

CHRISTIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL OF INDIA

CMJI



A Quarterly Journal of the Christian Medical Association of India

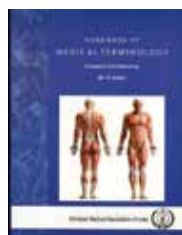
VOLUME 34 NUMBER 1: JANUARY - MARCH 2019

“Who Touched Me”?

Luke 8:45

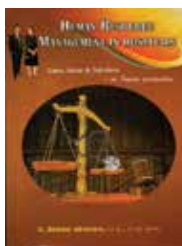


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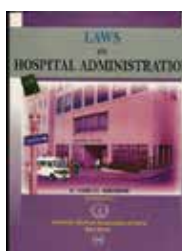
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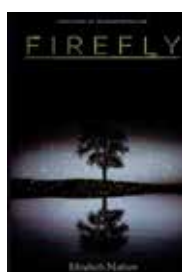


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Firefly, published by CMAI is an ode written by a mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Mathew, one of our staff in honour of her medical missionary son Dr. Shane Sam Mathew, who reached the eternal abode abruptly at the age of 25 in a fire that engulfed the staff quarters in Liberia in the year 2017. Dr. Shane was her first born and only son. The devastating experience of suddenly losing her child in a foreign land made her re-think about her faith, priorities and the purpose of life. Despite all the sorrows, through this book, she is trying to draw God's strength and grace and living with the hope that death is only a temporary separation and one day, she will meet her son in eternity. This book will challenge the young, console the grieved and uplift many-a-soul to understand and accept the sovereignty of the Almighty God. Rs 300

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending CMJI after a long gap. From the very beginning, I am receiving your magazine regularly. It is five years since I retired from the Lord's ministry. I had a stroke on 19th Jan 2005. Receiving your magazine gave me strength and spiritual and physical nourishment. Sincerely,

Rev. Kamkhosoi
Churachandpur, Manipur.

Respected Sir / Madam,

This is from the Library, Nazarene Nurses Training College, Washim, Maharashtra. We are Life Members of the Subscription CMJI. But in the year 2017 we haven't received the following issues: Vol. 32, No. 2, 3. In 2018 we haven't received any issues. So kindly send it at the earliest or let us know the reason for not sending it.

Sincerely,

Dr. Johnny K.K., Librarian
NNTC, RMH, Washim - 444505, MH

Letter from the Editor

We have received several letters such as the one above, regarding the non-receipt of CMJI. In 2018, we observed that many copies were lost in transit

and returned due to address change of the members.

Moreover, the cost of printing and mailing increased considerably compared to previous years. We cannot charge subscription under the Registrar of Publications, and we do not get any subsidies in newsprint or postal costs. Hence the Board of Management had to take a tough decision to limit the number of printed copies and to popularise the web edition of CMJI through our website www.cmai.org.

However we will send the Journal to the libraries, administration of the institution members and those life members who request for the journal.

Editor

LETTERS / ARTICLES FOR CMJI

We invite your views and opinions to make the CMJI interactive and vibrant. As you go through this and each issue of CMJI, we would like to know what comes to your mind. Is it provoking your thoughts? The next issue is on "Chronic Kidney Disease". Please share your thoughts with us. This may help someone else in the network and would definitely guide us in the editorial team. E-mail your responses to: cmai@cmai.org

Guidelines for Contributors

SPECIAL ARTICLES

CMAI welcomes original articles on any topic relevant to CMAI membership - no plagiarism please.

- Articles must be not more than 1500 words.
- All articles must preferably be submitted in soft copy format. The soft copy can be sent by e-mail; alternatively it can be sent in a CD by post. Authors may please mention the source of all references: for e.g. in case of journals: Binswanger, Hans and Shaidur Khandker (1995), 'The Impact of Formal Finance on the Rural Economy in India', Journal of Development Studies, 32(2), December. pp 234-62 and in case of Books; Rutherford, Stuart (1997): 'Informal Financial Services in Dhaka's Slums' Jeffrey Wood and Ifftah Sharif (eds), Who Needs Credit? Poverty and Finance in Bangladesh, Dhaka University Press, Dhaka.

- Articles submitted to CMAI should not have been simultaneously submitted to any other newspaper, journal or website for publication.
- Every effort is taken to process received articles at the earliest and these may be included in an issue where they are relevant.
- Articles accepted for publication can take up to six to eight months from the date of acceptance to appear in the CMJI. However, every effort is made to ensure early publication.
- The decision of the Editor is final and binding.

LETTERS

- Readers of CMJI are encouraged to send comments and suggestions (300-400 words) on published articles for the 'Letters to the Editor' column. All letters should have the writer's full name and postal address.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Authors are requested to provide full details for correspondence: postal and e-mail address and daytime phone numbers.
- Authors are requested to send the article in Microsoft Word format. Authors are encouraged to use UK English spellings.
- Contributors are requested to send articles that are complete in every respect, including references, as this facilitates quicker processing.
- All submissions will be acknowledged immediately on receipt with a reference number. Please quote this number when making enquiries.

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EDITORIAL

Jesus said, “Who touched me ?”- I did !

The Healing Ministry theme chosen for meditation and study this year is “Who Touched Me ?”. St Luke in his gospel (8:42-48) tells us of how a woman, severely burdened with menorrhagia for 12 years, steals through the crowd to touch Jesus’ cloak. She is healed. But Jesus asks : Who touched me? She confesses. And the healing is complete.

Imagine this woman, bleeding for 12 years. What anguish! And what liberation with one touch !

Touch is a powerful tool in human interaction. It can be positive and negative, comforting and threatening. The refusal to touch can be a sign of discrimination and marginalization. Why do we call irrationally sensitive people – “Touchy” ? On the other hand, we talk of people who “touched” our lives in some special way. For us in health care, touch is critical to healing. But today, we teach our children to differentiate between “good touch” and “bad touch”, to protect them from abuse. Touch is a multi-faceted idea.

In this issue, we will look at “**Touch**” from a range of angles. We invite you to think and reflect too, and to introspect on the role of “touch” in your life. The articles include

- Biblical reflections on the healing touch and the sensitivity of Jesus
- The power of Touch in Health Care, especially in times of loss and bereavement ; and diseases of discrimination, such as Leprosy and HIV.

- Stories of mentors and angels in disguise, that remind us in turn to recall those who have touched our lives

On the other hand, we also have articles on the other side of “touch”

- Untouchability and the Dalit perspective on touch : Who is willing to touch me?
- Negative Touch : In an age of abuse : Who touched me ?
- Teaching children to protect themselves ; to differentiate between good touch and bad touch.

A few years ago - my father was admitted in hospital. I must admit that being a patient’s relative is a very strenuous and difficult exercise. At times I just wished that I did not know what I knew. It was hard. But I had many dear friends who helped during that time – physically and emotionally. I thank God for each of them. If Jesus asked me the question “Who touched Me” – I can simply raise my hand and say, “I did”. He was so palpable, so real – in the ward and along the corridors of the hospital. In my desperation, I had the privilege of touching our Lord.

May God continue to touch our lives so that we may be transformed for His purposes . Go in peace!



Ms Mercy John

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ms Mercy John'.

Ms Mercy John

TRUE GREATNESS IS SHOWN IN HUMBLE SERVICE AND SELF-SACRIFICE

Who does not desire to be great? There would not be many human beings who do not want to achieve greatness and even strive to achieve greatness in their sphere of activity whether it be sports, entertainment, business, education and profession. Why do people wish to achieve greatness and even beat themselves for it? Greatness makes them stand out as superior to others of the human race and their names immortalised. It gives them power over others.



Mr. Kamal Baluja

However the standard with which the world measures greatness is not the same gauge that God uses. Today's theme spells out what God measures greatness with. And as with most things with God and His kingdom the standards are diagrammatically opposite to what the world applies. In God's Kingdom greatness is found in the twin factors of humble service and self-giving or sacrifice.

Humble service and self-sacrifice! Let us understand these two virtues closely – virtues or character traits that we have to cultivate if we have to grow spiritually and in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is humility? What does it mean to be humble? Humility is not that we carry on in life with an inferiority complex. With a whipped dog expression on our face. That is false humility or a pretense to be humble and such humility does not last long. At the first prick the balloon bursts.

If humility is not to carry an inferior feeling at the same time it also means an absence of a superiority complex i.e. that you are better than others. Humility is not thinking of yourself as any less but thinking less of yourself.

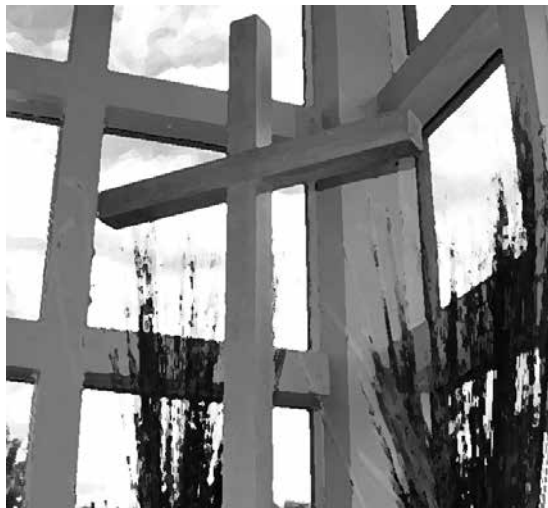
Michelangelo when he had painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel knew that he was an exceptional painter who had performed a great task but he also knew that someone else selected by God could have done the same or even a better job. This is humility.

Handel the composer of the epic symphony – Messiah – did not consider that He was not a great composer but knew that God could have well chosen another composer to write this symphony. That is humility.

Let me now give you a definition of humility. Humility is looking at yourself through the eyes of God. Then you will have a true measure of your greatness. But how do you do that? There is a way. Draw yourself up to your full height – meaning think of your biggest achievements and best traits or qualities. And then compare yourself to that figure on the Cross. You will find that you do not even reach the feet of that person. To look at yourself through the eyes of God is to compare yourself with His Son. You will find that not even your best deed, not even your best quality will be a patch on to what his Son is and what he has done.

It was his last night on earth and Jesus was troubled about something. He had taught a number of things to His disciples during the three years He was with them and very soon His mission was to be handed over to them. But there was a major lesson which the disciples seemed to have missed and that was important in

determining how the mission was to be carried forward and grow. They were still worldly in their leadership style and ambitions.



Jesus had told His disciples - **“You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great amongst you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave.”** But this seemed to have gone above their heads. Peter wanted to be the foremost amongst the disciples. John and James wanted the positions next to Jesus on either side. To villages which did not pay heed to their teachings they wanted that fire be hurled from heaven and blast them.

He was running out of time. Tomorrow was to be the big day for which He had come to earth. So how should He impart this rule of the Kingdom so that they can come around to what He wanted of them? He had to imprint it on their hearts so that it would remain an indelible impression.

Jesus does something dramatic. He takes off His outer clothing, wraps a towel around His waist and one by one washes His disciples' feet. The disciples were aghast. Peter as usual was the loudest in His protest. This was an act of a servant. How could their Master, their leader do such a lowly thing.

