

Day 1
August 20



Pray | for God to use you to help someone walk closer to God.

WHAT CAN I DO?

This week's passage is a dramatic one. The stage is set immediately as, in his travels, Jesus steps foot onto Gentile land during his ministry and is met by a demon-possessed man living in isolation and being tortured by evil spirits. Jesus moved toward this man, both literally and figuratively, though the people in town had pushed him away for some logical reasons. He was a danger and a threat and couldn't be contained, so he lived isolated, unloved, and rejected.

This man was a product of a world gone awry with evil powers and sin. And sin always isolates us, seeking to stand between us and relationship with God. While we may not encounter people openly in bondage to evil spirits like this man, daily we encounter people suffering under the bondage of sin that separates them from right-relatedness with God.



Read | Mark 5:1-8



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Consider your thoughts and actions if you came across someone like this man. What would you be thinking about their state, and how would you respond? Why?

What are some reasons we tend to shy away from serving people who may be labeled "hard cases"? Read Matthew 25:40. Considering what this passage says, how do you feel God could be leading you?

How and when have you ministered to an "outcast"? How did it affect you, and what did/can you do with that moving forward, taking Jesus' lead?

Day 2
August 21



Pray | Claim Jesus' power in your life over any scheme of the devil.

ALWAYS ON THE PROWL

The Bible says, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He seeks to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10), and in Luke 4, when Satan’s attempts to tempt Jesus failed, “he left him until an opportune time” (v. 13). Satan is always slinking in the shadows, waiting for a time when our attention is off of Jesus so that he can weasel his way in between us and God.

As you’ll read in today’s passages, Jesus has authority over this legion of evil spirits, and they knew it! Likewise, God has given us immense power through truth and light in Jesus to withstand Satan’s attempts to tie us up, to steal from us, and to keep us from God’s blessings for us. Just as Jesus did, we need to stand up and claim our authority rather than run in fear.



Read | Mark 5:6-10; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Satan works to oppress everyone, including believers, in a myriad of ways. What is one area of your life that you feel he’s feeding you lies and keeping you bound? Spend some time today asking God to show you the truth to combat the lies.

Ephesians talks about the spiritual armor of God, meant to protect us from this slinking, sneaky adversary. What pieces of armor do you use regularly, and which could you learn to use more effectively?

If you feel that Satan is winning some battles in your life, you are not meant to be isolated and alone. God’s desire for you is that you would be free, so reach out to someone in your small group or at church, or identify a believer that you trust, and ask for help fighting this battle. Claim your authority in Jesus.

If you have not submitted to all that life in Jesus has to offer, please reach out to him right now, and tell him you want to be free. Reach out to someone whom you know has a personal relationship with God to help you take the first steps.

Day 3

August 22



Pray | that you would be moved in the direction God wants.

“BREAK MY HEART FOR WHAT BREAKS YOURS”¹

Sin separates us from God’s wholeness and brings brokenness. Over and over in the gospels, Jesus saw the brokenness and consequences of sin, and he always had compassion on the people afflicted by the evil powers in the world. He was so compassionate, in fact, that he came to earth in the first place. He showed compassion and never shied away from the darkness he saw, bringing healing and light.

As our hearts grow closer and closer to God’s, what breaks his heart begins to break ours, too. Of course our hearts break for the wounded children of the world, but what about the adults who willfully hurt others? Jesus’ heart breaks for them, too.



Read | Mark 5:9-13; Matthew 9:35-38



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Broken relationships, families separated by incarceration, homelessness, violence, and sorrow are just a small portion of some of the consequences of sin we see every day. When was the last time your heart broke over the consequences of sin? How can you respond to God’s movement in your heart?

The key to fighting darkness is to bring the light. Satan always fights with lies, so start small. Where is God leading you to bring truth and light to confront and expose lies? Maybe it’s in your family, your neighborhood, your workplace, or your small group.

Who is one person (or group of people) you have a hard time showing compassion for? Maybe someone has wronged you or your loved ones. Maybe your family has shunned you. What about someone with a different moral stance or political view? Ask God to give you his heart toward those you find it difficult to have compassion for.

¹ Brooke Fraser Lingertwood, “Hosanna,” performed by Brooke Lingertwood, *All of the Above* (Hillsong Music and Resources LLC, 2007).

Day 4

August 23



Pray | Thank God for the new heart he has created in you!

VISIBLE TRANSFORMATION

Today's final verse is one that would fill most of us with joy and awe. The Gerasene people showed up and saw this man, who was previously crazed and possessing superhuman might, sitting down "in his right mind" (Mark 5:15). His transformation was strikingly obvious to everyone! It was unmistakable, and no doubt his entire life of isolation and affliction was about to do a 180.

When any one of us turns our life over to Jesus, we are given new life. That doesn't mean we don't still experience some of the consequences of our old ways of living or still struggle with temptation, but it does mean that we have a new heart that changes the way we think and therefore behave.



Read | Mark 5:11-15



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Who do you know who has God's hand at work in their life? From their example, how can you live out your own faith?

What changes have happened in your life because of your relationship with God? How different do you look to those who haven't yet been transformed by Jesus' compassion and power?

What areas of your life do you still need Jesus to transform? Maybe you see a small portion, or maybe you feel like you need an entire overhaul. Whatever it is, don't be afraid to give it to him. Life with transformation is always worth it!

Day 5

August 24



Pray | Ask God to show you how you can spread his love.

THE GOSPEL THAT SAVES IS THE GOSPEL THAT SENDS

There is an interesting chain of events once Jesus heals this demon-possessed man, including a herd of pigs and a disbelieving, scared people, but for the man who had been healed, he sees only his transformation!

And once he's been healed and transformed, he wants more. He wants more of Jesus. He doesn't want to be stuck and assuredly does not want to risk going back to where he was, so he begs to go with Jesus. But Jesus instructs him to go and tell what God has done for him. Not just what this man Jesus has done for him, but what God has done for him.

Just like this man, when God redeems us, he also gives us a mission. Oh that we choose to accept it and the blessings that accompany it!



Read | Mark 5:14-20



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

We saw the people of this town react negatively to this man's healing. Compare their response in verse 17 to those in verse 20. How do you respond when God moves?

All of us who have been redeemed by God have also been mandated by God to share the news and help bring healing and hope to others. God never intended his gospel to remain within one person or even one people group. He spread his gospel even beyond his chosen people to all of us. How are you engaging right now in spreading this news around you?

Maybe this is a difficult subject and you're not sure how to spread the gospel without appearing overzealous. Or maybe you're overwhelmed by the ministry opportunities around you. How might God use you, based on your unique gifts, to further his kingdom? Spend some time seeking God's direction in how he would send you.