

Unit Title

Faith's Actions

Session 28

The Big Idea

Faith is reflected when we bring our needs to God and trust Him with them.

Session Aims

In this session you will guide students to:

- Learn they can have faith in Jesus' power;
- Feel peace and assurance that they don't have to meet their needs on their own;
- Show their faith by bringing a specific need to God.

The Biggest Verse

"But say the word, and my servant will be healed."
Luke 7:7

Other Important Verses

Psalms 55:22; 105:4,5;
107:19,20; Mark 9:14-27;
Luke 7:1-10; John 14:27;
18:15-18,25-27; 21:15-19;
Hebrews 11:1; James 1:2-4

Teaching Tips

Challenging students to think is essential to helping them to develop a strong faith. They need to understand why they believe the things they say they do. We need to develop convictions in students by often asking tough questions: "Why do you believe that?" "How do you know that is true?" "Where does it say that in the Bible?" Asking tough questions is key to growing students' faith, and teenagers are just getting the intellectual skills to be able to respond.

Followers of Jesus

The Centurion: A Trusting Faith

Step 1 MOVING IN

This step helps students realise that they can't have faith in something unless they think it will work.

You'll need One sturdy chair for every six to seven students and several adult volunteers.

Greet students and divide them into groups of six or seven and, if possible, assign at least one adult to each group. Instruct each group to choose a member to stand on the chair with his or her back to the rest of the group while you explain the rules: Each group's members are going to stand directly behind the person in their group's chair and form two lines facing each other. They are going to place their arms out toward the people facing them to form a landing area for the person on the chair. Without looking back, the student standing on the chair should cross his or her arms across his or her chest and ask, "Are you ready?" The group will respond, "Ready." The student standing on the chair will then say, "Falling," and finally, the group will respond, "Fall away." At this point the person on the chair is to fall backward into the landing area formed by the arms of the rest of his or her group.

Caution: Make sure students understand that they must remain stiff (body straight) as they fall and land. If they bend in the middle as they fall, they will go right through the arms of the people trying to catch them. That is not a good thing!

Have each person in the groups perform the fall, including adults. If you have larger adults, simply add some more people to the catching crew. Sixth-grade girls have been known to catch a 90 kg man falling off a 30 to 60 cm platform, but it takes a lot of them! The key is having an appropriate number of catchers! After everyone has "taken the plunge," discuss:

How did you feel as you were standing on the chair and prepared to fall?

What about when you were standing and waiting to catch the person falling?

What would happen if you didn't think your catching team would do their job?

Who did you have to put your faith in?

How would you have felt if you saw a group of catchers drop someone right before you stood up on the table?

Explain: **You can't have faith in something (or someone) unless you think it (or he or she) will do its (or his or her) job. Today we're going to study a lesser-known follower of Christ who had great faith - possibly the greatest faith Jesus had ever seen - because He knew Jesus' power would work.**

Step 2

MOVING UP

This step teaches students that they can have faith in Jesus' power.

You'll need Your Bible and space to play Simon Says.

The Big Idea

Our faith is made evident when we acknowledge Jesus' power.

The Big Question

What do we need to know in order to have faith in Jesus' power?

Have the students stand for a quick game of Simon Says. Students stand facing you. Say, "Simon says, *raise your right hand*" as you raise your right hand. Continue with other movements. When you leave off "Simon says" and simply give an instruction ("Clap your hands"), the students who copy your action are "out" and sit down. Continue until there is one winner.

After the game, have students sit down and explain: **Words are powerful, not because of the actual letters and sounds themselves, but because of the one who speaks them. In the game you did what I said, not because of the actual words, but because as the leader I have authority here, so you listened to my instructions.**

Now think back to the account of creation from Genesis 1. How did God create everything? Solicit a few responses; then read Genesis 1:3 and continue: **When God created the world, He spoke and it happened. His words were powerful enough to create all things out of nothing! Why? Because He has all authority, so when He speaks, everything stands at attention!**

Explain that there's a passage in the Bible where someone who was in a position of great authority recognised that even his own great authority was not enough. Read Luke 7:1-10 aloud and continue: **A centurion was in charge of 100 soldiers. He would have commanded them on and off the battlefield. Whatever he said, the soldiers had to do or they would be punished - even by death. So when his servant got sick you would think all he'd have to do is order a doctor to come and make his servant better. There are two reasons the centurion is an example of great faith:**

1. He expressed faith in Jesus' authority.

Even though the centurion had a great deal of authority himself, he knew it was nothing compared with Jesus'. By calling Jesus "Lord" (v. 6), he showed his faith in Jesus' authority over not only people, but sickness. The first step to great faith is to recognise that we are unable to do everything. We need Jesus to help.

