

1. A standard question one gets as a Christian is how do we go about making a difference for God? Yes we are need to rely upon His power, but how do we do that practically? Where do we begin? If God wants us to use our lives to make a difference for Him, that's wonderful, but where do we start? The good news is the stories in Chapter 8 lay out some ground work for us to show who it is that are called to serve God, what kind of results to expect, who is and isn't a disciple of Jesus, and how does God work in our lives to make a difference for Him? If that's too many questions to remember, let me lay out the stories in this chapter and hopefully that will explain these points I'm laying out of the who, what, when and how's that we make a difference for God. That by the way, is my lesson title, those questions about how we make a difference for Him. As a bonus we will also discuss how to deal with resistance to whatever it is God has called us to do. With that said, let me summarize this chapter and hopefully that will explain what I'm talking about:
 - a) The first story describes who are Jesus' followers. It wasn't just the 12 disciples. It's best to think of the 12 as Jesus' appointed leaders, but not all who followed Him. Among the followers some women are mentioned here. Among them was one who had demons cast out of her and a wife an important government official under King Herod. The big point here is that Israelites from all walks of life realized that Jesus was something special and in effect altered their lives to make a difference for Him. That's my "who" of who makes a difference for God.
 - b) The second story is a famous parable (made up story) that most Christians know well. It's the story of four types of soil used to grow crops. In three of the four types of soil, crops can't grow, as the ground is either too hard, too shallow (rock bed below a shallow soil) or it is too full of weeds. In the forth type of soil, the soil is so good that it produces far more crop than can be expected from a normal planting. That parable is the "what" question: it is what kind of results we can expect when we do make a difference for God.
 - i) The related point is that most people who hear the gospel won't become lifelong believers. The smaller percentage that gets it will blossom in tremendous ways far more than what one normally expects to accomplish using one's own strength.
 - c) The third story is about Jesus encounter with His mother Mary and His brothers. Despite what is commonly taught among many Roman Catholics, Joseph and Mary went on to go have a large family after Jesus was born. This incident is not to say that Jesus didn't care about his immediate family. The point here is that Jesus considers His family anyone and everyone who is willing to do God the Father's will for their lives. The point is about who is and isn't a disciple. Those willing to commit our lives to serving Jesus are His disciples more than say, those who Jesus' blood relatives.
 - i) From God's all knowing perspective, He knows who'll commit their lives to serve Him. From our human perspective, it's up to us to make that commitment and use our time to make that difference for Him. Again it's another example of the "who".
 - d) The fourth story is about Jesus and the disciples in a boat and a horrible storm that causes the disciples to panic. Here we have the first time the disciples needed Jesus to perform a miracle for them personally. It's one thing to watch in awe of Jesus doing miracles but it's another to be in such trouble oneself that one is now dependent upon Him for their own survival. That leads me back to my lesson title. The other "who" is our dependence upon God to guide us in order to make a difference for Him in this world.
 - e) The fifth story is about Jesus curing a man who literally had thousands of demons living inside of him. This is another famous story where the demons then entered a large herd of pigs who drowned from that event. This story is designed to show us the "how". That is how much power God gives us to deal with forces we could never defeat on our own.

- f) The sixth story involves two intertwining stories where Jesus performed miracles. One is the death of a local synagogue leader's only daughter. This is the second time we read of Jesus' raising a person up from the dead. Mixed in with that story is one of a woman who desperately wanted to touch Jesus, as her menstrual period was nonstop. In other words, she couldn't stop bleeding. Believe it or not, these stories teach us another "who": Who it is that Jesus wants us to help.
2. With that said, let me put this altogether: The stories in this chapter show us how we can use our lives to make a difference for Jesus. If our goal as Christians is to make a difference for Him, this chapter gives us some wonderful examples of how we do it, why we do it, who involved in the process and how we go about making that difference. With that said, I believe we're ready to get started on the details.
3. Chapter 8, Verse 1: After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.
 - a) Let's start with the phrase "after this". The "this" refers to the last part of Chapter 7, where Jesus had a meal with a Pharisee and a woman there cleaned Jesus' feet with her hair. The simple point here is the story moved on and there is no connection between the chapters other than to say "after that" event occurred.
 - b) There are some commentators who consider this Jesus' "second round" through the towns around the Lake Galilee area. That's because in the "first round" Jesus didn't choose His 12 disciples yet. Personally, I don't think it's very important. What is important is that we are at a point now where Jesus has a large band of "common folk" who are following Him from town to town doing miracles and proclaiming His message of repentance from sin.
