

Week 11 Day 2 | *New Testament Heroes: The Centurion*

We are amazed by Jesus, but perhaps not amazed often enough. He taught in the synagogues and healed the sick (Matthew 4:23). He cast out demons and raised the dead (Mark 5). He forgave sins (Matthew 5:20) and conquered death (Luke 24). The Gospel of John tells us that there aren't enough books in the world that could contain all that Jesus did (John 21:25).

Jesus was nothing short of amazing. When someone that incredible is said to have been “amazed” Himself, we should stop and take notice. One such time was in regard to today's New Testament hero, the centurion.

Matthew 8 or Luke 7 both tell the story of the centurion. Read either and you'll find at least three things that stand out about this man: his love, humility, and faith. Any one of those attributes can stand alone as a source of encouragement to us. Stack one on top of the other, however, and it's easy to see why Jesus was amazed by the centurion.

If you're unfamiliar with the story, a centurion was concerned over his dying servant. The centurion sent some respected friends to Jesus so Jesus could heal this servant. Jesus agreed to come but was stopped before entering the house. The centurion did not feel worthy to have Jesus in his house. On behalf of the centurion, his friends asked Jesus to “say the word,” knowing those words would be sufficient for healing of the centurion's servant. We then read that Jesus “was amazed.” When the centurion's friends had returned to his house, they found the servant healed.

Having some background will make this story all the more inspiring. A centurion was a commander of 100 soldiers in the Roman army. A man of his authority could very well have had many servants. Furthermore, it wouldn't have been uncommon to treat them poorly. Not this centurion. Luke 7:2 tells us He “valued highly” his servant. The centurion cared so much that he sent for help from Jesus for the man who was “paralyzed, suffering terribly.” The centurion showed great love where none would have been expected.

Then, when Jesus graciously asks if He should come and heal the servant, we see the centurion's great humility emerge. Luke 7:6–7 recounts the story: “Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.” In spite of the centurion's earthly position, of his vast resources, and of being well respected (Luke 7:4–5), he remained humble. The centurion understood that these meant very little compared to the One who had been given all authority in heaven and earth. The centurion's heart was greater than his status.

Next, we see the centurion's great faith. Luke 7:7 continues, “But say the word, and my servant will be healed.” It's faith enough to believe that Jesus could touch the servant and the servant would be healed. Yet to believe that words alone would be sufficient displays a deepness of trust rarely seen in Scripture:

“When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, ‘Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.’—Matthew 8:10 (NIV)

The centurion's faith in Jesus' power was affirmed. Matthew 8:13 concludes the story this way: “Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.’ And his servant was healed at that moment.”

Love. Humility. Faith. I think it's fair to say these traits characterized the centurion. Here's what's exciting: such attributes can characterize us too. We are already blessed because we believe but have not seen (John 20:29). The Holy Spirit lives in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). We have access to the One who marked the heavens with the breadth of His hands (Isaiah 40:12). Therefore, Jesus being “amazed” doesn't have to be confined only to the story of the centurion.

When a woman forgives a drunk driver for killing her husband, God is amazed. When an 82-year-old repents for his hardened life of rebellion and indulgence, God is amazed. When a family praises the Father in spite of cancer stealing their mom, God is amazed. When the lone Christian stands up for her faith in the face of her atheist professor, God is amazed. When the stay-at-home mom turns from food to God for her ultimate source of comfort, God is amazed.

He is amazed . . . but not surprised.

If we want to amaze God and be amazed by God, love others, stay humble, and keep your faith first.

We can all be centurions.

Prayer

Father, thank You for marveling at anything I might do. Will You forgive me when I fail to be amazed by You? By your Spirit in me, make me more like the centurion. Grow my love. Establish my humility. Increase my faith. Amen.

Meditation

Work in me that my love, faith and humility might amaze for your kingdom.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Pick a meal to fast from for the day. The hunger you feel is a reminder to be praying for a fully surrendered life. As you pray throughout the day, be sure to ask God what He'd like you to learn from this exercise. We don't just pray. We pray and we listen.