

# Healing of a Demon-possessed Man



Scripture Reference: [Mark 5:1-20](#)

**Suggested Emphasis:** Satan hurts people and wants them to suffer. Jesus is stronger than Satan. He loves people so he helps them and saves them from Satan.



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## Story Overview:

For many people a deranged wild man who lived in a cemetery would be someone to avoid. Instead of ignoring the man's suffering, Jesus saw beyond the man's outward condition. In an event very foreign to us today, Jesus actually spoke to the evil spirits inside the man and sent them out of the man and into a herd of pigs. The pigs then ran over a cliff to their death. Satan caused the man hurt by sending evil spirits to live inside of him. Jesus had mercy on the man and used his superior power to help him.

## Background Study:

(You can also read about this story in [Matthew 8:28-34](#) and [Luke 8:26-39](#))

If this was a movie then the opening scene would be gripping! It is the middle of the night. Jesus and the disciples have just been through a terrible storm. The disciples are reeling from the realization that Jesus could just speak to a storm and make it stop. Then, they land the boat near a cemetery and a naked demon-possessed man (covered in blood and wearing broken chains) runs out yelling at Jesus.

The region of the Gerasenes was on the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee from where many of the other stories

about Jesus take place. It was a place where many Gentiles (non-Jews) lived. This can be seen in the fact that there was a huge herd of pigs nearby (verse 11). Jews did not eat pork because God had declared it unclean so they did not raise them.

Another thing that was unclean was a tomb. Jews were not supposed to be near dead bodies. The fact that this man came to them out of the tombs reveals how different he was from them. He was an unclean man living in an unclean place surrounded by unclean animals. His reputation was so bad that even the Gentiles in the nearby town had cast him out. This man lived a pathetic life. Being possessed by demons had ruined his life.

Matthew's account mentions two demon-possessed men. Mark and Luke only mention one so perhaps one of the men was the more outspoken and one stood back.

The demons that lived in the man used the man's voice to address Jesus. Even demons recognize the power of God and the demons used the name of God in a vain attempt to protect themselves. A Roman legion is a military group made up of 6000 men so this indicates the large number of demons possessing him.

The power of Jesus is seen in his ability to converse with powers of darkness that we humans cannot even see. He commanded the demons to transfer into the herd of nearby pigs. The pigs ran into the sea and drowned. Perhaps this was a final end instead of an eternal punishment of "the Abyss" ([Luke 8:31](#)).

This whole encounter was an amazing thing to watch. The ones who had been tending the pigs would have been very confused in the least. They rushed to tell everyone in town. The people from town had seen the demon-possessed man many times but that had not frightened them like the sight of the man, fully clothed, and obviously in his right mind.

The town's people had tried to keep this man away by chaining him up and hiding him away. It is easier to dismiss people or cast them out than it is to actually deal with them and live beside them. This and the fact that Jesus was interrupting their economic stability (pigs) made the people ask Jesus to leave.

Jesus knew that the healed man would be a living example to all of the people. Although the man wanted to go with Jesus, Jesus told the man to go back to his family and tell them all about what the Lord had done for him.

There is more to this universe than what we can actually see. There is a spiritual realm. Undue attention or dramatization of the demonic world could be scary for young children and yet it is ultimately harmful to leave them ignorant and vulnerable to the attacks of Satan by never mentioning it. Carefully consider the amount of information you give and how you relate it.

- Young children can understand that Satan and his helpers only want to hurt people and Jesus only wants to help people. Jesus is stronger than Satan. Satan was hurting the man in today's story and Jesus made Satan go away.
- Older children are better able to grasp the idea of the unseen world and spiritual warfare. Satan is strong but Jesus is stronger. The cross was Jesus' ultimate display of triumph over Satan. In the last days leading up to the cross Satan seemed to be "sending out his troops" in a vain attempt to show he could still have power over people. During his ministry (and in today's story) Jesus showed over and over that he could defeat Satan and save people by casting out demons.

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 6:10-12, NIV*

*"The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." 1 John 3:8, NIV*

*“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Colossians 2:15, NIV*

Jesus knew he had the power to help this man who was in deep pain and he did. He showed mercy to him. Help children recognise hurting people around them. Help them plan ways to show mercy to them.



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## Way to Introduce the Story:

Use any available surface (paper, a chalkboard, whiteboard or sand) to guide the children in drawing circles. You will then guide them to draw expressions on the faces. First have all of the children draw a happy face. Talk about why this person might be happy. Now draw a sad face and ask the children what reasons could cause this person to be sad. Continue to fill in faces and use them to talk about people who might be in pain, lonely, sick, bullied, etc. These situations should relate to the age and experiences of the children in your class.

