



# Study 3

## Luke 7:1-35

### NOTES IN BLUE ARE FOR LEADERS:

#### Big Idea:

The kingdom of God, at its heart, is about trust [faith] in Jesus

#### Hook:

Does Christian faith doubt? And if it can, how do you go about dealing with doubts in the Christian life?

#### Big Application:

Wise living in this world comes through *trusting* Jesus and acting on that trust (even amidst periods of doubt)

## JESUS, FAITH & DOUBT

### Kick-off Activity

Does Christian faith ever doubt? What do you think the Bible teaches on the issue?

You could split the group in two and get one group to defend the answer 'yes' and the other, 'no' Actually both answers are right, but it is up to you as leaders as to how much to give away this answer at the beginning of the study.

Yes, Christian faith can have doubts, because we are growing in our faith in God as we grow in relationship with him. Doubts are a normal experience.

No, Christian faith is certain and does not doubt, not because of the strength of our faith, but because of the one in whom we have faith. Christian faith doesn't doubt, because our faith is in the *true & living* God (c.f. Heb 11:1)

### Background & context:

Over the last few weeks we have been growing in our understanding of who Jesus is (Lk 4:1-5:32). Last week we began to unpack what it means to be a citizen of God's kingdom (Lk 6:17-49). Surprisingly, Jesus said that those who are dependent on God and lowly will inherit the kingdom. In today's study we will unpack this idea further as Luke begins to unpack the right way to respond to Jesus, that is, with *faith*. Throughout the text we will meet people who trust Jesus, people who question Jesus and people who doubt Jesus. Let's see what we can learn together about our Lord and our faith.

### TRUSTING JESUS

Read: Luke 7:1-10

1. If you had to do a background check on the centurion, what information would you come up with from the text?

He is a soldier (v2), he had lots of people working for him as slaves (v2-3, 8), he is rich and respected (v5). He has connections in the Jewish community, was a God fearer (v3-5) *and importantly is not a Jew, he is a Gentile!* (v3,9)

2. In what ways is the centurion like the blessed man in Luke 6:20-21, even though he is a rich commander?

V6-7 He is humble before God. He realizes he is not worthy to have Jesus come to him. He recognizes God's power, and especially his power to save.

3. How does the centurion help us understand what Christian faith is life?

His faith doesn't come by sight but by hearing. The centurion never sees Jesus or his miracles! He only hears of them. He is like us. v3

His faith is in Jesus. Faith is not something we conjure up ourselves. It trusts in the one with power v6, and in this the centurion's faith is greater than that of anyone else in all Israel. v9

His faith recognizes God's powerful word v8

4. Thinking about our own faith, it is common at church when sharing our testimony to say that we first trusted Jesus as our savior (faith) and then later on we made him Lord. While this does help others understand how we've grown in our faith, what does the centurion's faith teach us about the nature of faith?

Faith is an expression of treating Jesus as Lord. It is depending on him for all things. It is submitting our will to his purposes and authority.

## MARVELING AND QUESTIONING JESUS

Read Luke 7:11-17

1. What kind of authority is Jesus claiming to have?

Jesus has authority even over death!

2. What are the responses of the crowd? Do you think their responses are appropriate?

They fear, glorify God, they call Jesus a prophet and claim that God is with them.

These are all somewhat appropriate.

Jesus is a prophet, he does deserve healthy fear and it is true that God is with them.

But their picture is incomplete for they do not know that Jesus is the one that the prophets (including John the Baptist) were waiting for. He is the prophet of prophets.

3. What is your response to Jesus' authority over death?

Comfort, joy, hope... and most importantly faith/ trust.

## DOUBTING JESUS

Read Luke 7:18-30

1. In Luke 7:18-20, why does John doubt who Jesus is? (c.f. Luke 3:16,19-20)

John is wondering if Jesus is just a prophet, like the crowds have just suggested.

He is in prison and has heard that Jesus is doing miracles but is wondering when he is going to bring his baptism of judgement and fire

2. How does Jesus help John in his doubt? (c.f. Luke 7:21-23, Isaiah 61:1-3)

In v22 Jesus shows that he is fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah 61. He is currently showing the time of God's favour. However the time of judgement and fire is near. His baptism of fire will be at the cross, where he takes on God's judgement for his people

3. In what respect is it true to say that each member of your growth group, is ddgreater than John the Baptist? (Hint: what does your faith have that John the Baptists never did?) (v28)

Even though we too can have doubts, John belonged to the time of promise and we belong to the time of fulfillment.

We see Jesus crucified and risen.

John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament era and never got to see the New Covenant. He will be beheaded before then.

## Wrap Up

1. If someone asked you why you were confident that Jesus is who he says he is, what would you say?

Jesus is the one who has displayed God's favour to the world through his death and resurrection. We can look to those events and trust Jesus is who he says he is.

2. Learning from the centurion, how can you express your faith, *in action*?

Various.

3. What has this text taught you about faith and doubt? How do you go about dealing with doubts in the Christian life?

This text reminds me of the man in Mark 9:24 who cries out to Jesus - I believe, help my unbelief. Like the centurion we have faith in Jesus. We are certain of his power over our sin & death. But like John we need to cry out to God for help in our doubts & deal with them. When assailed by doubts it is critical to keep looking to what Jesus has achieved for us at the cross. Satan, would prefer us to go around in circles of doubt rather than remember that Jesus is alive and that we are forgiven.

**Prayer**

Thank God for giving us faith.

Pray that God would grow our faith to be like that of the centurion. (Luke 7:9)

Pray that even in doubt we call out to Jesus in the same way that John did. (Luke 7:19).