

Centurion – a Roman army officer who was usually in charge of 100 soldiers. He would also be in charge of the smaller group of soldiers at the cross.

A Centurion

Believes



The Roman centurion laughed out loud.

Before him stood a man who had called Himself the king of the Jews.

“HA!” the centurion laughed.

“That’s the silliest joke I’ve heard – because He doesn’t look like a king at all!”



The gang of soldiers shouted, “Let’s dress this man, Jesus, like a king!”

They took off Jesus’ clothes and wrapped a purple robe around His shoulders. They twisted together some thorny branches to make His crown.

“Hail, king of the Jews!” the bullies teased. They knelt before Jesus, laughing and spitting on Him.

“Put His own clothes back on now,” commanded the centurion.

“We must follow our orders,” he said.

The centurion and his soldiers marched out of the palace fort. They led Jesus through the city and outside the gates to a place called Golgotha.

“Crucify Him!” yelled the crowd.

The soldiers grabbed Jesus and stripped off His clothes. They nailed His hands and feet to a large, wooden cross.



Then – BANG! They hammered a sign to the top of the cross. It said, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

The centurion and his soldiers hooted and howled with laughter. What a funny-looking king!

Suddenly, Jesus opened His mouth, “Father, forgive them. They don’t understand what they are doing.”

The centurion stopped laughing. *Did Jesus just say “forgive”? Shouldn’t Jesus be angry at them instead?*

The soldiers kept joking and playing games. “Let’s roll dice to see which one of us gets His clothes!” they said with a chuckle.

But the centurion decided to watch Jesus closely. He watched the people passing by make fun of Jesus.

“You’re not our king!” they sneered. “Why don’t you climb down from that cross? Then we will believe you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus only looked at the people. He didn’t say a word.

Soon, the sky darkened. The teasing voices hushed.

“What’s happening?” the centurion cried. “It’s only the middle of the day, but it looks like nighttime!”

For three long hours, the centurion and his soldiers sat in the dark. Silently, they kept guard. Then they heard a loud wail.



The centurion ran to the cross. He stood in front of Jesus and watched.

Jesus took a deep breath. “IT ... IS ... FINISHED!” He cried. Then He bowed His head and died.

At once, the ground rumbled and shook. The huge rocks split in two.

The centurion looked at his soldiers with big, round eyes. He had never seen *anyone* die like this!

With a shaky voice, he started to speak, “At first I thought this man was a joke. But now I know He was telling the truth. Clearly, this man, Jesus, was the Son of God.”

The soldiers nodded. No one laughed now. Instead, the centurion stood at the cross, praising God for the amazing things he had seen and heard that day.

Learn from the centurion’s biography:

- Jesus really is who He says He is. He is God’s Son, the Savior and King of all people.
- Praise Jesus for His powerful work on the cross to save us from sin.

Parent Ideas

A Centurion Believes
Scripture: Mark 15:16-39;
Matthew 27:51-54;
Luke 23:32-38

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Jesus really is who He says He is. He is God's Son, the Savior and King of all people.
- Praise Jesus for His powerful work on the cross to save us from sin.

1. Read-together activity

Make laughing sounds whenever you read about the centurion and soldiers laughing (or hooting, howling or chuckling). End by shouting words of awe and praise to God, like the centurion did at the cross.

As you read aloud, you and your child could also make sound effects for other parts of the biography. For example, add sounds of spitting, marching, nailing, rolling dice, a deep breath, the ground rumbling, etc. For a unique and dramatic experience, read the biography again – except don't say any words. Make your sound effects only! Emphasize the long silence while the soldiers waited in the dark. For dialogue, you can make vocal sounds, but do not say any distinct words. Consider creating an audio recording of your sounds and listening to it together.

2. Discussion activity

To prepare, gather several objects to represent items in the biography, such as a purple cloth, a crown, nails, a cross, a "King of the Jews" sign, dice, rocks, etc. To make a crown, twist and tie together branches from a bush or purchase a grapevine wreath from a craft store. To make a cross, attach two sticks or pieces of wood together tightly with rope. (Make the cross an appropriate size for the first application activity.) Or, instead of a wooden cross, cut a cross shape out of cardboard and paint it brown.

To start your discussion, put the objects in a bag or box. Pull out each object and ask your child to tell you when that object was mentioned in the biography. Who used or wore the object? What happened? In this way, your child will retell the action of the biography.

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3. Discussion activity

Ask your child questions like these:

- Why do you think the centurion changed his beliefs about Jesus? What surprising things did he see and hear at the cross?
- Who do you believe Jesus is?
- How do you know Jesus really is God's Son? (He rose again, He did many miracles, the Bible says so, etc.)
- What did Jesus mean when He cried, "It is finished?"

Help your child to understand that Jesus' work of paying for our sins was finished on the cross. Jesus could have easily stopped people from killing Him, but He **CHOSE** to die so we could be saved.

4. Application activity

Gather your family and give a note card to each person. On the cards, family members should each write one way they have sinned. Define sin as disobeying God by the things we think, say or do. For more privacy, people can simply write a letter or picture to represent their sin.

Nail or tack the cards to the cross you made in the first discussion activity. Explain that Jesus forgave the Roman soldiers, and He forgives us too. Jesus died so **ALL** our sin could be forgiven. Thank Jesus together. Then leave the cards on the cross until you study the next biography.

5. Application activity

Place a red candle in the center of the crown or grapevine wreath from the first discussion activity. Each evening for a week (a Sunday to a Friday), light the candle with your family and read what happened on each day of Passion week, ending with the crucifixion. Read passages like these: Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:15-17; Matthew 26:6-13; Matthew 26:14-16; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 15:16-39.