

The Gospel of Matthew, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: Healings and the Authority of Jesus

Matthew 8:1–34

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Matthew 8 is, at its core, a sustained argument about the identity of Jesus, and the teacher should keep that doctrinal aim front and center. By stacking miracle upon miracle, authority over disease, over nature, over the realm of demons, Matthew is demonstrating that Jesus is no ordinary prophet or healer. The sea obeys Him; the demons cannot stand before Him; a word from His mouth is enough to heal a dying servant miles away. The disciples' question, "What sort of man is this?" (8:27), is the question the whole chapter exists to answer, and the answer is that this is the Lord Himself, God come near, exercising the authority that belongs to God alone. To miss the deity of Christ here is to miss the point.

Yet Matthew weaves this display of power together with the call to follow, and the teacher must press that too. The same chapter that shows Jesus stilling the storm also records a centurion whose humble faith astonishes the Lord, would-be disciples warned to count the cost, and frightened followers rebuked for their little faith. Authority this great is not given to us as a spectacle to admire from a safe distance. It is given to be trusted and obeyed. The spiritual aim of the lesson is that your students would move from being spectators of Christ's power to being followers who bring their real needs to Him and stake their lives on His command.

So teach for both. Let your class marvel afresh that Jesus is God over disease, nature, and the powers of darkness. Then let that wonder do its work, drawing out a deeper faith, a readiness to follow whatever the cost, and a settled trust in the One whom even the wind and waves obey.

Question 1

Student Question:

In one chapter Jesus heals a leper with a touch, a servant with a word, a fever, a crowd, calms a deadly storm, and casts out demons (8:1–34). What is Matthew teaching us about the identity of Jesus by showing His authority over disease, nature, and the powers of darkness all together?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open by helping students step back and see the shape of the whole chapter before diving into any single scene. Matthew has deliberately arranged a sequence: authority over disease (the leper, the servant, the fever, the crowd), authority over nature (the storm), and authority over the demonic (the two men of the Gadarenes). Each domain is a place where human beings are helpless, and in each one Jesus simply speaks and the impossible bends to His will.

Linger on the leper as the opening note. Leprosy made a person ceremonially unclean and socially dead, cut off from family, worship, and touch. The law kept everyone away. Jesus does the unthinkable: He stretches out His hand and touches him (8:3). Normally uncleanness spread by contact; here cleanness flows the other way. The authority of Jesus is so great that He is not defiled by the leper; the leper is healed by Him.

Then sweep through the rest. A word heals the centurion's servant at a distance. A touch lifts Peter's mother-in-law from fever to service. At sunset the whole town's sick and oppressed are brought, and He heals them all. The sea rages and He rebukes it like a disobedient child. The demons shriek and flee at His command. The cumulative effect is overwhelming, and it is meant to be.

Bring it home to the doctrinal point. Only God has authority over disease, nature, and the spiritual realm all at once. The Old Testament sang of the Lord who stills the storm (Psalm 107:29) and heals His people (Psalm 103:3). Matthew is showing that the One doing these things is that Lord, come in the flesh. The right response to this gallery of power is not merely amazement but worship and trust.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The deity of Christ revealed in His authority over disease, nature, and demons (8:1–34; Colossians 1:16–17)
- Jesus as the Lord of Psalm 107 who stills the storm and the Lord who heals (Psalm 103:3; 107:29)
- The cleansing power of Christ that is not defiled by what it touches (8:3)
- The Old Testament expectation of God's saving, healing reign fulfilled in Jesus
- Worship and trust as the fitting response to the authority of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- What strikes you most about seeing all of these miracles gathered in a single chapter?
- Why does it matter that Jesus has authority over disease, nature, and the demonic, and not just one of them?
- How should the authority of Jesus shape the way we come to Him with our needs?

Question 2

Student Question:

Jesus reaches out and touches a leper, the very person the law and the crowd kept at a distance (8:2–3). Who are the people you instinctively keep at arm's length, and what would it look like for you to move toward them the way Jesus moved toward this man?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the leper's story into our own relationships. Begin by recovering how radical Jesus' touch was. No observant person touched a leper. The disease was a wall, and on the far side of that wall a human being lived in isolation, untouched perhaps for years. Jesus crosses the wall before He even speaks the healing word.

