

THE STORY HOUSTON: **inspiring non-religious Houstonians** to follow Jesus

CHASING HOPE: how ordinary people make extraordinary disciples

PART 7: THE CENTURIONS | 3.8.20 | thestoryhouston.church | [@thestoryhouston](https://www.instagram.com/thestoryhouston)
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INTRO TO CHASING HOPE

What do the lives of Jesus' first disciples teach us about authentic Christianity? What inspiration can we glean from those women and men who gave it all to follow him? Each week in this series we're taking an up-close, between-the-lines look at some of the everyday people who chose to follow Jesus, and we'll find ourselves in each story.

ROMAN CENTURIONS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

What role did centurions play in the Roman military? What was life probably like for them?

How many centurions appear in the New Testament text, and why is that surprising?

THE CENTURION AND HIS SERVANT

In Luke 7:1-10 we are introduced to a centurion whose favorite servant is sick and about to die. What steps did the centurion take in a last-ditch effort to save his servant's life? Why did the elders of the Jews do what he asked? How did Jesus respond to the elders' request?

What was the centurion suggesting when he compared his authority over his troops to Jesus' authority? What does that suggest to you about the centurion's understanding of Jesus' identity?

"JESUS WAS AMAZED AT HIM"

What was it about the centurion's words that 'amazed' Jesus?

What message was Jesus sending about salvation when he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel"? What is the relationship between faith in Jesus and salvation, regardless of religious identity?

CENTURION CHRISTIANS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

What role did centurions play in the early church? How do we know that?

Why is it 'Good News' to learn that some of the first Christians were Roman soldiers?

What does all of this say about God?

BIBLE PASSAGES FROM TODAY'S MESSAGE

Luke 7:1-10 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Mark 15:33-39 At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Acts 10:1-4, 44-48 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Romans 3:21-26 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.