Then Jesus explains His action - **“Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”** Instead of giving a sermon or lecture to them He had visually imprinted the message on their minds by this one dramatic act. The sight of their Master kneeling at their feet they will never be able to forget nor hesitate to follow His example.

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be

exalted.” Strange but this is how it works in the Kingdom of God. The way up is down. Christian service is to be done with humility. Christian leaders are to be servants

with Jesus as their role model – the epitome of a servant leader. They should be ready to serve their followers and not lord it over them. Ready to do any menial task which they may expect their followers to do. Leading by serving is the way. This is the Christ way of service and this is where true greatness lies.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble and you will find rest for your souls.”

Incidentally even in the corporate or secular world there is now a premium put on humility as one of the essential traits to be found in persons who

are at the top management level. The concept of servant leader has caught on even in the business sector.

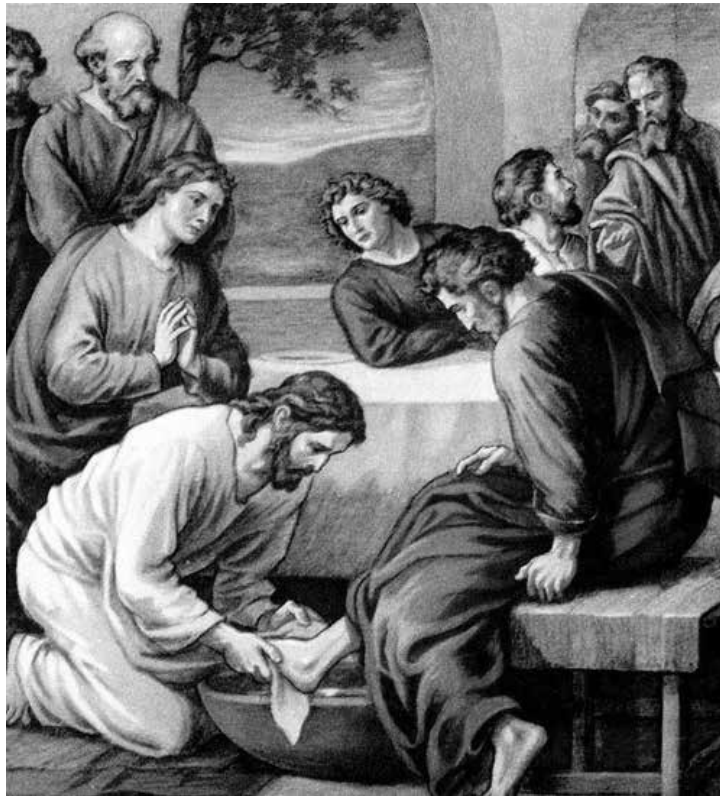
The other element of greatness, true greatness is self-sacrifice or self - giving. What does this mean or entail? Consider these words of Jesus to understand.

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Losing your life here is not literally to kill oneself or getting oneself killed but to lose the Self. Christian life is a pilgrimage where the pilgrim keeps losing his life by denying himself bit by bit, chip by chip and in the process finds life which is truly life – eternal life.

The key to Christian life is very much clear here – it is in dying we live. In losing ourselves we gain our real selves. Unless we die first God cannot create the new life in us -the eternal life which Jesus promised and gives. The new person cannot be created till the old person dies.

This Prayer of Francis of Assisi brings out this point beautifully.



Instead of giving a sermon or lecture to them he had visually imprinted the message on their minds by this one dramatic act.

DEVOTION

In the Gospels we find Jesus giving three commands concerning our relationship with others. The first we find as part of the Sermon on the Mount **“Do unto others what you would have them do to you.”**

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not seek so much to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

But dying can be painful. Let us not have any illusions. The old self is not easy to remove. We cling on to it hard. But die we must. Daily. Even if slowly but surely we must.

Self-sacrifice involves denial. Denial of your interests, your own ambitions, your aspirations, your habits, your gains, your pride, your ego for the sake of Christ and for the good of the others. This is the cost we have to pay as a disciple of Christ.

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Jesus had made it absolutely clear by this invitation what is means to be His disciple.

The cost of discipleship in a nutshell is to give up yourself.

St. Paul says in his letter – **“I am being poured out like a drink offering”**. Such was the extent of his self-sacrifice that he had emptied himself in his service of Christ.

In the Gospels we find Jesus giving three commands concerning our relationship with others. The first we find as part of the Sermon on the Mount **“Do unto others what you would have them do to you”** and He says that if you can do that you will be fulfilling the Law and Prophets.

The second - **“Love thy neighbour as yourself”** - Jesus explains is one of the two greatest commandments in the Law of Moses. Now people are expected to love themselves. Very few would not. Very few would work against their own interest. This is a higher form of love for it equates your love for others with your love for yourself.

The third is the ultimate command of love. In **John 13:34** Jesus says – **“A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** This is the highest form of love: agape – unconditional love.

Loving one another is not just enough. We have to love as Jesus did. And how did Jesus love us – by sacrificing Himself. The same form, the same essence of love is now required from us.

This is sacrificial love. Because it is other centric. It puts the other and his interest before one's own. This is where dying takes place, this is how we deny ourselves. By practicing the love of Christ. Again it must be mentioned – it is not easy. It is a very, very hard and a consuming process.

Yes, we can be great. And we should all strive for greatness. But not the greatness as the world defines. But eternal greatness – that is the true greatness in the eyes of God. And for this greatness to be seen in us its two important pillars are humility and self-sacrifice. As we increasingly grow in them we will grow in greatness. For these virtues were in Jesus and now must be seen in us.

Know, that to become like Christ is the true measure of our greatness. As St. Paul wonderfully puts it – **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**

Mr. Kamal Baluja is a Management Consultant working with Private Companies. He is a Lay Leader in St. James' Church, Delhi assisting in pastoral activities and is also the Secretary of the Pastorate Committee of the church. He has written a book on his Christian experience - "Reflections of a Pilgrim" published by ISPCK.

THE SENSITIVITY OF JESUS

LUKE 8: 42-48

Have you ever felt so exhausted that you couldn't go on? If so, ponder this little slice of life as told by Luke.

This story captured the imagination of the early church. Over the generations a large tradition arose around this story, including the name of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment. In the Greek church her name was Bernice; in the Latin church it was Veronica. Eusebius says that she was a Gentile from Caesarea Philippi and that when she returned home after her healing, she erected a statue of Jesus in her front yard. All these things amount to interesting speculation, but none of them are verifiable. They do, however, point out the hold this story had on the early church.

What we really have here is a miracle within a miracle. In all three accounts (Matthew 9, Mark 5, Luke 8), this miracle takes place within the context of the raising of Jairus' daughter. It happened like this. One day as Jesus was teaching in one of the villages along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, a man named Jairus came and begged Jesus to come to his house and heal his twelve-year-old daughter, who was desperately sick. As Jesus began to walk with Jairus toward his house, hundreds of people began to press in upon him, many of them no doubt hoping for their own cure, many others listening to his every word, and still others attracted by all the commotion.

Without a miracle, there was no hope

If you have ever been to the Holy Land, you know how narrow the streets can be. The scene must have been chaotic and confusing with Jairus on one side of Jesus tugging at his sleeve ("Hurry, Lord, my daughter is dying"), the disciples forming a moving wave like bodyguards



Dr. Ray Pritchard

for a celebrity, and hundreds of eager people pushing, milling, shouting, stretching out their arms to touch him as he passes by. Meanwhile, totally unnoticed, a frail, stooped, sickly woman pushes her way through the throng. Her face is partially covered so no one will recognize her. Her arms are thin; her hands shake as she stretches them toward Jesus. Now she is only a few feet away. Now he is passing right by her. No one notices as she reaches out to touch the blue and white tassel on the corner of his cloak.

Doctor, Doctor

In Mark's version of this story one detail is included that Luke omits. Mark 5:26 notes that this woman **"had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting**

better she grew worse." Why do you think Luke left that detail out? Probably because he was a physician and he didn't want to make his own profession look bad.

Actually, that verse doesn't imply that the doctors back then were all quacks. What it means is that they simply didn't have any effective treatments for this kind of chronic hemorrhaging. As a matter of fact, the Talmud lists several "cures" for this problem: (1) drinking a goblet of wine containing a powder composed of rubber, alum, and garden crocuses; (2) eating Persian onions cooked in wine administered with the words "Arise out

of your flow of blood"; (3) carrying the ash of an ostrich egg in a certain cloth. With "cures" like that, it's no wonder the woman wasn't getting any better.

The doctors had no answers

It's also no surprise that she had been to many doctors and had spent all her money. The Mishnah (the Jewish

Meanwhile, totally unnoticed, a frail, stooped, sickly woman pushes her way through the throng. Her face is partially covered so no one will recognize her.

FEATURE

oral commentary on the law) contains this frank opinion on doctors by one Rabbi Judah: “Ass-drivers are most of them wicked, camel-drivers are most of them proper folk, sailors are most of them saintly, but the best among physicians are destined for hell.”

The doctors simply could not help her. For twelve years she had suffered from this “issue of blood.” Her prognosis was grim. Without a miracle, there was no hope.

The “Living Dead”

But that wasn’t the worst of it. Leviticus 15:25-27 contains certain regulations for women with an uncontrollable flow of blood. The passage says that such women are to be considered unclean and defiled as long as the flow of blood continues. Furthermore, anyone who touched such a woman would himself become unclean and defiled. In a practical sense, this meant that this poor woman had become an outcast in her own village. G. Campbell Morgan describes her situation:

By the law of Moses this woman was not allowed to touch any human being, and no human being was allowed to touch her. The law demanded that a woman suffering in this way should be segregated. . . . For twelve years this woman had been excommunicated from the Temple and from the synagogue, from every religious place of assembly.... [She was] divorced from her husband, shut out from her family, ostracized by society, and treated as a pariah.

She had endured incurable illness, social isolation, constant pain, financial poverty, and personal humiliation. It is hard to imagine a more pitiful situation. In the words of one writer, she had been among the “living dead” for twelve long years. Now, at last, Jesus has come to her village.

Touching the Tassel

Now Jesus has come to her village. The word spreads like wildfire. “He’s here.” “Who’s here?” “Jesus, that man from Nazareth who heals the sick. He just came to town, and Jairus is talking to him.” With that, the poor woman makes the decision that somehow, somehow she must get through to see Jesus. If only she could touch him.

She was embarrassed and ashamed of her condition.

She did not speak to him because she was embarrassed and ashamed of her condition. After twelve years of public humiliation, she wouldn’t risk exposure and the taunts of

the crowd. She thought to simply touch him, receive her healing, and then slip away unnoticed. After so many years, she was used to coping with life that way.

Now she reaches out and touches Jesus. The older translations say that she touched the hem of his garment. The Greek word probably refers to one of the four tassels all Jewish men wore on their outer garments. Numbers 15:37-41 specified that tassels must be sewn on the four corners of the cloak and that each must contain a blue thread. The tassels were visual reminders to obey God’s commandments. No matter the design of the cloak, at least one of the tassels would always hang from the back of the wearer. It was this tassel that the woman touched as Jesus walked by.

Instantly Healed!

The text is very clear on what happened when she touched the tassel. Two different words are used. She was immediately (v. 44) and instantly (v. 47) healed. The text even specifies that at the moment she touched the tassel, the bleeding stopped.

