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Luke 10:25-37

Five Love Languages: Physical Touch

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Luke 10:25-37 (New Revised Standard Version)

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”  But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

The church is a funny place. We have funny names for things. Instead of a foyer we call it a narthex. Instead of a stage we call it an altar. Instead of an audience, you are the congregation. In the church we talk about money all the time. Jesus talked about money a lot too, 16 of the 38 parables are about how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, 1 out of 10 verses talks about money. In the Bible there are 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.

So, in the church we talk about money, we talk about building campaigns, but we don’t talk about sex and we don’t talk about domestic violence. I recently attended a domestic violence seminar called Safe on Sunday because more domestic violence is reported on Sundays due to Saturday night excesses and sporting contests than any other day.

One in every 4 women and 1 in every 7 men will experience domestic violence during their lifetime. Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, spiritual or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. So, today as we talk about the five love languages of physical touch, may we pray about domestic violence, may we pray for life for the victims and that the abusers are held accountable.

We have been spending the last weeks talking about the five love languages that Gary Chapman shares in his book, The Five Love Languages: words of affirmation, (loving through what we say and how we say it), receiving gifts (tangible, symbolic expressions of love), acts of service (love in action), physical touch, and quality time. Chapman says that we all experience and communicate love differently. Every one of us has one or two of the five love languages that we primarily identity with. If you do not know your love language, I want to encourage you to go online to [www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com) and take a quick quiz. And the hope is that by talking about each of the love languages we will better be able to love. We are a people saved by grace who are called to love. Our life is a gift to God and we are called to love one another, to respect all people, and to share with those in need. So, today we talk about physical touch.

A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face are ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love to a physical touch love language person. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.

In our scripture today Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. The robbers beat, abused, and left the man for dead. The tragedy of the story is that two others didn’t show him love either. The Priest and the Levite were religious, educated folks. They should have known better yet there are no words of comfort, no quality time, no acts of service, and no physical touch.

It is a Samaritan who shows the stranger love. This is shocking in the ancient world. Jews did not speak to Samaritans. Many thought they could have no relationship with God since they worshipped differently and in different locations than the Jews. Yet it is this outsider, the one who understands rejection and has probably experienced it himself, who loves the stranger deeply. He sees the beaten man as another human being, without regard of culture or race. He touches the man and binds his wounds. This is the primary reason the religious folks walked on by. They didn’t want to touch him. He was bleeding and touching blood would make them ritually unclean until enough time had passed and enough sacrifices had been made. The religious folks valued the law above a life.

As I drive around Dallas, I see many homeless folks. I wonder when the last time was that someone shook their hand or gave them a hug. When was the last time that you experienced physical touch? Make sure to give someone a hug today. Jesus loved deeply and demonstrated that love. Remember when he washed the disciples’ feet?

Loving relationships are built on communication. Research tells us that communication is 7% what you say, 38% how you say it, and 55% body language. We communicate our love through hugs and kisses, pats on the back or on the head, holding hands, and sexual intimacy between a committed couple.

Touch has the tremendous power to hurt or the power to heal. Touch is critical to a child’s development. We here at Greenland Hills and in the larger United Methodist Church have programs of training and background checks for those who work with our children and youth because we want to make sure that this is the safest possible place for all the children of God.

Abuse exists in many forms and my heart breaks for all who have suffered from hurtful, harmful touch. Touch is one of God’s gifts to us, to help us thrive. But out of all the love languages, this one takes the most sensitivity. So if physical touch is your primary love language, be aware of a couple of factors. First, culture because some family cultures may see physical touch as a tremendous invasion of privacy and respect. Next, personality because while some people are overt in their affection for others it as intrusion. Another factor to be aware of is relationship. Hugs are not always welcome from casual acquaintances.

Christ touched people. He touched dead people, bleeding people, people with skin diseases, people who were called unclean. Jesus sticks his fingers in the ears and holds on the tongue of a man who was deaf and mute in Mark 7:31-37. Jesus is brought a blind man in John 9:1-7 and he picks up some dirt, spits in his hands, and then rubs the mud on the man’s eyes. Jesus wasn’t afraid to touch people, to get involved, to get dirty.

Christ touched people and allowed himself to be touched. Jesus welcomed the children and I am sure they were grabbing his legs and jumping all over him. Mary washed Jesus’ feet with her tears. When Jesus was arrested, the guards whipped him, stripped him, beat him, and nailed him to the cross. And when Jesus is raised on the third day he proves his resurrection by having others touch him. “Touch me,” he says. Touch the place where the nails were in my hands. Touch the place where the spear was thrust into my side.

God cares about every part of us: our heart, soul, mind, and body. We as followers of Christ must also care about bodies. We must touch. In fact, we the church, are called the Body of Christ. We are Christ’s hands and feet and our hands were made to heal. There are so many ways to show our love.  May we use our love languages to bring God’s healing love into the world.