

## *Session 2*

# Yielded Faith

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## THE POINT

*Faith acknowledges the authority of Jesus.*

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Frank David Bennett was no more than 5'5" tall, and well into his 70s when I came to Louisiana College as a theater major. It was his last year of teaching and my first year on campus. I had received the only theater scholarship in the department, and I was working in the set shop.

He was a small man, but with one stroke of the pen, he could end my scholarship and my job in the theater. I could be relegated to working in the cafeteria, which would be the worst-case scenario for me as an 18-year-old freshman. His authority was paramount that year, and he knew it and I knew it.

That's the thing about authority. The strongest police officer cannot stop a moving car, but that same police officer can command law-abiding citizens to apply their brakes of that moving car. Why? Because we yield to authority.

Jesus appeared to be an unusual authority figure to many people He encountered, but surprisingly a centurion recognized His authority and received a great reward.

### QUESTION 1:

***Who's someone in your life who could always get your attention?***

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

### LUKE 7:1-5

**<sup>1</sup> When he had concluded saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> A centurion's servant, who was highly valued by him, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, requesting him to come and save the life of his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they reached Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy for you to grant this, <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue."**

Sometimes the greatest lessons come from the most unlikely people. This is certainly true in Luke's account of the healing of the centurion's servant. All indications pointed to the fact that this centurion was a Gentile, an authority in the Roman hierarchy, and most likely a Roman citizen. Centurions were Roman officers who had authority over 100 soldiers. In other words, he had tremendous authority and control.

Everyone eventually reaches the conclusion that many things in life happen without our permission. We must resign ourselves to the stubborn fact that we are not in control of everything. As many have said, "We must resign as the general manager of the universe." Life is messy and everyone is struggling with something. Even the strongest people among us—those with the most authority—find themselves rocked by adversity. Billionaires can get pancreatic cancer just like the rest of us. Accidents will happen, even when we are cautious. No matter how many self-help books we read, we can still be betrayed and rejected by family members. We all find ourselves struggling under the weight of uncertainty. The questions

for all of us to ask ourselves: Where do we turn when life is unfair? What do we do when we take an unexpected hit or life turns dark?

Jesus, in His sovereign knowledge, knew that the punishment He would face for our sins would come from the same system that employed the centurion. If we had that much knowledge, if we had that much forethought for the future, what would our reaction be? Would it be difficult to lend a hand to the ones who would ultimately cause our death?

Yet, even with this knowledge, Jesus acted under the principle of grace. It's easy for us to forget the sovereign power of grace and the revolutionary concept this was to the Jewish people. They lived and died by the rules. There were steps to take to receive an audience with the Almighty, and if you missed a step, it was the Monopoly® rule: "Do not pass go. Do not collect 200 dollars!"

Jesus, with a heart of compassion, cared most about three things: people, people, and people. Most encounters don't happen by appointment.

Like this story, things happen along the journey from here to there. Faith in Jesus cannot be based on our worthiness, efforts, or achievements. Otherwise, it wouldn't be faith. No matter what our position or past may be, we can approach Jesus; He is enough to carry us.

The Jews despised the Romans and their leaders, but this centurion stood out among the rest. Apparently, the Jews in that village saw him as a benevolent authority. He had helped build a synagogue. They wanted to make sure Jesus had the backstory of this centurion. Jesus never asked, "Why should I listen to the centurion?" They answered that question before it could be asked because they assumed it was coming anyway. *Certainly, only people who deserve to be heard will be heard. Right?* They shared with Jesus that he *deserved* it. It was the standard of

goodness that they thought brought them into favor. The Jewish mindset was: Be good. The Jesus mindset was: Be God's. Paul is clear on this: "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus is open to the voices of desperation, and He rejoices in the opportunities to see anyone redeemed. He's just that good.

#### QUESTION 2:

***Where does our culture encourage us to turn when difficult problems arise?***

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## LUKE 7:6-8

**<sup>6</sup> Jesus went with them, and when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, don't trouble yourself, since I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup> That is why I didn't even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I too am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."**

A friend of mine went to a Dallas Cowboys football game on a Monday night. Jeff had bought the cheapest tickets available and was enjoying the game from the nosebleed section. On his way to the concession stand, a wealthy member of his church spotted him. This person asked Jeff where he was seated. Jeff jokingly pointed at his binoculars and smiled. His wealthy friend winked at him and said, "Follow me." He took Jeff through security, simply saying, "This one's with me." They rode an elevator to a luxury

box complete with a buffet of steaks. Jeff went to the game as an ordinary fan, but he ended up hobnobbing with the big shots of Dallas in leather easy chairs while enjoying a feast.

As he told me this story, I was reminded of the access we get through Jesus. He has all authority. The only thing He has to say is, "This one's with Me." I wonder how many times I sit in the cheap seats ignoring God's invitation to a life of spiritual joy.

