

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JUNE 28 2025

"used-to-bes" and "has-beens"

Scripture Story: Luke 8:26-39.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 34; 35.
Key Text: Luke 8:38, 39.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week's lesson focuses on the healing of the demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes. It is a storied event where a man so possessed by evil had to be chained in a cave or a graveyard far from people. The story reveals that thousands of demons occupied his mind and tortured his soul to the point where he tried to cut himself with rocks. When he broke free from the cave and ran at Christ the sight must have been terrifying, but Christ saw the tiny part of his heart that the demons did not occupy and found a mustard seed of faith there, which was enough to free this man from his suffering. Sometimes Christ calls us to exhibit faith in His power, but there are times when our best and only response is like the man whose words spewed only hate and hopelessness, and Christ set him free. Perhaps this is one message that young people need to hear this week.

Another focal point is what happens after the miraculous restoration of the demoniac. He becomes a "has-been." Where he has been becomes key to his witness to Christ's mercy. Often young people wonder why they don't experience power and joy in their walk with God. They believe all the right things and have asked God into their lives, but still they search for a sense that their relationship with God is real. It becomes real when we share it with someone else. Christ tells the man: "Go home and tell everyone what God has done for you and how He has had mercy on you." Challenge young people to think about their walk with God and fashion their testimony about what God has done for them. As they share it, a new part of their experience with God will come alive.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Personally witness the power and mercy of Christ. *(Know)*
- Feel compelled to receive and share their story. *(Feel)*
- Choose to tell their story to someone else. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10: "In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, Substitute and Example. . . . (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14-17; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Invite the students to share their responses to the voting activity in the *What Do You Think?* section. So often young people don't think they have a "testimony" because they haven't had a dramatic conversion such as the demon-possessed man in this week's lesson. This activity is designed to get them thinking about their journey and recognize that there are positive and negative aspects to the extremes on the continuum.

Some of the positive aspects of growing up Christian might be: You have a rich body of information that many crave. Your outlook is hopeful and healthy. You don't get blown around by extremes as much. Your view of God's love is real. Some of the positive aspects of those who convert from a life of sin is that they tend to have a deep hatred for the old life (sin). They are passionate and excited because the Christian life is new and so different. They are confident and bold because they have experienced both hell and heaven. In truth, it doesn't matter where you come from, but that you now belong to Christ.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The screeching tires and hollow "woof" of metal crushing metal still haunts my senses every time I drive by the spot. My New Year's Eve plan consisted of a large pizza and a lonely evening unpacking boxes and moving furniture into our new home while my wife and child visited the relatives several hours away. The accident occurred when an oncoming car swerved into my lane and smashed my economy-size car head-on, bouncing me deep into juniper bushes. Imagine a kindergartener colliding with a 250-pound linebacker running headlong into each other at top speed. That linebacker was an 89-year-old woman, attempting a left-hand turn as I inconveniently thwarted her efforts with the front of my car. The story becomes even more surreal when the little old lady that jousted me off the road with her 1974 Dodge Dart immediately left the scene, on foot, and made her way to the bank to make a deposit before the New Year. Unbelievable. After negotiating my way out of the wreckage, the lights of emergency vehicles emerged and found me, my smashed car, and an empty classic Dodge unblemished by the accident. The policeman asked, "Where is the other driver?" When I told him, "I think she went to the bank," he almost administered a sobriety test on me. After a few minutes she exited the bank and underwent a thorough examination by the paramedics and the police. Her words almost caused me to come unglued. "I was just turning to go into the bank and all of a sudden this car crashed into me." Unbelievable! The officer reinterviewed me because clearly my word meant nothing against the tender demeanor of a sweet 89-year-old woman. Just as I began to explain what really happened a young man walked over from the emergency vehicles and explained to the policeman, "I saw the accident . . ." His testimony saved me. He saw the entire accident and decided to turn back and make known what he knew about this strange event.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

According to the above story, how would you define a witness? Clearly, there are those who hear and believe, but only those who are willing to testify are actually witnesses. When have you experienced a scenario such as the one mentioned above?

The amazing story of the "once demon-possessed man" is a powerful example of the power of Christ to save anyone and how anyone's experience with Christ is powerful. Read the story, answer the questions in this week's lesson, and consider what your storied testimony might look like.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- As you read this story *underline* the key words or phrases that you think shape the meaning of this event.
- Read the context of this event (the events that lead up to this story) and describe the attitudes and experiences of Christ and the disciples as they face another frightening moment.
- *Circle* some of the key words and phrases that describe the demoniac before and after meeting Christ. What do these details say about the nature of Christ's kingdom and the nature of Satan's world?

