

united kingdom

THE
CENTURION

the Kingdom story from creation to revelation

THE CENTURION

Introduction

After Jesus was baptised, He began travelling around and teaching many people about God's Kingdom. Usually, He only taught God's people. But on this day, a foreigner came to Him ...

Matthew 8:5-7

When Jesus travelled back to a certain town, a foreign army officer came and pleaded with Him, "Sir, my young servant lies in bed, paralysed and in terrible pain." Jesus said, "I will come and heal him."

Matthew 8:8-9

But the officer said, "Sir, I am not worthy to have You come into my home. Just say the word from where You are, and my servant will be healed. 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."

Matthew 8:10-12

When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. Turning to those who were following Him, He said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen *someone who trusts God* like this *among any of God's own people*! And I tell you this: that many *foreigners* will come from all over the world – from east and west – and sit down with *God's people* at the feast *when God comes to rule as King*. But many of those who were supposed to be *God's people* – those for whom *God's Kingdom* was prepared – will be thrown into *the darkness away from God's rule*, where there will be ... *much pain and weeping*."

Matthew 8:13

Then Jesus said to the *foreign* officer, "Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened." And the young servant was healed *at that very moment*.

TELLING THE STORY

Why this story?

God's true people – those who believe in Jesus – are those who recognise the authority of Jesus.

Jesus is teaching God's people about what it means to be a part of God's Kingdom. However, a foreigner – even worse, a member of the detested occupying regime – recognises the authority and power of Jesus and comes to Jesus to ask Him to heal his servant. The foreign army officer exemplifies a trust in Jesus that few among even those traditionally considered to be God's own people exemplify. Just as in the previous story, Jesus challenges the traditional Jewish notion that belonging to God's Kingdom was dependant on ancestry (being a descendant of Abraham through Isaac) more than belief. In fact, He says that it is belief that brings people into God's Kingdom.

Key concepts to include in your story

- Set the scene for your audience: Jesus was travelling and teaching God's people about God's Kingdom.
- A **foreign** army officer comes to Jesus and tells Him that his servant is sick. Jesus says He will come heal him.
- The army officer tells Jesus that **he is not worthy** for Jesus to come into his home, but he knows that **Jesus has the authority** to tell the sickness, even from where He is, to go away.
- Jesus is amazed and tells those around Him that He has not seen such belief even among God's own people. There's going to be a feast when God comes to rule, and many foreigners will come sit at it and be a part of God's Kingdom.
- But many of those for whom God prepared the kingdom, because they do not believe, will be thrown out where there is regret (sorrow) and pain.
- Jesus tells the army officer to go back to his servant. **Because the army officer believed**, his request was granted.
- At that same moment, the servant was healed.

Notes about how the story was crafted

Most Bible translations call the **foreign army officer** either a **Roman officer** or a **centurion**. The Roman Empire controlled Palestine at this time and kept a small auxiliary force there for the use of Herod Antipas, Rome's local ruler of the part of Palestine in which Jesus did most of His work. These auxiliary forces would not have been Roman men, but soldiers from neighbouring Roman-occupied countries. They would certainly not have been Jewish. A centurion theoretically had command of a hundred soldiers. The centurion in this story may have been a senior officer in the area. Because this story set has not addressed the historical context of Rome's rule over Palestine in the 1st century AD, we have chosen to call this officer a **foreign army officer** in order to convey the fact that the original audience would have known that the officer was not a Jew and therefore not one of "God's people." Another way to describe this officer is **a foreign army officer of the occupying empire**. However, you will hear in the video and audio of this story that our storyteller chose to explain a bit about the Roman occupation. His explanation is clear and concise, and you may choose to include something like that in your story also if you think it will help your audience.

You will hear that the video version of this story says that the officer asked Jesus to heal his servant. The Matthew account of this story does not say that the army officer asked Jesus to heal his servant, but it is implied. The Luke account of this same story (Luke 7) says that others came to ask on the officer's behalf, so there is precedent to say that Jesus was asked to heal the servant.

The army officer's social status was higher than Jesus' status. However, he recognised something in Jesus that made him realise that Jesus had power and authority that even he as an army officer did not have. He recognised that Jesus' authority extended even beyond the Jewish community.

In recognition of Jesus' status as a man of authority, the officer called Him **Lord**. In Matthew's mind, this word may imply that Jesus is more than a man. However, in the mind of the people involved in the situation, the officer was simply addressing Jesus with a

term of respect as to a person with more authority. A modern-day English equivalent would be **Sir**.

I am not worthy could be expressed as ***I am not good enough, I don't deserve, I am not important enough*** or ***You are too important to come to my house***. These are the same Greek words that John says in the Baptism story when he says that he is not worthy to be the Promised King's slave.

When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. This is the only time in Matthew's Gospel that it is Jesus who is amazed at something rather than others being amazed at Jesus!

I tell you the truth is Jesus' way of emphasizing his introduction to a radical new concept – that perhaps others outside of the Jewish population could enter God's Kingdom. You could use a more conversational idiom (e.g. ***Let me tell you, You know what, I have never ever seen such trust.***)

Someone who trusts God is the way we have said **I haven't seen faith like this**. ... **Faith** in Matthew's Gospel usually refers to practical matters of trusting Jesus and expecting miracles. **Someone who trusts God** is an active and non-religious way to express this concept.

God's people in this story refer to the Jewish community – Abraham's descendants – that special kingdom that God created from Abraham and that continued on in the form of the Israelites/Jews. They are the ones for whom God prepared His Kingdom, but they do not accept the Kingdom coming with Jesus' advent in the same way that non-Jews seem to be! The Kingdom is opening up to all those who trust in Jesus. Use a consistent term for **God's people** throughout your stories.

Matthew 8:11 says that those at the feast will **sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** ... These men are the fathers of the Jewish people – God's people, and they represent those who truly trust God. Because our audience may not know Isaac and Jacob, we have described whom they represent by saying **God's people**.

