



BIBLE STUDY

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Bridging Cultures with the Gospel

Free Methodist World Missions is a resource to churches who are seeking to engage in local and global missions.

Through the migration of people groups, God is bringing individuals of many cultures to our communities. With their arrival we have the opportunity to create cultural bridges to love those who are different from us and to share the gospel with them.

This study explores the story of the Capernaum centurion and the cross-cultural challenges and opportunities that existed in that time and place. The study concludes with application questions which allow us to examine how we are to respond in our time and place to those who are unlike us.

The Faith of a Centurion

Read Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10

Rome had conquered Israel, and its soldiers occupied the land. The Jews resented these soldiers. This story of the centurion soldier took place in the town of Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee not far from where Jesus grew up. A centurion was an officer over 100 soldiers.

1. What's the story?
2. How are these two accounts similar and different?
3. What problems do you think this officer would have experienced in relationship to the Jews?

Luke's account of the story in 7:3-5 reads, "The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.'"

1. What made this foreign man and officer popular with the Jews?
2. What did Jesus see in this officer and like about him?

Exploring the Meaning

Jesus compliments this foreign soldier while rebuking fellow Jews. Jesus warns the Jews of a big surprise on judgment day: “foreigners” will find the kingdom of Heaven and “religious” people will be thrown into darkness.

1. What does this story tell us about God’s heart for the world?
2. Reflecting on this passage, how should we think and act towards people who are unlike us? Of different castes, religions, tribes or nations?
3. How might our thoughts and actions toward people unlike us make a difference in whether we see miracles?

Application Questions

1. What practices and attitudes in our church and lives could keep us from experiencing faith and miracles?
2. What attitudes and actions demonstrated in this passage would help us see God’s transforming power in our homes, community or neighboring city?
3. What implications does this have for the way you pray? Practice hospitality? Talk about others? See your neighbor?

Ask God to work in your heart. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal those thoughts and attitudes that are hindering your faith journey. Confess those attitudes and/or actions that are a barrier to God’s transforming power to work in your home, church and community.