- Based on what you observe in this story, how do demons respond to the presence of Jesus? How do you think the disciples and other witnesses of events such as this relate to Jesus' power?
- How do you explain the reaction of the villagers to this event? How do you compare their reaction to Jesus with other stories in which people received Jesus with adoration? What does this say about their previous knowledge of Christ?
- Why do you think the man healed of the demons so desperately wanted to stay with Jesus and get in the boat with Him? How did Jesus respond, and why do you think Jesus urged Him to share what he had witnessed?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

- Think of the most compelling sermons you have ever heard. What do you think is the most powerful part of the sermon? It is probably the personal testimonies that really capture our hearts—personal stories of how God made an impact in their life. Why is it when people describe where they have come from to where they are now that it is so inspiring?
- It is likely that the demoniac wanted to stay close to Christ because he was afraid the demons would return. How does telling people what God has done for you strengthen or defend you as in this story?
- How much did the "has-been demoniac" know about Jesus before he went through the 10 cities to spread the news? When have you held back your testimony because you thought you didn't "know enough"? How does this story change the way you think about what you might have to contribute?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Psalm 126:2, 3; Daniel 4; Mark 1:45; Acts 7:58–8:3; Acts 9; Mark 9:14-29.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The setting of this story is crucial because Jesus is dealing with questions about His authority as well as misconceptions about the nature of His ministry among His disciples. Because of the exhausting work they have done and the building popularity of Jesus, they cross the lake for some peace of mind. But the disciples learn a valuable lesson about peace in Mark 4:35-41. The disciples and Jesus are beset by a storm so severe these trained fishermen fear for their lives. But Christ speaks to the wind and the waves and the seas calm. Again, Jesus speaks to heaven and food for thousands appears. He speaks to the elements and they obey. And in this story, He speaks with power to thousands of demons and they run and hide. The context of this story is set in the middle of several life lessons on the power and authority of Christ.

Demon possession has such a range of behavior, from people who are constantly not in their right mind (Mark 5) to people who occasionally demonstrate erratic behavior (Mark 9). A legion of demons, as reported in this story, is equivalent to six thousand Roman troops. A legion of soldiers could have—and did—wreak unspeakable havoc on towns and cities in

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Desire of Ages. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Preparing to Grow

One of the key traits of good teachers is preparation—preparing your heart and mind for teaching, but also preparing the students to teach and learn. In keeping with the lesson on the demoniac, a teacher might call or invite three or four students to examine the different stories entailing demon possession and present a short summary of the event and the salient insights that emerge. As students present and make contributions, affirm their insights and ask the rest of the class to add. This preparation is so simple, yet watch the nature of your class dynamics grow!

that region. Combine that with the Jewish mind-set that demons were everywhere and if the human eye could see them, one would be frozen with fear. Nonetheless, the way in which Christ dispossesses the demons reveals the ultimate power of the Son of God as well as His compassion.

One of the likely reasons the man tried to get in the boat with Jesus was fear that the demons would return as soon as Jesus left. But Christ compels him to tell his story back home. The once-possessed man is said to have told the people of Decapolis what Christ had done for him. Decapolis means Ten Cities. Now these cities were not average Galilean towns; they were essentially inhabited by Greeks, but the territory was predominantly Syrian. But they were isolated by the roads so they didn't receive the Roman protection as did other cities along the main highways. Therefore, the ten cities banded together and formed their own protection and maintained their Greek culture, religion, and influence in a unique way. That this man's story paved the way for great inroads for the gospel that would come later is amazing.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

The recipients of Christ's healing power in the New Testament are many. In groups of two or three, make a list of three people of whom you would want to hear their testimony. Invite the groups to share whom they chose as interview candidates, why they chose them, and what you think they might say. Have the students report.

If your group does well at speaking freely and honestly with each other, you might ask if the group would be willing to share their testimony over the next few weeks.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The demoniac, even though he was screaming and disturbed by demons, came to Christ with a mustard seed of faith. I love the way *The Desire of Ages* shows this man's heart that longs for freedom but cannot even speak the right words to ask for help. But Jesus knew his heart and banished the evil spirits from him, bringing him to his right mind. When we come to Jesus, even though we are not entirely right with our lives or even when we are terribly distracted, Christ sees us, hears our hearts, and can draw us close. What Christ does for us will be real, but what will make it last is sharing our testimony with someone else. In the same way that the demoniac sowed seeds throughout Decapolis, our stories, even though simple, can foster growth and new life in ways we will never be able to count.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*),* chapters 34; 35.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

LESSON 13

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Luke 8:26-39.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 34; 35.

"used-to-bes" and "has-beens"



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"With authority He bade the unclean spirits come out of them. His words penetrated the darkened minds of the unfortunate men. They realized dimly that One was near who could save them from the tormenting demons. They fell at the Saviour's feet to worship Him; but when their lips were opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 337).

key text

"The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, '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."

(Luke 8:38, 39, NIV)

what do you think?

Indicate where you are on the continuum below.

The personal stories that others tell about Christ that inspire me the most tend to be:

Dramatic Conversions Lifelong Learning

1 2 3 4 5 6

Why do think that some believers who have grown up in Christ feel as if their experience is not as amazing because it is not as dramatic? Explain what is powerful about both types of experiences.

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INTO THE STORY

"They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 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!' 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.

"Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?'

" 'Legion,' he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

"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. 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.

"When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 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. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 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.

"The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, '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."

(Luke 8:26-39, NIV)

did you know?