The video version of this story does not include the concept of the **feast** that happens when God comes to rule his people. It is instead explained simply as God's Kingdom. You may choose to include the imagery of the feast or not in your story depending on what you think is best for your audience.

When God comes to rule as king is a practical description of the biblical concept of "the Kingdom of God" or "the Kingdom of Heaven." The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven refer to the same thing – the time when God will rule over His people. (For more information about the term **God's Kingdom**, see the Baptism story.)

The NLT's translation of Matthew 8:12 says that many **will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**. Biblical scholars understand this scene to depict the great sorrow and punishment at the end of time for those who do not believe and reject God. We do not usually speak in these terms in modern-day conversational English, so this description has been modified in the example story. **Darkness** as the opposite of light refers to a place reserved for ungodly people, so we have described it in very practical terms as **the darkness away from God's rule**. The people in this darkness will not be in God's kingdom. Your story should make that clear. **Gnashing of teeth** refers to pain, so we have modernised the phrase.

Because you believed, it has happened has been moved to a different part of this story in the video version. It does not change the meaning of the story, so you may choose to state this at either point in the story. It is an important statement however. The healing happened because of his belief rather than because of anything he did.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Retelling the story

- As your group practices retelling this story, help them see the different sections of this story.
 - Introduction and foreign army officer coming to Jesus
 - The army officer presents the problem to Jesus and Jesus offers to go to his home and heal the servant
 - The army officer explains that he is not worthy for Jesus to come – he understands authority, and he knows that Jesus has authority in this situation
 - Jesus is amazed and explains that those with the officer's kind of belief will be part of God's Kingdom
 - The servant is healed because of the officer's belief

Questions for discussion

You don't have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don't ask all the questions in a group, try to ask people what this story means for them personally. You'll find that as you continue to interact with God's Word at a deep level, God's Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

- What do you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?
- What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- How will you remember this story? *(Tell it!)*
- Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to? Or anyone you would like to practice with? E.g. Your children, your best friend, your wife, your husband, a mum at the school gate, your work colleague, your neighbour. (It's true that the best way to learn a story is to tell it. So why don't you give it a go and chat to each other next week about how you found it?)
- How does this story contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? How is this story part of the Gospel?

Questions people may have

This section can never be exhaustive. Remember that during your group discussion times, you want to focus on the above questions rather than get side tracked by deeply academic issues. Part of the joy of experiencing and studying God's Word in this way is allowing God's Spirit to teach us and reveal His truth to us through the narrative of the individual stories, and ultimately through the narrative of the larger story line. However, we understand that sometimes people feel they need some deeper answers. Sometimes, the storyline has to speak for itself, and we have to trust it to do so. However, if your group needs some deeper answers in order to go on, here are some basics that you can discuss. If you have unresolved questions, please come and ask, and we'll help you find the answers.

- Why would the foreign army officer refuse for Jesus to come to his house to heal his servant?
It would have been taboo for Jesus, as a good Jew (descendant of Abraham), to enter into the home of a Gentile (non-Jew). Non-Jews were considered unclean, and the fact that the man was an army officer of the occupying country would have been even more distasteful. Any foreigner living in Palestine at the time would have known those Jewish taboos, and this army officer was not any different. He was already very bold just asking Jesus for healing for his servant – he did not dare ask for Him to come personally to his home. In the Luke 7 account of the same story, the army officer does not even come to Jesus personally – his friends come on his behalf.

- The Luke 7 account of this story is different. In Luke some men come to plead on behalf of the Roman officer rather than the officer coming himself as in Matthew. Which is true? Why the difference?

Anytime a story is told, the teller tells it from his perspective and with a purpose in mind. Both Luke and Matthew were telling the same story, but through different lenses and for different purposes, so of course their stories would be different. In those days it was normal and even preferred for a man to show respect to someone he considered his superior by sending others with his message rather than go himself. The messengers would have been considered to be speaking for the man himself. Therefore, in New Testament biblical culture, Matthew was not lying when he said the army officer went to Jesus. He did go to Jesus in the cultural sense of the term. The original audience would have seen no discrepancy between the two accounts.

- Is this story saying that God was originally only planning to save the Jews, and that non-Jews are included in the Kingdom now only because Jews rejected Him?

Most Jews certainly believed that God was originally planning to save only the Jews. They believed that at the huge feast when God came to rule only the Jews would be there, and the Gentiles would be outside in the darkness. Jesus was turning their preconceived ideas upside down. The way Jesus described the unbelieving Jews in this story as being outside in the darkness where there is weeping and sorrow is the very way that the Jews described the unbelieving Gentiles!

However, the Old Testament does not actually imply that only Jewish people will be saved. There are several references to the salvation of all peoples, including in Isaiah 25:6 when Isaiah talks about a feast for “all the peoples of the world.” (c.f. the reference in Gen. 12 to Abraham being a blessing for all nations of the world) The feast in Isaiah has been understood by scholars to refer to the messianic feast – just as this feast in Matthew 8 refers to a messianic feast. The Jewish people believe that the messianic feast will be the feast of celebration held when God finally comes to rule His people in the perfect fulfilment of God’s Kingdom. So although most Jews seemed to think that only they would be saved, the Bible seems to contradict this idea from the beginning.

- So is God saying that the Jews – his original “people,” are “out,” and the Gentiles are “in”?
- No, He’s not saying that either. Remember, Jesus was a Jew, and so were His closest followers. Rather, Jesus is saying in this story that it’s not about ancestry (and actually never was, but the Jewish people had made it such) but about faith and belief in Him.*

- To what does the feast refer?

This feast is the celebratory feast held when God finally comes to rule his people in the perfect fulfilment of God’s Kingdom. It is widely accepted by scholars to symbolise salvation – the entrance into God’s Kingdom and eternal fellowship with God.

- Why is Jesus so amazed at this man’s belief compared to others? Others within God’s people have believed Jesus for healing also, so what is so special about this man?