Help students feel the tenderness of it. Jesus could have healed with a word, as He does for the centurion's servant. He chose to touch. He restored not only the man's body but his dignity, his place among people, his experience of human contact. The gospel comes to us the same way, not at arm's length but in person.

Now turn the mirror. Ask students to name, honestly, the people they instinctively keep at a distance. The category will differ for each: the person whose lifestyle unsettles them, the difficult relative, the one whose past makes them uncomfortable, the lonely person at the edge of the room, the one whose need feels like too much. We all have our lepers.

Move toward concrete action. Following Jesus here means moving toward, not away. Encourage one specific step this week: a conversation, an invitation, a visit, a word of welcome. The point is not to feel guilty about distance but to imitate the Christ who closes it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The compassion of Christ that crosses social and ceremonial barriers (8:3; Luke 7:34)
- The restoration of dignity and belonging, not merely physical healing
- The call to imitate Christ in moving toward the marginalized (Romans 15:7)
- Love expressed in personal presence, not action kept at a safe distance

Discussion Prompts

- Who are the people you tend to keep at arm's length, and why?
- What would it look like this week to move toward one of them the way Jesus moved toward the leper?
- How does the way Jesus treats you change the way you treat others who are kept at a distance?

Question 3

Student Question:

A Roman centurion says, "only say the word, and my servant will be healed," and Jesus marvels, "with no one in Israel have I found such faith" (8:8, 10). What does this soldier understand about Jesus' authority, and why does Jesus call it greater faith than He has found among His own people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The centurion is one of the most surprising figures in the Gospels. He is a Roman officer, a Gentile, a representative of the occupying power, and yet his faith draws from Jesus a marvel found nowhere else: “with no one in Israel have I found such faith” (8:10). Take time to understand why.

Listen to his reasoning. He is a man under authority, with soldiers under him; he says to one, “Go,” and he goes (8:9). He grasps that Jesus possesses authority of the same kind, only infinitely greater. Just as a commander’s word carries his whole command, Jesus’ word carries the authority of heaven. So the centurion concludes, “only say the word, and my servant will be healed” (8:8). He does not need Jesus to come; he trusts the word of Jesus to do it.

This is the heart of the faith Jesus praises: complete confidence that the authority of Jesus is real and that His bare word is enough. The centurion does not bargain, does not require a sign he can see, does not lean on his own worthiness, indeed he confesses he is not worthy to have Jesus under his roof. He simply trusts the authority of Christ. That is faith.

Note why Jesus calls it greater than what He has found in Israel. Many in Israel had every advantage, the Scriptures, the promises, the visible miracles, and still wavered. This outsider, with far less, trusted more. Jesus uses the moment to foretell that many will come “from east and west” to sit at the feast (8:11), a preview of the gospel going to all nations. Faith, not pedigree, is what opens the kingdom.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith as confident trust in the authority and word of Christ (8:8–10; Romans 10:17)
- The sufficiency of Jesus’ word, even at a distance, to accomplish His will
- Humility that confesses unworthiness yet trusts Christ fully
- The kingdom opened to all nations through faith, not by ancestry or privilege (8:11; Galatians 3:7–9)
- The danger of squandering spiritual advantages while an outsider believes

Discussion Prompts

- What does the centurion understand about Jesus that leads to such confident faith?
- Why does Jesus call this greater than the faith He found among His own people?
- Where do you need to trust simply the word of Jesus, even without a sign you can see?

Question 4

Student Question:

The centurion was an outsider, a Gentile, yet his faith astonished Jesus and pointed ahead to people coming “from east and west” into the kingdom (8:11). Where might pride in your own background or religious history be keeping you from the simple, trusting faith Jesus praises here?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question follows the centurion into our own hearts. Jesus uses this Gentile to warn that some who assume they belong, the “sons of the kingdom,” can be left outside, while outsiders stream in from east and west (8:11–12). The danger is taking our standing for granted.

Help students see how subtle this is. Religious background, a lifetime in the church, biblical knowledge, family heritage, all good things, can quietly curdle into presumption. We can begin to lean on our pedigree rather than on Christ, assuming our place is secure because of who we have always been rather than because of living, trusting faith now.

