

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

SAY: “In our last session, we looked at how God calls us to share the gospel with others. Today we look specifically at how we can do that close to home.” Invite members to turn to **page 3** in the **Personal Study Guide (PSG)** and review session titles.

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture (**PSG, p. 148**) as you introduce **Question #1: Who is a neighbor you’re glad you’ve gotten the chance to know?**

OPTION: IN ADVANCE, secure several local newspapers. Place group members into subgroups of three or four people each and provide each group with a newspaper. Ask groups to use the newspapers to identify people in our society who struggle in our broken world. For example, what people might be isolated, hungry, lacking medical attention, cut off from their families, and so on?

SESSION 6

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW



The Point

You don’t have to go far to share your transformed life in Christ.

The Bible Meets Life

Some Christians can be enthralled with the idea of doing great things for God in exotic locales. While that type of mission is needed, the first place God calls us is often not across

the world but across the street. Christ calls us to represent Him right where we are. The hardest ministry may be among those who know us best, but those same people are the ones most impacted by the way Christ has transformed us.

The Passages

Mark 5:1-2,8-15,18-20

The Setting

During the first half of His public ministry, Jesus spent much of His time in the region of Galilee, often in the town of Capernaum on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. One day Jesus and His disciples traveled to the eastern side of the sea to the region of the Gerasenes, which was Gentile territory. There they encountered a man controlled by multiple demons.

Mark 5:1-2

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

KEY WORDS

country of the Gadarenes (v. 1)—This area could be near the eastern seaside village of Kersa or near Gadara (about six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee).

We are broken people living in a broken world.

Verse 1. It had been a very busy time in Galilee for Jesus. First, scribes who had come down from Jerusalem had accused Him of being possessed by a demon (Mark 3:22-30). Then His mother and half-brothers came to take Him home because they thought He was crazy (vv. 31-35; see v. 21). But Jesus was undaunted, and continued teaching the crowd “by the sea side.” But “there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea” near the shore, referring to the Sea of Galilee, “and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables” (4:1-2).

When it was evening He told His disciples to head out to the other side of the lake. As they traveled, a great storm arose that threatened to capsize the boat. Jesus was asleep when His terrified disciples woke Him up. Jesus rebuked the storm and then remarked about their lack of faith (vv. 35-41).

1▶ Mark related that they arrived on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, **into the country of the Gadarenes**. Biblical scholars have long debated the actual location of the events described in these verses, since Matthew reported in his Gospel that these events occurred in “the country of the Gergesenes” (Matt. 8:28). The ancient town of Gerasa was about 30 miles inland from the lake, which makes it a very unlikely candidate for the location. The town of Gadara, however, was only about six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. However, the terrain surrounding Gadara (and Gerasa as well) does not appear to allow for the “steep place” mentioned in Mark 5:13. Another possible location is the region around a seaside village known as Kersa (an Arabic name that may be related to the Greek name *Gerasa*). This area has steep hills and cave-like tombs much like those noted by Mark in this chapter.¹

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 149)**. Highlight the author’s examples of those who like to travel and those who prefer to stay close to home. Make the point that wherever you are, you’ll find people who need Jesus.

Reinforce the importance of sharing the gospel where we are by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 149): You don’t have to go far to share your transformed life in Christ.**

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to help us recognize opportunities to share the gospel close to home. Thank Him for the opportunity to join Him on mission in our community.

STUDY THE BIBLE Mark 5:1-2



10 minutes

GUIDE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 152.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Mark 5:1-2.

GUIDE: Using Bible

Commentary 1 on page 153 and this page and **KEY WORDS** on page 153 (**PSG, p. 150**), explain the territory mentioned in these verses and the various names by which it is called.

SUMMARIZE: The demon-possessed man was very broken—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. His pain and struggle were obvious (**PSG, pp. 150-151**).

