

STUDY GUIDE



LET HOPE IN

DUTCHTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH

LET HOPE IN

HOPE FOUND

MATTHEW 8:1-13

07/10/2016

MAIN POINT

When we seek Christ, we find hope.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Last week we talked about letting go of our past in order to move forward in hope. What did you feel like you needed to let go of based on our discussion last week? Was that difficult for you?

Did you need to do anything in order to truly let go of something from your past (extend forgiveness to someone, have a conversation, etc.)?

What are some ways you began to see more hope this week?

In our study today, we will see the source of true hope. While we might be hoping for a change in our circumstances, true hope is founded in and is about something far greater than that. Real hope is only found in the person of Jesus Christ. When we seek Christ, we find hope.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

WATCH THE VIDEO SEGMENT FOR SESSION 2 FEATURING PETE WILSON.

AS A GROUP, READ MATTHEW 8:1-13.

What are some of the things we learn about the character of Jesus from these stories?

Why are those characteristics important if we want to find hope?

As Pete said, Jesus did some remarkable things in these miracles. He touched the leper before healing him, something that would have been unthinkable for the people of the day. Not only that, He associated with and commended a Gentile soldier and his faith.

If Jesus was willing to touch the untouchable, what does that mean about how He relates to you?

Is there any part of your life or past that you have thought made you untouchable by God?

If Jesus was willing to associate with this Gentile, what does that mean about how much He loves you? Have you ever felt like you were too far from God in order to be found?

What does it mean to come as you are to Jesus? How did these people do that?

Why is Jesus' response to them encouraging to you?

Pete told us that Jesus is comfortable in the midst of your mess. What parts of your life feel messy right now?

Are you hesitant to invite Jesus into that part of your life? Why?

The Gentile soldier was commended for his faith. What does it look like to go to Jesus with your mess in faith? What are you trusting Him to do?

These miracles show us that it's okay to approach Jesus; in fact, He wants us to. And He wants us to come as we are. When we are willing to come to Jesus, we will find that He's not going to shut us out but instead will fill us with hope because of His love and power.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

As Pete said, there is no shame in asking Jesus for help. What do you need help with right now?

Who are some people or groups of people in your life or our culture that are like the lepers and Gentiles—despised and overlooked? What should our response be as Christ-followers to these groups of people?

What is one step in faith you can make this week toward Jesus?

PRAY

Pray to close your group. Pray specifically for the situations people need help with in their lives right now.

Visit lifeway.com to purchase the Bible study book for more in-depth individual and group study.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 8:1-13

8:2. What is meant by “leprosy” is difficult to identify. The Greek term can refer to several conditions, ranging from fungal infections to Hansen’s Disease. The OT law required lepers to be isolated from society (Lv 13:45-46). By kneeling before Jesus and addressing Him as Lord (Gk “kurios,” the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Yahweh), the man recognized Jesus as far more than just a man. His confidence in Jesus’ ability to heal his condition hints that his act of worship involved full recognition of Jesus’ deity. After all, only God was capable of healing lepers in the OT (Ex 4:6-7; Num 12:10-16; 2Ki 5:1-15, esp. v. 7). The man’s qualification, “if You are willing,” may indicate that other so-called healers had mistreated or failed him.

8:3-4. Although Jesus frequently healed by touch (v. 15; 9:20,25), He could heal by command and even at great distance from the sufferer (8:5-13; 9:6). Touching a leper was an expression of boldness and deep compassion since doing so was prohibited by OT law (Lv 5:3). By being inspected and declared clean by the priest, the healed man could authenticate the miracle that Jesus performed.

8:5-7. Sometime (Matthew did not tell us exactly when) after the cleansing of the leper, Jesus returned to the city of Capernaum (pronounced, kuh PUHR nay uhm), a center of travel and trade on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. News of Jesus’ miracles not only followed Him, but also preceded Him. Jesus had no sooner entered the city than a second petitioner, a Roman centurion (the commander of about a 100 Roman soldiers), came to Him. The officer was likely responsible for the soldiers garrisoned in the city, which Herod Antipas, one of Rome’s Jewish puppet governors, had been charged by the emperor to maintain by law and order. It would not have been unusual for a Roman officer responsible for keeping the peace to approach a Jewish teacher whose reputation for drawing controversial crowds was well known. However, this Gentile was on an entirely different mission, which would have been every bit as remarkable as a Jewish leper abandoning his isolation to approach Jesus (vv. 1-4). The centurion had not come policing Jesus, but pleading with Him!