Invite honest reflection. Where does pride in background or experience dull the simple, dependent faith Jesus praises? Sometimes the longtime believer is harder to move than the new seeker, precisely because familiarity has bred a quiet self-confidence. The centurion had no such cushion; he simply trusted Christ.

Lead toward renewed dependence. The remedy is not to despise our heritage but to refuse to rest in it, returning to the posture of the centurion: unworthy, yet trusting the word of the Lord. Encourage students to name one place where they need to trade presumption for fresh, humble faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of presuming on religious heritage instead of living faith (8:11–12; Romans 2:28–29)
- Faith, not background, as what unites a person to Christ and His kingdom
- The warning against spiritual complacency among longtime believers
- Humble, ongoing dependence on Christ as the mark of true discipleship

Discussion Prompts

- Where might pride in your background or experience be dulling your simple trust in Christ?
- How can you tell the difference between resting in your heritage and resting in Christ Himself?
- What is one place this week where you need fresh, humble faith like the centurion’s?

Question 5

Student Question:

Matthew says Jesus healed the sick so that Isaiah’s words would be fulfilled, “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases” (8:16–17). What does it mean that Jesus’ healings point back to His mission as the suffering Servant, and what does this teach us about why He came?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After a long evening of healing, Matthew pauses to interpret it all with Scripture: Jesus healed “to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took our illnesses and bore our diseases’” (8:16–17, citing Isaiah 53:4). This is a crucial doctrinal hinge, so help your class slow down and feel its weight.

Isaiah 53 is the great Servant Song, the prophecy of the One who would suffer in the place of His people. Matthew connects Jesus’ healings directly to that song. The point is not merely that Jesus had power, but that His power flowed from His mission of bearing our brokenness. He did not heal at arm’s length; He entered our suffering in order to lift it.

Guard against a misreading here. Matthew is not promising that every Christian will be healed of every illness now, as some teach. Isaiah 53 reaches its climax at the cross, where the Servant bears our sins and sorrows in the deepest sense. The healings of Matthew 8 are real, and they are also signs, pointing to the greater deliverance Jesus accomplishes by His death and resurrection. Full and final healing comes when He makes all things new.

Bring out why He came. The healings reveal a Savior whose heart is moved by our suffering and whose mission is to bear it away. Disease, like death, is part of the ruin that sin brought into the world, and Jesus came to undo that ruin from the root. Lead your class to marvel that the authority on display in this chapter is the authority of a Servant who bears our griefs.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus’ healings as a fulfillment of the suffering Servant prophecy (8:17; Isaiah 53:4)
- Christ entering and bearing our brokenness rather than helping from a distance
- Healing as a sign pointing to the greater deliverance of the cross and resurrection
- The proper hope of full and final healing in the resurrection and the new creation (Revelation 21:4)
- Guarding against the error that promises guaranteed earthly healing now

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Jesus’ healings point back to His mission as the suffering Servant?
- How does Isaiah 53 help us understand why Jesus came?
- Where do you need to bring your own suffering to the Servant who bears our griefs?

Question 6

Student Question:

To one eager man Jesus says, “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head,” and to another, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead” (8:20, 22). Where in your life are you holding back from Jesus because of comfort, security, or competing loyalties, and what is He asking you to put first?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question sits between two would-be followers. To the scribe who eagerly volunteers, Jesus says, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (8:20). To another who wants first to bury his father, Jesus says, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead” (8:22). Both sayings are meant to surface the real cost of discipleship.

Help students hear the first saying rightly. Jesus is not against rest or shelter; He is being honest about the cost. To follow Him may mean discomfort, insecurity, and the loss of the settled life we crave. He will not let an eager volunteer sign up under false advertising. Count the cost first.

The second saying is harder and easy to misread. Jesus is not telling a man to skip his father’s funeral; many understand the man to mean, in effect, “let me wait until my aging father has died and I have settled the estate.” Jesus’ point is that nothing, not even the most legitimate family duty, can outrank the call to follow Him. Discipleship claims first place.

