

MADMAN Spiritual Insights for Youth Pastors

- Explain what Callimachus means when he tells Tallis “Do not fight the Maenads, fight what drives the Maenads.” Who or what drives the Maenads? In what way can we see parallels today with people caught in serious sin? For example, are alcoholism, child abuse, or murder completely human in origin or is there something evil in the spirit world that influences the behavior?
- Citizens of Scythopolis thought the Day of Dionysus was a holiday for drunkenness and dancing, and admired the fashionable Maenads. They were not aware that the cult practiced child sacrifice and cannibalism on the evening after the holiday. In what ways may something similar be happening in our culture today with the interest in Wicca, New age/eastern religions, or Islam? Are these religions pure or corrupt--practiced for good or for evil purposes--and how can we know for sure? Does it matter if some members of a religion practice evil, but some members of it practice good? Can good and evil co-exist, or does one eventually dominate? Who defines what is good and what is evil?
- “Quandocumque impellunt, repelle” “When they push, you push back.” What is the significance of the slave Samir’s statement about fighting the spirits? What about his two truths: that you can choose, and that you cannot choose for another? What can we choose? What does this ability to choose have to do with the plastered-over place inside Kardus? Or with Arinna’s decision to save little Zagreus? Or with Polonus’ decision to stop resisting evil voices?
- Four major characters and two minor ones all had mothers who were cult-practicing Maenads: Kardus, Kes, Tallis, Zagreus, Tallis’ younger brother Zagreus, and Alexander the Great. What choices did they make to follow or to resist the evil influence of their families, and what were the consequences in their lives? Are we responsible for our parents’ poor choices? Are we doomed to follow them, or can we choose differently?
- Much of the novel revolves around education. The school of the Decaphiloi was meant to bring the cultured learning of Greece to the rural areas of Palestine. Tallis and the scholar Polonus rely on their scrolls for wisdom. Kardus, before his descent into evil, was a brilliant scholar and proud of his brilliance. Yet the scholars’ education blinded them to truth in their lives. The Decaphiloi did not see the corrupting influence of Portia; Polonus, with all his wisdom, as well as the shamans he contacted were unable to cure Kardus; Kardus’ pride led him to make terrible choices; Tallis, despite his years of study, was still helpless in the presence of evil. What is the novelist trying to say about the limitations of human wisdom and learning?
- Who is Across the Sea and why do the demons inside Kardus fear Him? Why does He ask Kardus’ name? Kardus is set free, but the herd of pigs drowns. Why might the villagers have been anxious to send the Healer away following this exorcism? Why does He not allow Kardus to follow Him? Finally, what is the significance of the now healed Kardus adding “solum Jesu” to Samir’s phrase? And why does Tallis request to have his scrolls about Dionysus tossed into the sea?