

Skin Hunger

Whether it's friends, neighbors, coworkers, spouses or anyone else, God calls us to healthy, balanced relationships, and it's important that both our hearts and minds are in the right place. Let's talk about five relationship dynamics that, when navigated well, will help us develop healthy relationships with one another.



INTRODUCTION

Philippians 2:5 tells us that we need to have the mindset of Christ toward all those with whom we have a relationship. Jesus expressed His love for others through His personal touch. Today we are studying the concept of touch and how it transforms others physically, emotionally, and mentally.

STARTER QUESTION

God, through His Word, is very specific and intentional about the importance of His touch in our lives. At some point in our lives, we all need the touch of Jesus. In what areas of your life do you need Jesus's touch? How do we experience His touch? What are some ways you can show others your care and concern through touch?

INTO THE WORD

1. Reread Matthew 8:1-4. First, consider the symbolism of Jesus coming "down from the mountain." God doesn't have to come down to our level, yet it's a constant theme in the bible and in our lives. Second, consider the example of life-giving touch when Jesus touches the leper. Discuss how these verses bring Philippians 2:5 to life. How would you describe the mindset of Jesus Christ and how can you apply these scriptures to your relationships to lift people up and pray for His will to be done?
2. Various types of touches, some good and some bad, are found throughout the New and Old Testaments. An example of what was meant as potentially a permissible touch was manipulated by the serpent through Eve in the Garden. Read closely Genesis 2:16-17 and Genesis 3:2-3 and discuss the key words "touch" and "eat" and discuss how twisting God's words made such a mess going forward. Why do you think it might have been okay to "touch" the fruit but definitely not "eat" the fruit? What are other examples of good touch versus bad touch that can be found in God's Word? What was the outcome each time?
3. Pastor David spent some time discussing the importance of maintaining sexual touch within the boundaries of marriage. I Corinthians 6:16-18 reminds us that sexual touch connects souls. The Bible contains many examples of how illicit activity had negative repercussions. This is a concept that is very counter to what our culture accepts, but God promises blessing when we obey His instruction. What are some promises God gives us in His Word that we can share with others on this topic? Refer to Psalm 85:8, Psalm 119:76, and Isaiah 55:3 as examples.

APPLICATION

4. Pastor David mentioned three meaningful touches: affection, communication, and giving. Coming out of over a year of pandemic and isolation for a lot of people, we can take this knowledge and ask God to direct us to offer healing touches to people in our various communities, in the name of Jesus. Many folks are likely suffering from skin hunger. What are some places and ways we may express meaningful touches to people who have been isolated?

5. Remember Pastor David's phrase, "We're all lepers." What does that really mean?
6. During seasons of skin hunger caused by loss, illnesses, or pandemic, what are some of the ways you cope? How has God provided for you during those times?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for Your touch, whether physical or spiritual. Like the leper Jesus healed, we ask not that our will be done - but Your will be done through us. Let us give to others the endless grace we experience from You. Help us mind our hearts and create life-giving power through proper touch. In Jesus's name we pray, amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

Question 1:

Pastor David specifically provided the example of Jesus touching lepers when healing them. Leprosy was a highly contagious disease in Jesus's day, and people were advised never to touch them. Jesus broke that barrier by laying his hands on those lepers, demonstrating His love and healing power.

In *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee (Matthew through Romans; page 47)* Dr. McGee writes:

"Notice that Jesus came from the heights to the very depths. Leprosy, symbolic of sin in the Bible, was considered incurable; leprosy was the most loathsome disease. And when this leper came to Jesus, he did not ask, 'Will You make me clean?' or 'Are You able to make me clean?' This leper had faith. He recognized the lordship of Christ, and on that basis said, 'If You will, You can make me clean.'"

Question 2:

In Genesis 2:17 God did NOT mention the word "touch." He just said do "not eat of it", however, Eve added the word "touch" in Genesis 3:3. Eve added to God's instruction to give herself a bit of leeway and to justify to herself what she was about to do.

And could it be because Adam and Eve were instructed to "tend" to the garden, therefore, in tending the garden they would have had to touch all the fruit. To NOT eat from that one tree was the only fruit tree they were to avoid eating.

Question 3:

While not all situations would be appropriate for actual "touching," any degree of physical effort, as Pastor David mentions, could be meaningful and life-altering for any number of people, especially those in assisted-living situations, elders who are homebound, students who need extra help having spent a year trying to Zoom their lessons, etc. Eye contact, a kind word, a pat on the back, a hug - all humans need contact. We should counter any efforts of the evil one to isolate and cause us to disassociate.

Question 4:

Suggested verses to reference include Matthew 11:28, Matthew 6:21, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 5:44, and James 2:18.

Question 5:

Leprosy is symbolic of sin in the Bible. So yes, *we're all lepers*. We all need to experience a loving, forgiving *touch*. If you've experienced the cleansing touch of Jesus, who do you know that could use the same?