

# Underdogs

## “The Centurion – Stunning Faith”

Luke 7

### Small Group Plan

The story of the centurion and his sick servant speaks to us on various levels. First, it is the story of a leader who cares about a beloved servant. On a deeper level, it tells of a proud military leader who is humble enough to send others to ask for Jesus' help. And at an even deeper level, it describes how a foreigner understands better than anyone in Israel just how far Jesus' authority extends.

A Roman centurion was in charge of 100 men, from our word “century.” He was an officer similar, in the Roman hierarchy, to the position of our army captain. The ancient historian Polybius (200-118 BC) offers a list of qualifications looked for in centurions. They must be not so much *“seekers after danger as men who can command, be steady in action, and be reliable. They ought not to be over anxious to rush into the fight, but when hard pressed they must be ready to hold their ground and die at their posts.”*

#### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- Describe a time when you ended up liking someone that you originally thought you would not like.
- Why is it dangerous to prejudge and assume?

#### **LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...**

### **THE CENTURION'S COMPASSION**

Luke 7:1-2

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.

- Based on your knowledge of Roman History, describe the attitude and style of the typical Roman soldier?
- What was the average relationship between the Romans and the Jews?
- Why would it be unusual for a foreign leader of an occupying force to show compassion for a native servant?
- How are centurions portrayed in other places in scripture (Matthew 27:54; Acts 10:1-2)?

## THE CENTURION'S SERVICE

*Luke 7:3-6a*

<sup>3</sup>The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup>because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup>So Jesus went with them.

- What had the Centurion "heard" about Jesus?
- Two reasons are given to Jesus for helping the Centurion. The first comes from the Jews (vs. 4-5). Describe their reason.
- What kind of person would provide service to their community like this man had? How would you describe his character?

## THE CENTURION'S FAITH

*Luke 7:6b-10*

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup>That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." <sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup>Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

- The second reason given to Jesus for providing help comes from the centurion's friends (vs. 7-8). Describe their reason.
- What is the difference between the two reasons?
- After hearing about the Centurion's understanding of "authority" (v. 8), Jesus describes it as "great faith" (v. 9). Describe the connection between authority and faith. What is "amazing" (v. 9) about the Centurion's view of "authority"?
- Let's assume that this centurion eventually returns to his home. What effect might this kind of stunning faith have in a place like Rome?

### USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Why does compassion naturally lead to service?
- How can our own feelings of compassion and our humble acts of service prepare us for stunning faith?
- How can "amazing faith" lose his humility and become overcome with pride?
- What can we do to keep our compassion modest and humble?
- How can acts of service be protected from arrogance and egotism?
- Close by asking God to use us to extend His compassion and service to others.