 - c) What is interesting to consider is that women were among his band of followers. One has to understand how that was not done in those days. Among those women is a Mary (not Jesus' mother) named Magdalene who the text says was demon-infected. This is the first time we get introduced to her and she's not the same woman as the last part of Chapter 7. We also get a woman named Joanna who was the wife of the man who was in charge of managing King Herod's household affairs. We'll discover later in Luke's Gospel that King Herod wanted to see Jesus. I wonder if her stories came back to Herod based on her time with Jesus. A third woman is named Susanna, who we don't know anything about. Some suspect Luke knew her personally, which is why she's mentioned here.
 - i) Now for the important question: Why should we care about all of these details? It is to show that ordinary people (including some from privileged backgrounds) did turn from whatever it is they did in their lives to follow Jesus. After 2,000 years, in effect that hasn't changed as people are still willing to drop their lives to go make a difference for Jesus after realizing He's God and there is no greater purpose to live.
 - d) Another thing that's amazing to consider is that Jesus let other people support Him out of their means. Remember that this is the God of the Universe. He could have commanded food to exist, and it would just happen. By letting others minister to Jesus, it shows His willingness to be human and more importantly it shows a principle that Jesus wants us to live by, which is to care for others as others make a difference for God in the world.
 - e) I don't think this day is a special day all to itself. I think Luke just wanted to make the point here that once Jesus had established who His 12 disciples were, it wasn't just the 12 who followed Jesus from place to place. There was also a crowd of people traveling with Him wherever He went. Luke wants us to know this so that we get the idea that Jesus is getting popular at this point and that many people were willing to drop whatever it was they were supposed to do and follow Jesus realizing who He was. With that said, it's time for the second story in this chapter:

4. Verse 4: While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵ "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."
 - a) This parable, which is very familiar to most bible reading Christians, is also told in Mark's Gospel (Chapter 4) and Matthew's Gospel (Chapter 13). In both those accounts we learn that there was such a large crowd trying to get close to hear Jesus that He told this parable from a boat off the shore of the lake.
 - b) As to the parable itself, it's a fairly simple story about farming with different types of soil that can mean just about anything we'd want it to mean. My point is for us to understand it's meaning we have to read ahead to Verses 11-14 that give Jesus explanation of it.
 - c) One has to remember that farming was a big part of Israel's economy. Most people would get the idea that any type of seed would have to be planted in good soil in order for that seed to grow up and produce crops.
 - d) Before I get into the specifics of this parable, notice Verse 8 says that the good soil yielded 100 times more than what was sown. In that culture, a "good crop" was considered if the yield was 7 times more. In Mark and Matthew's Gospel it says 30, 60 and 100 times. The exact way Jesus phrased it as described by different witnesses is not that significant as is the idea that the crop gathered is far larger than what any farmer would expect to occur.
 - e) With all that said, it's time for me, a born and raised "city-boy" to explain the soils here: In fields there were places where people walked. These were common trails. Remember that there were no paved roads. Therefore the walking route in that dry climate can be as hard as cement from being heavily traveled. The point is the first type of soil can be so hard by all of the traveling that there is no way seed would stick to that type of soil and birds will eat it up before it can grow into seed.
 - i) The second type of soil is thin-layered where there is solid rock below the surface. Crops would spring up quickly as the soil is warm as it is thin with rock below it. However, because those plants can't grow roots, they would die quickly. Again anyone with basic farming experience would get this. It's not until we get to Verse 11 where the specific application will come into play.
 - ii) The third type is ground full of weeds. The obvious point is the weeds choke out the good plants from growing as both are trying to survive. As one who's pulled many a weed in my life, one can tell that one has to grab their roots or else they are still part of the problem.
 - iii) The fourth type of soil is good soil in that it is deep enough for plants to grow as well as weed-free.
 - f) A key point here is that anyone can understand this analogy and it can mean just about anything one makes up to apply it to. Without Jesus interpretation, this story is useless. Speaking of which, time to read on.
5. Verse 8 (cont.): When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
 - a) This was apparently a common line spoken by Jesus as it is repeated a number of times in the Gospels and even in the first three chapters of Revelation where Jesus talked to John (the disciple, not John the Baptist) near the end of his life. Jesus is not saying that those who are deaf are excluded from being saved. It's Jesus call for us to pay attention to the meaning of the parable which again is coming up in a few verses. The point being that those who don't care about Jesus being God won't bother to learn the parable's meaning or those who do bother to learn it (but don't believe in Jesus as God) won't accept the idea as fact what is about to be preached Him as to how that parable should apply to the lives of those of us who do trust in Him.

6. Verse 9: His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand."
- a) Here we get Jesus' final comment before actually explaining what the parable means: The point here is that the purpose of Jesus' parables in the bible is in effect not to reveal truth but to hide it. Again the point is that those who refuse to believe that Jesus is in charge of their lives either won't care what parables mean or even if they do understand it, refuse to apply it that way as they refuse to accept Jesus as being in charge of their lives.
