



LC STUDY GUIDE "Unfiltered"

The Passage: Matthew 8:5-13
April 1 - 14

How to use the LC Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method (not necessarily on the themes of that particular sermon). In summary, this method stresses “Observation” (what the reader can see from the text), “Interpretation” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “Application” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour or two of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

We are about halfway through Lent and continuing in our series called Unfiltered, where we look at the honest, straight from the heart, often raw prayers made to Jesus. We want to see that Jesus receives our direct and sometimes blunt words and feelings and meets us there.

Prayer is most effective when we draw near to God in the fullness of honesty. So whether we are afraid, grateful, in pain, in need, in adoration, and everything in between, the Lord can meet us where we truly are.

Today’s text looks at an unlikely individual coming to Jesus for help. He is a Roman centurion, and thus seen as an enemy of the Jewish population. It turns out he has an incredible need and he has come to Jesus for help. And Jesus meets him right where he is.

⁵ When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him ⁶ and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.”

⁷ And he said to him, “I will come and cure him.” ⁸ The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.”

¹⁰ When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.” And the servant was healed in that hour.

Matthew 8:5-13

Context:

Matthew is capturing an incredible and rare moment for us. If we could appreciate the context of the day, we would understand the underlying tension and also the beauty of the interaction. The Romans are an occupying presence in Israel and they have made life painful physically, economically, and emotionally for the Jewish people. Roman soldiers, especially a higher ranking one like a centurion, would have little interaction with someone like Jesus, except to assert their dominating roles. But here, this centurion has humbled himself, and come to Jesus for help. Jesus offers to come to the home and heal the servant but the centurion tells him that he is not worthy and just to issue a command and the servant will be healed. And then Matthew records that Jesus is impressed.

O – Re-read the short passage a time or two. What details and features might you have missed the first time? Are there any details or features that strike you?

O/I – Matthew records a variety of miracles in this section. Jesus has come down from the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, and now is displaying his power, love, and authority publically in the gritty everyday life of the community in all its true forms. The section begins with a healing of a leper, who needs not only healing, but to be brought back into community. Describe what you think is the significance of the Roman centurion coming to Jesus for help. *(In short, it’s a personal confession of who the Centurion truly believes is in charge, not Caesar or Herod but Yahweh – the God of Israel! And it’s also a public testimony about Jesus and that his authority has transcended beyond the local Jewish community and has spilled over to the larger, Gentile community as well.)*

I – For those who are intrigued by the personality of Jesus, Matthew tells us that Jesus was impressed by the centurion’s faith. Which brings up a divinity-humanity question, if Jesus knows all things, what does it look like to be impressed? (And does he know those types of things?) Try to avoid too long of a rabbit trail as this is a question to ponder not actually answer, so wonder aloud of the many amazing aspects of our Lord Jesus: What does it mean to you that Jesus was impressed by the centurion’s faith?

(Over and over we read that there are certain truths that Jesus has chosen to keep hidden from himself. For example, in Matthew 24:36, “No one knows when that day or hour will come—not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Still, this may not have meant that Jesus was ignorant of the Centurion’s potential reaction, but that he chose to allow himself to be surprised by it. And even more so, Jesus may also be celebrating the advancement of the things of the Father’s Kingdom—that even the occupying Romans have recognized where true power, true love, and true authority come from.)

A – Do you think Jesus has ever been amazed by your faith? Of course, it would be impossible to know, but consider two applications here in the rhetorical question. Describe a time when you were astonished or amazed by someone else’s faith. Second, while the goal should not be to impress others, as that would likely lead to conceit and self-righteousness, how can you encourage those around with you with your expression of faith?

(Consider what we learned on Sunday of the power of unfiltered intercession.)

A – The questions that we must also ask ourselves today are:

- What does it mean to truly recognize and be in submission to the authority of Jesus?
- What does it mean to make Jesus the Lord of our lives?
- What are the ways that we need to grow to allow him to reign over us?
- As we continue through Lent, is there one place you can offer to the Lord that you have previously kept clutched or have been reluctant to fully offer?

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.