

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME ONE

STUDY SIXTEEN

Restoring a Human Wreck

Mark 5:1–20

If He can clean up that wreck of a life, He can restore your life.
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

OUR hearts beat faster when we watch the demonic world depicted in horror movies. Beasts rise from the netherworld to drag human victims into their nightmarish realm. Zombies menace neighborhoods in the middle of the night. Ghoulish spirits invade suburban homes. These scenes provoke fear because they fall into the sphere of the supernatural—a world beyond the reach of normal human control.

What good are physical weapons against such powerful otherworldly forces? Overcoming them seems impossible. But they are not the only impossibilities we encounter that fall beyond the reach of normal human control. A marriage that has broken into tiny pieces. A loved one bound by chains of bitterness. Our own heart feeling pulled into the zone of despair.

We long to learn how to tap into the surpassing power of God, who can change any messy situation—natural or supernatural—and restore any wretched life.

The disciples had just seen Jesus do the impossible. When an out-of-control storm threatened to sink their fishing vessel, Jesus “rebuked the wind” as a parent might scold an unruly child. “Silence! Be still!” He said, and “suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39). Mouths wide open, they exclaimed, “Who is this man? Even the wind and waves obey him!” (4:41).

Jesus proved that He is ruler of the natural world, and now the disciples will see Him as king of the supernatural. He is Lord of all! In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll wear the sandals of the disciples and walk into gentile territory to meet a man bound by spiritual chains no one could break . . . until Jesus showed up.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

*O LORD, what great works you do!
And how deep are your thoughts. (Psalm 92:5)*

Join this psalmist's contemplation of the greatness of God's mighty works and the depth of His thoughts. In a prayer, recognize God's immense power to transform your life with His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

This scene of Mark's gospel takes place in the Decapolis, the region east of the Jordan River. *Decapolis* means "ten cities," and it was gentile territory. It included the port of Gergesa on the Sea of Galilee and, farther south, the city of Gadara.

Locate Gergesa and Gadara on your Bible map or on the online map "[Ministry of Jesus](https://insight.org/ministry-of-jesus)" at insight.org. Mark identifies the location as "the region of the Gerasenes." The exact location of Jesus' encounter with the demoniac is uncertain, but it's likely that it occurred by the sea near Gergesa.

In this land of gentiles roamed a wild man, a demon-possessed wreck of a human being in desperate need of restoration that only Jesus could give.



Observation: Jesus Restores the Gerasene Demoniac

To observe [Mark 5:1–20](#), read it in different versions, noting Mark's descriptions of the man and his impossible-to-control condition.¹ How would Mark's original readers have felt as they read about this man's state?

Can you imagine the danger of being around a man like that? Little children were told to keep away. Families had nothing to do with that area, nor did people who were there alone. They left him to himself. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Sad Situation—Mark 5:1–5

Mark paints a dismal portrait of this tortured man in Mark 5:1–5, to which Luke adds his own touches in [Luke 8:26–29](#). How would you describe him? What details did Luke include?

Unusual Conversation—Mark 5:6–17

The Most Holy and the most unholy meet face to face. In the chart below, note the observations that emerge from their fascinating dialogue, and write down clues from the text that support these observations.

Observations	Clues
The demons immediately recognized Jesus (Mark 5:6–7).	
The demons acknowledged Jesus' authority over them (5:7).	
Jesus commanded their obedience (5:8).	
The man was filled with demons (5:9).	
Demons operate at the mercy of divine authority (5:10).	
Demons desire to be embodied in living creatures (5:11–12).	
Demons wreak havoc in whatever they control (5:13).	

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Put yourself in the place of the disciples and the gentiles in Mark 5:14–17. What caused the townsfolk to be shocked and afraid? Summarize their surprising response.

Vital Restoration—Mark 5:18–20

How does Mark describe the transformed life of this wreck of a man in Mark 5:18–20? What did he implore Jesus to let him do, and what did Jesus say? How did the people in the region respond to this demoniac-turned-missionary? How did Jesus refer to Himself?