It was a vast miracle. Jesus is going the other direction, Jairus tugging at him and talking and crying all at the same time. Meanwhile, the crowd is so tightly packed in the narrow alleyway that a person could hardly breathe, much less move. No one sees this poor woman off to the side, no one notices as she elbows her way to the center,

no one pays attention as she reaches out her hand, no one speaks to her and she speaks to no one.

Here comes Jesus! As he passes by, her hand brushes his tassel. Something like an electrical shock moves

from her fingers through her hand, up her arm, and into every part of her body. *Only it is not an electrical shock, but the infusion of some mighty power with which she was not familiar.* And in less time than it takes to tell it, her weary arteries, shrunken veins, diseased organs, withered muscles, and shattered nerves are filled with health and life and strength. The disastrous decay of twelve years is instantly halted and then reversed.

She is well again! Healthy again! Whole again!

“Who Touched Me?”

But just at that moment, Jesus stops, turns, and surveying the crowd asks, “Who touched me?” It seems to Peter and the other disciples like an absurd question. Hundreds



of people were milling around and he wants to know who touched him? *Everybody was touching him.* So many people were crowding around Jesus it could have been anyone. Besides, what difference does it make? A touch is a touch is a touch.

But that's not true. In the gospels there are three kinds of touches.

There are three kinds of touches.

First, there is the touch of *hostility*. That's the touch of the religious leaders when they beat Jesus at his trial.

Second, there is the touch of *curiosity*. That's the touch of the crowd milling around.

Third, there is the touch of *faith*. That's the touch of this poor woman. If the disciples couldn't tell the difference, no matter, Jesus could. He knew that someone had touched him in faith. He felt the faith in the passing brush of her fingers on his tassel.

Please note that he did not ask the question for his own benefit. *He knew before he turned who had touched him.* He's the Son of God, after all. He asked not for his sake, but for her sake and for the sake of the crowd.

He asked for her sake so that he could raise the level of her faith. If she went away without a further word, she might actually believe there was some magic power in his clothing. He wanted to assure her that it was her faith in him that made the difference. Furthermore, he wanted her to know that the healing would be permanent. Finally, he wanted to establish a personal relationship with her. For all those things to be accomplished, she needed to identify herself to Jesus and to the crowd.

He also asked "Who touched me?" for the sake of the crowd. So that Jairus would know what Jesus could do. So that the curious onlookers would see his power fully displayed. And perhaps most important, he wanted the crowd to know that he wasn't ashamed to be touched by the untouchable.

This woman had taken a real chance by touching Jesus. *According to the law, her touch could make Jesus unclean.* But because he was the Son of God, his power of healing overcame her uncleanness. But she did not know that when she touched him.

What crucial point this is. *Our Lord Jesus was not ashamed to be touched by the untouchable, and he was not embarrassed to be publicly identified with the outcasts*

of this world. He was at home with publicans and sinners, he ate supper with gluttons and drunkards, he welcomed the prostitutes, he touched the lepers and, in this story, he is not ashamed to be touched by an unclean person.

Jesus was not ashamed to be touched by the untouchable.

Not ashamed? No, not at all. Delighted, I think, and glad to identify himself with her. Delighted that she had the courage to reach out and glad that he could heal her. And he didn't care who knew about it. No, that's not strong enough. *He wanted the whole crowd to know what he had done.*

Why is this so important? Because with our Lord there are no "untouchable" people. In Jesus' eyes, everyone is touchable. Thank God, there are no hopeless cases with him.

"Go In Peace"

Our story is almost ended. When Jesus asks, "Who touched me?" the woman knows he is talking about her. Luke says that she came trembling and fell at Jesus' feet. *Then she publicly declared what Jesus had done for her and how she had been instantly healed.*

I imagine there was clapping and cheering all around and Jairus saying, "That's good. Now come on, Jesus, my little girl needs you."

But before they go on, Jesus looks at the woman and says, "**Daughter, your faith has healed you**" (v. 48). The word for daughter is unusual. It's the only time the gospels record Jesus using this particular word. It's a term of affectionate endearment, something like "Maiden," or "Little girl," or even "Sweetheart."

Then he said, "Go in peace," or literally, "Go into peace," meaning "Go from this place and walk in good health. You are healed physically and spiritually."

Two Enduring Pictures

Before we wrap up this message, let us focus on two enduring pictures that remain from this story. They are images of Jesus and of this woman that encourage us along the way.

The Sensitivity of Jesus

The most sensitive man in all history is Jesus Christ. No one ever cared about people like he did. No one ever gave of himself like he did. No one ever felt the pain of others like he did.

As he walked down a crowded street, hundreds of hands reached out to him. Yet he felt the thin, sickly hand of

**If she went away
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clothing.**

FEATURE

faith. He felt it! He felt her touch ... He stopped ... He turned ... He spoke to her. *He was not offended or angry with her.* Nor was he too busy or too tired to bother with her. Think of it. He whom all the forces of hell could not stop was diverted by the touch of a sickly hand! This woman did by her touch what Satan himself could not do. She stopped Jesus in his tracks.

This woman did what Satan could not do.

And he spoke to her as if she were the only person in the crowd. When he turned, it was just Jesus and her. No one else mattered.

He loves you as if there were only one person in the universe to love. He hears you as if you were the only one speaking to him. He attends to your needs as if yours were the only needs in the universe. What a Christ!

Anything that touches you, touches him. If it is pain, then he feels the pain. If it is sorrow, then he feels the sorrow. If it is rejection, then he feels the rejection. If it is loss, then he feels the loss. If it is failure, then he feels the failure. Whatever it is that hurts you, he feels it. If it touches you, it touches him. That's what the writer to the Hebrews meant when he said, **"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses"** (Hebrews 4:15). Thank God it is so. If it hurts us, it hurts him.

We do not have a stoic Christ. Nor do we have a preoccupied Christ who is too busy to notice our problems, or an unemotional Christ who runs the universe like some high-powered businessman. He is the sensitive Jesus who, as the hymn writer says, "feels our deepest woe."

The Power of Feeble Faith

This story also shows us the amazing power of feeble faith. She didn't have a huge amount of faith, and what she had was partially misdirected. But she had a mustard seed, and through it God moved the mountain of her illness.

We do not have a stoic Christ.

This story means that we don't have to agonize over the "correct" way to come to God. You don't have to worry about crossing all your "t's" or dotting all your "i's." *You don't have to know all about the Bible before you come*

to God and you don't have to have a degree in theology. You don't even have to be a member of a church. Those things are good, but they aren't the main thing. If you come to Jesus Christ in simple faith- even though your faith be as feeble as this woman's was-he will not turn you away.

Do you ever feel as if your problems keep you from coming to God? Do you ever feel so dirty and unclean that you think Jesus would not have anything to do with you? Do not despair. *Jesus is not offended by your problems.* He's

seen it all before. I say it again. He will not turn you away.

How simple it is to come to Christ! *Only a touch, and this woman is healed.* Not by her toiling, not by her promises to do better, not by an offer to do something for Jesus if he would do something for her. No deals here. She reached out a trembling hand and in an instant she was healed. It was not a long process. It happened so fast that it could only be called a miracle.

Coming to Christ is not difficult.

That's what feeble faith can do. *Coming to Christ is not difficult.* The hardest part is reaching out with the hand of faith. If you want to touch Jesus, all you have to do is reach out to him.

"Can I Be a Christian?"

How do you get to know Jesus Christ personally? There must be a desire in your heart, which there already is. And you are already reading the Bible, which is God's message to you about Jesus Christ. *So the good news is that you are not far from being a Christian right now!*

In order to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you must trust him as your Savior. Does that sound strange? I hope not. Already you know much about Jesus. You know that he worked many

miracles and helped many people. *But the most important thing to know about Jesus is that he died on the cross for your sins.* That is, when he died on the cross 2,000 years ago, he took your place. You should have died there. But he died in your place, as your substitute, and by his death he paid the price for all your sins.

That's a lot to think about, and you don't have to fully understand it (no one fully understands it), but you do

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If it is rejection,
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rejection. If it is
loss, then he feels
the loss. If it is
failure, then he
feels the failure.
Whatever it is that
hurts you, he feels
it. If it touches
you, it touches
him.**

have to believe it. That's what trusting is. It's believing, really believing in your heart that something is true. Trusting Jesus Christ means staking your life upon the fact that when he died on the cross, he really did pay the price for your sins and he really did take your place.

So, do you believe that Jesus Christ died for you? Are you willing to stake your life upon that fact? If you are ready to say yes, then you can be a Christian.

Let me give you a simple prayer to pray. This prayer is not magic. *You should only pray it if it expresses the real feeling of your heart.* But if it does, then you can pray this prayer:

Dear Lord, Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me. Thank you for taking all my sin away. I believe you are the Son of God and the Savior of the world. I gladly take you as my Savior. Come into my life and make me a Christian. Please help me to live a life that will be pleasing to you. Thank you for hearing this prayer. Amen.

Who could be stronger than Jesus himself?

Reach Out and Touch Him

That's the power of feeble faith when it is directed toward the right object. You don't have to have strong faith. You can have weak faith so long as it is resting upon a strong object. And who could be stronger than Jesus Christ himself?

How simple it is to come to Christ! Just a touch, that's all it takes. If you have the strength to stretch out your hand to him, his mighty power will flow into your life.

<https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/the-sensitivity-of-jesus/>

Edited due to space constraints - Editor

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THE POWER OF TOUCH IN HEALTH CARE

The power of touch in bringing healing, repair and restoration is perhaps best illustrated in the lives of people affected by leprosy. Leprosy is an ancient disease associated with stigma and discrimination based on age-old myths and misconceptions leading to separation and isolation, and an unwillingness to touch the affected individual. This kind of deep stigma causes disruption of lives of those affected and eventual social exclusion. As a result, people affected by leprosy experience displacement from their communities, loss of dignity and denial of rights.

Perhaps this is why touch is so important in a disease like leprosy. In Mark 1:41a (Deeply moved, Jesus put out His hand, touched him and said, "I want to. Be clean."), Jesus sets the example for all of us in healthcare professions.

We must realise that the spoken word of Jesus was very powerful. His spoken word forgave the sins of those who came to Him, calmed the storms He and His disciples were in, and healed many, even from a distance. People who touched even the hem of His garment were healed. Yet when it came to healing the person with leprosy, He broke all norms, turning current practices of the day on their heads by making it a point to stretch out His hand, touch the man with leprosy and heal him. With that one touch Jesus not only healed the man but also repaired his brokenness and restored him to his family, his community and most of all to a life of dignity. With that one touch he showed the man and everyone else around, that he valued him, and that to Jesus, his disease did not define him. When we emulate Him by touching those who are stigmatized and discriminated we partner with Him to be Repairers of broken lives and Restorers of dignity. Touch makes a huge difference in



Dr. Sunil Anand

I realized that a simple gesture of touch went a long way in showing those affected by leprosy I cared.

each person's journey towards healing. Dare we emulate that?

Early on in my 34 years of work with those affected by leprosy, I realized that a simple gesture of touch went a long way in showing those affected by leprosy I cared. I made it a point to extend my hand and touch my patients with leprosy in a real and caring way, not just for the purpose of a detached clinical examination.

