

The Touch of God

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

Here's a riddle for you: What is the body's largest organ? I'll give you a clue. It is also your oldest organ, the very first one developed while you were growing in your mother's womb. So what do you think? The heart? The brain? The answer may surprise you. It's your skin. Yes, our skin is actually an organ with a function much more vital to us than being merely a wrapper to hold our body together. Our skin receives and sends all the vital messages our body needs – physical messages of heat and cold, of danger and safety, of pain and pleasure, psychological messages of love and care.

Your other four senses (sight, hearing, smell, and taste) are located in specific parts of the body, but your sense of touch is found all over. And it's the palms of our hands and our fingertips that are the most densely packed with these sensitive tactile receptors – about 100 in each of your fingertips alone. So the act of touching, or being touched, signals more accurately than any of our other senses what the quality of our environment is, the quality of our contact, even the quality of our relationships. It not only provides protection against the dangerous aspects of the world around us, but it also provides us with the means of experiencing the wonders of this world as we are literally in contact with it. And so from the very beginning of our beginnings we have been wonderfully and fearfully made to be sensitive, skin-sensitive to all of God's creation. Is it any wonder then, that from the very beginning of our very beginnings, the simple act of tender, caring, human touch has carried with it the profound qualities of love, of nurture, security, compassion, affirmation and healing?

The sense of touch is so important that infants die without it. Dr. Ruth Rice has spent years studying the effect of loving touch on premature infants. She says, "The loving touch provides psychological benefits which have long term effects. Through touch, infants communicate with their environment. Intensive care babies especially need loving touch from their caregivers to form positive, trusting, loving relationships."

Her research documented these benefits: babies gain weight faster, have longer periods of quiet sleep, neurological growth and development is enhanced, temperature remains more stable, higher levels of blood oxygen, immune system is strengthened, higher scores on motor/mental development tests, infants cry less, are more relaxed and smile more, anxious parents become more confident, more opportunity for bonding and attachment, babies are frequently discharged earlier.

TOUCH (Webster's Dictionary) – the special sense by which pressure exerted on the skin is perceived; ALSO – sensation conveyed; forceful or emotional stirring; sensitivity; responsiveness

By far, the most important effects of touch are not its physical sensations but its emotional ones. That why we work the word in our language:

- No one can TOUCH his work.
- These are problems that TOUCH us all.
- She has a TOUCH of jealousy.
- I never TOUCHED him!
- Her remarks TOUCHED off a controversy.
- Reach out and TOUCH someone.
- She has just the right TOUCH.
- He's never lost his TOUCH.
- That song really TOUCHED me.

Isn't it sad then that one of the most common phrases said to children is "Don't touch!" I'm not saying it's not necessary sometimes, it's just sad – maybe because it seems to summarize our human existence!

Genesis 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden. God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. **(DON'T TOUCH!)**

Exodus 19:12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: **(DON'T TOUCH!)**

Leviticus 5:2 Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or a carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty. **(DON'T TOUCH!)**

(THERE ARE MANY OF THESE COMMANDMENTS IN LEVITICUS)

Leviticus 13:45-46 And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. **(DON'T TOUCH!)**

Leviticus 15:19 And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. **(DON'T TOUCH!)**

The “don’t touch” commandments are necessary for our children because they can hurt themselves or damage things. And God’s “don’t touch” commandments were necessary for the same reason. In fact, if Adam and Eve had just listened to ONE COMMAND, sin would never have entered the human race!

But God got tired of the distance between Him and His creation. The laws, the boundaries, the sacrifices, the commandments, the constant ceremonies, the priesthood, the temple veils, and the endless shed blood all said “YOU CAN’T TOUCH GOD – OR YOU WILL DIE!”

That’s why Job said in his troubles that if he only knew where he could find God, he would like to go to His throne and just talk to Him!

Job 23:3 Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat!

That’s the signature verse of the Old Testament – I can’t find God, I don’t know where He is, I can’t talk to Him, I can’t reach and touch Him!

But God did something about it!

Galatians 4:3-5 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

It was “DON’T TOUCH!” ... until Jesus came!

Matthew 8:15 Jesus touched her hand, and the fever left her.

Matthew 17:7 Jesus touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

Luke 22:51 Jesus touched his ear, and healed him.

Matthew 20:34 Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes, and immediately (they) received sight.

Luke 7:14 Jesus came and touched the (coffin) ... and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

Mark 10:13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them.

Mark 3:10 Jesus had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him.

Luke 6:19 And the whole multitude sought to touch Jesus: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

Mark 6:56 And whithersoever Jesus entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garments: and as many as touched him were made whole.

If Jesus were just a prophet, this wouldn’t have been any big deal. But do you see what was happening here? **GOD WAS TOUCHING PEOPLE – AND PEOPLE COULD TOUCH GOD!**

That’s why it was a big deal when Jesus healed the sick!

Isaiah 35:4-6 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

That’s why it was a big deal when Jesus walked on the water!

Job 9:8 Which along spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.

That’s why it was a big deal when Jesus raised the dead!

Ezekiel 37:13 And ye shall know I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.

Have you ever heard of leprosy? It was the AIDS epidemic of Jesus’ day. It was contagious, it was feared, it was fatal, and it carried a moral stigma. The worst damage done by leprosy was that victims completely lost their sense of touch. But the worst penalty of leprosy was that victims could never be touched again by anyone! Other diseases could be healed, but leprosy had to be cleansed.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had adopted a strategy of isolation – they disdained lepers, Gentiles, women, tax collectors and a host of others they decreed unworthy of their touch or God’s.

But Jesus was the most approachable human being that ever lived! The law said “don’t touch!” – but He touched anyway. Even while lepers were still unclean, still isolated, still ostracized, still ignored, still rejected, still shunned, still feared, still cast away ... Jesus reached out to touch them!

Matthew 8:3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Luke 5:13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

Mark 1:41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Remember the woman with the issue of blood? She had suffered for twelve long years, had tried every doctor, medicine and cure; had spent everything she had; and had grown worse in the process!

But worst of all, her problem made her unclean and shut her out of the Lord's house. No one could even touch her or they would be unclean!

The Greek words that tell her story let us know that this was a bad day to bother Jesus – the crowds thronged Him (Luke 8:45), choking, stifling, suffocating crowds. He's in the middle of trying to help a distraught father (Jairus) whose daughter is about to die. And no one in the crowd wants her to touch them! That's why she sneaks up from "behind" (Luke 8:44).

She was so determined to touch Jesus that she broke the Law to do it!
The crowd was pushed close to Jesus involuntarily, but this woman got close to Him voluntarily – and that made the difference for her!

Matthew 9:21 For she said within herself, if I may touch his garments, I shall be whole.

And look what happened as a result of one person touching Jesus!

Matthew 14:35-36 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all the country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

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