- *His crazy and erratic behavior kept him isolated from the community and any family he might have had.*
- *The community's only "treatment" for him was to bind him with shackles and chains, but he simply broke the chains (v. 4). This demonic strength caused the people to fear him more, so he was left to fend for himself—in a cemetery.*
- *He was naked, which surely caused him further pain from exposure to the natural elements (Luke 8:27).*

(Continued on next page.)

While we don't know for certain the exact location of this event, it is important to understand it occurred in a Gentile—non-Jewish—region. This was one of the few accounts where Jesus ministered outside Jewish territory. It is also a reminder that His gospel is for all people of all nations—both Jews and Gentiles. The prophet Isaiah foretold this centuries earlier, “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa. 49:6). A servant of God named Simeon affirmed Isaiah's words the week after Jesus' birth, when he proclaimed Jesus as “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32).◀

Verse 2. Mark noted that **when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit**. It didn't take long to realize the man didn't come to welcome them to the area or to give them the key to the city.

Jews used the term *unclean* to refer to certain conditions that would cause someone to become spiritually defiled. A Jew could become unclean because of his or her failure to follow certain ritual customs. For example, contact with a dead body would render a person unclean. Thus, living in the tombs would have made this man unclean. A person who was possessed by a demon or an evil *spirit* was also considered unclean. This man was probably a Gentile; many Jews also considered all Gentiles (non-Jews) as unclean. Thus the man who came to meet Jesus would have been viewed as unclean for many reasons.

Mark went on to give us more insight about this man. The townspeople must have thought of him as a brute savage and feared him as such. “He had been often bound with fetters and chains,” which he easily broke (Mark 5:3-4). They may have driven him away from the town for their own protection. Thus he lived in the nearby caves that served as tombs for dead bodies. He would cut himself on the rocks and wander among the tombs and the mountains crying out day and night with screams that must have been disturbing to the other people in the area (v. 5). He surely had to be a pitiful and terrible sight. If the disciples had been frightened by the recent storm (4:35-41), they most likely were terrified by the presence of this demon-possessed man who “saw Jesus afar off,” and “ran and worshipped him” (v. 6).

Mark 5:8-15

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

KEY WORD

Legion (v. 9)—The main fighting force of the Roman army, which numbered up to 6,000 soldiers. Here, it indicates the man was controlled by a large number of demons.

Jesus replaces our brokenness with a restored life in Him.

Verses 8-10. When the demon-possessed man approached the group he fell down in front of Jesus. The demon spoke through the man and questioned Jesus about His intentions. Jesus spoke to the demon, commanding, **Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.** The demoniac had previously

- He was in such physical, emotional, and spiritual torment, that he intentionally cut himself. This may have been a vain attempt to drive out the demons or to end his pain by suicide.

DISCUSS: Question #2
(PSG, p. 151): **How do you typically react when you encounter brokenness?**

(Alternate: How would you describe the man in the tombs and where would you see such brokenness in our culture today?)

TRANSITION: "In the next verses, Jesus confronted the demons that plagued this man."

STUDY THE BIBLE

Mark 5:8-15



10 minutes

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Mark 5:8-15.

GUIDE: Use **Bible****Commentary** **2** and the **KEY****WORD** on page 155 (**PSG**, p. 152) to describe the name *Legion* and the nature of these demons.**SUMMARIZE:** Jesus allowed the demons to go into the herd of pigs for several reasons (**PSG**, p. 152-153):

- *It unequivocally showed the evil intent of the demons. What the demons did to the pigs was the total destruction they intended to do to the man.*
- *The demise of the pigs demonstrated beyond doubt the demons had left the man and he was healed.*
- *It was a witness to the power of Jesus to heal. Consider the impact this had on the people. They came running because of what they heard about their pigs, but when they arrived, they saw that the man was now sitting, clothed in his right mind.*

Jesus did a wonderful thing. He restored this broken man and gave a bold display of the destruction of these demonic forces.

used Jesus' name and addressed Him as "Son of the most high God" (v. 7). From the demon-possessed man's words, it appears he believed Jesus intended to torment him (v. 7).