 - b) One of the classic questions Christians ponder is, "How do I know if I'm really saved?" A great way to answer that question is to study Jesus' parables and ask if you are applying them to your life. Remember that salvation is based on the straightforward idea that one believes Jesus is Lord (in charge of one's life) and Savior (paid the complete price for one's sins, past, present and future). If we believe that as stated in Romans 10:9, we are saved. After that comes a separate question of what is one doing with one's salvation? If we are using it to make a difference for Jesus it's a sign we are "putting our money and our time where our mouth is" to borrow an old expression. My point is simply that if one believes one is saved then one would just naturally want to do something about it.
 - i) All of that leads me back to this parable. If we do believe Jesus is God, then it will be important to us to understand what Jesus meant by that parable. Therefore it'd be important to us to understand how Jesus' interpreted it, beginning in Verse 12. Speaking of which:
7. Verse 12: "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.
- a) Remember I said that this lesson is about the "who, what's when and why's of using our lives to make a difference for God? So you know, we're still focusing on the "who". In the first few verses, the point is Jesus had people from all walks of life follow Him. Now here in this parable, the "who" are the one's that grow in the good soil. My point is as you read this parable, think of our own lives and how we are using it to make a difference for Jesus in our lives. Jesus wants us grow 30, 60 or 100 times more than "how we were" before we were saved in the first place. It's the idea of our lives having a purpose that will benefit us and others for all of eternity. Therefore, as one studies this parable, don't think of it as it might apply to others, but consider how it might or should apply to us as we use our lives to make a difference for Him in this world.
 - b) OK enough of all of that. Onto the parable meaning itself.
 - c) The first point is the seed represents the word of God itself. Some make a big deal that it is God who plants the seed. To me, the purpose of this story is to focus on the soil, not the seed itself. The point being that it's not as important about who first lead us to Jesus as it is to ponder how we are actually growing in our "soil" to make that difference for Him.
 - d) The second thing to get is that no matter how hard we try, some people refuse to get it. We can do the most wonderful and convincing presentation of the Gospel and no matter how well it's done, some refuse to accept it. There was a famous 19th Century preacher who said in effect, "I wish those who were saved had a big mark on their bodies so I don't have to waste my time preaching to those who will never get it". (Paraphrase of a quote by Charles Spurgeon). My point being is that anyone who is saved, has the knowledge it takes to present the Gospel. No matter how we present it, some will refuse to accept it.

- e) My point is the first type of "hard as cement" soil represents the fact that some people do refuse to get it. We don't know who they are, so we witness to all people. But we have to accept the fact that God gives us free will, and some just refuse to accept it. The parable also says how the birds eat the seed in this hard ground before it can root. Think of that point as demonic forces offering alternatives to the Gospel message. The point is all of us have a built in desire to worship something. So that seed doesn't stick to the hard ground there are forces that prevent that soil from sticking. If one has any doubts this is true, go and be a witness for Jesus sometime and just watch "things" happen.
 - f) All of that leads to the second type of soil, the one that falls on "thin" soil. I'm positive in the best of churches are many people who are excited about the Gospel message and start off as strong believers. It's only through time that one can tell how serious they are. That is the point of this second soil. God knows who is and isn't saved. We can only tell by watching people over time and see if they take root in the bible and what it teaches.
 - g) That's why most of the churches I respect will encourage people after they are saved to go and get involved in bible studies so that they can take root. I remember doing that myself as a young believer and it benefited my life tremendously.
 - h) The third type of soil is about a person who believes but again, over time, starts to care more about other things than God. Without mentioning anyone by name, I know (second hand) of a famous Hollywood person who became a Christian for a few years. Then that person started sleeping around and let's just say he lost interest in his faith in Jesus. I will not reveal that name and occasionally I do pray for him. I just use him as an example of a person who after accepting the gospel message, can walk away because of other interests or even due to persecution, turn from the Gospel message. The point isn't that Christians can't have hobbies or other interests. The point is that we can get to a point where Jesus is no longer in charge of our lives as we care more about other things than serving Him.
 - i) I just heard the other day about a pastor of a large church who resigned as he said he had numerous affairs on his wife and other sinful issues. Do I believe that man is still saved? Yes I do, because the guilt over what he did bothers him. What we can lose is our opportunities to be a good witness for Jesus when we sin, but our salvation is a separate issue as I've tried to emphasize here in this lesson.
 - i) That point leads to the "good crop" of the 4th type of soil. Jesus doesn't just want us to be saved, but He wants us to use our lives to be a good witness for Him in this world. To say it another way, Jesus doesn't want us to lose our church (or whatever we're doing to make a difference for Him), but He wants us to flourish in our soil. Each of us have weaknesses we have to fight. In effect we have to slowly crucify those weaknesses to death so that we can flourish in the good soil, which is our lives to be used to make a difference for Jesus.