I wanted my touch to convey to them that for me, their physical deformities or ulcers did not make a difference to how I viewed them, as equals, where the privilege to meet them was mine, because it was.

I believe in the transformative power of touch, because first of all, it transformed me. I saw myself feeling their pain and their loss, humbled that I could even play a small part in making it better for them. and it touched me in a way that I could never be the same again. It made me a better doctor and a better person. The transformative power

of touch led to a bonding, a breaking of barriers between two individuals. I hoped that their brief encounters with me, where I did not show hesitation or ever draw back from touching even the worst of cases, would bring about a sense of inclusion for those

who for long felt ostracized and excluded from normal relationships, which most of us seem to take so much for granted.

I have never regretted the decision I made early on to be intentional in touching those affected by leprosy. It changed me. I hope it changed something for them as well.

*Dr. Sunil Anand, Regional Director for Asia
American Leprosy Missions*

THE POWER OF TOUCH IN PAIN AND LOSS: TOUCH IN NURSING AND HEALTH CARE

Who Touched Me?

This is often a question of authority, assertiveness, aggression or even anger because as we all know touch is a very sensitive action as it invades a person's personal space. In the Biblical account of Jesus healing the woman who was ill for 12 long years (Luke 8:44-46) we come to know that the woman touched Jesus with the thought that she would remain invisible and unacknowledged but would receive the healing that she desperately needed.

However, Jesus thought otherwise. In contrary to the first statement that I made, Jesus asked the question out of concern and love because He knew that someone had touched Him with a touch of faith. The woman's touch of faith did not make her invisible and unacknowledged as she thought, because Jesus acknowledged her and her story became a timeless encouragement to everyone who needed the touch of Christ that heals and transforms.

A personal anecdote on touch

Touch has power to heal and comfort. We often hear people say that we, health professionals, have a healing touch. As a nurse, I often believed it too. On the other hand, we also come across people who complained that a health professional was very rough in handling them. One of my earliest memories of a nurse's touch was very unpleasant. I was five years old then, very ill and hospitalized for almost a month. I needed to be given an intravenous injection everyday for a week. I remember a kind doctor and a pleasant nurse, who usually gave the injection, but on one particular day, another nurse joined them and to my horror, she held my hands and legs with so tight that I yelled in pain, not from the injection but from the pressure that the nurse exerted to restrain me. Years later, I wondered why the nurse restrained me so tight to the point that my hands and legs hurt so bad, that I cannot forget even after many years. That memory often made me think before I touch patients, including children.



Ms. Ophelia Mary Kharmujai

Should my touch bring comfort in pain or will my touch become a source of pain? We need to contemplate on the power of touch that is in our hands as health professionals.

The technical aspect of touch

Touch is an important mode of non-verbal communication and it is perceived differently by different cultures and age groups. There are different types of touch. One type of touch is the therapeutic aspect of it, which is acknowledged as a

complementary therapy and includes therapeutic touch, healing touch and massage therapy. Another type is instrumental touch, which is touch during routine care of patients, while a third is expressive touch or intentional touch that is demonstrated when a patient is in pain or is grieving. (Schmidt, Teresa Cristina Gioia, & Silva, Maria Julia Paes da, 2013).

Therapeutic aspect of touch: The National Centre of Complementary and Integrative Therapy of the US, categorized Therapeutic Touch, Healing Touch and Massage Therapy are complementary therapies that requires training. As per the Therapeutic Touch International Association, Therapeutic Touch is a holistic, evidence-based practice that incorporates the intentional and compassionate use of universal energy to promote balance and well-being. It considers human beings as energy fields, where the energy field is freely flowing and balanced in good health, whereas, in disease states there is energy imbalance or disorder. Therapeutic Touch practitioners usually pass their hands in a rhythmic motion over a person's body from head to toe, front and back, holding them 2-6 inches from the skin, in order to assess the condition of the human energy field. Similarly, Healing Touch International describes Healing Touch as a form of energy therapy in which practitioners consciously move their hands in a heart-centered way to support and facilitate physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health.

ROLE OF TOUCH IN HEALTH CARE

**As Christians, we are called to be the light of the world
and channels of blessing to people around us. We need to
incorporate our calling as children of Light into our profession
and touch people with the love of Christ.**

However, Massage therapy involves rubbing soft tissue and muscle in order to make a person feel better. While this article is in no way intended to support or deny the efficacy of these therapies, there is evidence in literature that suggests that these touch therapies have positive outcomes on the health of a person.

Instrumental Touch: Every health care professional is familiar with this aspect of care; however, nurses are the ones whose almost every task involves touching a patient. As students, we were taught to handle patients gently and with care, with warm and clean hands. While touching a patient is almost inevitable in the health professions, it is very important to obtain consent before performing procedures that involves touch. Patients would also appreciate if they have a good rapport with nurses and are provided adequate information before procedures that involve touch (O'lynn, C., & Krautscheid, L., 2011). Patients should not be made to feel that their dignity is threatened because they are at the receiving end of care and therefore, have no say even when they feel uncomfortable.

Expressive or Intentional Touch: When a person is in pain or is grieving, touch offered with an intention to promote trust and communication is often appreciated as it gives them a sense of support, comfort and healing (McPherson, Christine & White, Lacie, 2015). While providing an expressive or intentional touch, nurses need to be able to perceive and respond to the individual appropriately with relevance to the context. However, sometimes nurses can experience emotional exhaustion while providing intentional touch as they need to invest their emotions into the situation (Pedrazza, M., Minuzzo, S., Berlanda, S., & Trifiletti, E., 2015).

Concluding reflections

Touch is indeed a healing tool in pain and loss. We cannot

practice health care without touch even in this high-tech era. Technology has invaded every aspect of health care but without a human component, health care will become cold and mechanical, where patients are merely statistics on a computer and not people with thoughts, feelings and stories to tell.

While we may have learnt the importance in our practice, we need to be reminded of what is even more significant. As Christians, we are called to be the light of the world and channels of blessing to people around us. We need to incorporate our calling as children of Light into our profession and touch people with the love of Christ. Through our communication, both verbal and non-verbal, hurt people around us should feel comfort and love. We should be living examples of the love of Christ and draw people to the Kingdom of God through our words and actions. Our lives can be channels of healing to those around us. Are we willing to be divine channels of healing and touch many lives around us?

Take my life and let it be, Consecrated Lord to thee

Take my hands and let them move, At the impulse of thy love

Take my life and let it be, Ever only all for Thee!

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JESUS CHRIST TOUCHED ME FOR SURE

A **miracle** is inexplicable by natural or scientific laws. The phrase "**medical miracle**" happens when a person makes an unexpected recovery despite a pessimistic prognosis. Yet often the phrase is used broadly to describe seemingly supernatural or paranormal healing or curing event such as faith healing.

It was yet the beginning of another normal day for me on December 10, 2007. I took my shoulder bag containing my lunchbox and water, leaving through the front door of our home 'His Grace' on my way to work at the Schieffelin Institute of Health Research & Training Centre, formerly known as SLRTC Karigiri. There was a sudden urge to throw up and I rushed to the washroom. I felt comfortable after I purged. My wife, a nurse, noticed a blood spell. Soon my wife and daughter (also a nurse) took me to the CMC Casualty within half an hour. After two days of observation, and a series of laboratory tests and gastroscopy, I was treated for suspected *helicobacter pylori* infection which could be treated with oral antibiotics. I felt relaxed and joined duty next day. No more symptoms occurred after that.

Two months later, my elder daughter, coerced me to go to Dr. B. S. Ramakrishna, the gastroenterologist for follow up. He did a gastroscopy to rule out any unfavourable condition in my stomach. He identified a spot inside my stomach, bleeding on touch. With my consent, a specimen was taken for biopsy. I reckoned it as a normal procedure. After a week, on a Sunday evening, I found my wife and daughter in uncontrollable tears. When enquired, both of them hugged me and cried.



Mr. Immanuel Asher

"Appa, you have cancer [poorly differentiated adenocarcinoma of the stomach].

I replied immediately: "As long as God is willing to keep me alive only, I can live; not even a minute more". And I added, "If the prognosis is death, then pray for good nursing care and a painless death."

Following that, someone advised me to read, the Bible portion II Kings Chapter 20 as many times as I can. It was the narrative of Hezekiah's illness and recovery. I meticulously followed the advice and developed a very strong faith and hope in Christ.

After two days of observation, and a series of laboratory tests and gastroscopy, I was treated for suspected *helicobacter pylori* infection which could be treated with oral antibiotics.

Following the diagnosis, I was taken to a very senior surgeon in CMC. After reviewing the biopsy report, he suggested an abdominal CT scan with contrast medium. As soon as I was taken into the CT room, I felt very cold. I shivered badly while the technician slowly placed me into the CT machine. I made an instant prayer: "My Lord Jesus Christ, show me a sign of cure as you did to King Hezekiah. At that very instant, the shivering stopped which was a clear sign. From then on, I could distinctly feel a gentle and healing finger touch across my abdomen. At that moment, I was 100% sure that cancer could never overpower me.

On viewing my CT scan film, my surgeon explained diagrammatically about the cancer-affected area and the surgery plan to remove the entire stomach [total gastrectomy] and anastomosing (cross-connecting) the oesophagus with the small intestine, following which I would be able to take only modified diet for the rest of my life.

I am a diabetic for the past 31 years and my sugar levels are always under control with oral drugs. Now, I am a completely cured cancer survivor without any further complication for 11 years, which I think is a record.

The surgery was planned on the third day; I requested the surgeon to delay it for a week to complete my teaching session [contact classes from Monday - Friday] for tutor trainees (Medical Laboratory Technology) and our institutional graduation ceremony planned on Saturday. I did not tell my proposed surgery to anyone except to Dr Mannam Ebenezer, the director of SLRTC Karigiri. I completed all my tasks without any tension or fear and got admitted by the following Monday, March 3, 2008. The same evening, a new surgeon visited me, and told me, "Mr Asher, I am Dr Sudhakar Chandran Bose. If it is God's will, I will perform the surgery in a different way; be in prayer." The next day I was operated. I had no fear at all right from the healing touch I received during my CT scanning. The fourth day after the surgery, I was shifted to the ward from the ICU. In the evening, Dr Sudhakar visited me and said cheerfully, "God is Great, Mr. Asher. I changed the method of surgery. Instead of a total gastrectomy, we have done subtotal gastrectomy with cholecystectomy (removal of the gall bladder) and provided a very small stomach pouch." We praised God His miracle on me.

Though I was scheduled for a review by the Oncology team, Dr Sudhakar permitted me to go home without much delay. Thus, I was spared from radiation therapy and chemotherapy. I returned home on March 15, fully recovered.

During the beginning of my post-surgery days, I could take only one-fourth of an Idli, that too with great difficulty, sometimes I choked if I took more which is termed as Post Gastrectomy Dumping Syndrome. During the last 11 years my stomach has regained its normal size. Now I am 70 years old, fully active, and cycling up to 10 kilometres a day. I am a diabetic for the past 31 years and my sugar levels are always under control with oral drugs. Now, I am a completely cured cancer survivor without any further complication for 11 years, which I think is a record.