2 ▶ Now Jesus asked the demon, **What is thy name?** It is possible the name **Legion** was nothing more than boasting on the demon's part rather than a proper name. Or it could have been the demon's attempt to dodge Jesus' question (and perhaps His power as well) by giving a description rather than a name. While it is neither necessary nor important to think that an exact number of demons possessed the man, it is certain that **many** evil spirits controlled him. The Bible confirms that multiple demons can inhabit a person's body (Mark 16:9; Luke 11:26). Thus it is no wonder the man acted as he did since he was held captive by a demonic army.

We should take no issue with the variation between singular and plural in these verses concerning the demons. The demon that talked to Jesus spoke on behalf of the many who possessed the man. The demon apparently knew the ultimate fate he and all other demonic forces faced. He **besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.** Luke noted that the demon begged that Jesus "would not command them to go out into the deep" (Luke 8:31), a place where they would be confined and tormented before the Day of Judgment (Satan is confined in "the bottomless pit" in Rev. 20:1-3). The demons, despite their number, knew they were no match for Jesus. Thus they begged for any concession they could get, despite the fact they had shown no mercy to the man they inhabited. ◀

Verses 11-13. **Nigh unto the mountains** was a **great herd of swine feeding**; this confirms that Gentiles lived in this area. Pigs were "unclean" according to Jewish law (Lev. 11:7); thus, no good Jew even wanted to be around them. **All the devils besought** Jesus to **send them into the swine.** By dwelling in the pigs they could avoid leaving the area or being sent to the destination they feared the most.

Jesus **gave them leave.** He hadn't suggested they enter the pigs as a dwelling place, but He agreed to the demons' request. Immediately the **unclean spirits went out** of the man and **entered into the swine** herd of **about two thousand** pigs. Then the unexpected happened, at least from the demons' perspective. The startled **herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, ... and were choked in the sea.**

Verse 14. There were others in the area besides Jesus, His disciples, and the demon-possessed man. Men **that fed the swine** had witnessed the incident. Undoubtedly they knew of the wild man who lived in the nearby tombs. While they may not have known that the exorcism had just taken place, they clearly saw its effects as all the pigs rushed off the steep bank into the water where they drowned.

The men who tended the pigs were likely the caretakers of the pigs, not the owners. Thus, they would have had to account for their losses and possibly reimburse the owners if they were found at fault. No surprise, then, that they **fled, and told it to people in the city, and in the country.** This was no minor incident. It would have had a great economic impact as well as an ecological impact when dead pig carcasses started washing ashore. The men wanted others to know what had occurred. Perhaps they hoped others would discover who was responsible so the men would not be blamed for the loss.

As a result people **went out to see what it was that was done.** In Greek the term for *to see* means to look intently at something in order to understand it. In our time something similar would have us glued to our televisions or the Internet as we wait for the story to unfold so we would have some explanation. But in those days people who heard about such an unbelievable event would have had to stop what they were doing and go immediately to the site to find out more.

3 ▶ Verse 15. When the people arrived, they came **to Jesus.** Though they did not know Him, they probably assumed He was responsible and perhaps could shed some light on the event. Next to Jesus, however, they saw **him that was possessed with the devil.** Undoubtedly they knew him, having previously witnessed his violent nature and heard his constant screams and shrieks. While they probably didn't know this man **had the legion,** surely they had no trouble believing some type of spirit possessed him.

The man the people saw with Jesus **sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind** was much different from the man they had seen before. He no longer was naked, running wild, and out of control as they had previously known him. The man may have been talking, smiling, and rejoicing—a far cry from anything they had seen from him in the recent past.

It is perhaps understandable that **they were afraid.** It's doubtful they had any insight into the identity of Jesus. They apparently recognized, however, that He had power greater than that of the former madman they now saw sitting before them. They didn't know Jesus or know what to make of Him. Rather than finding out, however, the people begged Jesus to leave their area (Mark 5:17). ◀

GUIDE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 3 to describe the transformation that took place in this man and the effect it had on the people around him.