Now press the mirror gently. Where are students holding back from full obedience? For one it is comfort and security, the unwillingness to risk. For another it is a competing loyalty, a relationship, a career, a plan that quietly sits on the throne. Ask each person to name what currently comes before Christ and what it would mean to put Him first this week. The call is costly, but the One who calls is worth everything.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The real cost of following Christ, named honestly (8:20; Luke 14:28)
- The supreme claim of Christ over comfort, security, and even family (8:22; Matthew 10:37)
- Discipleship as putting Jesus first, not adding Him to a settled life
- The worthiness of Christ that makes the cost of following Him gain, not loss (Philippians 3:7–8)

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you holding back from Jesus because of comfort or security?
- What competing loyalty most often sits ahead of Christ in your life?
- What would it look like to put Jesus first in that area this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

In the boat the terrified disciples cry out, and Jesus answers, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” before calming the sea (8:26). What is Jesus revealing about the relationship between fear and faith, and what does it mean that He is present and in command even when the storm is real?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The storm scene is one of the most vivid in the Gospels. A “great storm” swamps the boat while Jesus sleeps, and the disciples wake Him in terror: “Save us, Lord; we are perishing” (8:25). Before He stills the sea, He addresses their hearts: “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” (8:26). Notice the order. He treats their fear before He treats the weather.

Help students see what Jesus is teaching about fear and faith. He does not scold them for feeling fear in a genuinely dangerous moment; He names the deeper problem, a faith that had shrunk under pressure. They had the Lord of the sea in their own boat, and still concluded they were doomed. Their circumstances were real, but their estimate of Jesus was too small.

Then comes the staggering act: He “rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm” (8:26). The same word used to rebuke demons He uses on the storm, and it instantly obeys. This is the prerogative of God alone (Psalm 89:9; 107:29). The disciples’ awed question, “What sort of man is this?”, is exactly the response Matthew wants from us.

Land the comfort. Faith does not mean the storm is not real or that we never feel afraid. It means we trust that the One who is with us in the boat is in command of the storm. Christ’s presence is not a guarantee of calm seas, but it is a guarantee that the seas answer to Him. Lead your class to move their gaze from the size of the storm to the authority of the Lord who is in the boat with them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The contrast between fear and faith, and Jesus’ care to address the heart first (8:26)
- Christ’s authority over nature as a mark of His deity (8:26–27; Psalm 89:9)
- The presence of Christ with His people in the midst of, not apart from, the storm
- Faith as trusting the authority of Jesus when circumstances are genuinely frightening
- The fitting response of awe and worship at who Jesus is (8:27)

Discussion Prompts

- What is Jesus revealing about the relationship between fear and faith in this scene?
- How does it help to know that Jesus is in command of the storm even when it is real?
- Where do you most need to move your gaze from the storm to the authority of Christ?

Question 8

Student Question:

The disciples were following Jesus and still ended up in a life-threatening storm. When have you assumed that following Jesus would keep the storms away, and how does this account change the way you read the hard seasons of obedience?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes a truth easy to miss. The disciples were not in the storm because they had disobeyed. They were there precisely because they had obeyed; Jesus Himself had given the order to cross to the other side (8:18, 23). Following Jesus led them straight into the storm.

Help students confront a quiet, common assumption: that faithfulness should buy us smooth water, and that storms are a sign something has gone wrong. This account dismantles that idea. Obedience is not a charm against hardship. Sometimes the path of obedience runs directly through the wind and waves.

Invite honest reflection on where this assumption has wounded them. Many believers have privately concluded, in a hard season, that God must be displeased or absent, simply because life grew difficult while they were trying to follow Him. The storm felt like evidence against God. This passage offers a different reading: the storm can be the very place where Christ reveals who He is.

Lead toward a sturdier faith. The lesson is not that following Jesus removes storms, but that He is in the boat through them and remains in command. Encourage students to reread their own hard seasons of obedience in that light, and to look for where Christ has been present and sovereign even there.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Storms as a normal part of the obedient life, not necessarily a sign of sin (8:23–24; John 16:33)
- The error of assuming faithfulness guarantees an easy road
- Christ's presence and command in the trials of those who follow Him
- Suffering reread in light of the sovereignty and nearness of Christ (Romans 8:35–39)

Discussion Prompts

- When have you assumed that following Jesus should keep the storms away?
- How does it change things to see the disciples in a storm because they obeyed?
- Where do you need to trust that Christ is present and in command in your current storm?