Explain that God wants us to have good things in our lives. When we follow God we can be happy even when bad things happen to us. But Satan wants us to be sad and hurting all of the time. Satan was hurting a man in today's story.

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## The Story:

It was a very scary night when the boat pulled onto the shore. Jesus and his disciples got off the boat and realized that they were in a cemetery. Would you be afraid if you were in a dark cemetery at night?

Things got even scarier when a man started running out from the cemetery. He was yelling and screaming. He didn't have any clothes on and there were scratches and blood all over him. The man had broken bits of the chain hanging from his wrists and ankles.

What would you do if you saw someone acting very odd like that? The disciples were frightened but the man did not come to them. He ran straight up to Jesus and started talking loudly in a possibly very strange voice. The disciples wanted to run away but Jesus did not run away. Jesus knew that the reason this man was acting so strange was that Satan had sent evil spirits to live inside of him. He saw how much the man was hurting and he wanted to help.

This man had no friends. No one in the town wanted him around because he acted very strange. They used to put chains on him and try to keep him away from the town but the man was very strong and he broke the chains. He started hiding in the cemetery so no one could find him. He did not act normal. He even used to get pieces of glass and cut himself.

But Jesus wanted to be this man's friend and help him. Jesus could see things that no one else could see. He could see inside the man's heart and he knew that Satan had sent evil spirits to live inside the man's heart.

But Jesus is stronger than Satan. He knew Satan's mean tricks. No one could see the evil spirits inside the man. No one, that is, except Jesus!

Jesus looked at the man and spoke to the evil spirits inside of him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," the man replied in a very strange voice, "for we are many." The man's voice sounded strange because it was actually the evil spirits who were answering Jesus.

Jesus commanded that the evil spirits leave this man immediately. The evil spirits left the man and went inside of some pigs who were nearby. When this happened all of the pigs began to act so strange that they jumped off of a cliff into the sea and died. The owners of the pigs were so amazed that they ran into town to tell everyone what had happened.

The people rushed back to the shore expecting to see the man still chained up and hurting himself. But that is not what they found. The man did not look unusual at all now. He was wearing clean clothes and acting completely normal. He was sitting quietly talking to Jesus.

When Jesus and his disciples got back on the boat to leave the man tried to get in the boat too.

"No," Jesus told him, "Go back to your family and tell them all of the wonderful things God has done for you today."

The man did just as Jesus said. He went back to his family and told them about God. He told them how Satan only wanted to hurt him. Jesus was only good and didn't want people to hurt. Jesus was stronger than Satan.

## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion. [Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and the slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson. [top](#)

## Review Questions:

1. Where did the man possessed by evil spirits live? In a cemetery (tombs)
2. What did the demon-possessed man tear off of his hands and feet? Chains
3. Where did the evil spirits go when Jesus cast them out? Into a herd of pigs
4. When Jesus cast the evil spirits into the herd of pigs, what then happened to the pigs? They ran off a cliff into water and drowned.

# Song Suggestions:

- [Shake the Devil Off](#)
- [Jesus Loves the Little Children of the World Song](#)
- [I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy](#)
- [He's Got the Whole World in His Hands](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

# Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

*Activities:*

- Divide a paper into two columns. Label one at the top as “Jesus and God” and the other as “Satan and evil spirits”. [Lead the children in contrasting the two columns](#). In light of today’s story the discussion should highlight the power God has over Satan and the fact that he wants to love and protect us while Satan only wants to hurt us. Some helpful verses for the discussion might be:
  - [2 Thessalonians 3:3](#)
  - [1 Peter 5:6-11](#)
  - [2 Corinthians 11:14](#)
- Jesus had mercy on the man and helped him. Guide the children in thinking of situations in which they could show mercy to someone who was hurting. [Click here for instructions](#).
  - On individual index cards or pieces of paper write various scenarios or situations typical to the ages of the children in your class. There should be one scenario on each card. (Examples might be: a child has been bullied at school, my friend’s mother died, a boy’s dog is missing, a girl on the playground fell off the top of the slide and is crying, there is a new kid in my class)
  - Turn the cards face down on a table and let children take turns drawing the cards.
  - After drawing the card the child reads the scenario written on it and then describes how they would help the person in that situation.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for “Healing of a Demon-Possessed Man” in A4 size paper](#)  
[Click here for “Healing of a Demon-Possessed Man” in letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

## Other Online Resources:

- [An excellent blog entry from http://www.parentinglikehannah.com](http://www.parentinglikehannah.com) with very practical points to teach children about Satan
- [An article from Focus on the Family](http://www.focusonthefamily.com) about teaching kids about spiritual warfare at <http://www.focusonthefamily.com>
- [A helpful article and Scripture references from ruthfortheworld.org](http://ruthfortheworld.org) discussing demon possession
- [Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus healing the demon-possessed man \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)

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