Why would a representative of Rome’s occupying army come urgently begging a controversial citizen of a small and troublesome nation for help? The mystery was clarified as soon as the centurion spoke. He approached Jesus with remarkable respect, submissively calling Him Lord. Then he spoke of his great concern for a servant whom he had left lying at his home paralyzed and in terrible agony. Most of the Jewish crowd who watched the amazing sight of a centurion turning to Jesus would not only have questioned his right, but also the sincerity of his confession. Jesus, just as He did with the leper, affirmed His willingness to help. He immediately answered, “I will come and heal him.”

8:8. Likely those following Him (v. 10) did not anticipate the centurion’s response to Jesus’ statement. The man said, “I am not worthy to have You come under my roof,” an amazing attitude for a Roman commander. His statement possibly showed a sense of personal unworthiness to host the Lord in his home. Or perhaps the centurion simply was recognizing the ritual uncleanness that would occur if Jesus entered a Gentile’s house. There is, however, no need to guess just how far the centurion’s faith had come as he turned to Jesus for help. He stated his conviction that if Jesus would only say the word, his servant would be cured. Astonishing. Remarkable. How great was his faith in Jesus!

8:9. The centurion based his belief in Jesus’ authority on his own position of power in the military. He knew his power was the result of his commission in the army of Rome. He was under authority. He was not surprised, therefore, that when he issued an order, whether to soldiers under his command or to a slave under his control, that they obeyed. His command was the same as if the emperor had spoken. Just as the centurion commanded others and they obeyed his orders, he also believed Jesus could command his servant’s illness to be cured on the spot and it would happen. It was enough for him to believe that Jesus, like himself, was under authority; but that unlike him, Jesus was under God’s authority for ministry. When Jesus spoke the word, the centurion had no doubt the servant’s paralysis would be gone in an instant.

8:10. Upon hearing the centurion’s unconditional trust (“only say the word” v. 8) Jesus was amazed. He literally marveled at the centurion’s faith. He marveled because no one else in Israel had faith in Him as did this Gentile soldier. A sermon preached can be very effective, but seeing one lived is powerful indeed. Pointing to the centurion’s faith, Jesus emphasized (the meaning of “I assure you”) to the Jewish crowd that He had “not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith!

8:11-12. The Bible pictures the ultimate and eternal victory of God as a great heavenly feast or banquet (see Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-16; Rev. 19:9), which God will share with His family. Unfortunately, the Jews of Jesus’ day were convinced that this honor was a national one belonging to Israel alone. Just as He had previously said, Jesus’ emphatic (“I tell you”) told them that God’s banquet is not limited by geographic, ethnic, cultural, racial, or national constraints. He said, “many will come from east and west, and recline at the table.” In light of His commendation of the centurion’s faith, Jesus indicated that Gentiles (from east and west) along with believing Jews will come in faith to Jesus and enjoy fellowship as part of God’s kingdom.

This participation in God’s kingdom is only through faith. Some of the Jews would not be included in the blessings of the kingdom because of their unbelief and rejection of Jesus. Jesus specifically warned the Jews that they could not depend on their national heritage as sons of the kingdom. This phrase was a common self-identifying idiom for the Jews’ belief that they were part of God’s covenant by birth. Apart from exercising the same kind of individual faith in Him they had just seen in the

centurion, Jesus warned that they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. Rather, they would experience outer darkness of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus' message was clear. Salvation is not a matter of a birthright but a right-birth. It is being "born again" (John 3:7).

8:13. Almost as an afterthought, Jesus turned to the centurion and directed him to go because his servant was cured that very moment. He had believed Jesus was the answer to the servant's need, and Jesus rewarded the centurion's faith in Him. The amazing faith, which had shamed an entire nation (v. 10), but brought joy to Jesus, now propelled a joyful soldier home to celebrate the healing with his family. 8:2. What is meant by "leprosy" is difficult to identify. The Greek term can refer to several conditions, ranging from fungal infections to Hansen's Disease. The OT law required lepers to be isolated from society (Lv 13:45-46). By kneeling before Jesus and addressing Him as Lord (Gk "kurios," the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Yahweh), the man recognized Jesus as far more than just a man. His confidence in Jesus' ability to heal his condition hints that his act of worship involved full recognition of Jesus' deity. After all, only God was capable of healing lepers in the OT (Ex 4:6-7; Num 12:10-16; 2Ki 5:1-15, esp. v. 7). The man's qualification, "if You are willing," may indicate that other so-called healers had mistreated or failed him.