

Lesson 2 --

Piercing the Darkness

Opening Thoughts

The Very Words of God

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:10 - 12

Think About It

We can all identify places and segments of our culture in which Satan and his evil influences are particularly active. It can be much more difficult, however, for us to identify where the light of God is piercing the spiritual darkness in those arenas.

Which places or segments of culture seem so evil to you that you don't want anything to do with them? What would be your response if, just as he did when he took his disciples to visit the Decapolis, Jesus announced to you, "Today, that's exactly where I want you to be involved"?

DVD Teaching Notes

The Decapolis

Feeding the five thousand and the four thousand

The trip "across the sea"

The demon-possessed man

Jesus' call to confront evil

DVD Discussion

Look at the map on page 47. Note the area of the Decapolis in relationship to Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee. Also note the locations of Beth Shan and the Decapolis cities near the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

1. What were the origins (historical and cultural) of the people who lived in the Decapolis?



ISRAEL AND THE DECAPOLIS

How did the Jews view these people and why?

2. Why did Jesus sail to the Decapolis? What can we learn from his decision to take his disciples into the most pagan area of his world?
3. How do you think the disciples felt about going across the Sea of Galilee to "the other side"?

How seriously do we, as Christians, consider the message of these passages as we go about our daily lives?

What would change — for us individually, and in the world around us — if we were to take this message to heart and live in response to it?

2. Read the following passages and identify some of the ways in which Satan has tried to derail God's plans:

Esther 3:5 - 11, 13 - 14

Matthew 2:13 - 16

Matthew 4:1 - 11

Matthew 16:21 - 23

Luke 22:3 - 6

Small Group Bible Discovery and Discussion

Jesus Has Given Us Power to Boldly Confront Evil

We Christians sometimes choose to ignore the evil around us and hide in our "safe" communities and churches. At other times, we compromise with sin. God, however, calls those who follow him to boldly confront the power of evil wherever it is. He calls us to respond compassionately and appropriately to both personal evil — such as immorality, injustice, and hatred — and natural evil — such as death and disease.

1. What do Ephesians 6:12 and 1 John 5:19 reveal about the evil one's work in our world?

3. How can we know for sure that God's power is greater than Satan's power? (See Matthew 13:41 - 43; John 16:33; Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 10:4 - 5; 1 John 4:4, 5:4 - 5.)

To what extent do you believe God's power is at work in the lives of Christians today? For example, how much do we value, depend on, and use this power?

What, if anything, about your answer concerns you?

Memorize

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Matthew 4:23-25