

Study Guide
Series: The Gospel of the Nobodies
“The Demon Possessed”

Monday - Luke 8:22-56

The Sea of Galilee sat in a kind of geologic “bowl,” and was always subject to sudden, severe storms. Jesus calmed one of them and amazed his disciples. Yet he showed a different, even greater kind of power as he calmed the inner storms of an unstable man, healed a woman ailing for 12 years and gave life and hope back to a synagogue leader and his deathly ill child. Such a small boat, with only a sail or oars for power, must have seemed terribly inadequate to deal with the violent storm that day. What “storms” are you facing for which your human resources seem inadequate? How can you open yourself to Jesus’ power and love, letting him help bring you peace as you face those storms? Whether facing a violent, disturbed outcast, an influential yet frantic synagogue ruler, or a “smothering” crowd in which one fearful invalid had touched him in faith, Jesus maintained his calm self-possession. What enabled Jesus to resist fear in situations that triggered it in most people? Do you believe his quiet confidence created a more supportive, safe environment for others to change their lives for the better? How can you be more like Jesus?

Tuesday - Luke 9:1-27

The disciples had a prudent idea: “Send the crowd away so that they can go to the nearby villages and countryside and find lodging and food.” Jesus jolted them by replying, “YOU give them something to eat” (9:13). How did the story (cf. verse 16) show Jesus’ power flowing through people, rather than just directly meeting people’s needs? Does he still call us to be vehicles through whom his power flows? How did the story show our need to rely on Jesus’ power, not our own, to achieve God’s purposes? In what ways have you had to answer Jesus’ question: “What advantage do people have if they gain the whole world for themselves yet perish or lose their lives?” (verse 25) What choice(s) do you face that promise gain, yet might cost you your values, self-respect or honor? In what ways can you gain the strength and self-knowledge to make the right choices?

Wednesday - Luke 9:28-50

The drama of the scene was stunning: Jesus’ face and clothes flashed like lightning, Moses and Elijah appeared, and God’s presence manifested in a cloud overshadowed Peter, John and James. In the midst of it all, God’s voice said of Jesus, “This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!” Here’s a straightforward question for you to ponder: what does it mean for you to listen to Jesus? Are you willing to do it? Peter, John, and James probably expected Jesus to descend the mountain, call in the cavalry, and drive out the Roman oppressors! They couldn’t yet grasp that greatness in God’s kingdom often looks very different from the world’s idea of greatness. True greatness, as Jesus lived it, involved having childlike trust in God, healing the sick and broken, serving people’s needs, and suffering at human hands to save the world. How do you define greatness? In what specific ways do greatness, according to God, and greatness according to the world differ?

Thursday - Luke 9:51-10:24

From Luke 9:51 on, Jesus was purposefully going to Jerusalem. Like the Gospel of John, Luke wanted it to be clear that Jesus was not a victim who stumbled unknowingly into hostile

Jerusalem. Luke framed every event from 9:51 on in this light: Jesus was going to Jerusalem, where the cross awaited and Satan was falling. This was a march to victory, not defeat. Jesus had a vital talk with the seventy-two after their mission ended. They were thrilled with their outward, visible success, but Jesus re-directed their thoughts. In verse 10:20, how did he turn their eyes to the true basis for Christian joy and confidence, regardless of outward appearances? Some people find 9:57-62 (like Luke 8:19-21) troubling. Was Jesus opposed to family love and loyalty? No (cf. Luke 2:51-52). He used hyperbolic language to get people to check our priorities. Has loyalty to family, company, school or anything else ever tugged you in a different direction than your loyalty to God? If that ever happens in the future, which loyalty will you choose?

Friday - Luke 10:25-11:13

The Samaritan in the story didn't just offer casual roadside help. He put the injured man on "his own donkey" (meaning he walked), brought him to an inn, cared for him, paid two days wages and offered to pay more on his return if needed. How did Jesus' description of the Samaritan reflect God's vast generosity to us? How can knowing we've received God's generosity move us to be generous to our neighbors in ways we never would achieve out of our own goodness? After teaching them the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gave his disciples an insight into "answered prayer". He compared the "good gifts" parents give their children with God's gift of the Holy Spirit to all who ask. But, of course, often we're not asking for the Holy Spirit. What things are you praying for today? If God answers by giving you the Holy Spirit's presence, will you thank God for that or be upset that you didn't receive the other thing you asked for?

Saturday - Luke 11:14-54

People convinced that they were upright slandered Jesus for setting people free from conditions caused by evil! Yet they fixated on washing for ritual purity (not for hygiene). Jesus strongly disputed their sense that outward rituals matter more than inner candor and openness. He was kind, but not a doormat, and he bluntly challenged their claims to have a corner on righteousness. Sometimes our efforts to "clean up our life" don't work out, Jesus said in verses 24-26. It doesn't help much just to clear out the bad and to give up hurtful habits. What are some positive ways you have learned to allow God to fill your soul with divine purpose and love? Verses 34-35 urged us to examine how well our eyes—not just physical, but spiritual—are working. Jesus' enemies blinded themselves spiritually by refusing to consider any evidence that didn't fit what they wanted to be true. In what ways has God brought new sight to your mind, to your ways of thinking, over the last year?