

MARK

Week 3: Mark 5-6:30

How to Use This Discussion Guide with Your Group

Start with a prayer and read the portion of the text from your Bible or an app (use whatever translation you're comfortable with, but we suggest the New Living Translation (NLT) or the English Standard Version (ESV)). Then read the summary paragraph(s) and talk through the questions for that section. You can work through this guide in one session or spread it out over several – whatever works for your group. As you read and discuss, consider how what you're reading applies to your life today. Don't forget to close with prayer!

5:1-20: A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN IS HEALED

The story of Jesus controlling a physical storm is followed by a story of him controlling a spiritual storm. He heals a man who is possessed by a host of demons.

Jesus and his disciples meet a man whose life is a living hell. He is possessed by so many demons that their collective name is 'Legion'—a term that refers to 6,000 Roman soldiers! These demons give him incredible strength. He is a terror to all, and a danger to himself. He lives, desolate and abandoned, among the tombs.

The evil spirits in the man recognize Jesus. Jesus commands them to leave the man and permits them to go into a large herd of pigs. The pigs stampede down a steep bank into the sea, where they are drowned.

When the local people see what has happened, they stop being afraid of the man and start being afraid of Jesus. They beg him to leave their region. The man wants to become a disciple, but Jesus sends him home to his family.

Jesus is stronger than a horde of devils. While Satan inflicts torment and destruction, Jesus brings sanity and peace. The herd destroys itself, just as the man had been doing under the influence of the demons within him.¹

1. After a nerve-wracking ride across the lake, how would you react to being accosted by an escapee in a cemetery?
2. What do we learn about demons from the actions of the possessed man?
3. How does his healing take place? What is the man like afterwards?
4. Why do you think the people reacted as they did? Why were they afraid (v. 15) after seeing the man "dressed and in his right mind"? What does this story say about their values?
5. What do you suppose the demoniac said to his family?
6. What did the disciples learn about Jesus on this day (4:35-5:20)?
7. When have you felt torn by many conflicting voices and feelings? How did Jesus bring peace to you? How do you need to hear His word of peace right now?

¹ Edited from Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 452.

6:14-30: JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

While the disciples are away, Mark tells how John the Baptist died.

John had been arrested by King Herod—that is, Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. John had spoken out against the royal marriage, when Antipas had stolen and married his brother's wife. The wife, now called Herodias, became a powerful and vicious enemy of John the Baptist, just as Jezebel had been of Elijah. Herodias seized her opportunity at Herod's birthday banquet. When Herod offered her daughter a reward for her dancing, she demanded that John's head be cut off and brought to her on a plate. It was a tragic and pointless death, and a warning of what lay ahead for Jesus.²

1. Why include this flashback to Herod between the sending out of the disciples (vv. 6-13) and their return (vv. 30-31)?
2. What drew Herod's attention to Jesus? What was the significance of Elijah and John the Baptist to the people of Jesus' day (see Matthew 17:9-13)? Why might people mistake Jesus for one of them?
3. Why does Herod put John in jail? What does that reveal about Herod? About John? About Herodias?
4. How do the two "kings" – Jesus and Herod – differ in terms of their kingdoms, character, popularity, and use of power?
5. What do you do when God's message leaves you puzzled?
6. Would you consider John's ministry a success or a tragedy?
7. What would the story say to someone facing persecution, then and now?

² Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 453.