

Hope Dispensers

by

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As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." Luke 8:43-48 (ESV)

This is an amazing story in the Bible that we can learn some key things with how and why God delivers His power to us. As you read it and think on it, I'm sure you will see some things in a different way, possibly even in a way that changes your view in the critical area of faith, and in living out your faith. Hopefully it will, for it sure did me.

If you are like me, our eyes are immediately drawn to the words Jesus spoke to the woman when He encouraged her by saying that her faith made her well. We need to be careful with how we read this, for at first blush it might appear that Jesus is saying that it is all up to our faith to receive an answer to our prayers. We will think that if we do not have a prayer answered as requested, or our life doesn't go as planned, it is because our faith is lacking. Sometimes it is, but not all the time. To reinforce this thought, there are some people who think and teach that moving God is limited only to our faith or lack of it, and as a result they heap a great burden on people who struggle with their "small" faith. So let's be clear about it. As Jesus said, a "mustard seed," or to be accurate, even a small amount of real faith will move mountains. But doubt in God's ability or His kind intentions will cause us to miss His work completely, and we will not see things moved.

Jesus asked who touched Him, for He said His power went out of Him. Now what do you think He was really doing here? Jesus already knew who touched Him, for *He knows, He cares, He is willing, and He is able*, to know us thoroughly. He knew the woman's problem before she told Him about it, and He knew what He was going to do about it as well. He wasn't surprised, as some would tend to think. His power went out of Him and therefore He pointed out that at that particular moment the woman had connected to Him through her faith in Him. But, why did He call her out as He did, if He knew the answers? I think it was a

teaching moment for the crowd and for you and me now as we read about it, in that seeking Jesus, reaching out to Him, and touching Him is a necessary requirement for receiving His power into our life. I know He said that her faith made her well. But I also know that it was His power that did the job. This woman simply did that which is essential for having God's power brought to her point of need by seeking, reaching out, and touching Jesus with her faith. Could she have been healed without Jesus' power? Absolutely not. Could she have prevented Jesus' healing if she did not have the faith to seek Him for her healing? Apparently so. So we see that our faith becomes a conduit for God's power into our life. It is not the power. But it is the pipeline for seeking and having transferred God's intervention and power to us. It is either stopped up, or it is open and flowing by our faith.

In this account, we see the poor woman was at her wits end. She had a long-term medical issue with blood loss. We don't know the medical condition. We only know that she had a chronic condition for twelve years, and every form of medicine had not corrected it. That was the physical challenge. But remember, this was ancient Israel, and there was also the additional stigma of being ritually unclean for twelve years as a result of the chronic issue of blood loss. She was not to be touched by people, and if she was touched or touched someone else, she would make that person unclean as well. So, she was just a little above the leper in that day, as far as society saw her. She was to be avoided, if they knew she had this problem. So, this is another point Jesus was no doubt making, which is that no matter how dirty and unclean we are by other people's standards, He will gladly receive us. He made her problem public, which she likely wanted to avoid. But, He also made His intentions public as well, which was for their benefit. She had to come out and be honest with her problem that she had tried to hide. But after this, she would become a powerful witness to her world and a historical figure in the Bible that we all now read about. Men we often try to hide our struggles as did the woman. But being transparent and honest before God and mankind starts the flow of God's help to you, as it did the woman.

Now let's look at Jesus and compare Him to the priests of that day. They were self-righteous, puritanical in their behavior, and their outward appearance was a false attempt to represent a loving God. Little wonder that Jesus had a hard time with those "whitewashed sepulchers", as He called them. They didn't represent a loving God who cared what this poor woman had gone through for twelve years. They only wanted to avoid her. Not Jesus. He allowed Himself to be touched, and He allowed His power to go out to her and heal her. He then made her an object lesson of faith, and she is spoken of even to this day as a hero of faith. What a powerful, and wonderful, and sensitive, and complete Savior we have in Jesus to do what He did for this woman. There is none like Him. But, He wants us to try and be like Him. So let us talk about that.

What does this say about Jesus, and what is He saying to you about your life? I think it is obvious that Jesus is a *hope dispenser*, and He wants you and me to be *hope dispensers* as well. How do we *dispense hope* as He did? Like Him, we must allow our lives to be touched by all people, even to the point that it drains us. To do this, we will have to become missional in life. We have to see our lives bigger than ourselves, and yet, be assured that our life is made sufficient by God's grace for any challenge He puts before us. Jesus, and His power, was sufficient for this woman's needs. But, He also made Himself accessible to the woman. What if

he had remained aloof as the priests of that day did? We would not have seen the woman even near Him, nor the others things that happened. Likewise, our life must be accessible for the people Jesus brings to touch us. Often times these people are in some way metaphorically or literally dirty, wounded, nasty with bad habits, or internally disfigured with painful memories of wrongs done against them. These are the kinds of things and people we normally run from. They tend to suck us dry. But we as Jesus' disciples must make ourselves available to be touched by these people, for Jesus shows that He was willing to be touched by all who would seek Him. But here is the good news. Yes, it does suck us dry for sometimes people and their problems and our serving them will drain us. But, Jesus fills us back up. This is the dynamic of the "Living Water" in that He never lets us run dry. Right before we do run dry, He fills us back up to an overflowing state. This is the only dynamic that I know of that makes it OK to empty our gas tank in order to be refilled and it not cost us an arm and a leg. In fact, He will replenish us as nothing else can. The fact is, if we do not empty out by serving others with that which He has done for us, we will become as stale and rotten as yesterday's manna. So, let's bring home what Jesus was teaching. Be accessible as He was accessible. Drop your walls and don't be afraid to be touched as He and the woman showed us. Dispense hope, for that is what His disciples do.