On the 10th anniversary day of my surgery, I thanked Dr Sudhakar in an email, who is now in Saudi Arabia. In his reply, he wrote: "Not many people with a similar diagnosis lived more than two to five years with treatment."

My elder daughter was childless for 8 long years of marriage. After my surgery, she was gifted with two daughters, by "His Grace". My younger daughter is also blessed with a daughter, seven years after having a son. I wrote textbooks for CMAI Medical Records Technology students, all after the surgery. He touched me to extend my life for 11+ years now. I travel across the country for teaching CMAI students pursuing Diploma in Medical Record Technology. I had been to Papua New Guinea in the Pacific area for two months to establish one Medical Record Department at the Pacific International Hospital, Port Moresby. I could survive there with cooked rice and Australian Yogurt during my entire stay there.

I was reminded of the promise He gave to King Hezekiah. When God is with us, who can be against us? He is the divine potter, who breaks us, shapes us and builds us for a better tomorrow. He hath made everything beautiful in its time. *Ecclesiastes 3:11*.

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MARK 5: 21-43 WHO TOUCHED ME?

Background

The passage dealing with the healing of the hemorrhaging woman is the only place in the Gospels where another healing is purposefully and inextricably intertwined, viz., with the healing of Jairus' daughter. These two stories are reflective descriptions of each other. In structuralist terms they are absolute binaries i.e. involving two things. While on one hand we have a 12 year old girl who has lived a life of privilege within the centre and on the other is a woman suffering for twelve years with a disease that has pushed her outside boundaries. Mark is clearly drawing a correlation between the twelve years of comfort of the one at the center and the twelve years of suffering of the other at the margins. Let me place before you two stories - one that deals with the woman at the fringes, being healed; and the other with the news from Jairus' house screaming of death. Despite the contrast the healing of one outside boundaries also heralds the restoration of life even at the center.

Although neither woman is named, what we do know is that the two come from very diverse socio-economic and political locations. Jairus' daughter represents the *very center* of Jewish society in that Jairus is "one of the leaders of the synagogue," while the hemorrhaging woman represents the extreme periphery, i.e., those who are ritually unclean and the socially recluse.

The Old Testament and Uncleaness in Women

The two main causes of uncleaness in women in the OT are child bearing and



Rev. Anand Peacock

Jairus' daughter represents the *very center* of Jewish society in that Jairus is "one of the leaders of the synagogue," while the hemorrhaging woman represents the extreme periphery, i.e., those who are ritually unclean and the socially recluse.

menstruation and/or abnormal flow of blood. The reason for this is that it is only a woman that can have a flow of blood according to her biological make-up. During the above conditions, she is seen as unclean and must not be found in the congregation of the people or in the open. It is significant to note here that the Hebrew root word for menstruant *niddah* connotes 'set apart', 'cast out', 'banned', 'separated' and 'move away'. That was precisely the condition of the woman who touched Jesus.

In the book of Leviticus 12:1-8 after childbirth, a woman is seen as impure or unclean for certain days depending on the sex of the baby. If it happened to be a male child, it was normally for 40 days and 80 days for a girl child. Throughout this time, she was disallowed to participate in communal religious worship. This clearly implied a psychological effect on her because of her lack of interaction with other members of her community. It can be safely deduced that this could bring on depression because of the remoteness, which also has implications on one's wellbeing.

I imagine her life as one without physical contact or hugs from friends, children and parents, bereft of marital rights with its duties and privileges, full of labor because of the need to constantly wash everything clean, and as costly because of the financial implications of a persistent illness. She is probably without income, because she is unemployable. In a culture dominated by the shame the woman is faced with awkwardness and exclusion.

PERSONAL STORIES

The Woman as seen in Mark

All these factors lead to this reasonable conclusion: Mark introduces this woman as friendless, secluded, impoverished, quite likely anemic, and possibly dying. Her condition appears hopeless and she is in a hopeless state of affairs. Most would think that she is better off dead. Yet Mark interjects hope!

This woman has *heard* stories of Jesus (Mk 5:27)! Prior to this incident, Mark records that Jesus had commanded an evil spirit to leave a man (Mk 1:21–28), healed Simon's mother-in-law by taking her hand (Mk 1:30), reached out his hand and touched a leper (Mk 1:40–45), told a paralytic his sins are forgiven and commanded him to take up his mat (Mk 2:1–12), and ordered the legion of spirits in the man who lived amongst the tombs in the region of Gerasenes to leave him (Mk 5:1–20). Reading Mark's gospel in the order presented, it is reasonable to assume that the woman has heard these or other stories that present Jesus favorably. Based on this, she persuades herself that if she touches Jesus' clothes, she will be healed

Commentator Barclay comments that the woman came to Jesus as a last resort, having tried every other cure that the world could offer. This is a total transfer of attention from physicians to Jesus, making a complete turn with her emotions. She turned with her knowledge, which might be from previous feat of healing she heard Jesus performed.

Why Jesus asked the question 'who touched me'?

Jesus raised the question: who touched his garment, in order to ascertain a personal connection with the healed; in addition, Jesus being who He is, knew at the instant, the woman was healed and that power does not leave him without his will and knowledge, which is consistent with His healing ministry. After Jesus' questions and the disciples' rebuff of Him, Jesus looked around hoping to identify who touched Him in faith. Jesus was not looking for the person but for the woman who had done it. He, by now, knew not only the sex but also the history, the faith and the intention of the one who had already been consciously healed.

What depicted Jesus' show of care was resident in the fact that Jesus desired to bestow upon the woman a greater blessing than mere healing. He would not permit her, in a sense, to steal a blessing, but would provide it for her openly, and before all and, therefore, He asked for who touched Him, to come out openly. She alleged that Jesus was able to cure people, but she did not know the strength of His love and care. In contemporary understanding, caring could turn around hopeless situations. It is on record that delinquent persons have been known to mend their ways when care and affection are showered on them unconditionally. This is what Jesus did in this context. Jesus refers to the woman as daughter. This is an intimate appellation; it implies that Jesus enthusiastically welcomed her into the family of God which He represents on earth. In addition to this, He conserved her healing by telling her to go in peace as her faith has made her whole. Scholars believed that this form of leave-taking go in peace, is customary of Jewish tradition. Jesus' utterance for her to go in peace sets His royal seal of perfection upon it.

Questions to ponder upon

A few things come out of this passage. Jesus stopped and turned to look at the woman (just as Moses turned to see the burning bush) in the same way he stopped to heal Bartimaeus and responded in like fashion, *your faith has healed you*. In other words they both were probably unaware that the substance of their faith was enough to heal them. It is similar to that of a mustard seed, denoting the quality of faith and not the quantum of it. When the characteristics she exhibits

– desperation, hope, selfishness, pushiness, courage, persistence, and self-interest – are directed at Jesus, they constitute faith. Jesus both defines her action and attitude as faith and acknowledges her faith as directed at Him.

Second, what would it take for us to grab Jesus' attention? What would it take to have Him stop and turn around to look at our own need? Peter didn't seem to get it and seemed put off saying there are so many crowding you and yet you ask such a question. Jesus recognized this was a different touch from those thronging Him. Is it possible that the disciples who were always with Him

It is similar to that of a mustard seed, denoting the quality of faith and not the quantum of it. When the characteristics she exhibits – desperation, hope, selfishness, pushiness, courage, persistence, and self-interest – are directed at Jesus, they constitute faith.

**Once you put your hand on the plough, do not look back.
It's all up ahead now. Face it like a man and take a beating
if it comes, but your team needs you tonight. They cannot
cross the line without you.**

understood Him the least? Maybe those who surround us the most also understand us the least. The woman also is portrayed as a successful disciple, and one much more successful than the twelve male disciples at this point in the gospel of Mark. How is this so? Firstly, she models the kind of discipleship Jesus preaches: persistence, risk-taking, suffering, confession and overcoming fear. The woman serves as a model of faith. She responds to Jesus' message in a more positive way than His closest associates do who are still stinging from Jesus' rebuke to them in the boat (Mk 4:40). Secondly, she believes what she hears about Jesus and applies it to herself, believing she can be healed. Thirdly, like the male disciples, she follows Jesus, but in a way tailored to her. Her life and story serve as an encouragement to the neighborhood to whom Mark writes.

A memory

On these lines, I want take you back to a normal University teaching day in the beautiful country of Malawi, Africa where I taught. It was an important day as the basketball finals were due that evening in the Macon gymnasium, the best athletes from the city would turn up and the star basketball player was absent from chapel that morning. We entered class and at 8 a.m. I noticed Geoff, the finest competitor around the campus missing among the 75 odd students in class. I sent for him, but heard he refused to come to class nor play that evening for the finals. It was a lose-lose situation, without the regular three pointer, the College had no chance of winning the basketball finals. After class, I landed up at his room, saw him lying, brooding and asked him to get ready and meet me outside. I didn't ask why he missed chapel or class, I asked instead what was so heavy on him.

He was raised by his mom, as his alcoholic father left his mom when he was a kid. His younger sibling brother was a no-good waster and his mom had all hopes on Geoff. If he didn't perform in University and get himself a scholarship she would have to have him back home doing the dishes as she couldn't afford his education.

The pressure of performing at academics, the pressure of being the star player in the team all got to him and he refused to play that evening. I told him "If you have been given much, much will be asked of you. The team relies on you. Just as much as you need them, they need you to perform the same way your mom needs you to stand up for her in College. There's no turning back. Don't let the pressures of life let you give up and turn away. Once you put your hand on the plough, do not look back. It's all up ahead now. Face it like a man and take a beating if it comes, but your team needs you tonight. They cannot cross the line without you".

That evening Geoff, that tall, muscular, manly young man began the game with his classic three pointer. His captain turned to me from the court and smiled and knew what worked. They won the finals clean: because a young man resolved that once he gave his life to God, nothing could stop him from achieving what God has in store. He came to himself like the Prodigal son who wallowed in the pig sty and turned around, realizing that was not the life he was meant to have. He came to himself.

I want to close by quoting the words of the song He touched me by the Gaither vocal band which fits in very well with our theme.

He touched me, oh He touched me,
And oh the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened and now I know,
He touched me and made me whole

Rev. Anand Peacock is pastor of a 200 year old Baptist Church in Kolkata (Circular Road Baptist Church) at the moment and lives with his wife and daughter on the premises. His wife is a cancer specialist and 12-year-old daughter studies in a school nearby.

GOD IS STILL WORKING ON US – HE TOUCHED ME

It was one of those usual busy mornings as I rushed through the rounds in Broadwell Christian Hospital, Fatehpur, UP. I was at my last ward patient, my mobile rang – one of the pastors in Fatehpur was on the line.

“Doctorji, there is a 15-year old boy who has been unconscious for the past 7 days. This has been happening for the past 10 years, almost monthly in spite of various treatments. Do you think it is all right to bring this boy over?, the pastor asked.

Within an hour, he was wheeled in on a stretcher. He looked like he was in a deep restful sleep. His vital signs were absolutely stable but Glasgow Coma Scale was 3/15. It just did not make sense. I decided that either the guy was an excellent actor or his problem was more spiritual than physical.

