

“Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (MARK 5:19, NIV).

## Bible Study 46

# God Loves Freaky People, Too

BY TIERCE GREEN

Read Mark 5:1-20.

Who came to meet Jesus when He got out of the boat? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did he live? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe this man's appearance and his strength. (*Mark 5:3-5; Luke 8:27-29*)

How did this man address Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

What was his name? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did he have this name? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was speaking—the man or the evil spirit(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

The man who had been demon-possessed became a constant reminder of the power of God to change lives.

This is a vivid and eerie story. At the end of Mark 4, when Jesus and His disciples set sail, it was evening. (This particular part of the Lake of Galilee was probably about five miles across.) Their boat was nearly swamped by a furious squall—even the macho fishermen were terrified! Then Jesus calmed the storm, leaving the disciples awestruck and marveling, “*Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him*” (*Mark 4:41, NIV*). When they reached land, out of the shadows of the night came a demon-possessed man who answered their question when he shouted at the top of his voice, “*What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?*” (*Mark 5:7, NIV*).

Jesus had taken His disciples to meet the most unlikely candidate for the kingdom of God. Restraining orders were useless against him—the demons had given him superhuman strength. He ripped apart chains for breakfast and broke leg irons for lunch! He was a naked raving maniac, into self-mutilation, who lived in the cemetery. This is not the kind of person most churches were hoping to contact. It was best just to avoid him and leave him to himself—maybe he would just disappear. But Jesus knew who he was and where he lived. He came not to restrain him but to set him free.

What had been the town's “solution” in dealing with this man? \_\_\_\_\_

Of what do you think his cries and self-mutilations were symptoms? \_\_\_\_\_

Could the people have not been aware of his predicament? (*Mark 5:5*) \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it so easy to ignore a person like this? \_\_\_\_\_

**The demons were fully aware of the identity of Jesus. What does this tell you about people who believe in God and those who are fully aware of who Jesus is? (James 2:19)** \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was completely aware of this man's name, as well as the names of the demons inside him. When Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" it was a teaching opportunity for those standing by—especially His disciples. They needed to know what they were up against, now and in the future. It was a wake-up call to prepare for spiritual battle—time to put on the full armor of God (*Ephesians 5:10-18*). The enemy was not this maniac—he was one of the victims. The enemy was identified and dismissed with authority.

Don't feel sorry for the 2,000 pigs! By law they were unclean creatures, unfit for consumption. Commanding the demons to leave this man and enter the pigs—driving them to their death—was a vivid visual aid of what could have happened to the man had he been left alone. The mutilations and the screams might have been a foretaste of a tragic finale—his suicide. Of course, the people who owned the pigs were less than pleased. At first, everyone was afraid and were forced to acknowledge the power of Christ. Then they decided it would just be best for Him to leave. But the man who had been demon-possessed became a constant reminder of the power of God to change lives.

**What was clearly the priority of Jesus—the pigs or the person?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why do you think the people begged Jesus to leave?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What did the man who had been demon-possessed want to do?** \_\_\_\_\_

**To what particular mission field did Jesus assign him?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How did he fulfill and exceed his mission?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why is it so important for us to pray for power in our mission?** \_\_\_\_\_

Protecting ourselves and others from dangerous individuals is certainly a concern, especially in light of the horrible acts of violence in recent years. The demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes was a monster—a freak—to many. It is only natural that most people would think more about protecting themselves than helping him. But we must not project our hatred for sin onto the person. God doesn't.

Recently, in many schools in America, several "freaks" have stepped out of their personal darkness to wound or kill their classmates and teachers. When a lifestyle culminates in assault, murder and suicide, the opportunity for Christians to make a difference in these lives has already passed. What if some *on mission* Christians had heard the cries of these students long before their rampages and had asked, as Jesus asked the demon-possessed man, "What is your name?" (*Mark 5:9*).

**Who is the least likely person you know to hear and accept God's message and receive new life?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is God able to change him/her?**     Yes     No

It was best just to avoid (the demon-possessed man) and leave him to himself. ... But Jesus knew who he was and where he lived. He came not to restrain him but to set him free.