Jewish recipients of miracles were definitely happy, but this officer took his enthusiasm for the miracles a step further – he recognised the authority behind the miraculous power. That recognition of authority was expressed in his belief that Jesus could heal with a word and from a distance.

THE CENTURION – for children

Introduction

After Jesus was baptised, He began travelling around and teaching many people about God's Kingdom. Usually, He only taught God's people. But on this day, a foreigner – a man who wasn't one of God's people – came to Him ...

Matthew 8:5-7

When Jesus travelled back to a certain town, a foreign army officer came *to Him, begging for help. The officer said, "Sir, my young servant lies in bed. He can't move his body, and he is* in terrible pain."

Jesus said, "I will come and heal him."

Matthew 8:8-9

But the officer said, "*Sir, I am not worthy to have You come into my home. Just say the word from where You are, and my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the orders of the officers above me, and I can give orders to my soldiers underneath me.* I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my *servants*, 'Do this,' they do it."

Matthew 8:10-12

When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. Turning to those who were following Him, He said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen *someone who trusts God* like this *among any of God's own people!* And I tell you this: that many *foreigners* will come from all over the world – from east and west – and sit down with *God's people* at the feast *when God comes to rule as King.* But many of those who were supposed to be *God's people* – those for whom *God's Kingdom* was prepared – will be thrown into *the darkness away from God's rule*, where there will be ... *much pain and crying.*"

Matthew 8:13

Then Jesus said to the *foreign* officer, "Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened." And the young servant was healed *at that very moment.*

TELLING THE STORY – for children

Key concepts to include in your story

The story will need to be simplified at varying levels based on the age group of the children you are teaching. This means that many of the details in the story will need to be summarized. However, you should include the following concepts in your story.

- Set the scene for your audience: Jesus was travelling and teaching God's people about God's Kingdom.
- A **foreign** army officer comes to Jesus and tells Him that his servant is sick. Jesus says He will come heal him.
- The army officer tells Jesus that **he is not worthy** for Jesus to come into his home, but he knows that **Jesus has the authority** to tell the sickness, even from where He is, to go away.
- Jesus is amazed and tells those around Him that He has not seen such belief even among God's own people. There's going to be a feast when God comes to rule, and many foreigners will come sit at it and be a part of God's Kingdom.
- But many of those for whom God prepared the kingdom, because they do not believe, will be thrown out where there is regret (sorrow) and pain.
- Jesus tells the army officer to go back to his servant. **Because the army officer believed**, his request was granted.
- At that same moment, the servant was healed.

Example of a simplified version of the story for children

After Jesus was baptised, He began travelling around and teaching many people about God's Kingdom. Usually, He only taught God's people. But on this day, a man who wasn't one of God's people – a foreigner – came to Jesus. When Jesus travelled back to a certain town, this foreign army officer came to Him, begging for help. The officer said, "Sir, my young servant lies in bed. He can't move his body, and he is in terrible pain." Jesus said, "I will come and heal him." But the officer said, "Sir, I am not worthy to have You come into my home. Just speak the word from where You are, and my servant will be healed. I know this will happen, because I follow the orders of the officers above me, and I give orders to the soldiers underneath me. I only have to say, 'Go,' and they go. Or I say, 'Come,' and they come. And if I tell my servants to do something, they do it." When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. Turning to those who were following Him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen someone who trusts God like this among any of God's own people! And I tell you this: many foreigners will come from all over the world and sit down with God's people at the feast when God comes to rule as King. But many of those who were supposed to be God's people will be thrown into the darkness away from God's rule. And those people will cry and be in lots of pain. Then Jesus said to the foreign officer, "Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened." And the young servant was healed at that very moment.

The following activities can be used to vary your storying sessions with the children and keep the action fresh and exciting. They also help the children learn the stories in different ways. You'll find as children journey through this story set with you, they become more and more capable of learning even complicated stories quickly and well. Varying activities and keeping it fun helps the children write the stories on their heart so that they can pull them out of their toolbox whenever a situation comes up where they can use them!

- **Charades** – Have participants choose one line from the story and use actions to convey that line to the rest of the group. The child that guesses correctly goes next.
- **Skit** – Assign parts to groups and have them act out the story as you or a participant narrates. This can be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, you may choose to have each team act out the whole story, or assign sections and have them perform the skits in chronological order one after the other.
- **Song** – This activity seems to work best in small groups of older and more advanced students. If you believe your group would enjoy this activity, have them write and perform a song based on a story or a portion of a story. To make this task easier, have each group choose a song melody as their foundation and change the lyrics as needed, as opposed to starting from scratch.
- **Sign Language** – This is a great way to incorporate kinaesthetic learning into storying. Work with the participants to develop "sign language" for keywords in the story. This will help them to remember the order and progression of the story. This activity may also be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, have a participant from each team narrate as the group demonstrates their motions. The more creative, the more likely they are to remember it! Sign language is a good activity if younger and more inexperienced storytellers are part of the group.
- **Perspective Shift** – This creative and critical thinking activity works best later in the story set. Assign groups of children different characters in the story. They then adjust the story they have learned to the perspective of that character. For example, they could tell the Fall story from Adam and Eve's perspectives or the Abraham story from Abraham's perspective.
- **Memory** – The storyteller starts this activity by saying the first line of the story. The story then moves around the circle as each participant tells a line. An alternate method is to go back and forth between partners as they tell the story to each other.
- **Popcorn** – The storyteller also starts this activity. As children remember, they raise their hand. When ready, the storyteller yells "pop" and the name of someone with their hand raised. That person will then jump in until more hands are raised and they shout "pop" to pass the story to another child. You will likely need to demonstrate how this works.
- **Interview** – Children are assigned different characters. A child designated as "interviewer" asks the characters questions about what happened in the story and the character answers according to his or her role. For example, the interviewer could ask Adam about what he witnessed or the actions he took in the garden when he ate the fruit, and Adam would give his answer.
- **Action words** – Before telling the story, the storyteller gives instructions associated with particular words. Children listen for those words in the story, and must do appropriate action when heard. For example, the storyteller would tell the participants to wiggle their arm like a snake anytime they hear the word "snake." There should be multiple words associated with actions in the story. This activity also works well with a younger audience.