“Looks like we ought to take him to the DTC hall and I can call the other pastors too. Does not look like his problem is related to my speciality.” I told Pastorji with a chuckle.

Pastorji nodded.

We were very blessed to have a wonderful bonding among the pastors and leaders of Fatehpur who came together at the hospital as often as possible primarily for prayer and fellowship.

And so within another half hour, the young man was lying on the floor of the DTC hall with around eight pastors, my wife Sunitha, my mother-in-law and myself praying over the boy, while his parents sat a few meters away. After 45 minutes, Sunitha and I decided to leave



Dr. Sujith Varghese Thomas

the pastors to continue praying and get back to the crowded OPD.

As I was getting up from the floor, my hand which was holding the boy's hand, sensed a strong pull. To my amazement, the boy who was till then immobile, was flinging his arms wildly and swearing in a husky voice.

As ten men tried to pin him down the husky voice shouted, “I will not go. This family has been under my authority for generations.”

Suddenly, the boy fell down and opened his eyes. He indicated that he was thirsty and gulped an entire two litre bottle of water. He appeared a bit disoriented and considering he had not had anything orally for days, I decided to start an intravenous infusion of dextrose-saline in the same hall. By evening, I was told that he had gone home fully well. I praised God for the miraculous deliverance that I had witnessed that morning.

Two years later, I was again rushing through the morning rounds. I was in a conversation with the brother of a lady who was admitted the night before. I explained her situation to him. After listening intently to my comments, he asked with a smile.

“Sir, do you remember me?”.

I shook my head.

“Do you remember the boy who came here two years back with episodes of prolonged unconsciousness? Many of you prayed over him and he was healed that day. I am that boy”.

Memories of that unforgettable day swept through me.

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"My poor parents spent lakhs on witchcraft and medicines. I knew I was a burden to them. I could never understand what used to happen to me. But that day, when all of you prayed over me and I woke up, I could sense that some evil power had left me. That day, my entire family believed in Jesus and in the power of His blood. We started a satsang in our house and as I read the Bible, God himself started teaching me. Soon, I got a job in the Cotton Mill factory and I became the main bread winner of my family. Till this day, we have never again been troubled by those demonic powers. Today, our whole family experience the peace, joy and salvation that Jesus alone can give."

I could not control my tears. Not only was I blessed to witness God's amazing touch and power deliver this young man from a demonic force that controlled him and his family for generations, but I was also blessed to meet him two years later to receive God's touch through his own testimony.

In Luke 3, a woman touched Jesus and power flowed into her and healed her. This incident assured me that 2000 years later things had not changed at all. God is yearning to touch those who are in need of His touch and is searching for His children to be the vessels of His power to move out into people in need.

God also touched Jacob's hip as he wrestled with God. That touch dislocated Jacob's hip such that he limped for the rest of his life. But that touch also changed his name from 'deceiver' to 'Israel'.

When we started work at Fatehpur in UP, the local people were rude, insensitive and unwilling to trust us. They openly accused us of having corrupt motives to loot their money. This shocked and frustrated us. We wanted to leave and felt that these mean people did not deserve our hard work and sacrifice. Since Sunitha and I were the only doctors there, we spent most nights at the hospital.

One night after about a week of poor sleep, a lady was admitted for delivery. Just as I had fallen asleep around 11.00 pm, the nurse informed me about the foetus in distress. With the little strength left, I picked myself up and talked to the relatives about the need of urgent Caesarean.

Their response blew me apart, "They just want to get money and that is why they are suggesting operation. The baby will come out normally."

Even though, my blood was boiling, I controlled myself and patiently explained to the male relatives about the risks involved. I gave them an option to sign a high risk consent for the baby, if they were not willing to go with my advice. I gave them 10 minutes to make a decision and went home to catch up on some sleep till the patient was shifted into theatre. At around 1.00 am, I jumped out of bed realising that the call had not come. I called the labour room to find out that the male relatives were still delaying the decision and they had not signed the consent either.

That was it! I could not take it anymore. I ran to the labour room. To make things worse, I found the male relatives chatting on a bed outside the labour room. All fountains from the deep burst. I yelled and screamed at them. I told them that I wouldn't deliver the patient here. They had tested my patience to the limits. They tried to counter me but I shut them up. I let lose my pent up anger. I told the billing clerks to refund their advance and told them to leave immediately. After they left, the ward became peaceful and I had sound sleep too. Two days later, as I was doing my night rounds, a familiar face walked towards me. I could not place him. He came close and said, "Doctorsaab, we have heard so much about the mission hospital. We have heard that doctors here are well behaved and treat patients with kindness and respect because they believe in Jesus. But two days back, the way you behaved was far from it. We, as patients, are worried and find it difficult to make decisions. It was your

duty to help us to make a decision. We would have got her operated but you were not even willing to listen to us. You threw us out of the hospital and good that you did it. My wife delivered normally in another nursing home and both mother and child are fine. I will never come to this hospital again."

As I listened to the man's words, I wanted to retaliate angrily but suddenly deep down my heart, I heard that soft small voice, "You let me down. Don't you dare say anything to him. I sent him to you to make you realize what you seem to be doing in my name." I kept quiet. As I watched him walk away, I felt like a balloon that suddenly burst. I had reached the limit of my ever increasing resentment towards the people there. I ran into a room nearby and wept bitterly. I had left my family to come to

When we started work at Fatehpur in UP, the local people were rude, insensitive and unwilling to trust us. They openly accused us of having corrupt motives to loot their money. This shocked and frustrated us.

PERSONAL STORIES



Uttar Pradesh to be a witness for Christ but instead what had I made myself into?. I was anything but a witness for Christ.

As I wept inconsolably, I heard that soft voice again, ***“Sujith, I did not bring you to Fatehpur to change the people of Fatehpur but to change you. I did not bring you to Fatehpur because I love you but because I love them. They have not tasted my grace as you have tasted and I have brought you here so that my grace and love would overflow through you into them. They are what they are because they are broken and my heart is broken to see their broken state. You cannot reach out to a broken world without understanding the broken heart of God. You cannot reach out to a broken world without being broken by God. You cannot reach out to a broken world without entering into the brokenness of the world around.”***

That was a turning point in my life in Fatehpur and my life was changed. In very painful ways, God had shown me His heart and taught me one of the most important lessons. His power touched me just the way he touched

Jacob on that hip joint. I was dislocated but I knew I had experienced God. Since then, I experienced God teaching me how to love those that you find difficult to love. I am still in that journey. Each of us at different points in our life time are touched by stories and testimonies. In reality, it is not those stories that touch us but Our Creator who is working on us daily, touching deep into our hearts to change us into His likeness. Let us yearn for more of these touches from our Master and Creator who knows what He is doing in our lives as He prepares us to be channels of His blessing and power and grace.

Dr. Sujith Varghese Thomas is a surgeon who along with his wife, Dr. Sunitha Varghese, was working at Broadwell Christian Hospital, Fatehpur for the past 11 years. They are presently at Kotagiri Medical Fellowship Hospital on a 2 year leave.

BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE!!

The first thought that came to my mind, was this series 'Touched by an angel', where people were ministered to by angels. Most of them realized only later that they were 'touched by an angel'. It is so with all of us, most times. There are times when the going gets tough we wonder why we are in certain situations or with certain people, but it is only in retrospect that we understand God's sovereign wisdom in placing us there. God doesn't always give us the people we want but He gives us the people we need, to build us, mentor us, love us and rebuke us. The two kinds of people in my life are those who've increased my faith and those that have mentored and built me.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights...James 1: 17.

Even as I embark on this journey of 'counting my blessings', do join along and hope you're blessed.

It was the summer vacation, 2000. My parents were going through the usual dilemma of finding out how many VBSes were happening in town (so that we could attend) and how to occupy us the rest of vacation apart from reading. That's when we got news of a new pastor at church and our parent's joy knew no bounds when we got to meet him and he asked all our parents to send the children to church that summer. As we kids gathered around him he briefed that we were going to white wash the fence, the only difference being the parapet! No sooner, did we realize that work was fun, uncle Danny Job as we all lovingly called him, made sure we were fed boiled peanuts, ginger tea, grape juice, soup, delicious lunch (complete with meat) every 2 hours (The joys of a rustic childhood!).



Ms Sara Joy

As we kids gathered around him he briefed that we were going to white wash the fence, the only difference being the parapet!

As we painted we listened to our favorite Gospel albums play on the old 'Philips tape recorder'. Post lunch sessions we had choir practice, French lessons as he'd majored in French, and made us all pray. I recall him cooking at home since his wife was on calls mostly being a gynecologist, visiting all our families and getting involved with our families, even in small aspects such as trying to locate math teachers to teach children struggling with math. He made sure that children struggling financially were supported by other well to do members at church. Vocational guidance, facilitating a number of people to find God's will in marriage, the list went on. Most children committed their lives to Christ in the three years that they spent as a family at Vellore. Above all I've seen uncle spending so much time in prayer and interceding and praying and visiting and serving in mission fields. As I look back, that was a golden age when our beloved pastor and his lovely family colored our lives. They continue to do the same in Karnataka, where they make their home now. Apart from us children having a lesser tan that summer, parents at peace about safety issues of children, most children having found a personal relationship with Christ; above all, summer rain had indeed come! I had the blessing of doing a brief stint at Orissa. While there I used to retreat for prayer and family time to missionaries hailing from New Zealand. I wasn't the only one welcomed into their home, there were countless other children who found food, shelter, clothes, education, love, a family and Christ. I have seen children receive parents and the safe haven of a home. I've always looked upto this family for their love for the fatherless, widows the oppressed and their labor of love, perseverance, resilience amidst

PERSONAL STORIES



such adverse circumstances and unshakeable faith in God's providence and protection. It has been a touching experience to see God do miracles, change lives. That place is one staircase to heaven where 'the weight of God's glory' covers and hovers. Thanking God for the life and ministry of Jason and Andrea Cobb, who were so much in love with each other, God and the children they raise.

One of the aspects I consider a gap in Christian circles these days is a dearth of mentors who are mature, exemplary, can hold things confidential and commit to giving time to Christian youth grappling with choices concerning their life and ministry. I've been blessed to see a particular couple pour out their lives wholeheartedly to the youth they mentored. Theirs was an open home where tea, food, love, Godly counsel and 'walk the talk, walk the extra mile' was always part of the daily menu. One could always run to their home to learn God's word or just to feel at home. I've seen them mentor so many young folks to find Christ, their vocation and make wise choices in marriage. I've been immensely touched by the life and ministry of Jikku and Manoja Jacob who are based at Bhubaneswar.

There is someone who's been a mentor to me on the professional front. One who loves God, students and her patients. I've seen integrity, unconditional positive regard for others, fear of God, professional competence and accountability. Paying the house hold maid a double portion of her pay during the time of Christmas, guiding a former student not just through nursing but management studies would explain much. Most of all I've been amazed by the leadership qualities, in being a model servant leader. Grateful to Dr Leah Macaden, for everything.

There are so many more who've been God's instruments in shaping me, of which I've shared about a few. In conclusion, ***For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. Luke 12:48***

Ms. Sara Joy is married to Dr Sachin George and they are blessed with a daughter Sanjana. Sara currently pursues her Masters in Nursing at CMC, Vellore.

Nominations are invited for Orations for the 45th Biennial Conference

Dates: 7 - 9 November 2019

Venue: Leonia Holistic Destination, Hyderabad

CMAI invites suggestions for a speaker to deliver the Dr. Jacob Chandy Oration 2019 and Ms Aley Kuruvilla Oration 2019.

Dr. Jacob Chandy Oration 2019

In 1990, CMAI instituted the Dr. Jacob Chandy Oration which is presented at the CMAI Biennial Conference by an outstanding Indian/Overseas Christian leader to challenge issues and show directions for the healing ministry of the Church.

Ms. Aley Kuruvilla Oration 2019

In 2013, CMAI instituted the Ms Aley Kuruvilla Oration which is presented at the CMAI Biennial Conference by an outstanding Indian/Overseas Christian leader to challenge issues and show directions for the healing ministry of the Church.

Members are requested to send suggestions/nominations to the General Secretary, CMAI by 15 September 2019

BLOCK YOUR DATES FOR THE 45th Biennial Conference of CMAI

Dates: 7 - 9 November 2019

Venue: Leonia Holistic Destination, Bommaraspet, Shameerpet, Hyderabad

CMAI INVITES NOMINATIONS for DR D W MATEGAONKAR AWARDS

In 1990, CMAI instituted national awards to publicly recognise members who have made a significant contribution to the mission of the Church in India in the ministry of health, healing and wholeness. The awards (up to 5 per year) are presented during the Biennial Conference.

Members are requested to send suggestions/ nominations to the General Secretary, CMAI by 30 June 2019.

GOOD TOUCH - BAD TOUCH

Gur Aryeh Emi

Sexual abuse on a child leaves lasting effects on the child and causes serious consequences.

Parents usually teach a child to steer clear of strangers, but must know that majority of the time it's the people well known to the child who abuse the child. Hope this is an eye opener. May God protect the children world over. Here are some useful tips on educating your child in a child friendly manner about touch.

Part of Body	Good Touch	Bad Touch
Face	Parents touch for cleaning or affection	Anyone touches mouth or tongue
Neck	Parents touch to check for fever or for cleaning	Others touch or massage
Shoulder	Parents touch for cleaning*	Others touch or massage
Underarms	Parents touch for cleaning*	Others touch or massage
Chest area	Parents touch <6 yr olds for cleaning*	Others touch or massage
Stomach	Parents touch for cleaning*	Others touch or massage
Back	Parents touch for cleaning* or anyone patting to appreciate	Others unnecessarily touch or massage
Hands	Parents touch for cleaning*	Others touch unnecessarily or kiss fingers
Waist	Parents touch for cleaning*	Others touch or massage
Groin	Parents touch for cleaning* for children <6 yr old	Others touch or massage
Buttocks	Parents touch for cleaning* for children <6 yr old	Others touch or massage
Thigh	Parents touch for cleaning	Others touch or massage
Legs	Parents touch for cleaning*	Others touch or massage

Note: The chest, lips, area between the thighs and buttocks behind are areas of caution.

Cleaning - For the purpose of cleaning when the child is unable to clean oneself properly. Most children learn to bathe and clean on their own from age 4-6 years.

Parent: Biological parents or foster parents/parental figures or guardians.

If any parent or guardian unnecessarily touches any part of the body without the purpose of cleaning or for medical purpose, it is wrong. (For instance a parent hugging or patting on the child's back to put them to sleep is not wrong.) Physically and mentally challenged children might need help with bathing, cleaning and medication depending on their level of disability. In such cases too, parents must monitor the caretaker's activities, since differently abled children are vulnerable and defenseless. For the purpose of medical examination, it is alright if a doctor or nurse touches a part of the body for assessment but this must be done in the presence of the child's family member or a medical person belonging to the same sex as the child. In case of a sport injury, the child could receive a massage if prescribed by a doctor specializing in sports injuries and by a person qualified for the same in the presence of parent/guardian.



BAD TOUCH BASED ON FEELINGS AND OTHER REASONS



What is a bad touch?

- When the touch makes the child feel **SHY, HURT, SCARED, FORCED, NERVOUS** or **HESITANT**.
- If a person touches or tickles underneath the clothes.
- If a person asks the child not to tell anyone about the touch and to keep it a secret.
- If the person threatens the child of serious consequences or threatens to hurt if the child informs someone.
- When a person tells a child that parents or others will be angry at them if they inform someone.

SAFETY RULES THAT EVERY CHILD MUST KNOW

- It is wrong if someone tries to touch their private parts. Must not touch others' private body parts
- Must never take off clothes if someone asks to.
- It is wrong if someone (other than your family) simply takes photos and videos of you.
- It is wrong if someone takes photos or videos with your clothes off.
- It is wrong if someone shows photos or videos of people without their clothes on.
- You can say **NO** if people other than your parents hug and kiss you or try to touch you.
- Immediately run to parents or **SHOUT** for help when a person tries to touch you in an inappropriate way
- Tell parents, teachers or trustworthy person if someone has touched you or is trying to do so.

IMPORTANT THINGS FOR PARENTS TO DO

1. Children won't understand good touch if it never happens. So show them.
2. Children won't realize a bad touch if they don't know what it is. So speak with them, cautioning them about the regions of the body - out of bounds for other people.
3. Teach children the body parts, especially their private parts with names to prevent strangers teaching them.
4. Teach children at a young age to NOT touch/ tickle /hug other children unnecessarily or for fun.
5. Teach children that unwanted or unnecessary touches are also bad touches.
6. Make the child feel motivated and fearless to report a bad touch or an attempted bad touch.
7. Pay attention and listen to children when they report bad touch.
8. Believe the child & tell the child that he/she is brave.
9. Tell the child that it is not his/her fault that this happened to them.
10. If not your child, bring the matter to the attention to those close to the child
11. Call child line at **1098**
12. Be sensitive while discussing the incident with the child
13. *Symptoms of Sexual Abuse:* Frequent unexplained injuries in private parts; recent absenteeism from school; sitting or walking with difficulty; fatigue/ sleeping difficulties, unexplained behavioral changes- social withdrawal, bedwetting, thumb sucking; sudden accumulation of money & gifts; withdrawal from people & places comfortable earlier and paying little or excessive attention to appearance
14. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) can cause a variety of psychiatric diseases such as depression & Post Traumatic Syndrome (PTSD) to name a few.
15. Above all, cover your child in prayer and ask them to inform their whereabouts - as to who they are with and to get back home before 6 pm.



Gur Aryeh Emi has been involved in the rescue, protection and justice for children who are victims of trafficking, prostitution and sexual abuse for the past 11 years.

MIRACLE HEALING – FAITH AND RATIONALITY

We were visiting a mission hospital in a rural area in the north. At the morning devotion of our first day there, we heard a preacher talking about the miraculous healing of a patient with a kidney tumour. He was speaking in the vernacular but the words kidney and tumour and the tone and tenor of the message gave us an idea of what he was telling. One tribal patient who had come to the hospital and diagnosed to have a kidney tumour was found to have no tumour on surgery. It was a miracle from God both for the patient and the preacher. What about us doctors? As a surgeon, I am always sceptical of people who talk of miraculous cures after having attended some or the other meeting. Not that miraculous cures do not happen. We, however, had a perspective on this story from the other side. The evening we had arrived, we met the surgeon who had operated on the patient. He was going back after two weeks in the mission hospital. I am also a surgeon by training and we were discussing the case and he told me how they had suspected an abdominal mass (tumour for the layman) and turned out to be a fused ectopic kidney on surgery. In a setup with better diagnostic facilities, this would have been picked up during the preoperative evaluation, but this place was like the back of beyond and anything beyond the basics was a luxury. So while the patient and the preacher were happy and praising God for a miraculous healing of a dangerous tumour, the surgeons were rueing the lack of advanced imaging facilities. {Beyond the limits of our cities and some towns, the lack of infrastructure, (forget medical facilities) is in sharp contrast to the abundance of the same in cities. Bharat is a different country from India}.

So did a miraculous healing take place here? I was wondering about these things but not knowing how to put it down in words. Once, at our area-prayer meeting, one seminary student was speaking on Mathew 8.1-4. This portion mentions the healing of a person with



Dr. Phillip Umman

leprosy. As per (Mar Thoma) Church calendar, the first Sunday of February is Medical Mission Sunday. He was mentioning about various men of God, (or should we now say God-men,) who advertise faith-based healings in their meetings. He was emphasizing on the word “advertise” and mentioned a troll message which said that if these God-men would but just go to the adjacent medical college or cancer centre to practice their faith healing, the medical colleges and cancer centres would be relieved of their load of patients!

Now I am not saying that miracles and miracle healings do not happen. That would be to deny the omnipotence of our God. However, as a person with scientific education and reasoning, can we question or try to understand the issue. A sort of apologetics?

If we look at the Gospels, the passages mentioning the healing of people with illnesses or deformities do not anywhere hint at non-physical healing. If a blind man is restored sight, he is restored physical sight, not just spiritual blindness that is cured, though that is also happening. The same with deafness or lameness. Or the greatest of all, the resurrection of Lazarus. It IS a physical resurrection first and foremost.

What am I getting to? As I wrote above, I am always sceptical of claims of miraculous healings taking place at such meetings. A desperate person in pain and sickness wants healing, the atmosphere and the stage, the willingness to believe or suspend all belief, mass hysteria – almost all of these have been used to explain the so-called healings taking place at these meetings. There is no follow up of those who claim to heal to know whether the disease has actually gone. Yes, there are anecdotal reports of the treating doctors being surprised at the totally normal findings on tests now, but they are anecdotal. Was the diagnosis right in the first place at all? Like in the case I discussed above. The Catholic Church has the office

of the Devil's advocate involved in the investigation of claims of miraculous healing in the names of those being considered for elevation as Blessed or Saint. Their job is to collate all the facts to prove or disprove the claims but I am not sure their deliberations are ever put out.

If we take the example I cited in the first paragraph, did a miracle take place. Can it still be a miracle if it can be explained? If it can be explained, does it cease to be a miracle? Does reason trump faith?

I am reminded of an end-of-article-filler in a Readers' Digest magazine which went like this – The miracle of birth just happened for the 100 millionth time. How true. Embryology is a very well studied and understood subject, to the extent that various artificial techniques of conception have helped many childless couples. But to understand that so many things have to go right at each and every step from the first cell to deliver a normal child, it is nothing short of a miracle. And I am sure, no childless couple who conceives using Artificial Reproductive Techniques (ART), thinks of the science in the Petri dish. For them, a baby in their hands, at the end of all this medical and scientific treatment is a miracle! Probably a million times over. All involved in the entire process of ART can explain each step of the process but still, the end result is a miracle in their feelings. The reason is not trumping faith.

