

Luke 7, 8: The Power of Faith in Jesus

Leader Guide- 11/22/09



Small Group Study – Each week our small groups team works alongside Pastor J.D. to create a small group study which corresponds to his sermon that week. The study examines a related passage of scripture to the text he preaches through with the goal of challenging small groups to grow both in their confidence in studying the bible and in their application of the truths brought out in the sermon.

Context: In the introduction to his gospel, Luke claims to be writing “so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (1:4).” Luke made sure to include stories about Jesus that showed His power and His concern for the lowly, so that we could be certain that Jesus is able and willing to bring about the salvation that He was proclaiming. We see Jesus’ power when He heals diseases, drives out evil spirits, calms a raging storm, and even raises the dead! We see Jesus’ concern for the humble as He eats with “sinners,” lives among the poor, and fellowships with the spiritually and physically weak and broken. After all, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick (5:31).” Mary praises God because Jesus’ advent provides another example of God using His power to lift up the humble and bring salvation for His people (1:46-55).

Jesus’ power, combined with His deep concern for people, makes Jesus the worthy object of people’s faith. Luke describes the elements of Jesus’ ministry with quotes from Isaiah that indicate which Jesus has been empowered by the Holy Spirit. This anointing will drive him to preach good news to the poor and act for the healing and advantage of the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19, 7:22). As Luke recounts story after story of Jesus fulfilling this ministry, the people close to Him get a greater sense that He is the Messiah who will save the people. However, this salvation is not simply political, as some anticipated, but rather meets the deep spiritual need of the people. Jesus is using His power to demonstrate that He is God, and therefore can forgive their sins and restore them into proper relationship to the God who was now lifting them up. Jesus summary of His own ministry is found in Luke 19:10, “the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.”

Theme: The stories that we will examine this week are Luke’s evidence that Jesus is the Savior who can accomplish the great salvation that He was preaching. Thus, Jesus is worthy of our faith. We can trust Him to be powerful enough to lift us up and concerned enough to give us what we need. Through these passages, along with the stories from chapter 18 which we have been hearing during corporate worship, Jesus will inform our notion of what it means to have faith in Him.

Luke 7:1-10: Jesus commends the faith of the centurion, because he has shown more faith than anyone He had met to this point. Jesus says this in response to the analogy wherein the centurion compares his own authority over soldiers to Jesus authority.

Luke 8:22-25: Jesus displays his power over nature as He calms the storm and the sea. The sea represented dangerous and chaotic forces in 1st century Mediterranean culture. The disciples are chided for their lack of faith in this story. Surprisingly, the disciples are afraid even after the calming of the storm.

Luke 8:40-56: Jesus again shows his power over disease, and even death, with two miraculous works. He heals a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and raises a girl that they “knew” was dead (8:53). The woman has faith enough to simply touch His garment and realize that this had enough power to heal her in a way physicians could not (remember that Luke is a physician). Jesus commends her faith and says that her faith made her well. Though he arrives late to the house, Jesus instructs people to believe, even after she died. They laugh at this notion, but Jesus shows them that their faith would not have been too big if they had believed that He even had power over death!

Aim: To enlarge our faith in Jesus by studying Jesus’ actions, power, words, and character.

Prayer: -Like the apostles did (17:5), ask the Lord to increase your faith.
-Pray for redemption and revival beyond what you expect.
-Pray for neighbors, friends, and family that do not yet have faith in Jesus.

Study Questions:

What themes and ideas from the sermon challenged your faith the most?

[7:1-10]

What about the centurion's faith is commendable?

The centurion recognizes Jesus' authority. This healing is unique because the centurion knows that He can heal even when He is not in the same room. The fact that this deep faith comes from a Gentile hints at Luke's theme that Jesus' salvation is for all people.

What does the centurion's analogy teach us about Jesus?

The centurion compares his authority over men to Jesus' authority over the created world. He is able to simply speak and a broken body is healed. This calls to mind God's original creation when God spoke into the formless void and brought out a beautiful peaceful world.

[8:22-25]

How is this story applicable to our faith?

Jesus can calm any storm that comes into our lives. He is bigger and more powerful than any trouble we might face, even death itself. Jesus power over nature, the sea, and death itself would have been the clearest statements about Jesus' divine power that the Gospel writers could have made.

Why are the disciples afraid *after* Jesus calms the storm?

Though they once regarded Jesus as a mere man, they were slowly beginning to realize that He was much more. If He is more powerful than nature, He is truly a force to be reckoned with.

What does Luke want us to know about Jesus as a result of this story?

Our response to this story is about more than just relaxing about our circumstances. Jesus, our friend and Savior whom we talk to everyday, has authority and power beyond our imagination. If we are to be anxious about anything, we should be anxious about pleasing Him.

[8:40-56]

What does Jesus mean by the phrase: "your faith has healed you?"

Jesus uses similar phrases in 7:50, 17:19, and 18:42. A story from Luke chapter 5 is also instructive to understand what Jesus means by "healed." In that story, Jesus forgives a paralytic's sins before He heals the man. The crowds are shocked at Jesus apparent disregard for the man's obvious affliction, but Jesus is making a clear statement that spiritual brokenness is a worse condition than the worst physical ailment we endure. The Greek word here translated "healed" is the same one translated "saved" in 7:50, thus both physical and spiritual aspects of Jesus' salvation could be in view. As we put our trust in Jesus, we leave behind some of our spiritual brokenness and get on a path toward spiritual healing. He does not mean that faith itself is the magic formula to manipulate God into physical healing someone. A person's faith is not the agent for miraculous healing, nor is it even a prerequisite for God's ability to do miracles. Hebrews 11 contains a list of faithful individuals, some of whom miraculously had their afflictions removed, and others suffered faithfully- both to the glory of God.

What do these stories add to our understanding of faith in Jesus?

Jesus displays a power to heal a disease that doctors could not control. Jesus also displays power over death. There is nothing that can separate us from God's love or His good purposes for us- not suffering and not death. Influential voices in our culture sometimes say things like: "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you have faith." How do you think Luke would respond to this statement?

How would you respond to someone who was lamenting a lack of faith and asked you how to increase it?

What elements of a person or church have you seen that indicate healthy and robust faith in God?

How would Summit church change if the church body had more faith in Jesus?