DISCUSS: Question #3

(PSG, p. 153): **When have you observed such a significant transformation in someone's life?**

(Alternate: What are some of the ways Jesus has changed your life?)

TRANSITION: "In the next verses Jesus gave the man some interesting instructions."

STUDY THE BIBLE

Mark 5:18-20



15 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Mark 5:18-20.

GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 4** and **DIGGING DEEPER (PSG, p. 155)** to explain the mission Jesus gave to the man and the region that would be most directly affected by it—the cities in the Decapolis.

SUMMARIZE: Explain the hesitancy that some believers have in sharing the gospel and how we can overcome it (**PSG, pp. 154**):

One of the excuses people give for not sharing the gospel goes something like this: "I don't know what to say. First I need to study more Scripture and grow deeper in my faith."

We can, however, tell of our own encounter with Jesus and engage others in spiritual conversations.

DISCUSS: Question #4 (PSG, p. 154): How can you use your story of transformation to share the gospel?

Some people read this incident and claim Jesus was incredibly inhumane for allowing the destruction of such a large number of pigs. Others think He had no concern for the economic condition of those who owned the pigs. But both of these concerns are secondary to the value of a human life and the fullness of life Jesus wants for every person. He wants to replace our brokenness with a restored life in Him.

Mark 5:18-20

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Our response to Christ should be to participate in His mission.

Verse 18. The people did not want Him there, so Jesus did not stay. Yet, as Jesus was getting into the boat, the formerly demon-possessed man **prayed him that he might be with him**. Unlike the crowd, who begged Jesus to leave, the transformed man begged to remain with Jesus—the One who rescued him from the dominion of evil and had transformed his life. The man didn't know or care where Jesus was going; he was willing to go anywhere with the Lord.

Verse 19. Unlike other incidents which occurred in the region of Galilee when He called men to follow Him, Jesus did not make the same invitation to this formerly demon-possessed man. Instead, Jesus told the man, **Go home to thy friends**. Jesus had a mission for the man and it started at home—in the town where he had once lived and the region surrounding it.

Unlike many of Jesus' earlier healings, where Jesus instructed those He healed not to tell a soul (Mark 1:44; 5:43;

7:36), in this case Jesus told the man to tell freely **how great things the Lord hath done for thee**. This may have been because the formerly demon-possessed man was a Gentile who would be proclaiming what Jesus had done for him only in Gentile territory. Among the Jews, unwanted attention to Jesus' miracles might have led to a misunderstanding of His messianic role—to be that of a conquering king rather than a suffering Messiah (see John 6:14-15). But in Gentile territory, such a danger would not have existed since the Gentiles had no messianic expectations like those of the Jews.²

Jesus wanted the man to share how God **had compassion on him**. The word *compassion* means to have mercy toward another person and act on that individual's behalf. This was what Jesus had done for the man who had been held captive by many demons. It is what He did later on the cross for all humanity who had been held captive to sin (for those who will repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus).

Many people who had seen the man may have been skeptical about what happened or even questioned if he was the same man. Once he returned to his people he could tell the story and assure them of his transformation. This would be a challenge, going back to where people knew him and had seen the worst in him. Those Gentiles had no interest in Jesus. Still, Jesus had an interest in them. He wanted them to experience deliverance from sin and inclusion in God's family. Jesus left them with a witness—someone who could share the message about God's grace and mercy.