Can we look for help from the Bible? Let us look at some incidents mentioned in Exodus 4. God has called Moses to be the deliverer of His people when He speaks to him at the burning bush. But Moses is reluctant and wants to know why the people will believe him. In verse 3 of Exodus 4, we see God asking him to put the staff in his hand on the ground. Immediately it becomes a snake. Later, he takes it by the tail and it becomes a staff in his hand. Jump to chapter 7 and we see Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh. Aaron throws his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials and it becomes a snake. The people in the court would have been shocked. But in verse 11, we see that the wise men and sorcerers in Pharaoh's court are also able to do the same miracle, though finally, Aaron's staff swallows up the other staffs! So Moses did a miracle but the learned men in the royal court are able to replicate the same. Was this miracle within the domain of their knowledge? Surely it had to be. But just imagine a poor countryman or villager in the court that day, come to plead some cause before the Pharaoh. He would have been totally astounded. The learned men are not. They could manage to do the same thing with their knowledge and hence it is not a miracle to them but the same event is

Knowledge is all good, but it does not always make things happen.

a miracle to another who does not understand anything.

The same thing we see with the next miracle of turning the waters of the Nile River into blood. In Exodus 7. 22, we see that the Egyptian magicians could do the same things by their secret arts. So there is a body of knowledge which explains a miracle. But the grasp of that knowledge is not open to all.

Is there a limit to the knowledge of the learned men? The magicians are able to replicate the miracle of the frogs (Ex 8. 7). But in verse 18, the magicians have reached the limit of their knowledge. They are not able to produce gnats. So what do they say? See Ex 8. 19. "This is the finger of God." Blame it on Rio?! When we can explain it, it is not a miracle. When we cannot, it is a miracle. Could it be that there were other wise men who could have done this miracle and not the next? Would the miracle of gnats then be a miracle or not?

The point I am contending is that just because an event can be explained as to its causation, does not make it cease to be a miracle. For the person who can explain the sequence of events, it is not a miracle, but he is not the

one in need. For the one yearning for an answer, it is. An orphanage gets excess food from a party. The person who threw the party is upset not all whom he called came. Did a miracle happen? If so who made it happen. You ask any school going child how the rains happen and he or she can talk to you about evaporation, of cloud formation, of condensation and

rain. So much for theory. But no rains this Southwest and Northeast monsoon seasons in Kerala and people are praying desperately for relief before the scorching summer! Knowledge is all good, but it does not always make things happen.

There is however a passage in the Bible which is very widely misunderstood when in the context of an unanswered prayer or healing. In Mathew 17. 14-21, we see a man coming to Jesus and asking him to cure his epileptic son and that Jesus' disciples were unable to. I think here it can be understood that the disciples could perform some healing miracles. In Luke 10. 17, when the seventy come back after being sent out as two by two, they are joyous at the fact that *even* the demons are subject to them in Jesus' name. Notice also the question they ask in Mathew 17 verse 19, "Why could we not cast it out?" That means they were able to cast out some evil spirits but not *this one*. Later, when the disciples speak with Jesus in private, he admonishes them saying that if they had faith as a mustard seed, they could move

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mountains. I think the above-quoted verse is one of the most misunderstood verses. It is used to almost judge people who do not seem to get answers to their prayers. If only they had prayed harder, believed harder, fasted harder, their prayer would have been answered – is how the logic goes. And certain fundamentalist interpretations of these verses take the meaning to an extreme, where only fasting and prayer is expected or believed will provide the answer or the miracle and man need not do anything. As a medical practitioner, I have seen quite a few people in this category, who when diagnosed with a medical condition that requires intervention, sit and pray and refuse all help. I have sometimes argued with them that the very God they are going to fast and pray to has also made us. And if He made us, surely it must be with a purpose and if they believe that He can work miracles in their lives, surely He can use us for working out that miracle. When we pray to God for a miracle, it does not mean we can sit cooped up in a room waiting for a miracle to happen. We have to get out. While God is omnipotent, He still works through the natural laws that He has created. A miracle healing does not mean that human agency is not needed. God works through His people. In fact, the people through whom he brings about the miracle may be able to offer rational explanations for why they did what they did. The recipient only rejoices at the answer to his prayers. We have to put in our effort. See Mark 2. 1-12. We cannot expect to top an exam without preparing or studying. Surely, we cannot expect a miracle like that.

Does God intend more than a miraculous cure for us?

I want to again look at the incident mentioned in the Gospel of St Mark 2. 1 – 12. This is a very familiar passage and narrates the incident where a paralytic is healed when his friends drop him through an opening in the roof of the house where Jesus is preaching. Most of us would have heard many sermons on this passage highlighting various points of view. Indeed, when we read the same passages at different times in our lives, God speaks to us in our present situations. A re-reading of the passages is important. Here we see that the friends of the paralytic are keen to see that their friend is healed and they make all efforts to bring him to Jesus. Unfortunately, at the doorstep, a seemingly insurmountable final obstacle. They are not able to see Jesus because of the crowd. Faith and hope are at the verge of breaking down and losing. But against all odds, they do not give up. One can imagine the effort involved in lifting a stretcher to the roof of the house and then to lower the paralytic before Jesus. Surely, such faith deserved a miracle. The miracle did happen, but not before Jesus has highlighted a very

important point here. In other such situations, where Jesus marvels at the faith of the supplicant, he tells them that their faith has made them well. (See Mathew 8.5 – 13). In Mark 2. 5, seeing the faith of the friends, he tells the paralytic that his sins are forgiven. Surely not what they had expected. And certainly not the crowd, because we see them murmuring that Jesus is committing blasphemy by forgiving sins as only God can forgive sins. Jesus realizes the misgivings in the minds of his listeners and asks the question as to what would be easier to tell – that the sins are forgiven or that the paralytic gets up and walk. But he wants to show that he has the power on earth to forgive sins. A small dash, a pregnant pause and after this, Jesus tells the paralytic to take up his bed and walk. The supplicant wants physical healing. The omnipotent wants the supplicant to see beyond physical relief. There is another instance where Jesus points to something beyond physical healing or relief. In Luke 13. 1 – 4, while replying to some Pharisees, Jesus says that the Galileans who were killed were not worse sinners than those who survived. Also that the eighteen people who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them were not worse than all the others in Jerusalem. But unless one repents one will perish. I think Jesus is not talking about physical death here. It is spiritual death. It is not that the one who repents will not die a physical death. Those who repent and accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour also will die their physical deaths. But when that which is perfect comes, that which is in part will be done away. For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. (1 Corinth 13. 10, 12). Not all our diseases are taken away, not all our infirmities cured, not always is the miracle that we want to be made real. As the writer to the Hebrews says in Heb 11. 40, God has provided something better for us.

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‘UNTOUCHABLE’ PEOPLE OF SOUTH ASIA

Dr. Henry Thiagaraj gave the following speech at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993

It is in achieving the supreme goal of "all human rights for all" that we bring to the attention of this august body the plight of the 250 million "untouchable" [Dalit] people in the South Asia region. The sheer magnitude of the number of people suffering discrimination alone is sufficient to attract the attention of this world body.

When our group arrived in Vienna, a friend took us to visit Mauthausen, near Linz, to see the site of a concentration camp of the Nazis which now has memorials to the people who suffered inhuman torture and death. This reminded us of the experience of our own Dalit people's suffering, violence and pain. It is very clear to us that "casteism" and its untouchability doctrine is a manifestation of Nazism still practised in modern times in South Asia. It has all the dangerous ingredients of racism which manifests in ugly forms.

The untouchable people have chosen a name for themselves — Dalits, the broken people — to overcome the stigma of being born in an untouchable community. Untouchability is worse than apartheid, as it is not colour but the community and the place in which one is born that discriminates a person: whether in the caste village or the segregated Dalit colony. Discrimination of one's very existence, one's being starts from birth and continues to haunt all through life and goes beyond death into separate burial/cremation grounds.

This anachronistic belief system, sanctioned by the Hindu religion, has been absorbed by other religions through social practices and taboos. This pernicious doctrine is insidious, showing up in discrimination of occupation, marriage and segregated housing. Casteism is a man-made myth, which was designed to keep a class of people under servitude.

Historically, it originated from powerful invaders who created segregated communities to oppress the native indigenous people and to enslave the conquered communities by imposing discriminatory taboos: denial of ownership of land, denial of education, denial of worship and spirituality, denial of growth of human personality, denial of drinking water and access to public roads.

Dalits were condemned to engage in degrading occupations like carrying corpses, leather workers, cobblers, scavengers, street sweepers and agricultural coolies. All kinds of dirty, difficult and dangerous work are assigned to the Dalits, who in many places are still treated like slaves — their masters believe they are born to lord over them and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

This practice of "casteism" has been dehumanising people for over 2500 years and enforced deplorable living conditions. This reality is easily seen even today in rural areas, where feudalistic social structures and attitudes, supported by a colonial bureaucracy, keep people in oppressed conditions — as landless labourers and bonded labourers. Women are induced to prostitution in the name of religion.

Murder and criminal assaults are well documented. According to an Indian government document, in 1991 - 1067 Dalit women were raped, 731 Dalits were murdered, 645 incidents of arson against Dalits took place, 1890 Dalits were grievously hurt. Another 17,029 offences against Dalits were registered. Every hour two Dalits are assaulted, every day three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered, two Dalit houses are burnt.

The national press have pointed out in several leading articles how the tormentors go free while victims wait for justice with pain from wounds inflicted on their body and soul. Justice delayed is justice denied, and our people suffer with anguish. Despite clear laws abolishing untouchability, the crimes committed by upper caste feudal people continuously reveal the deep-rooted

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prejudices which cannot be changed by mere legislation alone. Efficient law enforcing machinery and the will of people in power to implement the laws are urgently required. In this area the United Nations Human Rights Commission can play a vital role.

When Dalits want to escape from the oppressive social system by seeking faith and comfort in other religions, they are denied the benefits of the government. They are denied the freedom of belief, though they continue to suffer the same socioeconomic disadvantages. This is clear violation of article 18 of UN Human Rights. Several protests and petitions against this discrimination on the basis of religion have not produced any remedial measures.

This world conference has highlighted the interrelationship of human rights with democracy and development. This new paradigm will herald a new revolution in the world based on justice. The removal of poverty and the social development of deprived people with full realisation of human rights go together. A country's real progress is measured by the quality of life of the people.

The Dalits remain untouched by development. Literacy, disease and poverty are high among the Dalit people, who are exploited by age-old barbaric customs. It is in this context of socioeconomic realities we would like to urge the United Nations Human Rights Commission to establish a cell to end the racist manifestation of untouchability which is a crime against humanity.

As we reaffirm the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we recall the words of a great champion of human rights for Dalits, Dr B.R. Ambedkar: "The world owes a duty to the untouchables, as it does to all oppressed people, to break their shackles and to set them free".

We plead that the United Nations, which is the conscience of the world's humanity, to accord high priority to appoint a special commissioner to study the situation of untouchable people and to initiate measures to end violations of human rights. Human rights is an "idea whose time has come" (Victor Hugo) — to bring real humanity to the deprived millions of Dalit people in the Asian region.

Dr. Henry Thiagaraj was a prominent human rights activist and the founder of Dalit Liberation Educational Trust. He was the advisor of Madras Development Society, Dy. Director of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu; and the Chief, University of Madras Students Guidance Bureau. He passed away on December 27, 2017. This article, which is still relevant about the Dalit situation in India, was published in 1993.

Credit: Green Left Weekly, Australia.

Link: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/untouchable-people-south-asia>

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