Question 9

Student Question:

When Jesus arrives among the demon-possessed men, even the demons recognize Him, crying, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God?" and He casts them out with a word (8:29, 32). What does this passage teach about the deity and supreme authority of Jesus over every spiritual power, and why is that authority such good news for those who belong to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, so give it your fullest attention, because here the curtain is pulled back on Christ's authority over the spiritual realm. Two men, so violently possessed that "no one could pass that way," meet Jesus, and the demons themselves cry out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (8:28–29). Even the powers of darkness know exactly who He is.

Notice three things the demons confess against their will. First, they recognize Jesus as "the Son of God," a confession many humans in the chapter have not yet made. Second, they recognize His authority; they do not challenge Him but beg Him, knowing they cannot resist His command. Third, they recognize that He is their appointed Judge, who will torment them "at the time" set by God. The demonic world has no illusions about the deity and supremacy of Christ.

Draw out the doctrinal point plainly. Jesus is the Son of God, and His authority extends even over the spiritual powers that terrorize humanity. With a single word, "Go," the legion of demons is cast out (8:32). There is no struggle, no contest of equals. This is not dualism, where good and evil are evenly matched. Satan and his forces are real and dangerous, but they are utterly subordinate to the Lord Jesus.

Help your class feel why this is such good news. The same powers that ruin and torment are powers Christ commands. For those who belong to Him, this means no spiritual force can finally overcome them; we have been delivered "from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13). The believer need not live in fear of the demonic, for greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

End with worship and sober reality. Note the strange ending: the townspeople, more disturbed by the loss of their pigs than amazed by the deliverance of two men, beg Jesus to leave (8:34). Authority over the demons is glorious, yet people can still prefer their comfort and their possessions to the presence of Christ. Lead your class to respond differently, with awe at His power and gladness to have such a Lord among them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The deity of Christ confessed even by the demons as "the Son of God" (8:29; Mark 1:24)
- Christ's supreme authority over Satan and all spiritual powers (8:32; Colossians 2:15)
- The rejection of dualism: evil is real but never an equal of the sovereign Lord
- Christ as the appointed Judge before whom even the demons tremble (8:29; James 2:19)
- Deliverance of the believer from the domain of darkness into Christ's kingdom (Colossians 1:13; 1 John 4:4)
- The warning that people may prefer comfort and possessions to the presence of Christ (8:34)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it tell us about Jesus that even the demons confess Him as the Son of God and obey His word?
- Why is Christ's authority over every spiritual power such good news for those who belong to Him?
- Why do you think the townspeople asked Jesus to leave, and how is that temptation still with us?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter, the leper, the centurion, the storm, the demons. Name one specific area of your life where you most need to trust the authority of Jesus this week, and what would it look like to bring it to Him expecting Him to act.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this capstone to gather the whole chapter and turn it from observation into trust. Across Matthew 8 we have watched Jesus exercise authority over every domain that threatens us: disease in the leper and the sick, distance and doubt in the centurion's servant, nature in the storm, and the powers of darkness in the demon-possessed. The cumulative message is clear: there is nothing in your life that lies outside His authority.

Press the personal application. The chapter is not finally about ancient miracles; it is about whether we will bring our own impossibilities to this Lord. Invite students to name one specific area, a fear, an illness, a strained relationship, a besetting sin, a storm they are presently in, where they most need to trust the authority of Jesus right now.

Help them move from passive admiration to active faith. The centurion did not merely admire Jesus' authority; he acted on it, sending word and trusting the result to Christ. Ask each person what it would look like this week to bring their named area to Jesus expecting Him to act, in prayer, in obedience, in dependence rather than self-reliance.

Close with worship. The right answer to "What sort of man is this?" is to bow before Him. Lead your class to marvel that the Lord whom disease, nature, and demons obey is the same Lord who touches lepers, marvels at faith, sleeps in our boat, and bids us follow. Such authority, joined to such love, is meant to draw out our deepest trust.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The all-encompassing authority of Christ over everything that threatens us (8:1–34)
- Faith as bringing our real needs to Jesus and trusting Him to act
- The move from admiring Christ's power to depending on it
- Worship as the fitting response to the One the wind and waves obey (8:27)
- The union of Christ's supreme authority with His tender compassion

Discussion Prompts

- Which area of your life most needs to come under the authority of Jesus this week?
- What would it look like to bring that to Him expecting Him to act?
- How can this class pray for you as you trust the authority of Christ in that area?