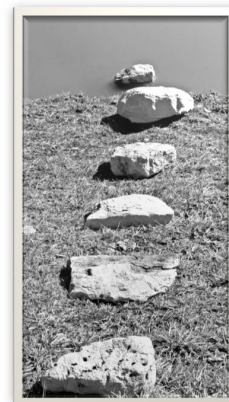


Take The Next Step

Mark 5-6



...their hearts were hardened. Mark 6:52 NIV

None of this had yet penetrated their hearts. Mark 6:52 The Message

Truth to Stand On

Hard hearts keep people from recognizing Jesus as Savior, but they do not keep His kingdom from spreading.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, Soften our hearts to see all the fullness of God dwelling in you. Use us to spread your kingdom in a hard hearted world. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Getting in Step With Your Group

Introduce yourselves if there are any new group members. Think of people you know who cannot see Jesus for who He is. What kinds of barriers are in their way?

Step by Step Through Mark 5-6

Jesus shows His amazing power as God in these chapters, and yet not every heart is ready to accept who He is. Read through Mark 5-6 together, noting these steps along the way:

- o Step 1: Jesus turns powerful demons into whimpering beggars – Mark 5:1-20
- o Step 2: Jesus frees a woman from years of suffering with just a touch – Mark 5:25-34
- o Step 3: Jesus shows His power over even death – Mark 5:21-24, 35-43
- o Step 4: Jesus encounters hard hearts that cannot see who He is...
 - ...in His hometown – Mark 6:1-6
 - ...in Herod – Mark 6:14-29
 - ...even in His own disciples – Mark 6:45-52
- o Step 5: Yet His kingdom multiplies – Mark 6:7-13, 30-41, 53-56

In the story of the demon possessed man (5:1-20), how does Mark describe the effect of the demons on the man? How does he describe the effect of Jesus on the demons? What are Jesus' directions to the man after his miraculous healing?

How long had the bleeding woman been suffering? How long did it take Jesus' to heal her? What did Jesus say had healed her? (5:34)

What was the response when Jesus said that Jairus' daughter was asleep? (5:40) Why did the people respond this way? How was the response different when He raised the girl from the dead? (5:42) Why do you think Jesus gave them strict orders to keep quiet about this?

In Mark 6, Jesus encounters hard hearts. In each of the following cases, discuss what is getting in the way of seeing Jesus for who He is, and the effects of this hard heartedness:

- o In His hometown (6:1-6)
- o Herod (6:14-29)
- o His disciples (6:45-52)

When Jesus sends out the twelve (6:7-13) what restrictions does He place on them? What does He equip them with? What were the results of their mission trip?

How did Jesus prepare for the big picnic? (6:31) Why did He tell His disciples to feed the people? How much did Jesus start with and how much did He end up with?

How do you see the spread of Jesus' kingdom in this chapter?

Stepping into Our World

Let the words in these chapters penetrate your heart. Apply what you have just read by answering the questions below in your group as time permits:

- What "demons" are you fighting that Jesus could turn into whimpering beggars?
- Are you or someone you know experiencing long term suffering? How could Jesus' touch make a difference?
- The word translated "healed" in 5:34 also means saved. Share how God has healed you, physically and spiritually.
- How does Jesus' power over death change the way you live your life?
- Where is your hard heart keeping you from seeing what Jesus can do for you?
- Who do you know who is hard hearted and cannot see Jesus? How can you reach out to them?
- Where do you see Jesus' kingdom advancing in spite of hard hearts?

Greater is He That is in Me

The story recorded in Mark 5:1-20 is one of the most striking accounts of Jesus' power over the devil. No human effort was strong enough to subdue the demons that tortured this man. Yet when these same demons encountered Jesus, they begged not to be tortured. It is also significant that they could only go into the pigs with Jesus' permission. Satan may have power in this world, but Luther reminds us in his explanation of the second article of the Apostles' Creed that Christ has redeemed us from sin, death, and *the power of the devil!*

Are there temptations in your life that no human effort can overcome? Take heart, "...because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." 1 John 4:4

Taking the Next Step

Take today's study of Mark 5-6 into the week ahead by choosing one of the following challenges:

- Pray daily for someone you know whose heart is hard toward Jesus.
- Pray that Jesus will turn one of your "demons" into a whimpering beggar.
- Jesus directs the formerly demon possessed man to "Tell them your story." (5:19 The Message) Briefly write out the story of what God has done in your life. Who can you share this story with?
- Prepare for a big task ahead of you by going to a quiet place and resting with Jesus.
- When Jesus sent out the 12, He gave them more than He restricted. Change your focus from what you don't have to all that God has given you.

Closing Prayer

Give group members an opportunity to share prayer requests for the coming week.