

One day, surrounded by people ready to listen and learn, they were distracted by the rush of a sobbing father. He ignored everyone else and blurted out to Jesus, "My little girl is near death. Hurry and help, before it is too late. You must come and touch her and then I know she will be healed. Come! Now! Quickly!" What parent would not, or has not uttered the same prayer? Jesus started to follow the dad but was distracted by a great crowd. But out of the blue a middle-aged woman reached out to touch the back of Jesus' robe. She was sick, but not deathly sick. She had a chronic bleeding issue and no one could find the cause or cure. It wasn't going to kill her but did keep her from being accepted in her community, as any bleeding rendered one "unclean."

It took faith for her to be so bold. She brushed against his robe. It was just a casual touch, less dramatic than the sobs of a frightened father. Suddenly she felt different. Her bleeding stopped. It was a miracle! How often have you wished you would see miracles today like we read about in the Gospels? I mean, really dramatic miracles like this one from Mark's Gospel! Before she could sneak away Jesus shouted, "Who touched me?" Jesus had not been asked, had not even seen her coming. Everyone looked around and saw a woman who had not been with them before. She had traces of blood on her clothing! What was going on? The law said anyone touching a dead body, leper, or blood was unclean.

Her touch had made Jesus unclean, according to that law. Her boldness was reckless. She had two choices. She could run and hide or could confess her bold action. She faced the music, choosing to kneel and admit what she had done. Jesus replied, "Faith healed you, be at peace, your disease has been cured." What a beautiful gesture on his part!! What a powerful example of how love is stronger than law and community is more important than fear. He had not chosen to act, it just happened! Forgotten was a father who had first gotten Jesus' attention.

Think of her confession, "If only I can touch Jesus' garment, I will be healed." What a bold move. No asking. No prayer. It was like the night Peter decided he could walk on water. Faith rather than reason moved her toward Jesus. She was certain of his power, and felt she only needed to get close. Just a touch and her life would change. No miracles of science or drug store purchases had given her any relief. But Jesus' arrival gave her hope. Such faith! But that story still has legs today, and I'll explain how it helped me in a surprising manner.

Years ago, I underwent radiation therapy to insure residual cancer cells after I assumed and earlier surgery had healed me. My blood work indicated there might be a problem, and my doctor felt radiation was necessary for complete healing. It was a scary time for me, four years after surgery, to submit to radiation. Would it work? What damage would it do? Was I going to die? As I lay in the machine that would dispense radiation, all I could think to do was pray. And then I remembered this story of the woman who touched Jesus' robe. The machine made weird, loud noises, as it revved up. It sounded like whooshing and whirring as it targeted beams of radiation to destroy the

evil cancer cells are. For some reason I remembered how a woman was healed when power flowed out of a mere touch of Jesus' body. Mark relates Jesus felt a discharge of energy. And now a machine was bombarding my own body with energy. These thoughts became my distraction, meditation, and prayer.

Listening to the whooshing and whirring of the machine, I prayed like never before, I visualized the scene of Jesus' and the woman and wondered what it sounded like as people rushed with Jesus to the scene of a dying girl. I thought about the sounds the woman must have heard with the wind in Jesus' robes and his sandals scuffing the dry earth. I wondered if the whooshing and whirring of the radiation machine was similar to the noises this woman heard in the instant before she was healed! Suddenly inside that noisy radiation machine, a cold empty tomb of a tube felt safe, and I felt peace! After that, every time I went into that tube for treatment, and each time the whirring and chattering and whooshing of the machine started I remembered a woman, the sound of Jesus rushing by, an energy discharge from Jesus, and the gift of faith Jesus said was the power of this woman's healing. That became the visualization of my prayer, and comfort and peace in the midst of what was scary and noisy and a reminder of earthly weakness. I felt God's presence.

As I reflect there are even more connections for me. How ironic that radiation could become a cure or how the energy of invisible forces of nature was touching my brokenness. It struck me that these invisible neutrons and protons really are the source of creation itself. A gift of God! Such energy is part of everything that is and can unleash the incredible power of destruction or the awesome gift of healing. I thought about the "big bang" which is science's way of saying God is the author of creation.

I hope these connections helped, as this two-thousand-year-old account from Mark's Gospel helped me face my fears and brought peace every time I underwent radiation therapy. As I was surrounded by alien noises and thought of a woman who reached out as Jesus went whooshing by. For me this is a powerful reminder that the inspired words of scripture are more than words to remember but an avenue for God to breathe into us and become part of us.

I find it ironic that the same energy that created the universe and is the building block of life is what touched such a life, healed it, and made it new. I find it useful to think that I too desired to touch Jesus' robe and had faith that he could make me new. I find it amazing to consider that a story from so long ago became the answer to prayer, and even the words of prayer as energy was shooting into his body ... and that the energy itself was created by God.

The inspiration of Scripture is not simply in the words God caused to be written and preserved, but how those words bring the energy and healing power of God's presence and peace into our lives today. How amazing that the same energy that created an entire universe, touches each of us at different times, in different ways, with the same result. God is with us, and it is good! All it takes is just a touch and life is never the

same again. It isn't dependent on the right prayer or action; it is all about grace – that undeserved love that deals with the little issues of life and the bigger issue of death. Faith reveals to us that the same powerful God who reached out and created a universe is willing for that same touch to change every life. And all it takes is a little touch.

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