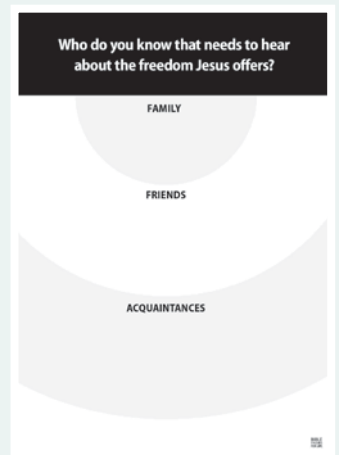
4 ▶ Verse 20. Jesus commanded and the man obeyed. He left that place and **began to publish** the message as he had been told. He most likely didn't know anything about the Scriptures nor did he know any evangelistic presentation. All he could do was share his story of **how great things Jesus had done for him**—that the Lord had delivered him from torment and death and given him life. The transformation story of the former demoniac became known throughout the cities in the **Decapolis** (the region that included Gadara, Gerasa, and Damascus). Those who heard the message **did marvel** at what they saw and heard from this man. ◀

1. James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 89; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 227.
2. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 232-33.

DISCUSS: Question #5
(PSG, p. 156): **How can our group help bring healing to the brokenness in our community?**

(Alternate: *What can we learn about evangelism from this formerly broken man?*)

LEADER PACK: Point to **Item 13: Share Christ**. Ask: "Who is in your family that needs to hear about the freedom Jesus offers?" Record the responses in the "Family" circle on the chart. **Note:** Members likely will want to use first names only for this activity. Repeat this question for the remaining two circles, recording your group's responses in each circle.



DO: Invite volunteers to share responses to the activity on **PSG page 156: "Transformed."**

LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point:** You don't have to go far to share your transformed life in Christ.

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out (PSG, p. 157;** see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Emphasize that when God transforms our lives, we have an obligation to share it with others right where we are.

PRAY: "Father, thank You for giving us opportunities right where we are to make a difference in Your kingdom."

NOTE: Remind group members that **PSG pages 6-9** are there to journal one another's prayer requests.

LIVE IT OUT

How will you share your transformed life in Christ this week? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Write.** Write down the names of three people in your life who are far from God. Ask God for an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with each of them.
- ▶ **Walk.** Walk across your street, hop over your fence, or knock on the cubicle next to you. Start a spiritual conversation with someone and ask God to guide your words and the conversation.
- ▶ **Research.** "Hasn't science disproved Christianity?" "How can you take the Bible seriously?" "If your God is so loving, why do you believe in hell?" We can respond with grace and intelligence to the skeptic's questions. Launch your study with a book like Jeremiah Johnston's *Unanswered* or *Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics*.

You don't have to travel far to share your transformed life in Christ. The first place God calls you is often not across the world, but across the street. Will you go?

BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR



Denarius with an image of General Pompey the Great; coin struck in Sicily, Catana. Pompey helped bolster the Decapolis as a region. He granted Decapolis citizens virtual autonomy in most matters.

Mark 5:20 records the Gerasene demoniac's enthusiasm to share his experience with Jesus in the region of the Decapolis. The word *Decapolis* means "ten cities." The term did not refer specifically to the ten cities themselves but to the general region where they were located. The region, primarily east of the Jordan, was part of the Roman province of Syria and was bordered on the west by Perea, Samaria, and Galilee.

The Decapolis cities had a shared history. Each experienced attacks by the Hasmonean (Maccabean) Kingdom from Jerusalem under Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.). The Roman general, Pompey, arrived in 63 B.C. and reestablished the Decapolis cities' freedom as independent city-states. Each city encouraged a Hellenistic worldview. The inhabitants spoke Greek; persons in the surrounding areas continued to speak mainly a combination of Aramaic and Hebrew. The citizens of the Decapolis imported the Greeks' gods and built temples dedicated to their deities. These elements of Greek culture helped the new citizens to feel comfortable.

While Greek did influence all areas of Israel at least to some degree, the Decapolis proved to be wholeheartedly committed to Hellenistic culture.

The excerpt above is from the article "What Was the Decapolis?" (Fall 2011), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus wants to replace our brokenness with a restored life in Him. Jesus is not only in the business of forgiving and healing our past, but He also wants to redeem our present, and transform our future.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.



Free additional ideas for your group are available at
BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra