Bible Point
Following Jesus means having faith.

Bible Verse
“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Students will
- identify the confidence faith inspires,
- recognize Jesus’ power shown in his miracles, and
- have an opportunity to express their faith in Jesus’ ability to handle real-life problems.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
- Jesus heals the centurion’s servant.

Matthew 8:5-13
A Roman centurion commanded 100 soldiers. The centurion in this story was apparently a very unusual Roman officer. Luke 7:1-10, which tells the same story as today’s passage, tells us that the centurion loved the Jewish people and had even had their synagogue built for them. The Luke passage also shows that the Jews seemed to care for the centurion; they testified to Jesus on his behalf and told Jesus that the centurion deserved to receive the healing he requested for his servant.

This Roman centurion understood authority. He knew that when his superiors spoke, he jumped. He knew that when he spoke, the men under him jumped. And he must have had a remarkable understanding of who Jesus was, because he deduced that if Jesus spoke, any part of creation to which Jesus directed his command would “jump,” or respond immediately.

Jesus’ response to the centurion’s statement not only credits the centurion with a remarkable faith but goes on to suggest to the Jews who were listening that this faith of an outsider might be just the beginning. Jesus indicated that people outside the Jewish faith would actually be taking the places in the kingdom of God that Jewish people, by their lack of faith, would have lost.

The Roman centurion exhibited a faith that was beyond anything Jesus had seen. And that faith resulted in an unprecedented miracle: Jesus healed the servant without even being physically in his presence.

Prayer
• What message strikes you from this story?
• Pray: Lord, give me faith like that of the centurion. I need that kind of faith today to…
## Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.
- Make photocopies of the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for your students and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.

## This Lesson at a Glance

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Welcome

As kids arrive, ask them how they applied what they learned last week. Ask questions such as “Where did you learn about Jesus this past week?” and “What new things have you learned about Jesus recently?” Tell kids that whenever you ring the bell, they are to stop talking, raise their hands, and focus on you. Explain that it’s important to respond to this signal quickly so the class can do as many fun activities as possible.

Attention Grabber

Superheroes

SUPPLIES: newsprint, tape, crayons or markers

Have children form trios. Give each trio several large sheets of newsprint, tape, and crayons or markers. Say: Each group will make a superhero. First, tape your sheets of newsprint together to make one huge sheet. Next, have one person lie on the newsprint while the other two people trace around that person. Then fill in the outline to create a superhero. Invent a new superhero of your own—with a fun name, unique powers, and an interesting costume. I’ll give you five minutes to work.

Circulate among groups as they work, encouraging kids and offering suggestions. As they finish, give a one-minute warning, and then ring the bell. Wait for kids to respond, and then gather them in a circle. Have groups present their superheroes and tape their completed drawings on the wall. When everyone has shared, ask:

• What makes the superhero you created special? (He’s invincible; she can fly; his hideout is inside a volcano.)

• What would it be like to have any of these superheroes for your friend? (It would be cool because he could protect me; it would be fun because she could fly me anywhere I wanted to go.)

Say: Each of us has a friend who is even better than a superhero—Jesus!

Ask: • How is Jesus stronger than a superhero? (Jesus has more power than anyone; Jesus has power over death.)

• How is Jesus a better friend than a superhero might be? (Jesus always cares about me; Jesus loves me, so he is the perfect friend.)

• If you were presenting Jesus as more than a superhero, but the hero of your life, what would you tell others about him? (Jesus is both powerful and loving; Jesus made a way for me to go to heaven, which is super-heroic.)

Say: Jesus has great power that he uses to help us. Following Jesus means having faith in his great power. Let’s thank Jesus for his great power.

Bible Insight

The centurion had a faith in Jesus that was well thought through. He knew that as an officer, he had the authority to make sweeping changes in the areas he ruled because his power came from the emperor. He reasoned that Jesus carried the same kind of authority through God who sent him.
If any of the children want to pray aloud, let them open this time of prayer. Then pray:

**Dear Jesus, thank you for your love for us and for your incredible power. Help us to have the faith we need to follow you each day. Amen.**

Say: **Today we’re going to discover some of the things that Jesus can do.** Leave the drawings in place for the closing activity.

