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~ **The Centurion's Servant and the Widow's Son** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read the stories in Luke 7:1-17 and Matthew 8:5-13
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story from the New American Standard Bible and from the Easy Read Version

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New Living Translation (NLT) **Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.**

Luke 7:1-17 - NASB	Luke 7:1-17– New Living Translation
<p>When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.</p> <p>² And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. ³ When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵ for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." ⁶ Now Jesus <i>started</i> on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷ for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but <i>just</i> say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ⁹ Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.</p> <p>¹¹ Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. ¹² Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ And He came up and touched the coffin; and the</p>	<p>When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people, he returned to Capernaum. ² At that time the highly valued slave of a Roman officer was sick and near death. ³ When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his slave. ⁴ So they earnestly begged Jesus to help the man. "If anyone deserves your help, he does," they said, ⁵ "for he loves the Jewish people and even built a synagogue for us."</p> <p>⁶ So Jesus went with them. But just before they arrived at the house, the officer sent some friends to say, "Lord, don't trouble yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of such an honor. ⁷ I am not even worthy to come and meet you. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."</p> <p>⁹ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, "I tell you, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!" ¹⁰ And when the officer's friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed</p> <p>¹¹ Soon afterward Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nain, and a large crowd followed him. ¹² A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. "Don't cry!" he said. ¹⁴ Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. "Young man," he said, "I tell you, get up." ¹⁵ Then the dead boy sat up and</p>

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bearers came to a halt. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!” ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to speak. And <i>Jesus</i> gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶ Fear gripped them all, and they <i>began</i> glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!” ¹⁷ This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.	began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶ Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, “A mighty prophet has risen among us,” and “God has visited his people today.” ¹⁷ And the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside.
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

The Centurion's Servant

- The centurion was the backbone of the Roman army. He was a veteran and his position had prestige. He was paid 15 times the rate of an ordinary soldier. He could be identified by his chest armor of tough molded leather, his transverse plumed helmet and wooden baton.
- Some Jews served in the Roman army. He may have been Jewish, maybe Gentile. He may have been a military official in Herod Antipas' service.
- Capernaum was a garrison city.
- The Greek word in Matthew is not *doulos* but *pais*, a servant/boy for whom the centurion had great affection
- According to rabbinic legislation that may have originated in the first century, a Jew would become defiled by entering a Gentile home. However, the centurion recognizes that he is the one who is defiled when Jesus approaches him, “I am not worthy.”
- Outside in the darkness = outside the brightly lit halls where the banquet takes place.
- Weeping and gnashing of teeth can also be found in Matthew 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30
- The centurion may have sent the Jewish elders thinking they would have more influence with Jesus.

The Healing of the widow's son

- The Hebrew word for widow is “one who is silent, unable to speak” because she has no voice in society.
- A widow would be extremely vulnerable
- A widow could return to her paternal family (Lev 22:13; Ruth 1:8).
- Much OT is about taking advantage of widows – Deut 22:22-23; Job 22:9; 24:3; 31:16; Psa 94:6; Isa 1:23; 10:2; Mal 3:5
- Under the special protection of God – Deut 10:18; Jer 49:11; Ps 68:5; Deut 14:29; 24:17; 19-21; 26:12; Luke 20:47; James 1:27
- Touching the bier would defile Jesus.
- Jesus not only raises the son but he restores the mother to the community.
- Nain was about south of Capernaum about two miles to the west of Endor. It was situated a high elevation against the slopes of the Little Hermon and still exists today as a small village called Nein. Tombs in the rock have been found before the eastern gate of the village along the road leading to Capernaum.

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- The procession would include hired mourners and musicians with flutes and cymbals.
- Custom had the woman in front of the bier

These insights from Social Science Commentary of the Synoptic Gospels by Bruce J. Malina

3. Answer these reflective questions.

What do you think would cause a Roman centurion to love the Jewish people and to build a synagogue for them? What does this show about the work of God in his heart?

The Jewish elders said the centurion was “worthy,” while the centurion said, “I am not worthy.” Why was there a difference of opinion about this man’s worthiness to have Jesus come and perform a miracle for him?

Jesus said the centurion had great faith, greater than anything he had seen in Israel. How did the centurion demonstrate his faith?

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When Jesus referred to those coming from east and west, north and south to recline at table in the kingdom, to whom was he referring?

Jesus raised the widow's son back to life even though she showed no signs of faith. The story just says that Jesus had compassion on her. Who do you know that needs an act of compassion today, regardless of whether they have faith?
