

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 148** as you introduce **Question #1:**

Who is a neighbor you're glad you've gotten to know?

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 149)**. Highlight the author's observation that all people, everywhere, have one thing in common: They need Jesus.

SAY: "Today we look at how Jesus miraculously saved a man. His neighbors believed he was hopeless. Jesus then told this man to stay at home and share with others what God had done for him."

Reinforce the importance of sharing the gospel where we live 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 give us the boldness to share the gospel with others who we know: our family, friends and neighbors.

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

around 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 They came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes.
- 2 As soon as he got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met him.

KEY WORDS: **Region of the Gerasenes** (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. Getting into a boat on the shore of the lake (or **sea**, referring to the Sea of Galilee), “He taught them many things in parables” (4:2). When it was evening He told His disciples to head out to the other side of the lake. As they traveled, a serious storm arose that nearly capsized the boat. Jesus was asleep when His disciples, afraid they were going to drown, woke Him up. Jesus remarked about their lack of faith and then rebuked the storm (vv. 35-41).

Mark related that they arrived on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, landing in **the region of the Gerasenes**. The actual location of the following events has been the subject of much debate, since the Gospel of Matthew referred to these events as happening in “the region of the Gadarenes” (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 bank” 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

While we don’t know the exact location of this event for certain, it is important to understand it occurred in

STUDY THE BIBLE

Mark 5:1-2



10 minutes

SAY: “Some Christians may be enthralled with the idea of doing great things for God in exotic locales. While that type of mission surely is needed, the first place God calls us is often not around the world but across the street. Christ also calls us to represent Him right where we are.”

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

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Mark 5:1-2.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **Key Words (PSG, p. 150)** to explain the term *Region of the Gerasenes*.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 151** to describe the characteristics of the “man with an unclean spirit.”

- *His crazy and erratic behavior kept him isolated from the community and his family.*
- *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 only caused the people to fear him more, so he was simply 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).*
- *He was in such physical, emotional, and spiritual torment, he would intentionally cut himself. This may have been some vain attempt to drive out the demons or an attempt to end his pain through suicide.*

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 1** to provide further explanation about the man with the unclean spirit revealed in Mark 5:3-5.

a Gentile (non-Jewish) region. This was one of the few recorded instances of Jesus ministering outside of 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 not enough for you to be my servant raising up the tribes of Jacob and restoring the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations, to be my salvation to the ends 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 for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32).

1 ▶ Verse 2. When Jesus and the disciples arrived on the shore, they immediately encountered someone very unusual. Mark noted that as soon as Jesus and the disciples had got out of the boat **a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs** to meet them. Obviously the man didn’t come to welcome them to the area or to give them the key to the city.

The Jews used the term **unclean** to refer to certain conditions whereby someone was spiritually defiled. A Jew could become unclean because of his or her failure to follow certain ritual customs. 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. Many Jews also considered all Gentiles (non-Jews) as unclean. This man was probably a Gentile. 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 monster. They had tried to restrain him with 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 alarming (v. 5). He was a pitiful and terrible sight. If the disciples had been frightened by the recent storm (4:35-41), most likely they were terrified by the presence of this possessed man who “ran” (v. 6) to meet them. ◀

Mark 5:8-15

8 For he had told him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

9 “What is your name?” he asked him.

“My name is Legion,” he answered him, “because we are many.” **10** And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the region.

11 A large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside.

12 The demons begged him, “Send us to the pigs, so that we may enter them.”

13 So he gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. The herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there.

14 The men who tended them ran off and reported it in the town and the countryside, and people went to see what had happened. **15** They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

KEY WORDS: **Legion** (v. 9)—The main fighting force of the Roman army, which numbered up to 6000 soldiers. Here, it indicates the man was controlled by a large number of demons.

Jesus replaces our brokenness with a restored life in Him.

2 ▶ **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, you unclean spirit!**” The demoniac had previously 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). Now Jesus demanded to know the demon’s name. It is possible the name **Legion** was

DISCUSS: Question #2
(PSG, p. 151): **Who might this broken man be today?**

(Alternate: How do you typically react when you encounter brokenness?)