 - j) Now that we get the idea that any and all of us can use our lives to make a difference for Him by sticking close to Jesus (through His word) and time with other believers, we can move on to the next story, which is another parable designed to benefit those who do care about pleasing Him just as those who don't care about God won't care what it means.
8. Verse 16: "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. ¹⁷ For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. ¹⁸ Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."
- a) Jesus here gives another simple illustration that's easy to understand: Lamps back then were usually oil-based. The point is if one turns (or light's) a light, one doesn't hide that light as it's used to see. The point here is that if we make use of the knowledge we have about Jesus, we will be given more. If we "throw away" what we learn about Him, God will "discard us as we discard Him". Again, the issue is not about salvation but being a good witness for Him. If we want to learn more, God gives us more.

- b) One of the things that never ceases to amaze me about my ministry is how God puts stuff in my life that relates well to whatever it is He wants me to teach. You and I are blessed to live in a world where one can easily study the bible better due to the wonders of the internet and how it can be used. Even before that time era, I'm convinced that for those who are interested in growing in God, He finds a way to get that information to them so that we can increase what we know so we can continue to be used for His glory.
 - c) All of that does tie back to this parable about the lighted lamp simply in that if we have an interest of things about God, and are willing to use (share) what we do have, God will get us more information as we continue to grow in His word. I am eternally grateful to a lot of wonderful teachers who've helped me to grow and hopefully I'm passing that teaching on to others through this ministry. OK, enough of my life, back to the text.
9. Verse 19: Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. ²⁰ Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹ He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."
- a) Let's start with the simple fact that Jesus has brothers. In Matthew 13:55-56, it lists four brothers by name and at least two unnamed sisters. The point is after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph went on to have a large family. There are Roman Catholic scholars who admit that the bible is clear that Mary was not a perpetual virgin, which is a fictional story that started in the 2nd Century. Nor is the story true that these are Josephs' children from a previous marriage. I say that because there is no mention of them in the "virgin birth" account. The simple point is Jesus had half brothers and sisters. We do know that at least two of them are saved (James and Jude) as they both wrote epistles in the bible.
 - b) The second thing to catch here is that Jesus was inside a building as Verse 20 says that the family of Jesus was outside. My point is this story is not at the same lake where the story of the four parables took place.
 - c) The important point here comes back to the issue of who are Jesus' disciples. Jesus cared for His mother and His brothers as again, we know that some of them eventually believed in Jesus as the Messiah. The point is that anyone willing to read God's word and put into practice what it teaches (i.e., that Jesus is who He claims to be) is part of God's family. It comes back to the idea of how we can tell if someone is saved. From God's all-knowing perspective, He knows who has chosen Him to be saved. From our not all-knowing life we can only tell by watching someone's life. The point is we can be part of God's eternal family not by being a blood relative of Jesus, but by trusting in that Gospel message. To say it one final way, we are not saved because our parents are saved. We each have to learn to trust in Jesus ourselves.
 - d) OK, time for the next story in this chapter:
10. Verse 22: One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. ²³ As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. ²⁴ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵ "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."
- a) Here we have another fairly famous bible story of Jesus calming a storm. Before I get into the specifics of the storm, notice Verse 22 says, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake". That means it was God's will to actually cross the lake. If the disciples knew it was God's will to cross it, they needed to have a little confidence it will occur.
 - i) So how do we know when something is God's will? The obvious first answer is if something is biblically based and not sinful. It's also important to pray for His will to be done and then do what is logical and trust in His guidance.

- b) Meanwhile, back to the storm itself. Some commentators suggest it is Satan himself who organized the storm as all the disciples are together in one place and it's his chance to end Jesus life before the cross was to occur. Others suggest it was God's idea as the storm was a test for the disciples. My answer? It doesn't matter. In life, storms come and go and we have to deal with them the best we can.
- c) Let me give you a little background on storms on the Sea of Galilee. This is a fresh water lake that is literally below sea level. It's main water source comes from a mountain next to it. Cold winds come down off that mountain. Also hot winds come from the hot desert in the other direction. The point is in that relatively small lake that is about 9 miles long and 5 miles wide, it can get violent storms out of nowhere due to the winds.
 - i) Some will argue that when Jesus calmed the storm, the winds just stopped because those winds can end as quickly as they start. The problem with that theory is that it doesn't explain how the waves just stopped. In a violent storm on this sea, if the wind stops, it usually takes hours for the waves to stop crashing, as they crash on the shore and keep coming back.
- d) Now let me come back to Jesus Himself. Notice He was asleep. The God who created all things in His human form, required sleep like anyone else. Anybody who has to speak all day will tell you how that wipes you out. After all of Jesus teaching and being in demand to do miracles, He was so tired, a storm didn't bother him.