Children's Teaching Materials

Sunday mornings will begin in the warehouse with a joint children's worship time led by a youth worship band followed by a storying session with the roving storyteller. Then groups will disperse to their usual meeting locations for the age-appropriate teaching of the story and activities that reinforce that story's message.

Sparks

10:30 Retell the story. Use a Storybook Bible.

Snack – rice cakes

10:45 Craft: Finger puppets
~ Make "Jesus" and "the Centurion" finger puppets. Pre-cut them and allow the kids to draw a face and colour the clothes.

Play

11:15 Music:
~ "My God is So Big"
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do ... for you
The rivers are His, the mountains are His
The skies are His handiwork too
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do ... for you

~ "The Centurion" (sing to the tune of "London Bridge is falling down")
The Centurion came to Jesus one day, Jesus one day, Jesus one day
The Centurion came to Jesus one day and asked for His help
Please can you heal my servant today, servant today, servant today
Please can you heal my servant today; I trust Jesus
By your faith he is healed, he is healed, he is healed
By your faith he is healed; go in peace

11:20 Play

Resources Needed:

- Storybook Bible
- Rice cakes
- Pre-cut finger puppet images
- Tape
- Pens or crayons

- Music CD

Little Flames

10:30 Begin with prayer. (Don't repeat a specific prayer, but follow the general idea of the prayer below.)
~ Say "Hi" to God, tell Him we're glad He's there with us and ask Him to help us see Him, hear Him and know Him. Invite Him into everything we'll be doing today.

Resources Needed:

Keep today's focus in mind: "Jesus wants me to believe in Him."

- 10:35 Retell the story together multiple times.
- ~ Use finger puppets with Jesus and the Centurion (and a crowd backdrop?)
 - ~ Use play dough models: use different colours for each character (so it doesn't matter what they look like)
- 10:45 "Knowledge Harvest" conversation: (use similar questions as below)
- ~ What did Jesus do when he travelled?
 - ~ Whom did Jesus teach?
 - ~ Who came to Jesus asking for help?
 - ~ What did the soldier ask Jesus to do?
 - ~ When Jesus said He would go and heal the servant, what did the soldier say?
 - ~ Why was Jesus amazed?
 - ~ What did Jesus say to His followers?
 - ~ What did Jesus say to the soldier?
 - ~ What happened to the servant?
- 10:50 Game: "Jesus says" or "The Centurion says"
- ~ Play the game similar to "Simon says" but change the wording to either "Jesus " or "The Centurion" – depending on the types of actions you want the kids to follow
- 10:55 Biscuit break – Use this relatively calm opportunity for a little chat and prayer time.
- Biscuits
- Discussion: "How can you show Jesus that you believe in Him?"
- 11:00 Popcorn Prayer
- ~ Have simple prayers, popcorn style: "Thank you, Jesus, for _____!"
- 11:05 Craft: "Shield of Faith"
- ~ Make a shield of faith to remind the children about the Centurion's faith. The story can be illustrated on the shield in a storyboard format for the children to remember.
- Illustrations of the story:
1. A sad Centurion standing over a sick servant
 2. The Centurion kneeling by Jesus
 3. Jesus saying, "Go"
 4. A happy Centurion standing beside a happy servant
- Cardboard boxes or paper plates with handles (for the shield)
 - Pre-printed illustrations
 - Tape or glue
- 11:15 Sing:
- ~ "My God is So Big"
- My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do ... for you
The rivers are His, the mountains are His
The skies are His handiwork too
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do ... for you
- Music

~ "The Centurion" (sing to the tune of "London Bridge is falling down")

The Centurion came to Jesus one day, Jesus one day, Jesus one day

The Centurion came to Jesus one day and asked for His help

Please can you heal my servant today, servant today, servant today

Please can you heal my servant today; I trust Jesus

By your faith he is healed, he is healed, he is healed

By your faith he is healed; go in peace

~ One (or more) of the songs that were sung during worship that day

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|-------|--|--|
| 11:20 | Learn the words of the week: "Jesus wants me to believe in Him." Use visuals for the kids to help them learn the words. | • Visuals to help learn the phrase |
| 11:25 | If there is any remaining time (or the previous activities finish early), allow the children to freely choose to do whatever they want to do. Play story-relevant music in the background. Leaders should engage with the children during this time: celebrate them, pray for them, love them.
~ Play with story-oriented toys
~ Role play
~ Play-dough creations
~ Colouring station
~ Free play | • Story-oriented toys
• Play-dough
• Colouring sheets
• Blank paper
• Crayons
• Music |

Blaze

Resources Needed:

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 10:35 | Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story | |
| 10:45 | Retell the story using illustrations (individual pictures are included at the end of this document; a miniature version of the photos are shown below)
~ Two groups race to put the illustrations in order. Once complete, each group retells the story to the other group. | • Printed illustrations (laminated) |



Reflection on the story. Discuss the questions:

~ What do you like about this story?

~ What bothered you about this story?

~ What does this story show you about God?

~ What does this story show you about people?

~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?

~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*

~ Who will you tell this story to?

11:00 Game: Faith Relays

~ Divide children into teams. Ask a series of questions, and each question will be one relay. Here are some sample questions:

1. Do you have faith that your team can roll this potato to the finish line? (run the relay)
2. Do you have faith that your team can pop all your balloons before the other team? (each team pops one balloon and runs the relay)
3. Do you have faith that you can hop on one foot to the finish line and back?

~ Continue giving children relays to run to show their faith in what they can do.

11:15 Craft: "Shield of Faith"

~ Make a shield of faith to remind the children about the Centurion's faith. The story can be illustrated on the shield in a storyboard format for the children to remember.