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**Bible Exploration & Application**

**With Just a Word**

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, Hershey’s Kisses, paper lunch bag, “With Just a Word” handout (p. 76), paper, scissors, pencils

Before class, place enough Hershey’s Kisses chocolates in a paper lunch bag for each person in your class to have at least one. Stuff the garland in the top of the bag so that none of the candies can be seen. You’ll also need to photocopy the “With Just a Word” handout and cut it into four sections as indicated.

Have kids sit in a circle. Then ask:

- **What is your definition of faith?** (Trusting; believing something I can’t see.)
- **How have you heard other people use the word faith?** (When they talk about following Jesus; when they talk about hoping that something will happen.)

Say: **I have a paper bag with something inside for each of you. What do you hope it is?** Let kids respond. The idea of a treat or food is sure to come up.

I’m going to let you each close your eyes and reach underneath the garland to feel what’s in the bag. When you’re sure of what’s in the bag, nod your head but don’t say anything. If you can’t tell what’s in the bag, just silently shake your head. Allow each student to reach inside the bag. After each child has had a turn, say: **Raise your hand if you feel absolutely certain you know what’s in the bag.** (Pause.) **Raise your hand if you think you know what’s in the bag.** (Pause.) **Raise your hand if you don’t have a clue what’s in the bag.** If some students don’t know what’s in the bag, have someone who is absolutely certain whisper in their ears. Continue to keep the secret as you go on with the lesson. Periodically throughout this activity, ask the kids to remember what’s in the bag.

The Bible tells us about a man who trusted in Jesus for something he hoped for but couldn’t see. This man was powerful—an officer in the army who commanded 100 soldiers. Let’s see what happened.

Form four groups, and give each group a Bible. Also, give each group a pencil, paper, and one section of the “With Just a Word” handout. Have each group select a Reader to read **Matthew 8:5-13** aloud to the group, a Recorder to write the group’s responses, a Reporter who will share the responses, and one or more Encouragers who will keep everyone involved in the discussion. Allow a few minutes for groups to read the Bible passage, discuss the questions on their section of the handout, and work out their responses. Circulate among the groups as they work, offering help as needed and reminding the kids to think about what’s in the bag.
After three or four minutes, ring the bell to bring everyone together. Have the Reporters read the handout questions and share their groups’ responses.

Kids’ responses may be similar to these:

Section 1. Nervous; excited about what Jesus could do; scared that Jesus might tell him to go away. Because he saw Jesus do other miracles; because he’d heard all of the amazing things Jesus had done.

Section 2. I’d be really excited; hopeful; glad that my master cared enough to get Jesus. I’d definitely believe in Jesus; I’d want to follow Jesus; I’d be healthy.

Section 3. Because not many people believed in Jesus’ power; because the officer wasn’t a Jew; because Jesus was used to having people doubt him. He probably felt happy; he probably felt surprised.

Section 4. I’d think the officer was brave; I’d think he had a lot of faith; I’d want to know him. I’d believe in Jesus more; I’d want to have faith like the centurion.

Say: Thanks for those answers! The officer sure had a lot of faith in Jesus, didn’t he? Let’s see how the Bible describes faith. Read Hebrews 11:1 aloud.

Ask: • How was the Roman soldier’s reaction like the faith described in this verse? (He believed in something that he couldn’t see; he had hope in something that seemed impossible.)

Say: Now think back to your experience with what’s in the paper bag. You may be hoping for a treat, but you haven’t seen it yet.

Ask: • How do you think your feelings about what’s in the bag compare with the Roman soldier’s feelings? (I hope for something good, and he was hoping for something good; his hopes were a matter of life and death while mine are just for something sweet to eat.)

