

## Study 6. LEADERS' NOTES

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1. Have you ever suffered with mental illness or have known somebody who has? How did you cope?

2. **Read Mark 4:35-41 and 5: 1-20.**

Why do you think the two stories are put together?

*Both stories have to do with Jesus displaying power over wild elements, of overcoming fear and demonstrating his serenity.*

3. a. If you were in the boat as it neared the Gerasenes, could you think of three reasons why you would not want to be there?  
b. What about you? Has Jesus ever taken you to places you would rather not be?

*a. Some suggestions: The mad man and his violence and noise. A cemetery, a place of the tombs, regarded as unclean in Jewish thought. The pigs, a hint that this was Gentile country.*

4. a. Have you ever been approached by a person that has made you feel uneasy or has frightened you?  
b. What do you think Jesus' attitude would have been as the mad man approached him from the cemetery?

5. What does this story have in common with the other stories from Mark that we have studied in this series? (The leper, the paralysed man, Levi, the man with the withered hand?)

*Most, so far, have been isolated; all for different reasons. Most would have been discouraged by their illness or situation. Most would have been seen as an undesirable".*

6. **See Mark 1:1, 3:11, 5:7, 15:39.**

In Mark's Gospel Jesus is rarely called the Son of God (although it is implied in other passages such as when Jesus calls God, "Father" or when he uses the self-appellation "Son of Man").

- a. What do you notice about these references above?  
b. Is there anything to learn from this?

*Apart from the prologue, the appellation "Son of God" is from either demons or a Roman soldier. To call Jesus by his correct title is not necessarily a statement of faith, or the basis of Christianity. Evil spirits can also have this insight. The most common term for Jesus in Mark ("Son of Man") is based on the Daniel 19-14 and is an apocalyptic image of the authority of Jesus.*

7.
  - a. Because the Gospel attributes this man's mental state to demon possession, should we disregard modern teaching about possible causes of mental illness?
  - b. Should we still believe in demon possession?
  - c. If you were suffering with a mental disorder, would you go to your doctor, your herbalist, an exorcist or to someone else for treatment?

*In general, modern science has theoretical and hypothetical approaches to the causes of various forms of mental illness. Genetic and environmental factors figure most frequently, although in recent years there has been a greater awareness of the physiological aspects of the functions of the brain and how this affects behaviour. Many results of mental illness can be evil and dysfunctional, and the influence of supernatural causes cannot be discounted.*

**8. See Mark 5:14 - 17**

- a. Why did the people react in such a frightened manner?
  - b. What do you think of the reaction of the pig owners?
  - c. What does that say about their values?
- a. *See particularly 5:15. The group should pick out elements such as the removal of torment, social acceptance, community, sense of purpose etc.*
  - b. *The man was from the Greek Decapolis. He was probably the first Christian missionary there.*

**9. See verses 15-20**

- a. What was different with the man at the end of the story compared to the beginning?
  - b. What do you suppose he would have told his family?
  - c. Have you experienced any similar (perhaps less dramatic) changes since you met Jesus?
10.
    - a. What does this story tell me about Jesus?
    - b. What does this story tell me about myself?
    - c. Is there any action that I need to take?
    - d. Is there anything I need to think and pray through?