Illustrations of the story:

5. A sad Centurion standing over a sick servant
6. The Centurion kneeling by Jesus
7. Jesus saying, "Go"

A happy Centurion standing beside a happy servant

- Cardboard boxes or paper plates with handles (for the shield)
- Pre-printed illustrations
- Tape or glue

11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

~ Use the shield as an aid to prayer and reflection time to talk about faith.

- Container for the offering

TNT

Resources Needed:

10:30 One leader retells the story

THEME: We can believe (have faith) in Jesus' authority and walk with a shield of faith just like the army officer.

10:35 Split into two teams. Give each team a stack of six puzzles and six "shields." (*Each of the six illustrations included in this document should be pre-printed and cut into puzzle pieces. Each team should have all six puzzles/illustrations.*) Each team races to complete their six puzzles. Each puzzle/picture should then be attached to one of their team's shields. Then they put the puzzles in order and practice telling the story using the pictures.

Each team stands up and retells the story with a different child telling the part of the story that accompanies their shield/illustration.



- Two sets of pre-printed (laminated) illustrations; cut into puzzle pieces
- Blue tack for putting the puzzle pieces together and tacking them to their "shields"
- Twelve foil party platters (six per team) to use as the shields
- Something to use as a handle on the back of each shield
- Split pins (to attach the "handles" to the shields)

10:50 Split into groups and have the leaders retell the story
 Discuss the questions:
 ~ What do you like about this story?
 ~ What bothered you about this story?
 ~ What does this story show you about God?
 ~ What does this story show you about people?
 ~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
 ~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*
 ~ Who will you tell this story to?

Pray for who they want to share the story with

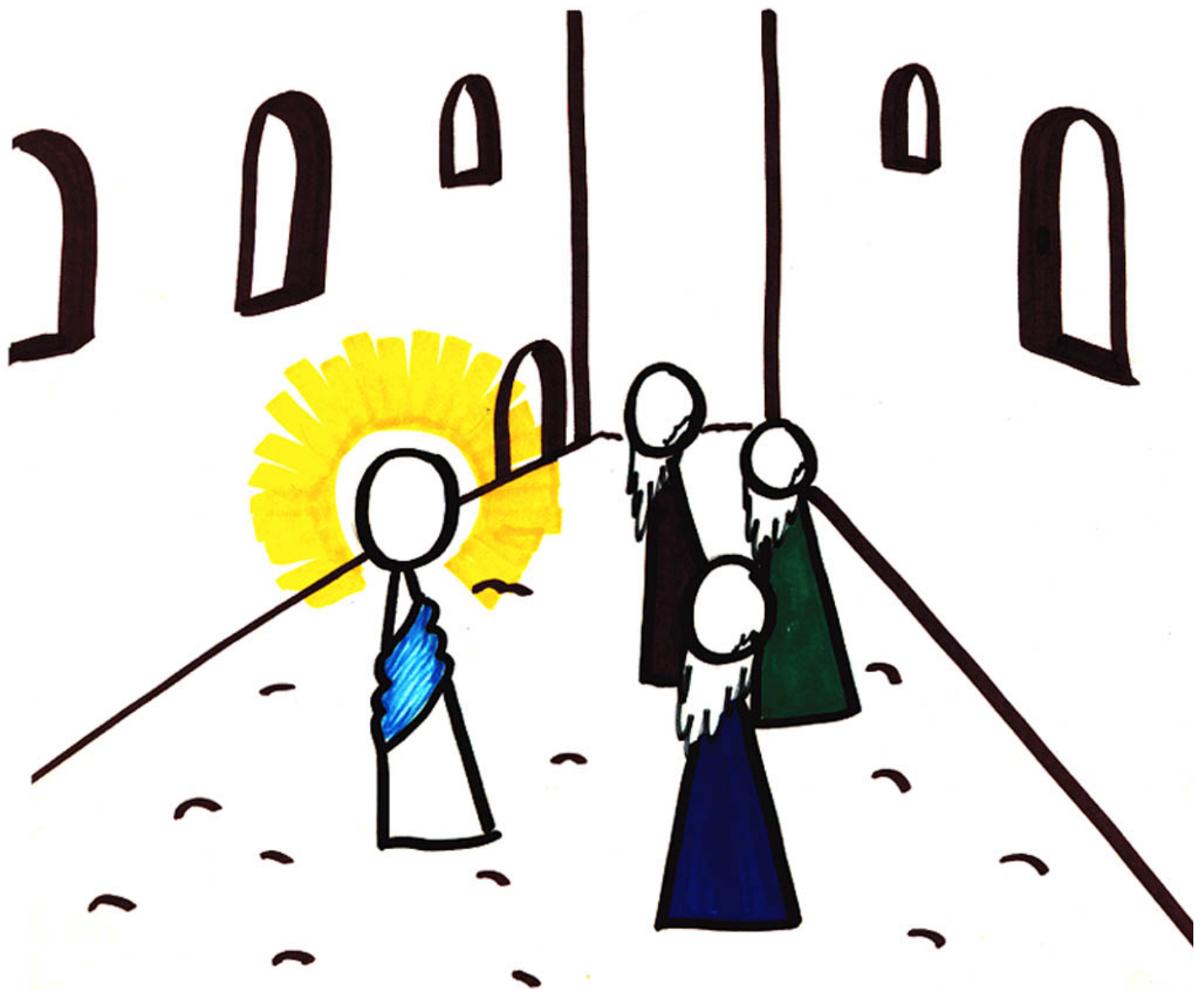
11:05 Craft: Shield of Faith
 ~ Use grey cards pre-cut into the shape of shields.
 ~ Attach strips of coloured paper to divide the shield into sections.
 ~ Use other coloured paper (in various shapes) to create designs on the shield. (Alternately, crayons or coloured markers may be used to draw pictures on the shields.)
 ~ Use another strip of grey card as the handle for the back of the shield. Use split pins to attach the handle to the shield.

