

running of the pigs

You'll need:

- Bible
- DVD of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*
- paper
- pens
- matches
- steel trash can



Overview: Luke 8:26-39—We all have demons, but Jesus can heal us.

Once teenagers arrive, watch *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* from chapter 15 to 17 (“Knife in the Dark” to “Flight to the Ford”).

Say something like: **These scenes remind me of three truths: First, evil is real and is more terrifying than ringwraiths, Saruman, and orcs put together. Second, I’m more helpless than a hobbit when it comes to saving myself from evil. And third, there’s one who’s greater than Strider and Arwen who comes to my defense. Frodo might think the ringwraiths and Sauron are his greatest enemies. But his greatest foe is much closer—it’s the ring around his neck. Let’s watch another scene. Bilbo (former ring bearer) is saying farewell to his nephew, Frodo.**

Show chapter 24 from *The Lord of the Rings* (“Bilbo’s Gifts”).

Ask: What was going on with Bilbo when his face went crazy?

After a few kids respond, say: **In the movie, the ring isn’t really a possession. In fact, it possesses. It’s been said, “What you have, has you.” Beware of those things that you *must* have. Be careful whenever you hear yourself saying that you can’t live without something or somebody. Those are rings. Let’s meet a man who had many “rings” and had worn them for too long.**

Read aloud Luke 8:26-31.

Ask: Who can restate what’s going on in this passage?

Say something like: **Notice that before the demon-possessed man said anything, Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Jesus is a first-mover. He’s often working in our lives before we have any idea he’s there. Our responsibility as followers of Jesus is to pay attention to what he might be up to. Instead of spending our energy trying to get Jesus to do what we want, we pay attention to what Jesus wants and join him.**

Ask: What was the demon-possessed man’s life like? Why did the demons behave the way they did?

Read the rest of the passage in Luke 8:32-39 as kids follow along.

Ask: Why did Jesus allow the demons to go into the pigs? How do the pig-keepers respond? What happens to the demon-possessed man? How do the townspeople respond? Why does Jesus give these instructions to the healed man?

Ask: Do you believe in demons? Why or why not? What do you know about them?

Say something like: **The Bible makes it clear that demons are real. They’re messengers from Satan, and their mission is to kill, steal, and destroy your life. This man’s demon was called Legion. Let’s define demon possession this way: *Whenever we let a lie shape how we live or dominate how we engage the world around us, we’ve allowed a demon an opportunity to infiltrate our lives.***

Say something like: **In a very real sense, we’re all battling demons. We all have listened to lies and have accepted them as truth.**

Ask: What are some common lies you see people believing around you?

Hand out pens and paper. Say something like: **Let’s name some of our own demons—the lies we know are lies, but believe anyway. Let’s write them down as a step toward breaking their control over our lives. This might be difficult for some of you, so I’m available to talk with you any time about this. Sometimes we’ve believed things for so long that it’s hard to let go of their hold on us.**

Give kids time to write. Afterward, close by saying: **Just like Frodo did to the ring, I want to give us a chance to cast our “rings” into the fire. Place an empty steel trash can near the front of your meeting room, then place your paper in the can and light it on fire. Invite the others to follow your lead. Then pray together as you watch the lies burn. ■**