



Only Say the Word

Goal: To marvel at an example of great faith.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 8:5-10, 13

A centurion was responsible for a military force of one hundred men. The position of the centurion was prestigious. They were quite well rewarded for their service and were given substantial pensions upon retirement. The centurion at Capernaum was a slave owner. As offensive as this may be to us, it was merely a part of life in biblical days. The centurion is presented as a caring, generous man, humble and unwilling to claim any special privilege from the itinerant teacher/healer. There was no pleading, no effort at persuasion, just a simple request for help from one recognized as able to offer it, if he chose to do so.

It is significant that Jesus never comes into contact with the slave. There are centuries of believers who have never actually come into contact with Jesus either, but who believe in his healing power. The Spirit of Christ effectively sustains the church and the faith of his followers living in another place and time.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The children may question how Jesus healed the slave from a distance. They also may have questions about why some people are healed and others are not. Let them know that not all healing results in physical cure. Some people talk about experiences of healing through prayer that give a sense of peace or comfort. The children may not think about themselves as healers. Challenge them to begin to think of themselves as everyday healers, for example, through kind words, a smile, and so on.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

If you know of illness or a death in the family of one or more of your children, find some ways to help individuals talk about their experience. Talk to the family before the lesson to be sure to address specific concerns about healing and faith that they may have, or to avoid areas of sensitivity. Try to be clear in your own mind about your own feelings and thoughts on the relationship between healing and faith.

Gracious God, may I be an instrument of your healing through my words and actions, offering hope to those in need. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2019–2020

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 9, 20, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 2: picture or
coloring books with a
single item on each
page

choice 3: one hundred
of a small item such
as pennies, stones, or
pony beads; tray

Exploring

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

A **MS** **C** **LD** **T**

Greet the children and parents/caregivers by name and with the words “Jesus is alive.” Prompt the children to respond with “Jesus is alive.” This is the season of Easter, and we continue to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection.

Option: Use the traditional greeting, “Christ is risen,” with the response, “He is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know. Explain that the children will hear a story about a time Jesus was amazed at someone’s faith.

Introduce children to your helper or helpers. Invite them to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Along the Road**—Provide a number of blocks to outline a “road” to walk along, or a mat with roads printed on it. Encourage the children to pretend that they are traveling along the road. Talk with the children about where they are going, and what they will do when they arrive.
- 2. Picture Words**—Set out picture books or pictures with a single item in each picture. The items pictured might be animals, such as a bird, a dog, or a cat; everyday things, such as a chair, a car, or a tree; or simple shapes, such as a triangle or a square. Pages from a coloring book will work well for this. Invite the children to identify the item pictured and “say the word” that they see.
- 3. One Hundred**—Place the items on a tray and invite the children to count them. Counting to one hundred may be daunting, so suggest the children count ten items at a time and make ten groups of ten.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult. Alerting the children of the change in advance allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, playing “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**MM 19; SCM 20**.

Call and Response

L LD

Write the children’s names in a column on a sheet of paper. Tell the children that you will call their name, and to respond, “I’m here!” when they hear their name. Then invite the child to come put a sticker by their name and say, “I’m here!” again.

The Centurion Says

L MS F

Explain that a *centurion* was an officer in the Roman army who was in charge of one hundred soldiers. He would give orders, and others would follow them.

Play a game like “Simon Says” and tell the children to follow your instruction when they hear you say, “the centurion says.” Tell them that if you do not say, “the centurion says,” they are not to follow your instruction. Use the following or make up your own. You may want to move from active instructions to quieting activities.

- ✎ The centurion says, “Stomp your feet.”
- ✎ The centurion says, “Stop.”
- ✎ “Salute.”
- ✎ The centurion says, “Jump up and down.”
- ✎ “Run in place.”
- ✎ The centurion says, “Sit down.”
- ✎ The centurion says, “Put your hands in your lap.”



For a short video demonstration of the sign language, go to www.aslpro.com then click on “Religious Signs” and find *Jesus*.

Hearing the Story

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Open the Bible to Matthew 8. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God’s people. Tell the children that they will hear a story about a time when Jesus was amazed by someone. Encourage the children to listen for what amazed Jesus.

Read **SCM 9**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Give the children the following directions to do when they hear the story again:

- ✎ As Jesus is coming down the mountainside, pat your hands on your legs as if you are walking: right, left, right, left.
- ✎ Whenever you hear the word *centurion*, salute.
- ✎ Whenever you hear the name *Jesus*, make the sign-language sign for *Jesus* by touching the tip of the middle finger on your right hand to the palm of the left hand; then touching the tip of the middle finger on your left hand to the palm of the right hand.



- At the end of the story, wave both hands in the air and shout, “Hallelujah! Amen!”

Practice the actions a few times so the children are familiar with them. Read the story again, pausing and prompting the different actions.