Have kids come back together in a circle. Return the garland to the Learning Lab. Then pass the bag around the circle, letting each child take a candy. As kids enjoy their treats, say: You were certain of what was in the bag because you trusted what your fingers felt or because you trusted the friend who told you what was in the bag. The Roman soldier was certain of Jesus’ power because he trusted Jesus and had faith in him.

Ask: • What would life be like if we had faith in Jesus like the Roman officer’s? (We wouldn’t worry as much; we would have a stronger relationship with Jesus.)

• How can we build our faith? (By talking to Jesus more; by reading our Bibles more; by talking to others about what we believe.)

Say: Just as the army officer believed that Jesus could heal his servant, we can believe that Jesus will use his power to help us today. Following Jesus means having faith.

■ Amazing Feats

SUPPLIES: Bibles, index cards, scissors

Before class, practice folding and cutting an index card as explained on page 72.

Say: You probably didn’t realize that I have some amazing powers myself. I can do some seemingly
impossible things. Hold up the gold hoop. For instance, would you believe that I can poke my head through this gold hoop? Allow a few kids to try poking their heads through the gold hoop. See, it’s not that easy. But I can do it! Watch.

Hold the gold hoop in front of your forehead, as if you’re going to stick your head through it; then hold up your finger and touch your forehead through the gold hoop.

Say: See, I poked my head through the gold hoop! Bow as if accepting applause.

Place a mini disk on the floor in front of you. Say: Would you believe that I can jump into this mini disk? I can! Watch. Jump forward so that you bump the mini disk. See, I jumped into the mini disk! Bow again as if accepting applause. Return the gold hoop and mini disk to the Learning Lab.

Hold up an index card. Say: I have one more amazing thing that I can do. But this one takes a little time. Would you believe that I can step through this index card? I can! In fact, I think you can, too!

Distribute index cards and scissors, and show kids how to fold and cut the cards according to the diagram in the margin. Explain that thin slits work best.

After kids have stretched out their index cards, show them how to step through the long necklace they’ve created! Kids may wear the necklaces around their necks. Collect the scissors and form a circle.

Ask: • What did you think of my amazing tricks? (They were goofy; they were funny.)

• Why were they less than amazing? (Because you didn’t really do anything amazing; what you said you would do was a little different from what you really did.)

• What would you think if I really could do unbelievable things? (I would be amazed; I would think that was really cool.)

Say: My unbelievable feats weren’t so great. But there is someone we can trust to do real amazing things—Jesus! Let’s find where the Bible tells us about the amazing things that Jesus did.

Form three groups. Assign one of the following Scripture passages to each group:

• Matthew 8:23-27
• Matthew 14:22-32
• Mark 10:46-52

Have each group select two or three readers to read the assigned passage and a reporter to give a summary of the passage to the whole class. When kids have reported on the passages, ask:

• Why are the things that Jesus did so amazing? (Because they’re humanly impossible; because no one has power over the weather; because we can’t walk on water or heal people.)

• Do you believe these accounts are real? Why or why not? (Yes, they’re in the Bible; I’m not sure, they sound too amazing to be true.)

• What are reasons we can have faith in Jesus? (Because we believe what the Bible says about Jesus is true; because we have seen things happen in our own lives when we’ve prayed; because Jesus has changed my life.)

• What amazing things do you think Jesus can do in your life? (Give me courage to do what’s right; help me obey even when it’s hard; love me even when I do wrong things.)

Say: Following Jesus means having faith that Jesus has real power. The Bible tells the real stories of the real things Jesus did. Things that seem
impossible for us are easy for Jesus to do. He wants us to believe that he can do great things, just as the Roman soldier believed that Jesus could heal his servant. When you get home, hang up your necklace as a reminder that Jesus can do anything and you can have faith in him.