What was it that amazed them? His restored life. And just as we started with the disciples, we find all the people in Decapolis with their mouths wide open. “Who is this evangelist, telling us this message?” “He’s the man from whom we once ran, transformed.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God’s Power Restores a Human Wreck

It’s not an accident that Jesus’ encounter with demons came on the heels of His encounter with the stormy sea. What did Mark want his readers to know about Jesus by linking these natural and supernatural events?

What do the sea’s tempestuous waves and the demoniac’s tormented soul illustrate about our condition apart from Jesus? What can He do for us?

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The demons called themselves “Legion,” a term for a Roman military regiment. What mental image did this term bring to the Jewish mind in terms of the number of demons, their efficiency, organization, and invincibility?

Demons are not fictitious spirits found only in movies, nor are they pointy-tailed characters perched on someone’s shoulder in the comics. They are real but invisible creatures, powerful but not all-powerful. The gentile villagers were terrified of demons—but they were even more afraid of the One whose power was greater. Why did they ask Jesus to leave the area? What message did the demoniac’s transformation convey to those who knew him?

Now their eyes are wide open. Now their mouths are open. Why? Because the man they once feared is now an evangelist among them. He’s telling them what Jesus had done for him, and obviously the message is what He can do for you.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God’s Great Power to Restore Lives

How do passages such as [Mark 5:1–20](#); [Romans 8:38–39](#); [Ephesians 1:19–21](#); [Colossians 1:15–22](#) attest to the surpassing greatness of God’s power over demons? What encouragement do these verses bring to believers, knowing that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us?

In any film, any form of media, any video game where there is a supernatural presence, there is fear. And it’s easy for you as a believer to think you are in the category of those who ought to be fearful. We are not at the mercy of their power. We respect the fact that they have great strength and authority, but their authority is not greater than ours. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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How does the truth in [Psalm 91](#); [Ephesians 6:10–18](#); [James 4:7](#); [1 Peter 5:8–9](#) and our passage displace superstition in our lives and cast out fear in the presence of the demonic world?

The number one malady in our day is fear. The better you know the truth, the more courage you get, and the more courage you get, the less fearful you live your life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How does the account of the Gerasene demoniac-turned-evangelist resemble the account of Mary Magdalene in terms of freedom, devotion, and commission in [Mark 15:40–16:3](#); [Luke 8:1–3](#); [John 20:11–18](#)? What do both accounts teach us about God’s power and His Word?

With God’s Word, you will have a greater respect for God’s power. And you will dismiss mythology. You would be surprised at how many people live their lives under the cloud of superstition, fear, and basing many of the things they believe on mythology. God’s Word is the truth, and the truth does what? It sets you free. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Believe in God’s Power to Restore Lives!

Pastor Chuck shares with us three practical lessons. First, *any wrecked life can be restored*. Think of that situation in your life or in the lives of your loved ones that seems messy and hopeless. What truth has the Holy Spirit shown you in this Bible passage that motivates you to believe in God’s great power?

No one is finished. No one is without hope. The marriages you’ve ruined. The homes you’ve messed up. The lives you’ve brought chaos into. The words you’ve said. The things you’ve done. None of that represents any kind of restriction for God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Second, *any restored soul can be used by God*. And, third, *anyone used by God can make an amazing difference*. In your own words, present your requests to the Lord for restoration that you would like to see in your own life or in the lives of your family and friends. Then, thank God for His surpassing power at work in you to give you lasting hope, abundant joy, and true peace.

Imagine the man whom Jesus freed from demons speaking to you as he spoke to his own countrymen. “Jesus set me free!” he would say. What a message of hope! Is anything beyond Jesus’ power to overcome? Lift your heart to the Lord who can calm the turmoil in your life as easily as He calmed a tormented soul.



A FINAL PRAYER

Gracious Father, thank You for Your great power at work in my life, filling me with lasting hope, abundant joy, and true peace. Help me to walk in the victory that I have in Christ. In His powerful name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](https://www.insight.org/how-does-pastor-chuck-swindoll-study-the-bible)” at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2010, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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