- e) Now think about the disciples. They were mostly professional fisherman who knew how to deal with storms on that lake. Yet this one was so bad, they were "freaking out". They went to wake Jesus who was sleeping on this journey as the disciples sailed (this was not a row boat, but a sail boat) across the lake.
- f) This same story is told in Matthew Chapter 8 and Mark Chapter 4. In Mark's account (if you don't know, was probably Peter's account as told to Mark) Jesus just said to the storm "Quiet! Be Still" as if one could talk to a storm. The literal translation is like, "Hush, calm". By the way, that's not a contradiction to Luke's Gospel as Luke just says Jesus quieted the storm while Mark gives Jesus exact words He used.
 - i) The important point is the storm obeyed Jesus. All of a sudden there was no more wind and the waves instantly stopped moving. If we want proof that Jesus is God consider these verses. Personally as I said earlier, I don't care who started it, the point is Jesus can end it with a simple "Hush" if it is His desire.
- g) Let me answer the tough question first: If all of this is true, why does God allow violent storms to occur and people to die? In effect that's a famous question that many atheists will use. To phrase it my way: Believers in God have to explain why the innocent suffer. Nonbelievers in any God have to explain everything else which includes the idea that if the big bang occurred, who lit the fuse? My own response to suffering is that our world is cursed by sin and we have to accept that idea. The other thing I do know is that Romans 8:28 teaches that for believers all things eventually work out for God's good (not our own good) that happen to us in life. My point is I've seen many times, good things come out of horrible tragedies that if seen the right way. God allows for His good for those who trust in Him with their lives. That's why I preach all the time that the most valuable thing we own is our time and the best use of our time is to use our lives to make a difference for God. With that said, back to the storm.
- h) If you recall, I said that before the storm started, Jesus commanded the disciples that they were to go over to the other side of the lake. That's why in Verse 25, Jesus rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith. Was Jesus rebuking them for waking Him? Don't think so. I think the rebuke was for their panic and their conviction that they were all going to die due to the storm. To paraphrase Dennis Prager, "Anxiety is to worry about a situation without putting God in the middle of that situation". That's why the disciples panicked as they worried about their situation without putting God in that situation.

- i) The one thing I do give the disciples credit for is they didn't question why they're going across the lake. They did obey Jesus in that sense. Anyway, this is now another scene where the disciples were probably just standing there with their mouths wide open as the lake was as calm as calm can be. Personally, I think there was a lot of that jaw dropping in the three years the disciples spent with Jesus as they witnessed miracle after miracle.
 - j) Finally, consider the fact this is the first time the disciples themselves needed Jesus help. It's one thing to watch Jesus do miracle after miracle on someone else. It's another thing when we are in trouble and require His help. There is nothing as wonderful as watching Jesus work in our lives as we use it to make a difference for Him.
 - k) With all that said, the disciples are now across the calm lake and let's read what's next.
11. Verse 26: They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.
- ²⁷When 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. ²⁸ 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!" ²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the evil 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.
- a) As the rest of the disciples' trip across the lake was calm, it's time for the next adventure. As the boat landed on the eastern side of the lake, the disciples were now in non-Israelite territory called the "Gerasenes". The first person to greet Jesus and the disciples as they arrived was a naked man who was demon possessed. I guess my first thought is if I saw someone like this is, "Hey buddy get some clothes or can someone get the police?" Since that wasn't an option in those days, let's see how Jesus handled this situation.
 - b) Notice the demon possessed man knew who Jesus was. The demon used a formal title to refer to Jesus, "Son of the Most High God". To understand this, it would help to accept a few things about demons: First of all, they are "timeless". They've been around since the creation of the world. They can't be killed and they will continue to exist until the end of our world as we know it. As I stated a few lessons back, demons are also "orthodox" in their belief of Jesus. I'd also argue that they are "pre-millennial", which is a classic debate in Christianity about whether or not Jesus literally rules from the earth for a 1,000 years in the future or do we just all go to heaven. In Matthew's account of this same story, he says the demon says, "Have you come to torment me before the time"? My point is the time is the end of the present age when demons are sent to a "lake of fire" whatever that is, where they suffer for eternity.
 - c) My point of all of this is simply that demons believe that Jesus is God. They just refuse to honor Him as such. They want to be in charge of their own destiny just as most people don't want Jesus to be in charge of their own lives, but want to decide by themselves what is best for their lives.
 - d) So if this demon possessed man knew who Jesus was, why did he run up to Him? I think it's to show that he wasn't afraid of him in the sense that demons got the idea that it's not the time of the "Second Coming" yet. That's why Matthew's account states this demon asked Jesus if He was going to torment him before the "time". The "time" is the time of Jesus 2nd Coming, which is why I state that demons are "pre-millennial" in their view.