**Faith Relay**

*Supplies: blindfolds*

Form two teams, and have both teams stand at one end of the room. Have children form pairs in each line. Explain that one person in each pair will wear a blindfold and the other will use the *handicopter*. To make it easier to decide who should take each role, have the child in each pair whose birthday will arrive first wear the blindfold. Distribute a blindfold and a *handicopter* to the first pair in each line.

Say: *This relay involves working together. If you have the *handicopter*, you’ll spin it between your hands, and then let the *handicopter* fly and land. Then you’ll guide your blindfolded partner to pick up the *handicopter*. You’ll continue spinning the *handicopter* toward the opposite wall until you’ve both reached the wall. Then remove the blindfold from your partner, and quickly return to your team so the next pair can go.*

When everyone understands the rules, demonstrate how to spin a *handicopter*, and then start the race. When everyone is finished, put the blindfolds and *handicopters* away. Gather kids in a circle and ask:

- **What was challenging for you about this game?** (I was worried I’d get hit with the *handicopter*; it was hard to make the *handicopter* go where I wanted it to go; it was slow having to lead a blindfolded person around.)

- **What would make this game easier?** (Just running; not wearing the blindfolds; not having to follow the *handicopter* around; not having a partner.)

- **Have you ever had a day when you wished things could have been easier? Explain.** (Yes, I had a rough day with a test and a bully and a fight at home; yes, the day my pet died was a day I wish could have been easier.)

Say: *Sometimes difficult or challenging things happen to us. Just like this *handicopter*, we can spin out of control when something unexpected happens to us. But that’s where faith keeps us going forward. Following Jesus means having faith. Think about the Roman soldier from the Bible. His life was spinning out of control because his servant was dying. But he trusted Jesus to help him, and so can we. Jesus can lead us where we need to go, even if we can’t really see where we’re going! We just have to trust him.*

**Have Faith**

*Supplies: none*

Have the kids sit in a circle on the floor. Say: *The officer in the Bible account had a lot of power. He probably could have tried different ways or trusted different people to help his servant instead of going to Jesus.* Set out the gizmos from the Learning Lab (but not the seeds or glow crystals).
People today are kind of like that officer. There are lots of things we can trust in when we’re worried. Choose an item from the Learning Lab that reminds you of something people have faith in, or trust, besides Jesus. It can be a good thing to trust or a bad thing to trust. Be ready to tell us why you chose the item you did.

You may have to help some of your students make a connection between the items and something they could trust. Some ideas are

- the gold coins or the $100 bills, for people who trust money.
- the cedar hearts, for people who trust someone they love.
- the graduation cap, for people who trust what they have learned.
- the garland, for people who trust whatever sparkles the most.
- the mini disks, for people who trust whatever seems fun.
- the inflatable microphone, for people who trust someone famous.

Let the kids share what they have selected and why they chose it. Then ask:

- Which of the things we mentioned are good for people to trust? (It’s good to trust people we love; it might be good to trust what we’ve learned to make a decision.)

- Which of those things might be bad to trust? (Trusting in money or possessions isn’t good; some famous people might lead us away from God.)

Say: Our Bible verse is Hebrews 11:1. It says, “Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.”

Our hope is in Jesus and our relationship with him. It’s OK to trust the people we love and have confidence in what we’ve learned, but Jesus is the only one who will never let us down or give us bad advice. We need to remember that following Jesus means having faith.

BIBLE VERSE

Place construction paper, markers, tape, yarn, crepe paper streamers, and scissors where children can reach them.

Say: We can’t see the wind, but we can see what the wind does. In the same way, we can’t see Jesus, but we can see what Jesus does. This helps us have faith in Jesus. Let’s do a project that will remind us that even though we can’t see Jesus, we can still have faith in him.

Have children open their Hands-On Bibles and find the Hebrews 11:1 Key Verse activity. Let them read through the instructions and then complete the craft. If time and weather permit, have children take their completed projects outside so they can let the wind blow through them.
Closing

Follow On

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player, paper, pencils

Cue the CD to the “Meditative Music” segment (track 11).

