

A TOUCH:

I will begin by asking two questions.

How important is a touch.? Can you remember a special touch?

Some touches are comforting; they give peace and reassures us that all is well. I am with you; you are not alone. It may have been a difficult season in your life. An unfavorable report from your doctor or sad news of the death of a loved one and at that moment you were embraced by someone showing you that they care, you have their support. They will be there with you as you go through that season, you can lean on them. Those touches are both life changing and memorably.

Some touches are traumatizing. They could be a hateful touch which caused physical and emotional harm. Or it could be an inappropriate touch which causes fear, resentment, hate, un-forgiveness, discomfort, or withdrawal. This type of touch can also have both physical and emotional effects. Unfortunately, the emotional effects are more devastating and more difficult to overcome than the physical. Individuals who have had traumatic touches have difficulties with relationships and socializing.

As we go through our daily routine, we are surrounded by people in both groups. When we pray and ask the Lord to make us a blessing to someone today, He will place some of these individuals in our paths. When He does, we need to ask Him to guide us how to minister to them.

We will now turn our attention to four passages in the Bible, in three of these four we see Jesus touching others and in the other, we see someone touching Jesus. We will also learn the significance of each touch.

1. JESUS TOUCHED THE LEPER: Mark 1:40-45 ; A CLEANSING TOUCH:

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

The leper went to Jesus to be healed. That action was against the custom. Lepers were to practice social distance and declare that they were unclean. No one touched them. When he went to Jesus, Jesus changed both the custom and culture, He touched him and spoke healing into his life. He said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean." When Jesus spoke those words, immediately the leprosy left the man, and he was cleansed. The question is Who are those around us whom the culture and society consider to be unclean? They are asking to be made whole. The leper went to Jesus to be made clean. Jesus touches him

and spoke cleansing into his life, and he was cleansed. There are many among us who are unclean because of sin. Sin is as deadly as leprosy, it produces death. Sinners come in contact regularly, some are seeking to be cleanse as the one in this passage. Will you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to make you a winner of souls. That He will quicken you with compassion and boldness so that you will become a better witness and be able to lovingly touch them with His love. Will you intentionally touch them with your compassion and words? Jesus was moved with compassion, He touched him physically and spoke cleansing into their lives.

What can we learn from this lesson. (1) How we apply ourselves to Christ; Come to Him as the leper did: (a) He went with great Humility, the leper went beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him. It teaches us that those who would receive grace and mercy from Christ, must approach Him with humility and reverence. (2) We should have a firm belief in His power. He said, "If You will, You can make me whole" There were no doubts on his part that Jesus was able to heal him. His question was, will He heal him. When we pray, we should pray with such certainty. You can, You are able to do whatever we are asking for in your name according to your will Jesus told us that when we pray, we must believe. (Mark 11:24)

James puts it this way in James 1:6 "When you pray, you MUST believe and not doubt at all." The leper did not doubt, he said, You can make me whole. (3) What should we expect from Christ? We should expect that we receive according to our faith. The leper exercised his faith and it moved Jesus to compassionately touch him. He said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean." When Jesus spoke, immediately the leper was healed. Those who receive His mercy must obey His command. He commanded the leper to say nothing to

anyone, but he should go and show himself to the priest and offer what was required by the law when a leper was cleansed. (Leviticus 14:33-57) 33 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

34 When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession;

35 And he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house:

36 Then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest go into it to see the plague, that all that is in the house be not made unclean: and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house:

37 And he shall look on the plague, and, behold, if the plague be in the walls of the house with hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall;

38 Then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days:

39 And the priest shall come again the seventh day, and shall look: and, behold, if the plague be spread in the walls of the house;

40 Then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city:

41 And he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place:

42 And they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house.

43 And if the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken

away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered;

44 Then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean.

45 And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place.

46 Moreover he that goeth into the house all the while that it is shut up shall be unclean until the even.

47 And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes; and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes.

48 And if the priest shall come in, and look upon it, and, behold, the plague hath not spread in the house, after the house was plastered: then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed.

49 And he shall take to cleanse the house two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

50 And he shall kill the one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water:

51 And he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times:

52 And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet:

53 But he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house: and it shall be clean.

54 This is the law for all manner of plague of leprosy, and scall,

55 And for the leprosy of a garment, and of a house,

56 And for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot:

57 To teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean: this is the law of leprosy.

We are no longer under the law, however; when our prayers are answered, we should testify of God's grace and mercy. He must be given all the praises and the glory for what He did to and for us. They were required to take material things to the priest, who would examine them and declared that they were clean. What do we offer our Priest for cleansing us and making us whole? He expects us to live holy lives and to remain faithful to Him.

2. Jesus touched the coffin Luke 7:11-15: A COMPASSIONATE TOUCH:

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said,

Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

Jesus was moved with compassion for this widow. Her only son was dead. Her hope of existing was lost. She was destitute. She would not be able to support herself, her only

son was dead. What is strange, Jesus did not touch the woman or the dead son. He touches the coffin in which was her dead son, then He spoke these words to the dead son “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise” Those words were a command with authority. There is power in His word. In fact, His word is so powerful the dead heard and obeyed it. There may be some dead situations that we need to command to rise up in the name of Jesus. However, those dead situations may be inside of their masks, known as their coffins, before we speak the resurrection word of life, we must first touch those masks, and when we speak to the dead situations they must rise up in the name and authority of Jesus. Jesus touched the coffin and spoke to the dead who man. He stood up and started talking. His word is alive, and it gives life to those who hear it and obey.

3. JESUS TOUCHED THE BLIND MAN; Mark 8:22-25; A VISIONARY TOUCH:

22 “And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.”

