

# Underdogs

## “The Demoniac— A Jesus Encounter”

Luke 8

### Small Group Plan

This graphic story pictures an aimless life receiving direction and purpose. This scene is set at the edge of the district of Decapolis on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee. Here, Jesus encounters a life that is deeply entangled with pain and trouble.

Think of this story as a three-act play:

*Act 1 – An Aimless Life*

*Act 2 – A Selfish Response*

*Act 3 – An Amazing Conclusion*

### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- Have you ever felt, or has someone you’ve known ever described to you how it feels to be out of control or for something evil to be in control?
- What is it like? How does it feel?
- How did God come to the rescue?

### **LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...**

— **JESUS** —

**Luke 8:26-27a**

<sup>26</sup> They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. <sup>27</sup> When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town.

- Notice that Luke reports that “Jesus stepped ashore.” We have no record that anyone else got out of the boat.
- Put yourself in the disciple’s place. How would you feel having arrived on a non-Jewish shore and the first thing you see is a madman running towards you screaming?
- How does it affect your view of Jesus to know that he calmly and confidently “stepped ashore”?

## — THE DEMONIAK —

### Luke 8:27b-33

For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. <sup>28</sup> When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” <sup>29</sup> For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. <sup>30</sup> Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. <sup>31</sup> And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. <sup>32</sup> A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. <sup>33</sup> When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

- Contrary to the Hollywood version, evil must be en fleshed, incarnated. Jesus does not encounter floating apparitions or disembodied spirits because evil is not abstract. It is real. It dwells in real people. It grips human beings.
- How had evil gripped this man?
- When Jesus asked for his name he was given a number, “Legion” the name used for a division of the Roman army numbering at least 6,000 (Mark 5:9).
- Imagine the collection of uncoordinated impulses and forces inside of this man. A part of him runs to Jesus. Another part begs Jesus not to torture him. How would you describe the battle that is going on inside the man?

## — THE NEIGHBORS —

### Luke 8:34-37

<sup>34</sup> When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, <sup>35</sup> and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>36</sup> Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. <sup>37</sup> Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

- Now picture the dramatic change in the man — sitting, dressed, and clear-minded. How is he feeling about himself, about his rescue and about Jesus?
- We might think that the neighbors would be overjoyed, but not so. After seeing the man returned to sanity and wholeness, why are they “afraid” (v. 35) and why do they ask Jesus to “leave” (v. 37)?

## — THE REST OF THE STORY —

**Luke 8:38-39**

<sup>38</sup> The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, <sup>39</sup> “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

- Why did the man beg to go with Jesus?
- Why did Jesus tell him to stay and share his story?
- What do you think his story sounded like?
- For the rest of the story read Mark 7:31-8:10. See what the witness of one man can do.

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- Why is it so popular to paint abstract pictures of evil?
- Why do many only conceive of evil in dramatic ways?
- How can the quieter, more gradual evil often be even more deadly?
- What is the most difficult part of your life to surrender?
- This man is a “mustard seed” spreading his story throughout his friends and family. Who in your family has never heard your story of faith? Brainstorm on ways to share our faith stories with those we love.
- The demoniac progressed through three stages — Choice, Confession and Commitment. Close by asking God to accept our choice to come to Him, to hear our confession of sin and to strengthen our commitment to follow.