 - e) Let me also give a few words about the human who this demon possessed. Apparently he was such a strange person, that the local townsfolk tried to chain him up as stated in Verse 29, but apparently the demons gave this man the strength to break the chains. He also lived among the tombs which my guess is a way of saying to that tormented man, death is what awaits you fairly soon. Why did the demons pick him? Don't know. We do know it was a non-Jewish person. Demons can't embody believers. They mostly exist in places where Christians can't pray that much and they can pick on occultists.

- f) I am convinced that Christians can't be "engulfed" (if that's the right term) by demons as again we pray to much and they fear those who trust in Jesus. While demons do try to get us to be ineffective witnesses for Jesus, that's a lot different from being inside of us. Think of it this way, "if the Holy Spirit dwells within us, there is no room for demons to be there as well".
 - g) So how does one tell if a person is demon possessed? The text gives us some clues. First not all "crazy people" are demon possessed. Most are just mentally imbalanced. Clues to consider would be superhuman strength as this demon could break chains. Such people are also obsessed with death as this man lived in a graveyard. Another test is simply that it is impossible for demon-possessed people to sincerely say, "Jesus is God". (1st John 4:2.) The Roman Catholic tradition is to eliminate all other possibilities before assuming such possession. I've never encountered such a person. There are ministers I respect who have and they state it's usually obvious if one eliminates all other possibilities.
 - h) OK, enough of all of that. Back to this one strong man who greeted Jesus as the boat got to the other side of the lake. As far as the possessed man was concerned, all he knew was that whoever was inside of him often seized him to the point where the local townsfolk tried to chain him up but failed. Remember there were no mental institutions back then so to chain one up was the best they could do. It also shows the demons were localized in that this possessed man refused to leave town.
 - i) With all that said, it's time to read of Jesus reaction to all of this:
12. Verse 30: Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him.³¹ And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.
- a) My first thought is why would Jesus ask the name of the demon? Do all of them have names and why did Jesus ask his? Some argue that Jesus just wanted to know who it was he was really speaking to. Since Jesus is God, wouldn't He already know that name? I'd argue yes, but Jesus as human gave up the power (during that time) to see inside a person to see who was indwelling him. Therefore Jesus asked the name.
 - b) Let me now discuss the term "Legion". In that culture, a legion was a reference to a large army. A Roman legion of soldiers was about 6,000 men. In the last lesson, we dealt with a centurion who was in charge of 100 men. Here we have a whole army. So how can that many demons embody one person? The answer is they don't take up space the same way we take up real space. So why would this army want to be inside of a man to begin with? The short version is demon's goal is to delay as long as possible their ultimate fate when Jesus sentences them to hell. They do that by embodying people to encourage as many as possible not to turn to God. By embodying and scaring the people living across the Sea of Galilee, it would discourage the locals not to get involved with the Jewish nation.
 - c) Then we have Verse 31 that says the demons begged Jesus not to send them to hell yet. I don't believe demons know all things. Satan knew his bible, but like us, doesn't know the timing of Jesus Second Coming. My point is all the demons knew is that God was right in front of them and Jesus could give the order for them to be tormented forever, so they did not want their time on earth to end just yet. All of that leads us to Verse 32:
13. Verse 32: A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission.³³ 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.
- a) When I first really thought about this passage, my first thought was why would demons want to enter this herd of pigs if they were just going to drown immediately? Remember that demons are timeless so they themselves would not drown. Some argue that they just need to embody something and the pigs were the only other thing in site. Personally I see it as something more devious: The demons knew those pigs were important to the local economy, so to drown them would hurt the "wallets" of the locals. In other words, some are willing to follow Jesus, unless of course it costs them real money or their livelihoods.

- b) By the way if one ever travels to Israel, there is only one spot on the east side of this lake that has a steep cliff so one could see where this story took place. It's sort of interesting to me that those pigs have understanding about demons that all of them knew that whatever is happening is something they didn't want, and it caused them to run off this cliff. Again I understand that demons have been around since the world was created, so they didn't die, just the pigs did. So where did the demons go after that? Don't know. I just know they didn't want to be near Jesus, so off they went somewhere else.
 - c) The important part is the man who was demon possessed, was now cured.
14. Verse 34: When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside,³⁵ 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.³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.³⁷ 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.
- a) Now we get the "pig farmers" in the scene. All they knew was that the "weird naked guy" was there, talking to the strangers who just landed in the boat. They also saw their large herd of pigs (Mark 5:13 says there were 2,000 pigs) just drown in the lake. All the herders could do was go back to town to report what they saw. When the townsfolk heard all of this they came to Jesus and asked Him to leave. The big question is why:
 - i) Part of it was probably fear of the "naked weird guy". Like I said earlier, I think it has to do with their "wallets". Jesus just harmed their economy and they wanted him to leave. In that sense, the demons thought they did their job well so far. The issue was here was this stranger coming to town and we assume a big part of their economy just drowned in the sea. Therefore, they asked Jesus to leave before He did any more damage.
