

## Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

### Luke 8:26-39

(FYI...all discussion questions are at the end)

So after Jesus calmed the sea (see previous passage) He and His disciples arrived safely to their destination on the other side of the lake (Sea of Galilee) in the region of the Gerasenes. An important piece of information about this place is that this was a predominately Gentile area.

Upon stepping ashore, Jesus and the boys were met by a demon-possessed man. Apparently this guy had been in this state for quite some time. We're not told details like how this guy became demon possessed. It seems that the locals had tried several times to get control of this guy, but to no avail. At this point it would seem that they were content to leave the local crazy dude alone since he was staying in solitary places among the tombs. Though it's safe to say the townspeople feared this guy; and as we'll see, this guy (or at least the demons within him) feared Jesus.

Some fascinating points of interest from this passage:

-At the sight of Jesus, the demoniac came running and fell at Jesus' feet. The Greek word used here means to prostrate oneself, and is usually translated "worship". Isn't it interesting that when a demon (or as we'll see, several demons) sees Jesus they come and worship, almost instinctively/reflexively, like they can't help it? I don't know about you, but I would tend to think that if a demon saw/recognized Jesus it would turn and run in the opposite direction.

-And recognize Jesus he did, accurately calling Him "*Son of the Most High God*".

-The demoniac begged to not be tortured/tormented. (In Matthew's account, by the way, there are 2 demoniacs mentioned. And they add, "*Have You come to torture us before the appointed time?*") Apparently demons have an inkling of what their future holds.

-Jesus asked him his name. Ancient exorcists would often ask possessed people their name because knowing a name helped identify what they were dealing with, and was sort of a way to gain power over them. In this case, we can safely say that Jesus likely already knew what He was dealing with, and had no need to "gain power" in the situation because He already had it. So why did Jesus ask him his name? Perhaps this is part of the "separation process", beginning to separate this man (and his identity) from the demons (Legion). (Incidentally, a "legion" is a group of 4000-6000 Roman soldiers.)

-The presence of pigs reinforces the idea that this is not a Jewish area. Jews would never deal with pigs.

-It's hard to say exactly what the demons were hoping to accomplish, or avoid, by going into the pigs. Did they end up in the "Abyss" after the pigs drowned? Hard to say, as we're not told.

-The reaction of the townspeople to Jesus is interesting (and sad). After delivering the man from the demons, and by extension delivering the town from the crazy demon-possessed man, they didn't want anything to do with Jesus. They preferred He just leave them alone. This tells us a lot about human nature. People don't like change. Sadly, many people would prefer to stay in a bad situation simply because it's familiar. The fear of change and the unknown can be so gripping that people will stay in negative situations. And let's face it, having Jesus around, for any of us, does mean change. Faith means trusting that it will be positive change.

-The cured/healed man, with his new lease on life, wants to join Jesus and the disciples as they head back to the other side of the lake. But Jesus had another (better) idea. This unnamed guy becomes one of the earliest missionaries. Jesus told him to *"return home and tell how much God has done for you."* And he did just that, *"the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him."* Mark's version of the story states, *"So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed."* The Decapolis means "ten cities" and was an area east of the Sea of Galilee containing ten towns in relatively close proximity to one another. This man made this his mission field, following Jesus' command, and was apparently pretty successful. It would not be too many years later, after Jesus' resurrection and commissioning of the apostles that this area would be reached for Christ...and this man (we can assume) played a part in getting the soil ready for the Gospel.

-Another interesting thought: We see the demons ask Jesus to let them go into the pigs...and Jesus honored their request. We see the townspeople ask Jesus to leave their area out of fear...and He honored their request. We see the healed man ask Jesus if he can join Jesus and the disciples...and Jesus said no...but gave him a task instead. The demons and the townspeople were gripped with fear. The man, on the other hand, seems to be the only one not operating in fear...but if you think about it, he likely had something to fear if he chose to think about it. In all likelihood, by staying in the region, he would have to deal with the stigma of being previously demon-possessed, of being the guy everyone talked about. What Jesus asked of him would make him confront dealing with what people thought about him. Isn't that, typically, one of our biggest concerns/fears (whether we can admit it or not)...what people think of us. It seems that the man was able to overcome that fear by not focusing on what people thought of him, but being concerned about what they thought of Jesus. This might be a clue in how we can overcome similar fears.

**Q. What are you afraid of? How does that fear play itself out in your life?**

**Q. We lived in a fear-based society. Business, media, politics, even education, often seed our minds with things to be afraid of. Sometime they offer solutions to our fear...for a price, of course. Can you give some examples that back this idea up? Can you give any examples of how you've been affected by such "propaganda"? How has your faith in Christ helped you navigate this fear-based quagmire?**

- Q. The presence of Jesus in our lives naturally causes/affects change. How have you seen Jesus cause/affect change in your life?**
- Q. Describe how your trust in Jesus allows you to face and overcome fear? (Or, how can your faith in Jesus address whatever fear you may be currently facing?)**
- Q. When/how do you typically recognize when fear is getting the best of you? What are the signs that fear is at play in your life?**
- Q. How does a concern/fear of what other people think of you affect your life?**
- Q. How have you experienced the debilitating effects of fear in your life?**
- Q. A popular verse from Proverbs state, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*" (Proverbs 3:5-6) In practical/tangible ways, what does trusting Jesus look like for you?**
- Q. We could put trust and fear at opposite ends of a spectrum. Generally speaking, considering your general mood and M.O., where are you on that spectrum? What do you think it would take to slide you more on the trust side?**
- Q. When, if ever, have you wanted Jesus to leave you alone? To give you space? To allow you to hurt yourself?**