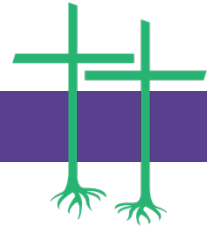


MINISTRY TOOL #9 – FOR INNER TRANSFORMATION

Appropriate Physical Touch



God's power and love are often communicated through physical contact.

Mark 10:16 – And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

EXPLANATION:

Physical touch is a basic human need. It is a means by which people give and receive affectionate love. It is also the means by which God prefers to communicate His power throughout Scripture.

Sin and our world's culture have perverted physical touch, often wounding people in ways that make them want to avoid contact with others. So, while we know physical touch can help people, we also need to be aware of their possible wounds and approach such ministry carefully. It should go without saying, but we ought never engage in worldly touch during a ministry session, including violence, harshness, sexual advances, or any form of touching that even the world would recognize as inappropriate.

It can be helpful to initiate the ministry session with a handshake. If this is a person with whom you're close, a hug may be appropriate. As the Gospel Encounter progresses, sometimes feelings attached to a painful memory will surface, and suddenly the person will not be as welcoming of physical contact as before. In these cases, it's best to ask permission before grabbing their hand or placing your hand on their shoulder.

Always err on the side of inviting physical contact rather than demanding or forcing it. The possible exception is in *rare* cases of deliverance ministry in which you're addressing spirits of rejection, self-hatred, or witchcraft. In these situations, occasionally a demon will recoil from physical contact because it knows such contact will either dismantle the stronghold of rejection in the person's heart or communicate the superior power of God that will set the person free.

In most cases, however, a certain amount of physical space can help the person feel safe. And knowing that you won't physically touch them without their permission can give a great deal of peace to a victim of abuse who was previously denied such authority over their own body.

GOSPEL SUMMARY:

God's affectionate love is often communicated through physical touch (1 Thessalonians 5:26). A pat on the back, a hug, or a hand held can communicate God's love and support in ways that words cannot. Isaiah 40:11 says, "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart."

Similarly, God's power is often communicated through physical touch. We see this especially in cases of healing ministry (Luke 6:19), blessing (Mark 10:16), and impartation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6). It is generally considered appropriate to place a hand on someone's shoulder or hold their hand while you pray for them.

HOW TO:

- ❑ Be aware of a person's "personal bubble" and respect it.
- ❑ Ask permission before making physical contact.
 - "Is it alright if I hold your hand while we pray?"
 - "Would a hug be helpful to you right now?"
 - "Can I put my hand on your shoulder?"
- ❑ Watch for signs that the person is uncomfortable, and respond appropriately.