Think about it: We get access to God's divine favor. We don't deserve it; we didn't earn it. He just chose to give it to us. He taught us the accent of grace. He pulls down the hierarchy of this world and sets a new standard for belonging and hope. This is what yielding in faith means. It's the revolutionary act of recognizing who has all authority and power. We yield to Christ because we know that He can do what we never could. When we come to Him, life becomes transcendent and unlimited in its scope. We have to drop our titles, our agendas, and that nagging sense of self-sufficiency. We must come to Him with our hands open to His grace to experience His power. We have this all-access relationship with Father God through Jesus, His Son. It brings us into the throne room. As the writer of Hebrews put it: "Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness" (Heb. 4:16a). Not only *can* we approach boldly, but He *wants* us to approach boldly.

It's fascinating to hear the faith of the centurion. Somehow, he knew that Jesus didn't need to be present to be powerful and sufficient. Jesus could just say the word. Somehow, the centurion knew that the One who spoke stars into existence could speak healing a few hundred

yards away. He reframed the situation by trusting in the power and sovereignty of Jesus over the laws of time and distance. The centurion accepted Jesus's authority as a given. It would be like saying to your teenage self that in the future, your phone could be in your pocket, and you can see the person to whom you are talking to while that person is 500 miles away! That's how mind-blowing this conversation between Jesus and the centurion must have been for those within earshot. "But say the word, and my servant will be healed."

As a side note, I wonder how our prayers would change if we had faith enough to believe deeply that all Jesus has to do is just say the word. How would it affect the time we spend in deep, specific, intensive prayer? How would this constant belief change the way we live out our lives from crisis to crisis?

### QUESTION 3:

***What do you appreciate about the centurion's posture toward Jesus?***

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## LUKE 7:9-10

**<sup>9</sup> Jesus heard this and was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found so great a faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup> When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant in good health.**

Throughout Scripture, we read about the amazement of people when Jesus would do "Jesus things." The disciples were amazed

when the fig tree withered and died. They were amazed when the dead were raised, when the storms ceased at His word, when the lepers

## Engage

### YIELDING TO JESUS

Choose one or more of the areas of life listed below in which you sense Jesus telling you that you have not been yielding. Beside it, write a short sentence that describes the actions you will take.

\_\_\_ Finances

\_\_\_ Leisure time

\_\_\_ Screen time

\_\_\_ Family

\_\_\_ Vocation

\_\_\_ Friends

\_\_\_ Church Involvement

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

were healed, and when Jesus forgave people of serious, deeply damaging sin. But in this story, it was the other way around. A Roman centurion amazed Jesus with his faith. It's surprising to me that the King of everything would marvel at someone's faith. Perhaps it speaks to the fact that Jesus is enthralled with our faith when we express it.

**QUESTION 4:**

***What do you think was amazing about the centurion's faith?***

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As a father, I was amazed when my son ran for over 100 yards in a peewee football game. I didn't expect it. I'd been to all the practices, and I'd never seen him run the ball like that. One of my other sons went to college and played the lead in the classic play *Our Town*. If you had asked me if he could memorize the Gettysburg Address, I would have said, "Probably not." But I sat in the audience in tears. Those were the big moments of amazement, but I've seen the little moments too. Once I walked into my son's bedroom and noticed everything was in order. I marveled. If you knew him, you would too!

I think God celebrates the little things as well. Now go with me on this: I think in the same way, we have the ability and God has the desire to be amazed by our faith. When our resources are few, and we continue to give generously, we are in the crosshairs of divine amazement. When we yield ourselves to Him and trust Him with supernatural faith, we get to feel the amazement of the Father, just as the centurion amazed Jesus.

If you want to please Jesus, just have a little faith. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that without faith, it is impossible to please God. If we want to please, truly please, our heavenly Father, we must yield to faith. A yielding faith isn't discarded when storms gather in the western sky. It isn't waiting for the perfect situation. Our yielding faith is a ready faith that withstands the trials of a chaotic season. In this world of uncertainty, as nations rage and fools rule the day, we can be certain that God is looking for people of faith who are willing to overcome the atmosphere and enter an all-consuming, relentless pursuit of Jesus.

The good news about yielding in faith is that when we draw near to God in faith, He promises a great reward. This reward supersedes the flimsy assurances our world offers. Our life here on earth, outside of Christ, has no guarantee of success. But with Christ, even what appears to be failure will be vanquished. That's really the story of the gospel. Jesus didn't come to earth as a conquering hero dispelling His enemies with a bolt of lightning. Jesus personified faith, even amid His own apparent demise. But that's not the end of the story, is it? Jesus invites us into the same faith that raised Him from the dead, so that we can be more than conquerors—both here on earth and throughout eternity.

**QUESTION 5:**

***How can people tell Jesus has authority over your life?***

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## LIVE IT OUT

Faith acknowledges the authority of Jesus.  
Choose one of the following applications:

- **Thanksgiving.** Spend some time alone reflecting on how God has provided for you in the past. Give thanks!
- **Pray.** Make a list of the circumstances that challenge your faith. Ask God to give you a greater faith in His presence and power.
- **Seek.** Seek out someone who is struggling in life during this season. Connect with them. Bless them with your words and deeds.

Where is your faith today? Are you hanging on by a thread? Are you radically depending on Jesus? Are you somewhere in-between? The good news about faith is that the more you practice faith, the better you get at it. A mountain is scaled one step at a time. You'll be amazed how far you'll rise on the wings of yielded faith.



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