This blind man was taken to Jesus to be healed. Jesus took him by the hand and led him out of the town. There are times that we need to be separated from some people or locations. Jesus could do no miracles in Nazareth because of unbelief. Mark 6:5. When

the ruler's daughter died, He put the people out of the house and shut the door because they were not open to the power of Jesus, then He told the girl to rise up. He spoke the word and dead child heard and obeyed. (. Mark 5:39-42)

Jesus took the man by the hand out of the town and touched him, and he regained his sight. There are times when we need to get away from the crowd and noise when we are ministering to individuals. Other times we need to move away from negative influences and find a neutral location, away from the familiar places and distraction. When praying for healing and deliverance we need to be surrounded by people of faith, who of the same mind. Too often believers become spectators instead of participants by joining in prayer when one is praying for the sick. Jesus took the man away from the city before He ministered to him. We must keep in mind Jesus, being God was able to heal the man in the city. He took him away from the city for our benefit, to teach us that there are times when we must move away from the distractions around us in order to be effective.

We have noticed that when we go on the Mission field, we see the manifestation of the move of the Spirit of God more than at certain assemblies of worship here in the US.

There are times when we need to move away from some people and at other times, we are more effective in different locations. Jesus touched the blind man's eye, and he was able to see. He saw both physically and spiritually. He touched him twice, the first time the man opened his eyes, he saw through his spiritual eyes. He said he saw men as trees walking. That could mean he saw things not as they were in the natural but in the Spirit. Verse twenty-four said "And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking." The second time Jesus touched his eyes he was able to see clearly, verse twenty-five. These verses tell us how we see; James 1:22-26; 1 Corinthians 13:12

4. JESUS WAS TOUCHED BY A WOMAN; Luke 8:43-48: A HEALING TOUCH:

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Most passages in the Bible record Jesus touching individuals and the effects. This is a little different, we will turn our attention to someone who touched Jesus. This woman represents many who have tried religion, relationships, work, service or substance to fill the void in their lives. They have tried for years but instead of getting better they are worse. They are bent over with guilt and shame. They stay away from gatherings because they consider themselves unfit to be connected with others because they are afraid of what others would think of them. They find themselves in a desperate place emotionally,

spiritually, financially and physically broken. However, they have not given up they still have hope and look to see if there is anything left for them to try.

They heard that a group of church people were gathering in their town and decided as a last resort to go incognito. Notice no mention of the woman's name was recorded; only a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years. Fearfully and timidly, they moved through the crowd to get to a place where they could touch the hem of the leader. She was so ashamed that she sprawled on the ground to get to the leader. The crowd was very thick and the only one who was aware of the touch was the leader. He turned around and asked, "who touched Me?" Those in the inner circle wanted to dismiss the touch by saying that there were many people there, it was natural for someone to touch Him. The Leader would not accept that because He felt the touch and it was not a casual touch but a meaningful one. He waited for the person to identify him or herself. Then a nervous woman who was bent over from the pain she had suffered over the many years presented herself falling at His feet and declared her reason for touching Him. She then added that immediately after touching Him she was healed. (Mark 5:25-34; Matt.9:20-22; Luke 8:41-56) This story is so important that all three writers of the synoptic gospels recorded it for us.

The woman in this passage was touched emotionally. She should not be in the public with others because her condition made her unclean. She was touched socially, because she was unable to have fellowship with others. She was touched financially. She spent all she had at the doctors that did not help her. In fact, the passage says, her condition was worse. She was touched physically, the burden of her illness caused her to be bent over. She had an illness that lasted twelve years. She had all these touches and more, yet none

satisfied her. She needed another touch. She needed a touch that would heal her and make her whole. She was going to do something about her next touch. This time she was going to do the touching. All the others were touches done to her. She believed by faith that she would be healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. She exercised her faith and pressed in, ignoring all the reasons why she should not be in the crowd and touched Jesus' clothes at the hem, signifying how low was her self-esteem, she felt unworthy, but she persisted and touch the hem of His garment; and was healed immediately.

The woman exercised her faith and was healed. She did not allow the crowd or custom to prevent her from getting close to Jesus to touch Him. She tried all the available help by going to the doctors; when they failed, she turns to Jesus. We can learn from her to never give up. We should be persistent and never allow the crowd or people's opinions to prevent us from getting to Jesus. Push through the crowd and don't sit back and wait but press in and get to Him.

There are times when we have to be the one to touch those around us. There are many that the Lord put in our paths who are sick emotionally, physically, financially, and socially, they are in the crowd and waiting for us to touch them with a word of encouragement or an embrace so that they may be healed. I have witnessed on more than one occasions where someone collapsed on another person's shoulder because that person was obedient to touch the other with an embrace. Will you Internationally reach out and touch those around you.?

I can remember a meaningful touch from a little girl in Guatemala. It was February 2000; I was on my first missionary trip, and we were at a school doing their devotion. While standing in the crowd, I felt a cold gentle touch on my hand. When I looked, a little girl

about 8 years old stood beside me and she looked up at me. She took hold of my hand with the intent of leading me to her home, because her mother was at home sick in bed. I learned that through one of our interpreters. Unfortunately, I could not go with her because of safety, and I could not be separated from the group. Through the interpreter I had to deny her request, I hoped that I prayed for the mother's healing, but I am not sure I did. Every time I remember the incident, I still feel that cold timid and gentle touch. We most often have been seeking a touch from Jesus or others, could we intentionally reach out and touch those around us? Your touch could bring healing to someone who is bent over through the sufferings of sin, shame, abuse, guilt, and loneliness.