 - ii) Notice Jesus agreed to their demands and left. Why? Part of the answer is that Jesus came to focus on the Jewish nation primarily. Another reason is that Jesus didn't want to deal with an unruly mob that wanted him dead. Jesus understood that the way He was going to die was via the cross and not due to these guys.
 - b) With all that said, here comes the "kicker" in the next two verses, which is also the main point for us to consider about our own witness for Jesus:
15. Verse 38: The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying,³⁹ "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.
- a) One would think that if someone wanted to follow Jesus, He would say, "come along and see more marvelous things that I can do in your life and the lives of others". Yet Jesus did specifically say here to this formerly demon possessed man to go home and tell others in that town how Jesus had cured him. The reason is that once we accept the idea that Jesus is God, He wants us to go be a witness for Him to others around us. Also keep in mind the idea that Jesus was sent primarily to the Israelites at this point. For this non-Jewish person, Jesus just wanted him to spread the word about who He is and what He's done.
 - b) If the locals were still worried about their economic loss of the pigs, the formerly demon possessed man was now the antidote. It's like he became the witness like we can be to say in effect, yes it will cost us everything to follow Jesus, but the cost is worth it as He is God and our eternal rewards are far greater than any loss we suffer now to follow Him.
 - c) Before we get to the final story in this chapter, let me talk a little more about how all this affects us as Christians. The point is not to go around our communities trying to see who is and who isn't demon possessed. The point is our own encounter with Jesus should get us to change our whole outlook about life. Does Jesus still want us to earn a living? Yes of course. However, not at a point of turning from Him in order to do so. Jesus wants to guide us so we use our lives TO make that difference for Him. That's the point here.

16. Verse 40: Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.
- a) The final story in this chapter occurs when Jesus and His disciples return to Israel after this trip. Here we get two stories that are designed to be intertwined together for us to study. One story involved a local synagogue ruler, not the rabbi, but the man who was in charge of running that place, an administrator. The point is he had a 12-year old daughter who was dying. He knew Jesus did miracles and since he was back in that town, this man wanted Jesus to do a miracle for his daughter.
 - b) Mixed in with that story is another story of a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (same length of time as the age of the dying girl). Anyway, this woman had a menstrual cycle that didn't end. In Mark's account the text says this woman "suffered many things from many people" trying to get well (Mark 5:26). The point is she was desperate for this to end. Verse 44 here says that she touched the "edge of Jesus cloak". In that culture, one would often have embroidered on one's robe one's status on that edge. The closest I can come to describe it would be like an army officer would have their rank embroidered on their shoulder cuffs. I don't know if Jesus had anything embroidered on His clothing, but this woman understood that location on one's robe is associated with who He was.
 - c) There is an interesting theory about these two stories I'd love to share here: Some suggest that this woman was non-Jewish. That's because it was illegal for a woman with a flow of blood in that culture to be out in public. If that's true, here is Jesus on his way to help the daughter of a Jewish man first helping a Gentile woman get cured. It's a nice picture of Jesus leading us non-Jewish people to salvation before He returns in His Second Coming for the sake to rule over and from the Jewish nation. Whether or not this woman was or was not Jewish is not known. All we know is that Jesus helped this woman on His way to help the dying child of a synagogue leader. With that said, we can read on.
17. Verse 45: "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷ Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."
- a) Remember that as Jesus was walking through this town, hundreds or maybe thousands of people were mobbing Him. Yet He was aware of the fact somebody was healed when this woman touched His garment. So why did Jesus say this, and why should we care? That statement was made literally to help that woman overcome her shyness. Remember that she did this secretly as she probably knew it was against the Jewish law for her to be out in the open if she had this menstrual problem. (Reference Leviticus 15:25). Jesus wanted to say to her that her faith in Him cured her.
 - b) It was a teachable moment to show when we are willing to trust in Jesus, He will guide us through (not always instantly cure, but help us through) whatever it we have to deal with at that moment. That, is the lesson for you and me of that story: Trusting in Jesus with no other options gives Him a chance to show us that He's willing to work in our lives where nothing else works.
 - c) Does that mean I should not see a doctor for help? Of course not. It just means that whatever the situation we're dealing with, we say to God, "It's now Your problem to deal with as I can't solve it on my own. It's always when we are willing to let go that God does His best work in our lives. With that said, this story continues with "Part 2" in the next verse:

18. Verse 49: While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."
 - a) Here we get reintroduced to Jairus. This was the administrator of a local synagogue. He was probably among the crowd walking with Jesus. I can just hear him thinking, "Yes, we all get the point that this older women was healed by touching you, but I don't care! My only daughter is on the point of death and you (Jesus) are busy lecturing people about the fact that power went out of you. Now, please Jesus forgot them and help me!" It interests me to consider about all the requests we make of God, and rarely stop to think that He is working elsewhere. Of course I believe in a God that can be everywhere at once. At the same time, we easily forget that God's timing is always perfect, even if we're grumbling at the fact we think God isn't working fast enough for us.
