

Connect360: A Desperate Touch of Faith

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- *Lesson 6 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit "Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus" focuses on Matthew 9:20-22.*

The woman with a chronic condition set out to find the man of God called Jesus. Many who sought healing approached Jesus directly, speaking up to ask help for themselves (Matt. 9:27) or interceding for someone else (Matt. 15:22, 17:15). Within the woman's cultural context, however, she might not have thought it necessary to talk with Jesus personally. If Jesus's power indeed were supernatural, it would be enough for her to touch something that belonged to him. No one need ever know that she had passed her uncleanness to him through physical contact.

Many ancient peoples believed that objects or articles of clothing could be endowed with miraculous properties. That is why, for example, ill persons lined Peter's path so his shadow might fall on them (Acts 5:15), and many others touched him with "handkerchiefs and aprons" to lay on the sick and demon-possessed for healing (Acts 19:11-12). This understanding drove the woman's determination to lay hold of the fringe of Jesus's robe secretly.

It is likely that Jesus, along with other Jewish men, wore tassels on the edges of his robe in conformity to God's instructions in the law. One of these tassels would have made a logical target for the woman's resolve. It would be easy to furtively finger a tassel without being observed as Jesus moved along. When she touched his garment, Mark tells us that she was healed instantly and that Jesus had felt the power leave him (Mark 5:27-30). He wanted to speak to the person who had such bold faith.

'Take heart'

The woman in this story needed much more than physical healing. Years of being shunned by society had worn down her sense of identity and worth. Jesus not only restored her body to health, but also infused her life with purpose and value by showing her that she was loved by God individually. Jesus said to her "Take heart daughter, your faith has healed you" (Matt. 9:22)

Many people in today's world have trouble believing they have any personal worth. Whether abused by parents, betrayed by friends, discarded by spouses, or simply failing to measure up to society's impossible standards of beauty, intellect or material prosperity, people of all ages and rank see themselves as invisible. Their lives seem to hold no purpose or value. Jesus' message for them is as personal and life-giving as it was for the sick woman in Matthew 9. Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost." He can still meet the deepest needs of the most broken hearts.

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