

WARM-UP

- Share about your first impression of someone who you now know in a radically different way.
- Share an event, a story, or a quote that changed your perspective on something.
- What was one act of love that deeply moved you? How did it affect you?

WORD *Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"*

LUKE 23:47

(Read also **LUKE 23:33–38, 44–46.**)

Crucifixion was a Roman capital punishment. In Jesus' case, He had been brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. It was Pilate's soldiers who put the crown of thorns on Him and mocked Him, knowing He called Himself "King of the Jews." At the crucifixion, there was a Roman centurion—a commander of a platoon of 80 soldiers in the Roman army—who was keeping watch over Jesus. This centurion was a witness to all the events of God's love and power at Jesus' crucifixion and death. Some of these events were truly astonishing. He saw that Jesus, rather than weeping and cursing like others who were to be crucified, forgave His executioners (Luke 23:34). At Jesus' death, the centurion saw the sunlight fail, the earth shake, rocks break, and tombs open (Matthew 27:51–53; Luke 23:44). Today, we'll talk about the centurion's response to the events of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, and how it can apply to us.

1 | The centurion acknowledged who Jesus is.

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

MATTHEW 27:54

After witnessing these events, the Roman centurion was *filled with awe* and declared that Jesus was *truly the Son of God*. Most of the mockery was about Jesus' claim to be Christ—including the crown of thorns, the robe, and the sign over Jesus' head. They had been mocking a man claiming to be King, who was now undergoing a death sentence. Unlike the Jews, the centurion hadn't grown up with the hope of a coming Messiah. But when Jesus died, the centurion acknowledged that He was who He said He was: the Son of God. How do you see God in your life? How did you acknowledge Him and continue to grow in your relationship with Him?

2 | The centurion praised God.

Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" **LUKE 23:47**

In addition to acknowledging that Jesus was the Son of God, the centurion *praised* God. This means he also acknowledged and believed in God. This reaction and transformation of a Roman soldier were so different compared to others. While others mocked Jesus, the centurion praised Him. Do you have a story of transformation from mockery to praise? How has experiencing Jesus' love and witnessing Jesus' power transformed you?

APPLICATION

- Reflect on how you acknowledge Jesus in your everyday life. What's one way you could be more intentional about this?
- Take time to thank God for a specific way He's shown His love to you. How can you remember to praise Him daily?
- Pray about one area in your life where you feel you need transformation. What's one step you could take this week toward this change?

