



Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

“Willing and Able”

Matthew 8:1-17

Main Point: Jesus is the Messiah.

Wonderful reminders related to the revelation that Jesus is the Messiah:

Jesus the Messiah can cleanse those who come to Him in faith (1-4).

What a beautiful picture of an individual coming to Jesus in humble and trusting faith. In this case, the leper’s faith was in the power of Jesus to heal. It wasn’t that the leper saw Jesus in the fullness of who He was or that the leper understood the full power of Jesus in the eternal depth of what He could do. Rather, the leper came to Jesus with full confidence that Jesus was able to heal him physically, if Jesus was willing. In faith, the leper made a bold and risky move. This outcast of society, who wasn’t supposed to come near anyone who was clean, came to Jesus! It’s not just that leprosy was feared, but the condition was also viewed as a curse from God. The tension in that moment must have been powerful, and in an even more powerful move, Jesus reached through the walls of culture and fear, touching what was unclean and making the leper clean. In a beautiful and powerful way, this story reveals the heart of God and the grace of God towards those who come to Him in faith. It reveals the power of Jesus over the power and results of sin in this world, specifically in sickness and in disease. Most importantly, it displays the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of the long-awaited Messiah!

1. Discuss the leper’s faith in the ability of Jesus to heal him. Why is faith in God’s ability so important? In what ways does this aspect of faith get challenged?
2. Discuss the leper’s understanding that his healing was dependent on the will of Jesus. Why is trust in the will of God so important when it comes to faith? In what ways does this aspect of faith get challenged?
3. Why do you think the word “cleanse” (as opposed to “heal”) was used in this story? What’s the significance of this word in connection to leprosy? How does this add significance to the words and actions of the leper and Jesus? Why is this important today?

Faith in Jesus the Messiah is a matter of eternal significance (5-13).

In the second story of healing, a Gentile came to Jesus in the hopes that Jesus would heal one of his servants. In another case of breaking barriers of race and culture, the faith of the Gentile man was implied in the actions and words related in the story. Jesus didn’t wait for the question to be asked; instead, he responded immediately by indicating His willingness to go to the centurion’s home and to heal the man’s servant. Incredibly, the man’s humble and confident

faith in Jesus was then revealed in an astounding way. The centurion declared that there was no need for Jesus to go to the trouble of coming to his home; instead, he trusted that Jesus could simply give the command and his servant would be healed. In this moment, Jesus focused on sharing how the faith of this Gentile was much greater than any faith that He'd seen among the Jewish people. Most importantly, Jesus connected faith with eternal life in the family of God, declaring God's beautiful plan to build His family through faith in all the nations and emphasizing how faith in Jesus is connected with eternal life with God. More important that the power of the Messiah to provide temporary, physical healing in life in this world is the ultimate work of the Messiah in providing eternal, spiritual healing for the life to come.

1. The servant was sick and unable to come to Jesus, and there's nothing said about the faith of the servant that was healed. Discuss these differences in the two situations in these stories. Discuss the similarities in terms of the cultural barriers that were broken.
2. Read verses 10-12. Imagine being a Jew and hearing these words of Jesus for the first time. How would you have reacted to what Jesus said about the eternal destination of many "sons of the kingdom?" How would these words challenge your thinking about faith?
3. Discuss how faith impacts the eternal and the temporal. Both are important, but do you have a healthy balance and focus in your approach to faith? How does an eternal focus bring strength and health to faith in the here-and-now?
4. How do the words of Jesus bring a proper understanding of physical healing and faith?

Jesus the Messiah can work in the lives of those who are brought to Him in faith (14-17).

The final story of healing in this section is completely different than the first two. The leper came to Jesus in humble faith, which was stated clearly in his words and actions. The Gentile came to Jesus with a beautiful faith, which was stated in his actions and then affirmed and reinforced with his words. However, Peter's mother-in-law didn't say or do anything! Jesus responded to her problem and worked in her life without any recorded action of faith on her part. Then many others were brought to Jesus by other people, and Jesus healed them of their sicknesses. What an important reminder that God can't be put in a box! These stories aren't giving us a formula for getting God to heal the sick. These stories give us evidence — real proof — of the identity of Jesus. Matthew pointed to the prophet Isaiah, quoting from Is. 53:4, in order to reinforce who Jesus was: Jesus was the Messiah! Today, that's still who Jesus is! He is the Messiah, who is the Savior of the World, and he is still focused on faith and on eternity.

1. In your small group, discuss people who need to be brought to Jesus! Make a list of first names, and take time to break into small groups of 2 or 3 and pray for these people.
2. What is a concrete way that you can talk to one of these individuals this week about who Jesus is and about the importance of faith in your life? Commit to do that this week, and also commit to invite someone to church next Sunday.
3. Read Isaiah 53. Discuss the significance of this passage in connection with the stories that were told in Matthew 8:1-17. What does God mean when His Word states that "this was to fulfill..." in Matthew 8:17? What is the true focus of the healing and saving work of the Messiah?