TRANSITION: “In the next verses we see Jesus’ encounter with the man and the demons, and Jesus’ miraculous power of transformation.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Mark 5:8-15



10 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Mark 5:8-15.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** on this page and page 156 to explain Jesus’ command to the unclean spirit and His encounter with Legion.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **Key Words** on this page and in **PSG page 152, Legion**.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 3 on this page and page 157 to explain the role the herd of pigs played in the story.

- *The herd's demise.*
- *The men who tended the pigs.*

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG pages 152-153**. Ask a volunteer to summarize the following content:

- *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 that 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 townspeople.*

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 by giving a description rather than a name. While it is not necessary to think that an exact number of demons possessed the man, it is certain there were **many** evil spirits that 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 the way he did since he was held captive by a demonic army.

There is no issue with the variation between singular and plural in these verses concerning the demons. The demon that talked to Jesus was speaking on behalf of the many who possessed the man. The demon apparently knew the ultimate fate he and all other demonic forces faced. He **begged** Jesus **earnestly not to send them out of the region**. Luke noted that the demon begged Jesus not to "banish them to the abyss" (Luke 8:31), a place where they would be confined and tormented before the Day of Judgment (Satan is confined in the abyss 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. ◀

3 ▶ Verses 11-13. The **large herd of pigs** that was **feeding on the hillside** 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. The demons **begged** Jesus to allow them to inhabit the **pigs**. By dwelling in the pigs they could avoid leaving the area or being sent to the destination they feared the most.

Jesus **gave them permission**. He hadn't suggested they enter the pigs as a dwelling place, but He agreed to the demons' request. Immediately the **unclean spirits came out** of the man and went into the **herd of about two thousand** pigs. But then the unexpected happened, at least from the demons' perspective. The startled swine **rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there**.

Verse 14. There were others in the area besides Jesus, His disciples, and the demon-possessed man. Several **men who tended** the pigs 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 them were most likely the caretakers of the pigs, not the owners. Thus they would have had to give an account for their losses and possibly reimburse the owners if they were found at fault. It is no surprise, then, that they **ran off and reported** the event to people **in the town and the countryside**. 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 just 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 to see what had happened**. In Greek the term translated **to see** means to look intently at something in order to understand it. That's what these people were doing. 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. ◀

4 ▶ Verse 15. When the people arrived, **they came to Jesus**. They did not know Him, but they probably assumed He was responsible and perhaps could shed some light on the event. Next to Jesus, however, they **saw the man who had been demon-possessed**. 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 been controlled by the legion of demons, surely they had no trouble believing some type of spirit possessed him.

The man the people saw **sitting there** with Jesus was much different from the man they had seen before. The man was **dressed**, which only makes sense when we learn from Luke that “for a long time [the man] had worn no clothes” (Luke 8:27). They could see that the man was **in his right mind** (which refers especially to self-control). He was clothed, calm, and composed rather than 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). ◀

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 4 to show the dramatic change in the man:

- *Sitting calmly*
- *Dressed*
- *In his right mind*

DISCUSS: Question #3

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

(Alternate: When has Jesus made a noticeable change in your life?)

TRANSITION: "Next we read that the transformed man requested to go with Jesus."

STUDY THE BIBLE

Luke Mark 5:18-20



15 minutes

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

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 5** to highlight the interaction between Jesus and the transformed man:

- *The once broken man, now restored, begged to be allowed to stay with Jesus.*
- *Jesus told him to go home to his own people.*
- *Jesus told him, "Report what The Lord has done for you."*
- *How the Lord had mercy on him.*

DISCUSS: Question #4 (PSG, p. 155): Why is it important to be a light right where you live?

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 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged him earnestly that he might remain with him.