- Grey cards pre-cut into shields
- Coloured paper – some cut into strips; some into shapes
- Crayons or coloured markers
- Grey cards pre-cut into strips for handles
- Split pins

11:15 Game: "Who is the Real Centurion?"
 ~ "Can anyone tell me what a centurion's job was in Bible times? (Children respond.) Centurions were commanders of the Roman army. Each centurion was in charge of leading 100 soldiers. Centurions gave the orders and their soldiers had to obey right away. In our game, you must guess who is the "Real Centurion." Be sure to only obey the Real Centurion's commands!"

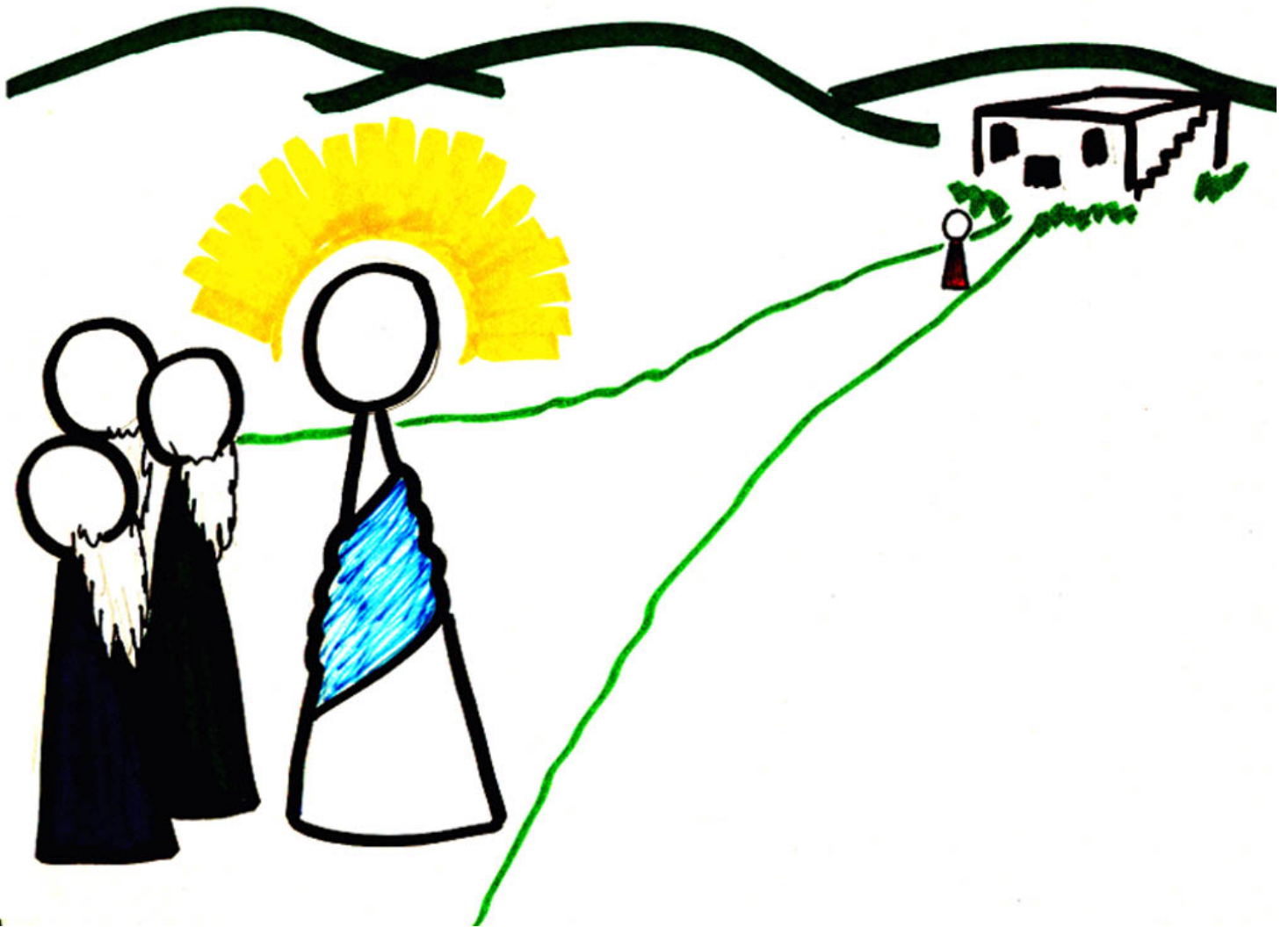
- One coin
- Three small balls or marbles

1. Display the four objects: one coin and three balls. Tell children that if they receive a coin, they become the Real Centurion. If they receive a ball, they are regular soldiers and must try to get the other children to think they are the Real Centurion.
2. Instruct all children to sit with their eyes closed and to hold out their hands.
3. Choose one child to be the Real Centurion and place the coin in that child's hand. Choose three other children to be the soldiers and place one ball in each of those children's hands. All four children should close their hands immediately to hide the objects.
4. Children may open their eyes on your signal. The Real Centurion and the three soldiers stand up.
5. In random order, ask one of the four soldiers to state a command to the remaining children. (Ex: touch your toes, say your name, jump up and down, hop on one foot, spin in a circle, stand on one foot, etc)
6. Any children who think the order was spoken by the Real Centurion should obey the order.
7. Let each of the four children take a turn stating an order. The other children may each choose only one child to obey as the Real Centurion.
8. Reveal the Real Centurion.
9. Collect the coin and balls and play again.



Jesus travelled around teaching many people about God's Kingdom.

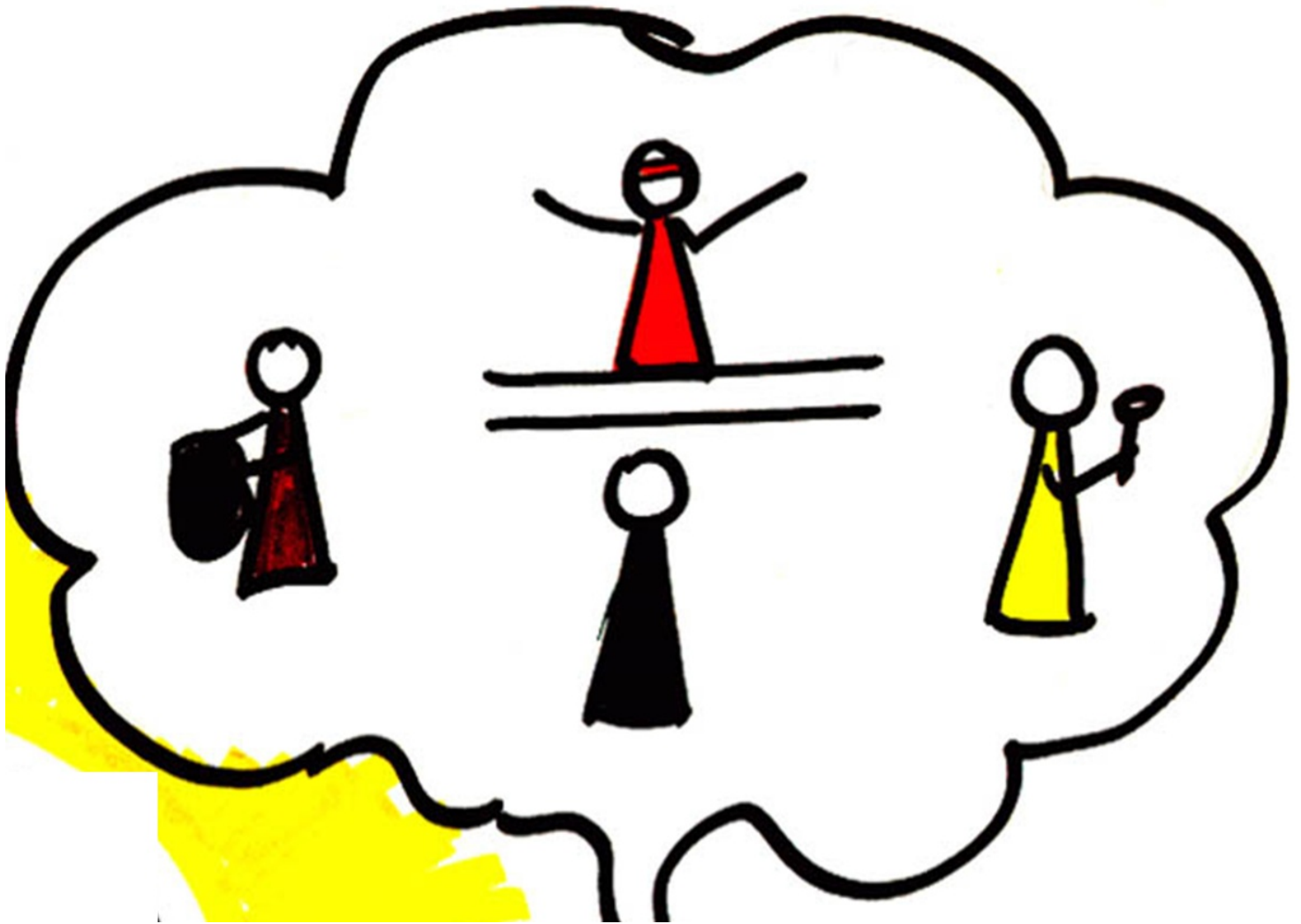
Usually, Jesus only taught God's people.



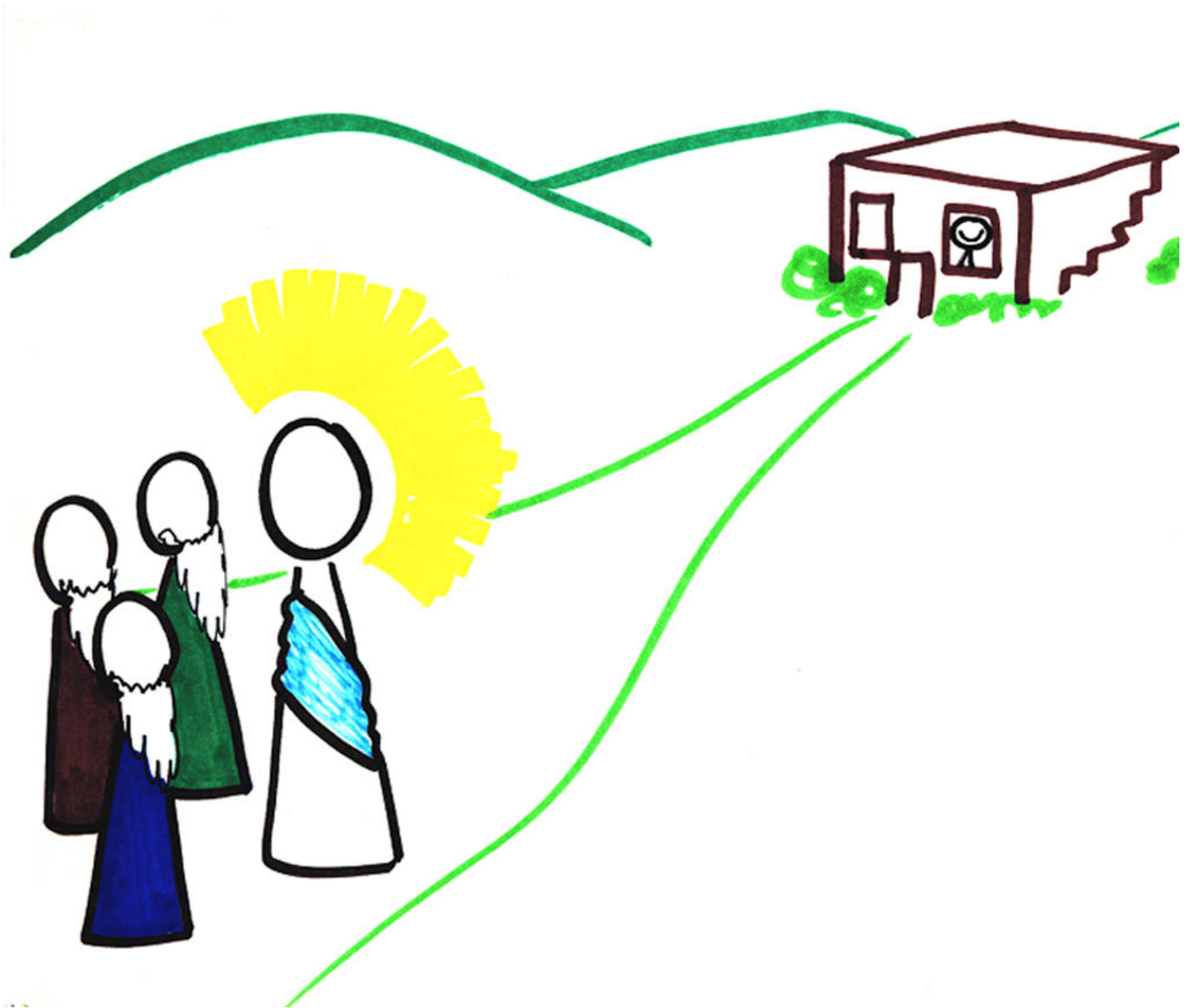
A foreign army officer came to Jesus, begging for help.
The officer said, "Sir, my young servant lies in bed. He can't move
his body, and he is in terrible pain."
Jesus said, "I will come and heal him."