The broader region where this event took place is called Decapolis (Ten Cities). These cities are: Damascus, Dion, Gadara, Gerasa, Hippos, Canatha, Pella, Philadelphia, Raphana, and Scythopolis. Some towns you might remember, such as Damascus, the place where Saul (before he became Paul) was going to arrest a rapidly growing Christian movement. It is likely that this "has-been" or "used-to-be" demoniac spread the word about Christ so effectively that the believers in that part of Galilee grew like wildfire. It just goes to show how one person's story can change everything.

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this story, *underline* the key words or phrases that you think shape the meaning of this event.

Read the context of this event (the events that lead up to this story) and describe the attitudes and experiences of Christ and the disciples as they face another frightening moment.

Circle some of the key words and phrases that describe the demoniac before and after meeting Christ. What do these details say about the nature of Christ's kingdom and the nature of Satan's world?

Based on what you observe in this story, how do demons respond to the presence of Jesus? How do you think the disciples and other witnesses of events such as this relate to Jesus' power?

How do you explain the reaction of the villagers to this event? How do you compare their reaction to Jesus with other stories where people received Jesus with adoration? What does this say about their previous knowledge of Christ?

Why do you think the man healed of the demons so desperately wanted to stay with Jesus and get in the boat with Him? How does Jesus respond, and why do you think Jesus urged Him to share what He had witnessed?

punch lines

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" **(1 John 1:1-4, ESV).**

"He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen" **(Deuteronomy 10:21, NASB).**

"Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me. For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke. If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer" **(Psalm 66:16-19, NLT).**

" 'Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?' And they went out to see for themselves" **(John 4:29, 30, *The Message*).**

"They don't belong to the world, just as I don't belong to the world. Make them ready for your service through your truth; your teaching is truth. I have sent them into the world, just as you sent me into the world" **(John 17:16-18, NCV).**

further insight

"'Lord, save us: we perish.' Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 335

"It is in working to spread the good news of salvation that we are brought near to the Saviour."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 339

Sabbath

Read 1 John 1:1-4.

Read and respond to the voting question in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. So often we think because we were not once demon-possessed or drug addicts that what God has done in our lives is not real, or as real as what He did in others who have had dramatic conversions. Think of heroes of faith in Scripture who were born into it, as well as those who had dramatic circumstances surround their conversion. In today's reading, what is required for you to have a testimony about what God has done for you? Also, contemplate this thought: "Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit . . . we are given the power to live a holy life" (The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10).

Sunday

Read Matthew 28:18.

Read the *Into the Story* portion and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study. This week's lesson portrays the power of Christ over the demons. Some may seem unreachable, but Christ has shown how no one is so far gone that He cannot save them. What part did you connect with, and what was God's message to you in this story? What is God's message to you in this text?

Monday

Read Luke 8:38, 39.

The *Key Text* this week comes from Luke 8:38, 39. "The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, '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" (NIV). What stories from the Bible or history portray one person sharing their testimony and having a great impact? If you could share your journey with Christ with three people this week, whom would you share it with? Why?

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 15:11.

Read the quote from *The Desire of Ages* in the *Flashlight* section and think about what it means for those people who seem to be beyond help. Note especially how Ellen White says: "His words penetrated the darkened minds of the unfortunate men. They realized dimly that One was near who could save them from the tormenting demons. They fell at the Saviour's feet to worship Him; but when their lips were opened to entreat His mercy, the demons spoke through them" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 337). Even when people spew out hatred, it is possible that there is still a part of their hearts untouched by evil that Christ sees and hears, and can restore. Whom do you know that seems so far away from God that they don't have any apparent desire to know the Lord? Begin praying for that small part hidden in the depths of their heart to grow and respond to God. What comfort can you draw from today's reading?

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson refer to the power of personal testimonies. Read them carefully and choose three passages that speak to you personally. Think of the various ways a person can tell their story to someone else. Perhaps it is in a song, in a letter they write, or in doing acts of kindness that prompt an onlooker's curiosity. Everyone who has experienced the mercy of Christ has a story. Whose story in the Bible do you resonate with the most? Why?

Thursday

Read Psalm 71:17, 18.

Demon possession is a real and undeniable problem around the world. In some parts of the world it manifests itself differently, but is still very real. The victory over such a problem depicts everyone's victory over sin by the grace and mercy of Christ. Again, everyone who becomes a believer, whether it is in a dramatic moment or over the course of a lifetime, has a rich, powerful story of faith to share with someone else. Everyone's story matters, and everyone's story is necessary. What is your story? One way to begin writing out your testimony is to consider three parts: (1) my life before I met Christ (or before I truly understood what He has done for me); (2) an event or experience that was a pivotal point in my decision to follow Christ; and (3) what my life is like as a result. Write out your testimony and stick it in your Bible so you have it to refer to, but also as a reminder of your journey with Christ. Make today's reading your personal prayer.

Friday

Read 1 John 1:1-3.

Reflect on moments in your life when you had the opportunity to share who Christ is to you. How did you respond? What might you do differently given the opportunity today. It is common that those who pray fervently for an opportunity to share their story with someone else are the ones who consistently share with others. How do you identify with today's reading?

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this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 34; 35.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.