

Our new mission statement is: *Building Bridges to Connect Everyone to the Dynamic Life in Christ*. But what does being connected and living that life look like and feel like? This spring we will be going through the Book of Mark to discover what it means to live the **Dynamic Life in Christ**. These discussion guides will follow along with the sermon series by using passages from the book of Mark.

These guides will be organized using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the discussion guides, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to us at groups@foresthill.org.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Print off the "Life Group Member Guide" for each member of your group – or email it to them in advance.
- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through Scripture and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His Word.

Date of Sermon: April 18-19, 2020

Topic of Sermon: Authority Over the Demonic, Disease, and Death

Main Passage: Mark 5:1-43

BEFORE your group meeting:

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

Topic of Life Group Meeting: Dynamic life confronts darkness, disease, and death.

Icebreakers (optional)

- How does the idea of demonic powers, disease and death fit into your worldview? Explain.

Leader’s Note: Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

“Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I’ve printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. I’m going to give us about 5 minutes to do this. Let me begin by praying that God will open our minds and hearts to His Word.”

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

HIGHLIGHT the Passage

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

EXPLAIN the Passage

- What are the three different sections of this passage? Note: the three characters that fall at Jesus’ feet representing three different worldly results of sin.
- Where do you see the dynamic life of Jesus on display in these encounters?
- What are some things this passage revealed about people?
- Why do you think it’s significant that the Legion was in this man? How does Jesus respond to him?
- How are the three different characters (the demoniac, Jairus, and the woman) the same? How are they different?

APPLY the Passage

- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- How do these stories inform your understanding of demonic activity in our world? Of disease? Of death?
- How do these three different characters influence your own response to Jesus and his authority in your life?
- By God’s power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?
- How do Jesus words in v. 19 challenge you to action now?
- How do Jesus’ words in v. 34 challenge you?

RESPOND to the Passage

- Take the opportunity to go to God in prayer as a group. This passage is a powerful truth in our time: No demons, no disease, not even death can resist our great God. He is able. So why is he allowing COVID-19 to rampage in our world? Go to God in prayer for the world: developing regions and areas with no infrastructure and resources, ask God to move in accordance with his love and mercy. Go to God in prayer for our country: that he might bring peace upon our lands. Go to God in pray or yourselves: that he might strengthen your bodies and your faith. For the Church: that he might build up his people in these days and display his grace and love through them.

 COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

5:1-5. Notice Mark's intentional contrast, Jesus steps out of the boat and 'immediately' a man with an unclean (Greek: *'akathartos'* meaning dirty or unholy, the opposite of *'kathartos'* where we get our English 'catharsis: to cleanse' from.) spirit meets him. Mark is pointing to the Kingdom of God's ever-present mission against the powers that reign on earth. Mark also emphasizes the fact that "no one" and "nothing" could contain this man. Many had tried and he had overpowered them every time. Continually, 'always,' 'night and day' he was shouting out in the mountains and tombs cutting himself. This is supposed to feel as hopeless as it sounds.

5:6-13. Curiously, he runs to Jesus as soon as he sees him and "fell down before him" a sign of respect and with a *'phone megale'* (literally 'huge voice' where we get 'Megaphone') cries out to Jesus calling him by name and also "Son of the Most High God." This phrase was an OT reference to God's Hebrew name "*El Elyon*" or 'God Most High', see Psalm 57:1-3. These demons knew the identity of Jesus and so now did this man. The unclean spirit or demon says "My name is Legion, for we are many." Legion was a Roman military term for a platoon of troops and at the time of this story, it referred to about 6000 soldiers. He "begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country." Here we see three powerful truths: demons fear God; they can inhabit people in great number; and Jesus can neutralize them. Notice the number of the pigs, "about two thousand" quickly run themselves off a cliff and drowned in the sea. Demonic activity is always destructive, Satan comes to "steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10) and as soon as the demons destroyed these farmers livelihood, they were freed again to terrorize someplace else.

5:14-17. The herdsmen, likely in anger and amazement, told everyone. They came to see this previously naked man, imprisoned with a legion of demons, clothed and sitting in his right mind. They angry and amazed that the pigs were dead, they were shocked that this demon had been cast out, and they were afraid that this man now was full of peace sitting before them. So, they feared Jesus and asked him to leave.

5:18-20. The man begged Jesus that he might "be with him." Here Mark clearly exaggerates the spiritual significance of what just took place. This man didn't just want to get into the boat with Jesus. He wanted to literally "exist" with him. When we truly experience dynamic life in Christ, our souls desire is to be with Jesus continually. But Jesus told him to go at once and tell "how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you." The Kingdom of God would always continue on its purposes to advance the good news of Jesus' coming.

5:21-24. Jairus is Jewish ruler in the synagogue, the same people who have hated Jesus for the disruption he has caused among them. The advance of Jesus' Kingdom was causing upheaval in their own power and authority. Notice, despite what issues he may have with Jesus, he comes, just like the demon possessed man and falls at Jesus' feet. He too believes in Jesus. Now Jesus goes with him on his way but is interrupted.

5:25-34. In a beautiful progression, we have the third person who proclaims faith in Jesus and falls at his feet. This woman who had a bleeding issue for 12 whole years and had spent everything she had on doctors only to grow worse. Notice her faith, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." Jesus perceives that his power had flowed out of him to the woman and looks for her. Jesus commends her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease." This woman's faith is what made her well according to Jesus. Throughout the Gospel accounts, faith in Jesus routinely unlocks the power of Jesus in the world.

5:35-43. This idea is reinforced as Jesus encourages Jairus "do not fear, only believe." A powerful admonishment in the face of death and disease. When they came upon Jairus' house there was weeping and wailing because the girl had died. But Jesus says "The child is not dead but sleeping." They laugh at Jesus in response; unbelieving. After Jesus raises her from the dead, Mark again uses the word "immediately" twice; the girl got up and began walking and the people were amazed. Mark underscores the crescendo of this passage: Jesus triumphs over demons, over disease, and even over death. He is King over all things.

Jesus encounters three different characters. All of them knew Jesus' identity and had some level of faith. But Jesus responds differently to each. His mission to free the oppressed, heal the afflicted, and comfort those who mourn could not be stopped; not even by the gates of hell.

Life Group Member Guide

Focal Passage: Mark 5:25-34 (ESV)

Passage in Context: Mark 5:1-43 (ESV)



Bible-Reading Tip: Begin by asking God to open your eyes and hearts to His Word. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul writes that the Spirit – who lives inside everyone who believes in Jesus – knows the depths of God and reveals Him to those who follow Jesus. So, always begin your time of reading the Bible with a prayer for Him to open your eyes and ears to what He will reveal. This doesn't mean that you will always have an emotional encounter or a special revelation, but you are acknowledging that He is that One through whom all wisdom is revealed.

²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

HEAR Bible Reading Method

HIGHLIGHT the passage

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

EXPLAIN the passage

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

APPLY the passage

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God's power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

RESPOND to the passage

- Talk to God about what you've seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.