pictures of people encountering Jesus, but the centurion provides a striking picture of someone who trusts Jesus' word.

Bible Study

Discuss or reflect on:

- What is the difference between believing *things about* Jesus and actually trusting Jesus?
- What do these passages teach us about humility?
- What do they teach us about bringing our anxieties to God?
- Why can trusting God be difficult when we cannot see what he is doing?

Personal Application

Think about something in your own life where you are currently unable to see the outcome.

What would it look like to say, in faith, “Jesus, I trust your word”?

This does not mean pretending that uncertainty is easy or that we know what God will do. It means choosing to trust the One whose authority, goodness and love we have come to know.

Where Has God Planted You?

The centurion did not leave his position and disappear into a religious community.

He lived and worked within the complicated reality of Roman occupation. He had responsibilities, authority and relationships. Within that setting, his faith affected the way he treated people.

He loved the people among whom God had placed him.

That raises an important discipleship question for us.

Where has God planted you?

Think about your:

- home and family
- workplace
- school or college
- neighbourhood
- church
- friendships
- community
- voluntary work
- places where you regularly meet people

Reflect

1. **What does my faith look like in the place where God has planted me?**
2. Do the people around me see evidence of Christ's love in the way I speak, listen, work and serve?
3. Are there people I am tempted to overlook because they are different from me?
4. Where might God be inviting me to use my position, influence, time or resources for the good of others?
5. Does my Christian faith remain mainly within church activities, or does it shape the way I live from Monday to Saturday?
6. What would it look like for me to become a person whose faith is visible through humility, generosity and love.

A Simple Take-Home Message

If you remember only one thing from this study, remember this:

I do not need to earn Jesus' favour. I can trust his grace, trust his authority and trust his word.

And that trust should change the way I live **where God has planted me.**

When I cannot see what God is doing, I can trust his word.

When I feel unworthy, I can trust his grace.

When I face uncertainty, I can trust his authority.

When I have opportunities to serve others, I can respond with humility, generosity and love.

Optional Worship

Before discussion, or during a personal devotional time, listen prayerfully to:

Nothing in My Hand I Bring

A hymn based on the words:

**“Nothing in my hand I bring,
simply to thy cross I cling.”**

As you listen, consider:

What am I tempted to bring to God as though it makes me worthy of his love?

What would it mean to come empty-handed and simply trust in Christ?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

thank you for the faith of the centurion and for what his story teaches us about you.

Forgive us for the times when we rely upon our own goodness, achievements, service or reputation rather than your grace.

Teach us the humility of the centurion.

Give us his confidence in your authority and his willingness to trust your word.

When we cannot see what you are doing, help us to trust you.

When we feel unworthy, remind us of your grace.

When we are anxious, help us to cast our anxieties upon you because you care for us.

And as we return to our homes, workplaces, communities and everyday lives, help us to live as your disciples in the places where you have planted us.

May our faith become visible through the way we love, serve, forgive, listen, encourage and care for others.

Help us not simply to believe in you, but to trust you.

May we live this week with the prayer:

“Say the word, Lord, and I will trust you.”

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.