

From Bondage to Freedom

1 So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from a cemetery to meet him. 3 This man lived among the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. 4 Whenever he was put into chains and shackles - as he often was - he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.

6 When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. 7 With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit."

9 Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man." 10 Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place.

11 There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. 12 "Send us into those pigs," the spirits begged. "Let us enter them." 13 So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.

14 The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. 15 A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid. 16 Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. 17 And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone.

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. 19 But Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been." 20 So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.

Mark 5:1-20 (NLT)

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. These guides rely heavily on a few different study guides; including "LifeChange Series" (ISBN 0891099107), N.T. Wright's guide (ISBN 9780830821822), James Hoover's guide (ISBN 9780830830046), and the Serendipity NT for Groups by the Young Life ministry (ISBN is N/A)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- What is the “freakiest” thing you have ever encountered?
- Have you ever experienced what you might consider demonic or evil forces?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

Background Notes:

- **Tombs (5:3)** - People in the first-century Palestine were often buried in natural caves or in tombs cut out of the limestone rock. These provided good shelter for anyone desiring to live there. It was a natural place for a possessed man to dwell because of the shelter and the popular belief that tombs were the favorite haunts of demons
- **Legion (5:9)** - A Roman legion consisted officially of 6,000 soldiers.
- **Pigs (5:11)** – The Law of Moses declared pigs to be an unclean animal (Lev. 11:7-8). The fact that such a large herd was present in this region shows that many Gentiles (non-Jews) lived there.
- **Decapolis, “Ten Cities” (5:20)** – A confederation of ten cities located (with one exception) on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Decapolis is Greek for “Ten Cities;” the non-Hebrew name is yet another indicator of the fact that the area was predominantly Gentile.

V1-5

- O: What do we learn about demons from the actions of the possessed man?
- I: This region of Gerasenes seems like an eerie place. How do you think they felt about it after the event previously recorded in Mark (4:35-41)?

V6-13

- O: How does Jesus deal with the demon? The man?
- O: What do you gather from the demon’s name (v.9)?
- I: Why were the demons so terrified of Jesus (v.7)?
- I: Why do you think Jesus allowed the demons to go into the pigs (v. 11-13)?
- I: What does the fate of the pigs show about what the demons were trying to do to the man?

V14-20

- O: What is the demon possessed man like afterwards (v.15,18-20)?
- O: Up to this point, Jesus has been telling healed people not to tell others about their encounter. How/why is Jesus’ response to this man different (v.19)? *Hint: When Jesus and His disciples landed on the southeast shore of the sea, they now entered Gentile territory (ex. Jews didn’t keep pigs as they were considered “unclean.”).*
- I: Why do you think the people/crowd reacted as they did? What does this story say about their values? Jesus’ values? More importantly, are people or “pigs” (a person’s livelihood) more important in our culture, church, &/or lives?
- I: What (and how) do you suppose the man said to his family and to those in the region?
- A: If you were one of the people living in Gerasene and saw this healing take place, how do you think you might have reacted under similar circumstances?
- A: How have you experienced healing/deliverance via the power of Jesus? How have you (or should you) go forward in sharing your encounter(s) with others (as Jesus commands in v.19)? What can you tell your family &/or friends about what God has done for you?
- A: Why are people in our culture/country not as “amazed at what the church tells them” when compared to the towns response in this account (v. 20)?
- A: How do we balance the Biblical view of the reality of demons and spiritual warfare with advances in modern medicine and the findings of mental illness and chemical imbalances? Can the two realities co-exist? Is there a demon around every corner? Is there ever a demon around the corner? How can Jesus enter/speak to both of these realities?

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Pray for Jesus covering, for strength in this spiritual battle (Eph 6:12), for deliverance from bondage in our church and in our broader area, for a boldness with our message and experience with Jesus.
- **Respond:** Spend this week talking inventory of your life. Where is their bondage. Where are there opportunities for Jesus to bring healing/deliverance? Where are there opportunities to be more bold with the gospel and your story?
- **Read:** Next week’s sermon (8/1/2010) will focus on Mark 5:24-34. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.