Point to the superhero pictures the kids made in the opening activity. Say: Remember those superheroes you drew? None of them can compare to Jesus! This next activity will help us remember that ►following Jesus means having faith.

Give each child a piece of paper and a pencil, and ask kids to write or draw something they’re worried about. Then have kids fold their papers into the smallest squares they can. Have kids stand in a line against the opposite wall.

Say: Without moving, toss your paper worry toward your superhero picture. Give kids a moment to toss their papers. There now, don’t you feel better? What? Your superhero wasn’t able to help you with your worry? Maybe you’d better try again. Let kids retrieve their papers, return to the wall, and toss them again. Then have kids pick up their papers and sit in a circle.

We’ve talked a lot about faith today. When we try to handle our problems alone, without Jesus, it’s like trying to toss these papers at the superhero pictures. No one, and nothing, can help you the way Jesus can. Faith in Jesus means trusting him to handle all of our problems, just as the Roman officer in our story trusted Jesus. Listen to what the Bible says about faith in Jesus. Read aloud Hebrews 12:1-2a.

Set the Bible open to the Hebrews passage in the center of the circle. Say: ►Following Jesus means having faith. I want you to think about the problem you’re holding in your hand. As I play some quiet music, pray silently that Jesus will help you with this problem and with any other worries you might have right now. When you finish praying, quietly place your paper on this open Bible and then sit quietly as others pray.

Play “Meditative Music” (track 11) on the CD. When everyone has finished praying and has placed a paper on the Bible, stop the CD. Close in a group prayer, thanking God for giving us his Son and for the opportunity to have faith in and follow Jesus.

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your kids. Encourage kids and parents to use the handout to spark meaningful discussion on this week’s topic.
1. How do you think the army officer felt as he approached Jesus? Why do you think he had such great faith in Jesus?

2. If you were the servant, what would you think about your master going to see Jesus? How would your life be different after Jesus' healing words?

3. Why was Jesus amazed by the officer’s faith? How do you think Jesus felt, knowing that someone believed in him so much?

4. If you were in the crowd that day, what would you think about the officer? How might your life be different by what you saw and heard?
Following Jesus means having faith.

“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Read Matthew 8:8-9.

Who is the most powerful person you know? What people or things does that person command? What does Jesus have under his command?

Read Ephesians 2:8.

What are some of the best gifts you’ve ever received? How can you thank God for the gift of faith? Who is someone who needs to receive the gift of faith? Pray for that person.

“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Miracle Mime Time

Play Miracle Mime at home with your family this week. Each night, let a different person pantomime one of Jesus’ miracles while the rest of the family guesses. Then read about the miracle together in the New Testament. Some passages might be Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 17:11-19; or John 11:1-44.

Try this “You’ll-never-believe-it-’til-you-see-it” experiment: Place a ruler on a table with a straight edge so that 10 inches of the ruler is on the table and two inches of the ruler hangs off. Lay a double sheet of newspaper over the top of it so that the edge of the paper is even with the edge of the table. Now hit the ruler as hard as you can!

Discuss how faith in Jesus helps us to stand firm when bad things happen, just as the newspaper “stood firm” when the ruler was struck. Faith is like the air pressure (at 15 pounds per square inch) that held the fragile-looking newspaper in place. You can’t see it, but it sure does make a big difference!

Focus on Faith

Have an adult help you prepare a cake mix according to package directions. Pour batter into flat-bottomed ice-cream cones until they’re almost full. Set the cones on a cookie sheet, and bake according to the directions on the cake-mix package. Cool the cones, and then add frosting and decorate. While you eat the snack, discuss how Jesus has the power to fill your life with good things when you have faith to follow him.

Read Matthew 8:8-9.

Who is the most powerful person you know? What people or things does that person command? What does Jesus have under his command?

Read Ephesians 2:8.

What are some of the best gifts you’ve ever received? How can you thank God for the gift of faith? Who is someone who needs to receive the gift of faith? Pray for that person.

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