 - b) As an example of that, here was Jesus lecturing the crowd about how He knew power was coming out of Him to heal this shy girl. At the same time a messenger told Jairus it's now too late to ask Jesus for help as his daughter is already dead. One can just sense the great disappointment Jairus must have felt when we think God is not working our way on our timing. However, as we'll about to read, Jairus is about to learn about God's timing.
19. Verse 50: Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."
 - a) John's loose translation: Jesus is always aware of all things and He will always work on His timing to bring Him glory through whatever we are dealing with in our lives. One of the greatest bible promises is that for believers (that's the key) all things do work out for God's glory. That means if seen in the right way, no matter how bad the disaster, there is good that comes out of that situation if seen the right way. (Based on Romans 8:28.)
 - b) While I'm lecturing us on dealing with tragedy, Jesus is lecturing Jairus to "just believe" as in the concept of trusting God in all situations, even dealing with the death of a loved one.
20. Verse 51: When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. ⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."
 - a) Let me quickly talk about who was and who wasn't allowed to watch the miracle that Jesus is about to perform. As for disciples, we'll read every now and then of Peter, James and John being the "inner circle" of the 12 disciples. The parents were also invited in to verify that it was a miracle and not some sort of trick. As for those who were left outside, in that culture, there were professional "mourners" who would wail for the dead. Since Jairus was the head of a synagogue and would hire such people regularly, I suspect they were already around the house knowing this moment might come. With that said, Jesus said to the "mourners", wait outside, it's not time for that ceremony just yet. Jesus gives the professional mourners a clue about what he's about to do saying she is only asleep.
 - b) Do I believe Jesus literally raised her from the dead? Of course. Then why did Jesus say she was asleep? It's a way of describing those who saved but died prior to Jesus being resurrected. The short version here is that Jesus was the first to enter heaven. Those who are saved prior to that are held in a "nice holding place" until that event. I'll explain that when we get to Luke Chapter 16.
 - c) So since raising someone from the dead is such a big miracle, why not invite everyone in the house to come see it? Part of the answer may be logistics as the room wasn't that big. The other answer comes back to the idea that Jesus is in charge and if these are the people who Jesus wanted to witness the event, we have to accept that idea.
 - d) In the meantime, time for the miracle itself:
21. Verse 53: They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.
 - a) Short version: Jesus raised here from the dead. Now the longer version:

- i) Notice Jesus refers to this girl as "My child". It's Jesus way of saying this girl is one of mine in the same way you and I as believers in God are one of His. It's amazing to think about the fact that Jesus has the power over life and death and at times He demonstrates that power in His ministry.
 - ii) The natural question is, "Why can't Jesus raise up my loved ones?" The answer is it is not His will to do so. Yes of course they are raised up to heaven, but miracles like this are given to show us that Jesus controls the power of life and death.
 - iii) Next question: Why did Jesus order to give her something to eat? I suppose it's to prove she was alive again and not some sort of ghost.
 - iv) Final question here: Why did Jesus give the order to keep quiet? The answer is it was hard enough as it was for Jesus to get around without being mobbed. If word got out that Jesus can raise people from the dead, now everyone is going to ask for someone they want to bring back. To state the obvious, they couldn't keep this to themselves and word got out, which is why Luke could record this story for us.
 - b) All of that leads back to you and me. This story shows us the power Jesus has and what power we can have as Christians. In effect anytime we lead someone to accept Jesus as being in charge of their life, we have "raised them from the dead" so in one sense this type of miracle does occur regularly in the world of Christianity. As to the specifics of healing, if it is God's will to demonstrate His power, some have been cured and even brought back from the dead in order to demonstrate His power in our lives. I can't explain why God chooses to heal one and let others suffer. I just accept the fact that God is in charge and it's His world to deal with as He pleases and not mine to do with as I please.
22. OK running long again. Let me wrap this up quickly: My main point of the stories told in this chapter is that it gives us wonderful examples of the "who, what, when and how" that we can use our lives to make a difference for Jesus. God will not always work the way He wants us to work, but He will work in our lives if we are willing to commit our lives to serving Him. We may not raise up someone from the dead, but we can bring people new life in Jesus as we each work to make that difference for Him in our worlds. On that note, let me end in prayer:
23. Heavenly Father, most of us realize our time on earth is limited and we realize the best use of that time is to make a difference for You. Guide us and make it obvious to us how it is You want us to use that time. Help us to understand the who, what, when's and why's of the purpose of our life, and how it is You want us to use it for Your glory. Help us to be willing to let us be used by You so that we can use our lives for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.