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Love Is Kind Mark 1 Small Group Plan

The headline read, “TOUCHING REQUIRED AT NEW AREA MUSEUM.” Recognizing the teaching power of touch, this children’s museum constructed a series of hands-on exhibits. Inviting visitors to touch exhibits was quite a break from the past when museums normally posted signs that read “Keep Off” and “Do Not Touch.”

What message do you receive when someone refuses to shake hands with you? Do you feel wanted or accepted? No! You feel rejected and embarrassed. Perhaps you even feel angry. If you offer your touch and it is refused, it means you are refused.

A husband pulls away. A wife says, “Don’t touch me.” But neither the husband nor the wife are refusing touch as much as they are refusing what touch stands for — their relationship.

Jesus’ touch symbolized God’s relationship with the human race. He understood the power of touch and made it central to His ministry, as these incidents in the Gospel of Mark indicate:

*Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever,
and they told Jesus about her.
So he went to her, **took her hand** and helped her up.
The fever left her and she began to wait on them.
— 1:30-31 —*

*Filled with compassion,
Jesus reached out his hand and **touched** the man.
— 1:41 —*

*He had healed many,
so that those with diseases*

were pushing forward to **touch** him.

— 3:10 —

A large crowd followed and **pressed around him**.
And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years ...
she came up behind him in the crowd and **touched** his cloak,
because she thought, “If I just **touch** his clothes, I will be healed.”

— 5:24, 25, 27, 28 —

He **took her by the hand** and said to her, “Talitha koum!”

— 5:41 —

They begged him to let them **touch** even the edge of his cloak,
and all who **touched** him were healed.

— 6:56 —

They begged him to **place his hand** on the man ...
Jesus put his fingers **into the man's ears**.
Then he spit and **touched** the man's tongue.

— 7:32-33 —

He took the blind man **by the hand** ... and put **his hands** on him.
Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes.
Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored,
and he saw everything clearly.

— 8:23-25 —

The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He's dead.”
But Jesus took him **by the hand** and lifted him to his feet,
and he stood up.

— 9:26-27 —

Jesus touched the “untouchable” — the diseased, the guilty, the outcasts and the dead. His kindness was “tactful” in the original sense of the word. To use the language of the King James Version:

We have not a high priest
who cannot be **touched**
with the feeling of our infirmities.

— Hebrews 4:15 —

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How would you feel if someone refused to shake your hand?
- How would you describe the relationship between love and touching?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

“IF YOU ARE WILLING”

Mark 1:40

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

- Imagine what this man is feeling as he approaches Jesus. Describe it.
- What would a lifetime of rejection produce in a person's life?
- How can this be reversed?

“I AM WILLING”

Mark 1:41-42

⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

- Why is Jesus' willingness not only kind, but also courageous?
- What is the meaning and effect of withholding touch?
- Since Jesus could have healed the man from a distance, without even seeing him, why does he make a point to touch him?

“SHOW YOURSELF TO THE PRIEST”

Mark 1:43-45

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

- Why does Jesus ask the man – “strong warning” – to not talk openly about his healing?
- Jesus not only offers his own love and encouragement, he immediately begins to move this outcast man back into his community. How and why?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

— THE PHYSICAL POWER OF TOUCH —

- Touch is a deeply felt experience. It is the parent of our eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Dr. Ashley Montagu wrote:

“The sense of touch, ‘the mother of the senses,’ is the earliest to develop in the human embryo.”

— from Touching: The Human Significance of Skin.

- How would you describe the **Physical** power of touch?
- Do you think the members of our churches are engaged in or insulated from ministry to the poor or disadvantaged? Explain.

— THE EMOTIONAL POWER OF TOUCH —

- Psychologist James Lynch has spent hours in coronary care units watching people visit loved ones. He described the emotional kindness of touch:

I have been struck by the way the most people finally say good-bye. ... Just before leaving, they will stop speaking and silently hold the patient's hand or touch his body or even stand at the foot of the bed and hold the patient's foot. ... More often than not, the final good-bye does not involve words, almost as if words alone were insufficient to communicate their true feelings. The most simple and direct type of human communication does not need words.

— from The Broken Heart: The Medical Consequences of Loneliness.

- How would you describe the **Emotional** power of touch?
- Who are the social lepers of Dallas?
- Why is simple presence so powerful?

— THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF TOUCH —

- Our physical and emotional needs are overshadowed by our need for spiritual kindness. At least Jesus thought so. His first words to the paralytic were not “take your mat and walk,” but “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5, 10)
- How would you describe the **Spiritual** power of touch?
- In this day of physical fitness and healthy diets what can we do to feed and nurture the deepest part of our life – our spirit?
- Close in prayer, allowing time for quiet reflection regarding to whom we each can extend our kindness. Praise and thank God for his amazing kindness.