

# RESTORATION WITHIN RUIN

Mark 5:1-20

**O**ur antique floor-model Edison phonograph cost \$1. We found it in a garage sale, dirty, moldy, its veneer peeling, three of its four legs partly rotted off. However, its internal works were all there and in good condition: turntable, tone arm, speed control, crank, internal horn, even a wool record cleaning pad and bamboo needles, plus a drawerful of seventy-eight records. We hauled it home (it weighs about two hundred pounds) and Dale began to restore its outside. He reglued and replaced veneer, carved new legs to match the one existing leg, and stained and varnished the entire exterior. Furniture experts argue about whether an antique piece should be restored. For our phonograph, otherwise doomed to the junk heap, restoration saved its life.

Jesus met many people who one way or another were headed for the junk heap. He had compassion on them and mercifully restored them to full and meaningful life.

**Group Discussion.** What are some reasons people feel despair?

**Personal Reflection.** What gives you hope even in seemingly hopeless situations?

As study six showed, the Bible takes for granted that demons are real. The Gospels assume that demons, also called impure spirits, can take possession of people and cause violent and self-destructive behavior. Jesus is consistently more powerful than demons, and they are consistently in terror of him. By the time of this encounter in Mark's Gospel, Jesus has already built up a reputation of publicly casting out evil spirits (Mark 1:21-28, 34; 3:22). He speaks to demons with authority, and although

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they protest loudly, they have no power to resist him. The night before the encounter of this study, Jesus has shown his lordship over nature by calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Now his boat comes ashore in the Gentile region of the Decapolis. *Read Mark 5:1-20.*

1. Put yourself in the position of one of Jesus' disciples in this scene. As you get out of your boat, what do you see and hear (vv. 1-5)?

2. Still reacting as one of the disciples, what do you do as the possessed man approaches?

3. Identify all the ways this man's life appeared hopelessly ruined (vv. 1-5).

4. When have you felt that your cherished plans or dreams have been ruined by forces outside of your control?

5. How did everything change when Jesus came on the scene (vv. 6-7)?

6. As terrible as the scene appears in verses 6-10, how did it introduce new hope to the demon-possessed man?

7. What words and phrases in verses 6-13 show Jesus' indisputable power over the demons?


8. Identify all the radical changes you see between the condition of the man in verses 2-5 and his condition in verse 15.

9. Consider the reaction of the herdsmen and the local residents (vv. 14-17). Why do you think they missed the point of the miraculous deliverance Jesus had just accomplished for this man?

10. No doubt the newly delivered man was disappointed when Jesus refused to let him get into the boat (v. 18). What did Jesus give him as a new aim for his life (vv. 19-20)?

11. In what area(s) of your life do you feel you are up against forces stronger than you are?

12. This week, how will you remind yourself that Christ is stronger than those forces that threaten your ruin?

 *Admit to the Lord that there are things you just can't handle and that you do not know what to do about them, or even what you could do about them. Turn these things over to him and remain expectant for his answers.*

#### NOW OR LATER

Study Psalm 35, David's plea that the Lord will "fight against those who fight against me" (v. 1) and his expression of confidence that "you rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them" (v. 10). Make Psalm 35 your prayer for deliverance from ungodly adversaries, whether human or spiritual.