

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, unforgiveness, 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 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 touched 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 cleansed as the one in this passage. Will you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to make you a winner of souls? Then 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) 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.

When we pray, we should pray with such certainty. You can, You are able to do whatever we are asking for. 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 to expect from Christ, 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) 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.

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 touched the coffin in which was her dead son, then He spoke to the dead son to these words “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise” Those words were a command with authority. 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 man. He stood up and started talking.

3. Jesus touch 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; then He told the girl to rise up. (Mark 5:39-42)

Jesus took the man by the hand out of the town and touched him and he regained his sight. 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 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 were not as though they were. 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 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 stanchd.

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 they 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.

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. 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 gospel 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. She was going to do something about her next touch. This time she was going to do the touching. 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 turned to Jesus. We can learn from her to never give up. Be

persistent, 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 must 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 International 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 you intentionally reach out and touch those around you? Your touch could bring healing to someone who is bent over through sufferings.