Ask the children what amazed Jesus. Wonder together why Jesus was amazed at the centurion’s faith.

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Follow the Centurion



Play a game like “Mother, May I?” Invite the children to line up at one end of the room. Stand at the other end of the room facing the children. Tell them that you are the centurion, and when you say the word, they are to do what you tell them, but they must first say, “Centurion, say the word!” If they forget to say, “Centurion, say the word!” they must go back to where they started. It is OK to remind them to say, “Centurion, say the word!” The object of the game is for all the children to come to where you are.

Give them instructions such as:

- Jump twice toward me.
- Take one giant step.
- Make three small hops toward me.
- Take four baby steps.
- Skip two times toward me.

Try to make sure that each child is moving forward at a similar rate. The game ends when everyone reaches you.

- Sometimes children protest that they’re being treated unfairly when actually it may only be because they’re not getting what they want. When self-interest overrides actually trying to be fair, ask them to flip the situation and look at it from the other person’s perspective.*

2. Sequencing the Story



Before the session, on sheets of construction paper, draw a line in the center going lengthwise and two lines going widthwise, dividing the paper in six sections.

Provide copies of **GN 1**, crayons, construction paper, and glue sticks. Give the children time to color the pictures and cut them apart. Help the children number the six spaces on the construction paper and glue the story scenes in order. Prompt the children by asking, “Where had Jesus been before he met the centurion?” Ask, “What happened next?” Suggest that the children form pairs to practice

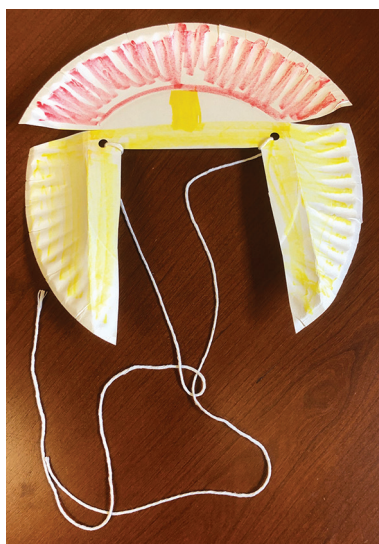
telling the story to one another. Encourage the children to tell the story to someone at home.



3. Say the Word



Before the session, make a helmet from a paper plate for each child. See sidebar for the finished helmet. Make two cuts on opposite sides about a third of the way down the plate. Fold the sides back from the cuts down. These will be the sides of the helmet. Cut out a rectangle from the center of the plate, leaving about an inch from the folds. Punch a hole at the top two corners of the rectangle. Draw a red line on the upper arc of the plate to indicate where the children will color the red crest. Draw a yellow line from side cut to side cut, with a small rectangle attaching the helmet to the crest. This will indicate where the children will color the helmet.



Tell the children that they are going to make helmets so that they can pretend to be the centurion who had great faith. Give each child a prepared paper-plate helmet. Invite them to color the crest red (the fluted edge above the red line) and color the helmet yellow (below the yellow line, the small rectangle, and the side pieces). Tie two pieces of string or yarn on each side of the helmet using the holes. Tie each child's helmet onto their head.

Have the children line up shoulder to shoulder. Use the following directions to demonstrate the centurion's faith:

- ▼ Show how the centurion might stand and look when commanding soldiers.
- ▼ Show how the centurion might have looked when he met Jesus and told him about his servant.

Say, "Jesus said he would go to the centurion's house and heal his servant." Have the children repeat after you:

- ▼ You don't need to come to my house. /
- ▼ I have faith. /

Say, "Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith! The servant was healed." Have the children show how the centurion felt when he heard this news.

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture and tell you about the story. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "What is Jesus pointing out?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did the centurion feel when he talked to Jesus?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What were the disciples thinking?"

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Have the children help clean up by putting away a toy or more.
Sing “This Little Light of Mine”—**MM 27; SCM 24**—together.
Consider having the children use rhythm instruments while they sing.
Enjoy a snack.

After the snack, wonder together what the children enjoyed best today. Listen attentively as they tell you. Then tell the children what you liked. You might say, “I liked meeting (*name of a newcomer*) for the first time,” or “I liked to play the centurion game.”

Gather in a circle and turn to the child on your right and offer this benediction, “(*Name*), go in faith; Jesus is with you.” Encourage that child to turn to the child on their right and repeat the same benediction. Continue around the circle until the child on your left offers the benediction to you.



A centurion meets
Jesus and the disciples.



The centurion says that Jesus
only has to say the word and the
servant will be healed. Jesus is
amazed at the centurion's faith!



Jesus and the disciples come
down from the mountainside.



Jesus says that the centurion's
servant has been healed.



The centurion tells Jesus
about his sick servant.



Jesus says he will come
to the centurion's house.

Only Say the Word



Jesus is amazed at the centurion's faith.

