

## Handout for Week 2 (Week of Oct 16):

One way to express the Gospel is to say that Jesus came to free us. If so, then it might be useful to take some time to reflect on how we might have been or might still be in bondage. So to prepare for next week's session, we suggest the stories of the Gerasene demoniac (demon-possessed man) (Mark 5: 1-20, Luke 8: 26-39) and the woman with the issue of blood (Matt 9: 20-22, Mark 5: 25-34, Luke 8: 43-47) as examples of people who were freed up as a result of meeting Jesus. There may have been some Jewish religious laws that caused each of these people to be considered "unclean." But even if we don't have such formalized rules about purity in this country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people often feel disconnected from society if they are dealing with a long-term illness. And we can expand our thinking to other problems as well. If people are dealing with financial problems, relationship or family issues, difficulties on the job, post-traumatic stress, low self-esteem, or any kind of problem, really, they can also feel very alone.

You might try spending the week reflecting on one of the following. In what ways do you see similarities to your own experiences? What do you think enabled each one to reach out to Jesus?

The story of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5: 1-20 or Luke 8: 26-39) – some possible areas for reflection:

- ◆ Notice that the man goes from inhuman howling and being unable to speak (the demons speak for him) to being able to proclaim what Jesus had done for him (in other words, he became a preacher!).<sup>1</sup> A modern connection we might make is with the book and movie "The Help." Whereas Aibileen first said that she was afraid to tell her story, something empowered her to start telling her story. Then others started telling theirs, too. What stories have you heard or seen where people who were once voiceless found a voice? How does Jesus figure into those stories?
- ◆ The man says essentially that his name is "Mob." So we could say that he does not have an individual identity<sup>2</sup> or that he is confused about his identity. What stories come to mind for you about people who have struggled with their identities? Is that a part of your own experience. What, if anything, helped them (or you) to find their (your) identity?

The story of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5: 25-34 is the most extended version of this story):

- ◆ In long-term illness, not only does the person have to deal with the physical ailment but like the woman in this story, their finances are also affected and there are likely also social and spiritual consequences. From your own experience or the experiences of people you know, reflect on the various parts of a person's life that are impacted by long-term illness (or other kind of long-term problem).
- ◆ Thinking about this story or about the stories of people you know, how does Jesus make a difference? Be specific.

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<sup>1</sup> From The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VIII, pp. 582-585

<sup>2</sup> From the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. IX, p. 188