19 Jesus did not let him but told him, "Go home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you."

20 So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed.

KEY WORDS: The Decapolis (v. 20)—A Gentile region mostly southeast of the Sea of Galilee, whose cities (originally 10 but later more) were centers of Greco-Roman culture.

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

5 ▶ 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 **begged him earnestly that he might remain 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 where Jesus was going; he was willing to go anywhere with the Lord.

Verse 19. Unlike other incidents 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 your own people.”** 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 other instances when He 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 **“how much the Lord has done for you.”** This may have been because the 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 mercy on** him. The word *mercy* means to have compassion toward another person. This was what Jesus had done for the man. 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. ◀

6 ▶ Verse 20. Jesus commanded and the man obeyed. He left that place and **began to proclaim** 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 much 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 **were all amazed** by 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.

LIVE IT OUT

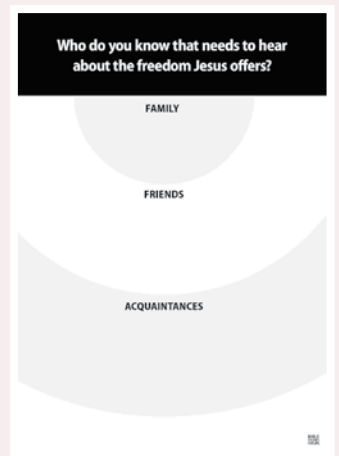
Right here, right now, the Lord Jesus wants to display

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 6** to show the conclusion of the story, how people responded to his transformation.

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

(Alternate: How can you use your story of transformation to share the gospel?)

LEADER PACK: Point to **Item 13: Concentric Circles.** Invite group members to create a list of people, family, friends and acquaintances who need to hear what the Lord has done for you.



DO: Encourage group members to take a few minutes to complete the activity **“Go Home to Your Own People”** on **PSG page 156.**

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 people everywhere are broken and need the transforming power of Jesus. You don't have to go around the world: you need to go across the street.

PRAY: "Father, help us be willing to go across the street or next door to share the gospel with those where we live who are broken and need the salvation that only Jesus can give."

through you His glory to this broken world. You don't have to go far to share your transformed life in Christ. The first place God calls you is often not across the world, but across the street.

- ▶ **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 them.
- ▶ **Walk.** Walk across your street, hop over your fence, or knock on the cubicle next to you. Start a spiritual conversation with them 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*.



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.



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COMING IN FALL

The Dark Side

A six-week study on the Bible's teaching on Satan, demons, and the paranormal and how believers are to stand in the face of such evil. The study is written by Jeremiah Johnston, Professor of Early Christianity at Houston Baptist University and President of the Christian Thinkers Society.

Session 1	Satan	<i>Revelation 12:7-12</i>
Session 2	Demons	<i>Mark 9:17-29</i>
Session 3	The Paranormal	<i>Deuteronomy 18:9-18</i>
Session 4	Fear Not!	<i>1 John 4:1-6</i>
Session 5	Battle Armor	<i>Ephesians 6:10-20</i>
Session 6	Battle Plan	<i>Matthew 4:1-10</i>

Second Nature: Choosing Christ-Centered Living in a Self-Centered World

A seven-week study written by Michael Kelley, Director of Groups Ministry at LifeWay, looking at seven men and women in Scripture who exhibited godly traits that should become second-nature for us.

Session 1	Caleb: Unwavering Faith	<i>Numbers 13:26-30; 14:6-10,21-24</i>
Session 2	Solomon: Unfailing Wisdom	<i>1 Kings 3:3-14; 4:29-34</i>
Session 3	Ruth: All-in Commitment	<i>Ruth 1:8-17</i>
Session 4	Barnabas: Ongoing Encouragement	<i>Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27; 11:19-26</i>
Session 5	John: Single-Minded Focus	<i>John 1:26-34; 3:26-30</i>
Session 6	Hannah: Trust-filled Prayer	<i>1 Samuel 1:9-11,17-18,26-28; 2:1-3</i>
Session 7	Andrew: Active Witness	<i>John 1:35-42; 12:20-26</i>