

Get more out of the message



LUKE

Luke 7:1-17

How can we become the Christ-centered church our world so desperately needs? Join us in Luke's Gospel, the most expansive biography of Jesus in the Bible. With the beloved physician as our guide, we hope to experience Jesus so we can participate with the new reality God is bringing into our world.

WATCH: [YouTube](#) or [Website](#)

The Big Idea

What captures the heart and attention of Jesus? Our faith in Him and our sorrow in this world.

Good to Know

- The two stories in this section are less about miracle accounts that focus solely on Jesus' power and more about character studies that emphasize the faith and circumstances of the people to whom Jesus loves to show God's mercy.

Why does this matter?

- Luke seems to be showing us how Jesus' Sermon on the Plain plays out in real life. The people who experience God's Kingdom blessing are not those with an impressive spiritual résumé, but rather, outsiders like the centurion who come humbly to Jesus and mourners like the widow who desperately need Jesus' compassionate power. This should encourage all of us to draw near to Jesus.
- **A centurion (vs. 2)** was a commander of a unit of about a "century" (100) of Roman soldiers (though this was more of a representative estimate, as these units often consisted of between 30 and 100 soldiers). Centurions were highly regarded for their discipline and were often paid 15 times the salary of normal soldiers.
- Roman troops weren't officially stationed in Galilee until after Jesus' resurrection in AD 44. This particular centurion may have been employed for police or security work under Herod, or possibly he was retired, living in something like a lake house near the Sea of Galilee. It's clear that he's a "God-fearer"—a term Jews used for Gentiles who attended synagogue and worshiped Yahweh, even though they hadn't fully converted to Judaism. In Acts 10, Luke tells the story of Cornelius, another Gentile God-fearer.
- **Elders of the Jews (vs. 3)** may have been something like deacons from the centurion's local synagogue or perhaps members of the centurion's village board who were willing to advocate on behalf of their God-fearing friend. Why did they do this? Because he had shown tremendous kindness toward them by bankrolling their synagogue project.
- **"I am not worthy to have you come under my roof" (vs. 6)** - The centurion was aware of the Mishnah's teaching that "the dwelling places of the Gentiles are unclean" for Jews. Not only did the centurion show grace for Jewish sensibilities, but he also showed deference to Jesus as his "Lord."

- **“I too am a man set under authority” (vs. 8)** – Roman soldiers were expected to give their lives *ad nutum* (“at the nod” of their commanders). The centurion’s understanding of authority was vastly different from our democratic, “be-your-own-boss” mindset. Jesus was astonished at how well this Gentile grasped the way God’s authority worked.
- **“Not even in Israel have I found such faith” (vs. 9)** – This was not just a huge compliment to the Gentile centurion, but also a backhanded critique of many of Jesus’ own people—many of whom struggled to accept Jesus’ authority, even though they had God’s Word telling them exactly what to expect from the Messiah.
- **“A man who had died was being carried out” (vs. 12)** – Jewish burial customs at the time meant that this young man was probably covered in spices from head to toe, wrapped in cloth and laid on a plank. The funeral procession would have started outside the city gate of Nain (probably the modern town of Nein, a few miles south of Nazareth) and led to the family burial site.
- Luke pointed out that this woman was already a **widow (vs. 12)**, meaning that not only was she dealing with layers of grief from losing her entire family, but she would have also been destitute without a male provider. More than that, Luke foreshadows the death of Jesus by mentioning that this young man was her “only son.” Jesus, God’s only son, knew full well that His own death would open up the possibility of hope to every grieving parent.
- **“He came up and touched the bier” (vs. 14)** – Touching the plank upon which a dead body was being carried would have rendered Jesus ceremonially unclean. However, just like in the case of the leper in Luke 5, Jesus’ holiness and power made the uncleanness of death run backward.
- **“The dead man sat up” (vs. 15)** – Can you imagine how wildly the people in the funeral procession must have reacted when the cloth-bound corpse they were mourning suddenly sat up? Technically speaking, this was not a “resurrection,” because there is only one resurrection in which every believer who has died will rise from the dead and inherit a glorified body suitable for God’s heavenly presence. This once-and-for-all resurrection would be Jesus, whose resurrection is the “firstfruits” of our end-time resurrection yet to come (see 1 Cor. 15:20). This story might be better labeled a “resuscitation” because only this young man’s mortal life was restored—eventually, he would die again. On the other hand, people who are resurrected are raised to eternal life.
- Some skeptics argue that the miracle stories of Jesus are just copied from other pagan myths. In fact, there is a similar story in which the ancient Greek writer Philostratus claimed that two centuries before his time, a Neo-Platonic teacher named Apollonius raised a girl from the dead. According to his account, Apollonius came across a funeral, stopped it, touched the dead girl and whispered a “spell” over her, awakening her. So, does this disprove Jesus’ healing stories? Certainly not! Unlike Philostratus’ account, Luke’s was written and distributed well within the lifetime of the original eyewitnesses. He wasn’t speculating on events that took place centuries before—he was reporting on what people had seen and heard for themselves.
- **“A great prophet has arisen among us!” (vs. 16)** – Back in chapter one, Luke pointed out that Jesus would be an Elijah-like figure calling the remnant of Israel back to God. Again, in chapter four, we see that in His very first synagogue sermon, Jesus explicitly compared Himself to Elijah (Luke 4:26). Luke carefully crafted the resuscitation story of the widow’s son to remind us when Elijah did something very similar in 1 Kings 17:23. Jesus reminded people so much of Elijah that some wondered if Elijah himself had somehow been brought back from the dead (see Luke 9:8 & 19).

Group Guide

Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

Conversation Starters

1. How does the centurion describe his understanding of authority in verses 7-8? What does this reveal about his faith in Jesus?
2. In verse 9, Jesus is astonished at the centurion's faith. What does this tell us about Jesus' heart for those who trust Him?
3. The centurion acknowledges that he is "not worthy" for Jesus to enter his home (v. 6). How does this humility contrast with the way many people approach Jesus?
4. Jesus says He has not found such faith even in Israel (v. 9). What does this imply about the nature of true faith? How can we model our own faith after the centurion?
5. What details does Luke include about the widow's situation (vv. 12-13)? Why is her loss particularly devastating in that cultural context?
6. How does Jesus respond when He sees the widow (v. 13)? What does this tell us about how He sees our pain and suffering?
7. Where are you struggling to recognize Jesus' authority? Where do you need His compassionate resuscitating power?

Prayer

Lord, together we ask You to reveal the true condition of our hearts through the fruit in our lives. Help us to follow You, not just in words but in obedience, surrendering fully to your Lordship. Build us up on the solid foundation of your truth so that we may stand firm and reflect your love in all we do.

Looking for more prayer opportunities?

Click [here](#) to be notified about ongoing DCC prayer needs.

Click [here](#) to send in a prayer request.