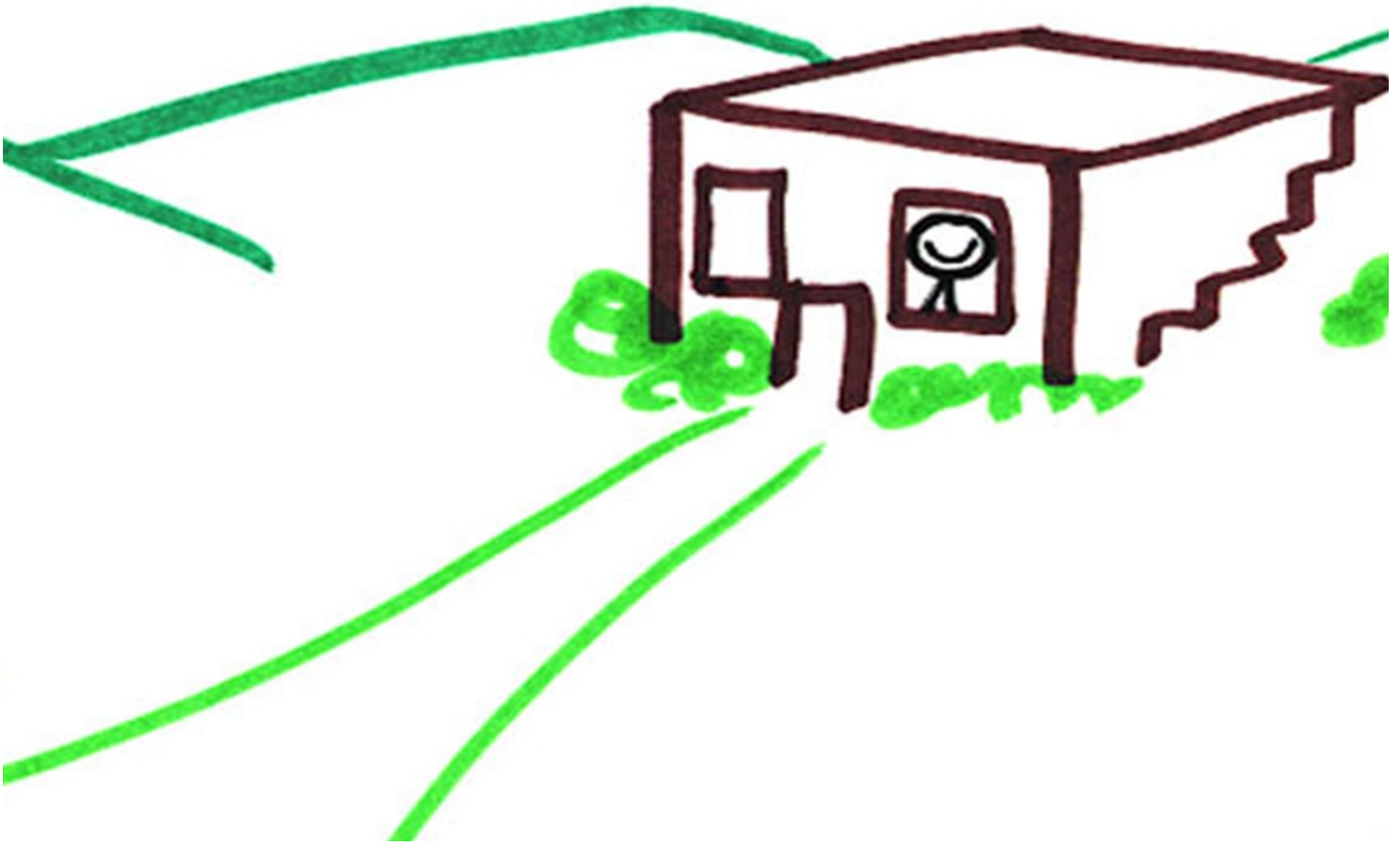
But the officer said, "Sir, I am not worthy to have You come into my home.
Just say the word from where You are, and my servant will be healed."



Then the officer said, "I know this because I am under the orders of the officers above me, and I can give orders to my soldiers underneath me. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my servants, 'Do this,' they do it."



Jesus was amazed and turned to those who were following Him.
He said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen someone
who trusts God like this among God's own people!"



Then Jesus said to the foreign officer, "Go back home.
Because you believed, it has happened."
And the young servant was healed at that very moment.