2. He expressed faith in Jesus' power.

By saying that a simple command would be enough to make the servant well, the centurion showed his faith in Jesus' power. He believed that a word from Him was enough to bring about the miracle he needed.

Conclude: **This doesn't mean that Jesus will do anything we ask; but it does mean that when we recognise His authority and power, we can trust that He will meet every need we have, in accordance with His will for our lives.**

Bible Bonus Note

The first account in the gospels of a Gentile approaching Jesus is the centurion we read about in Luke 7. He was wealthy and influential. As the commander of 100 men, his duties would have included drilling soldiers; inspecting weapons, food and uniforms; and commanding troops in camp and on the battlefield. He was of such good character and reputation that even the Jews admired him - very unusual considering the fact that he was a Gentile and part of the conquering Roman army. In light of this position of power, it is noteworthy that the centurion in Luke 7 recognised Jesus as being far above him in rank and authority. This centurion had such great faith in Jesus' authority and the power that flows from that authority, he believed a simple command from Jesus would be enough to heal his servant. *Continued...*

Step 3 MOVING ON

This step helps students feel peace and assurance that they don't have to meet their needs on their own, but they can depend on Jesus.

You'll need A willingness to wrestle with students with the truth about God.

1. Is faith something we have or is it something that God gives us? There are at least three different answers to that question. One is to say that faith, like grace and like salvation, comes from God as a gift that we receive. Another is that faith is a response that comes from our own choice. A third is that faith is a combination that is based on both God's gift and our choice.

2. Does God get angry with us when we doubt Him? God understands doubt. Jesus was best friends with men who at times doubted Him. Peter denied Jesus three times (see John 18:15-18, 25-27). Was Jesus disappointed? Yes. Did He forgive Peter and encourage him? Yes. According to John 21:15-19, Jesus reinstated Peter after His crucifixion and asked him to take care of His other followers. God understands our struggle, but He keeps telling us to hold on; He's in control and is making us mature and complete (see James 1:2-4).

3. What about when we don't get what we want? Faith means that we trust that God is in charge and knows what is best. It means trusting Him with your life and being able to rely on Him even when things aren't going the way we think they should. In fact, those are the times when we really need our faith to increase so that we don't move away from God.

4. What if I want to have faith that God will do something, but I just don't? In Mark 9:14-27, we get a great answer to that question. When the father of a sick boy realised that he has some faith but needs more, he exclaimed to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). This is a great prayer model for us today. If we didn't have at least a little faith, we wouldn't care about having any faith at all; but if we feel we need more, we can admit to Jesus that although we have a little faith, we need Him to help us believe more.

Step 4 MOVING OUT

This step points out tangible ways that students can bring their needs to Jesus.

You'll need Two student volunteers (one who has had a centurion-type experience where he or she had faith that Jesus could do something incredible; and one who has had an experience where he or she had faith in Jesus and prayed for a specific need, but instead of answering the prayer in the way he or she initially wanted, He answered it in a way that was difficult to accept at first and then wound up being the best thing), several sheets of paper and pens or pencils.

Ahead of time, prepare the volunteers to be very specific with their stories when they share them with the group and to talk about what they learned about faith through their experiences.

Introduce the volunteers and after they finish their stories, explain: **Although sometimes God does exactly what we pray for, other times He does something different, which is often hard at first.**

Continue: **Every one of us has needs, just like the centurion did. It might be a physical, emotional or spiritual need.** Share one of your own needs to trigger students thinking and set an atmosphere of vulnerability. Ask students to identify one area where they need to have faith and want to experience God's peace and assurance while you read Psalm 55:22 aloud. Distribute the papers and pens or pencils and instruct them to write that need on the paper. Have them pray for Jesus to help them have faith that they can trust Him with that need and that He will do the best thing for everyone involved.

Bible Bonus Note *Continued...*

The Jews asked Jesus to do a miracle for the centurion because of what he had done for their community - built a synagogue. Jesus was moved to help him, not because of what the centurion had done, but because of his great faith - a lesson to those Jewish elders and to us as well!