**Father and Son Arrested for Death of Jogger  
*The Wired Word* for the Week of May 17, 2020**

**In the News**

May 7 saw the arrest of two white men who, back on February 23, confronted an unarmed 25-year-old black man, Ahmaud Arbery, while he jogged along a road in Satilla Shores, a community near Brunswick, Georgia. A struggle of some kind ensued, and one of the white men shot and killed Arbery. Many observers now want to know why it took 74 days and the release of a video of the incident going viral before the arrests were made. The pair have since been charged with felony murder.

At the time of the killing, the white men, Travis McMichael, 34, the shooter, and his father Gregory McMichael, 64, said they intended to stop Arbery from their pickup truck and make a citizen's arrest because they thought he was responsible for recent break-ins in the neighborhood. They also said they killed Arbery in self-defense, shooting him with two shots from a shotgun. (It's not clear from the video how the struggle over the gun began; scenarios for either Arbery or Travis McMichael to be at fault can be developed. However, it was the McMichaels who brought guns to the scene.)

The shooting was captured on video by William "Roddie" Bryan, from a vehicle following the McMichaels' truck.

Despite the McMichaels' claim that they suspected Arbery of burglaries in the neighborhood, the only theft reported to police involved a gun stolen from Travis McMichael's unlocked truck, according to reports from the Glynn County Police Department.

It was later determined via a surveillance clip that although minutes before the shooting, Arbery had entered a house under construction which was not locked and looked around, he had not taken anything or caused any damage. A neighbor called 911 and reported someone in the building.

Following the shooting, the owner of that house, Larry English, issued a statement through his attorney, saying: "In the months prior to February 23, a motion-activated camera had captured videos of someone inside the house (which was and remains a construction site) at night. Mr. English has never said that Mr. Arbery was the person or persons in those videos, and he does not see a resemblance now. After the first time that video captured someone in the house, Mr. English contacted local law enforcement on a non-emergency number and made them aware of the unauthorized entry onto his property. He never used the word 'burglary.' He never shared any of this information with the McMichaels, whom he did not even know. Nothing was ever stolen from the house -- which, again, was a construction site. Even if there had been a robbery, however, the English family would not have wanted a vigilante response. They would have entrusted the matter to law enforcement authorities. …  The only crime that the homeowner has seen captured on video is the senseless killing of Mr. Arbery."

A CNN article about the shooting commented that Arbery's killing "raises a host of troubling concerns in a country where jogging while black must be added to the outrageous list of hazards facing black men."

Because the older McMichael was a retired investigator who had worked with the Brunswick Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office from 1995 until May 2019, and was in law enforcement before that, two different DAs recused themselves from charging the pair. It took the appointment of a third DA before the arrests were made.

The second prosecutor, George Barnhill, defended the actions of the McMichaels. In an April 3 letter recusing himself, addressed to a Glynn County police captain, Barnhill said the pair had "solid first-hand probable cause" to pursue Arbery, a "burglary suspect," and stop him.

A third prosecutor, Thomas Durden, the district attorney for Georgia's Atlantic Judicial Circuit, was appointed "on or about" April 13. On May 5, the video of the shooting was uploaded on the website of WGIG, a local radio station. The video was uploaded to YouTube and went viral. In a letter released that same day, Durden announced his intention to present the case to the next available Glynn County grand jury "for the consideration of criminal charges against those involved in the death of Mr. Arbery."

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a well-known commentator in the evangelical Christian world, characterized the McMichaels' actions and subsequent attempt to justify them as a failure to observe the rule of law. Noting the McMichaels' claim that they had tried to detain Arbery because they believed they had probable cause that he was a suspect and they were going to hold him for authorities, Mohler said, "In a nation under the rule of law, in most jurisdictions there is some power for individual citizens who are not law enforcement officials to arrest or detain someone until the police or law enforcement can get there if two … very important things have taken place. For one thing, they in most cases have to observe the crime in process, and secondly they are not to start a confrontation that can lead to violence."

*The Wired Word* is not vetting Mohler's statement -- like him, we are not lawyers -- and the second of his points is open to interpretation since *any* confrontation *can* lead to violence. Nonetheless, that point is likely held by a large number of people.

The McMichaels failed by both of those standards, Mohler said: "They did not see any crime undertaken by Ahmaud Arbery or anyone else, and they most importantly did start a confrontation that eventually led to the death of an unarmed citizen.

Mohler also said the rule of law makes the McMichaels' claim of self-defense problematic. He referenced former United States Attorney in Macon, Georgia, Michael Moore, who said that under the Georgia code, a citizen can use force if they fear for their life, but they cannot create a confrontation themselves and then claim self-defense after harming someone.

"We can summarize this issue in the law very easily," said Mohler, "by saying that it is a precious, important right for every single American not to fall victim of two men in a pickup truck who simply decide that we look like someone who might be a suspect and then start a confrontation that leads to our death."

Beyond matters of rule of law, however, the fact that it took authorities 74 days to arrest the suspects, and only after the video was leaked, has caused many observers, regardless of their own racial identity, to view the killing of Arbery and the subsequent inaction on the part of authorities as the result racial profiling.

On May 11, the U.S. Department of Justice said it would consider a request by Georgia's attorney general to review the shooting and assess whether federal hate crime charges should be pursued.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Ahmaud Arbery Shooting: A Timeline of the Case. *NBC News*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlqwAO-2B-2BIxQ7OQU-2BsAJgJdYwz6YSHFCip16RmRWZu0giOMc8qkx-2Fho6AAgN47-2BT2zjlJhsHVFdavqiFAlEz32iCivEsH6oF5FMtkHU6W1O2z-2B3ATtG_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGRI0njHScsJlKLfgKuozBP8bjtlYrAxpyDQKEbhgaD5u9gsrPTELyRWLt-2Fo-2Fo3Nulf4-2B5B9YFvJVsnNwe-2FhV49d6BHI8X7mR-2FXd9itCUmE6TNpjMT6sBkXLsULUPZEcJnrXRv1b2Ief1N4QcgUwj-2BTMWBCV-2FLzY6O8WUC-2FsI5tSYwID-2B6UgEuB-2BPWFU6-2FBXO80DbQrpYs1JEamGXCrWMCfRZDgDmBP91vIwEfEkLdkiQ)   
[DOJ Considering Federal Hate Crimes Charges in Ahmaud Arbery Killing. *National Review*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq8s0sNV4jNIqqxSuhTBKYRA9qsy7LGi3rZfE2Kvon7kTqSR8H93PxZOzw-2BYe-2F3m-2BoaH5rH1K5jneiXeDCeYl8oLv45OmF3L6bd9FTI2MK1wyXvow1yVRg1fQe-2BikcmpafupuPsQsP8DSUZed8zJQUWw-3DHVod_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGRP-2FPmVrR-2B1E2BYWcTILVWmUQ9fEC1PQ0pSth3bS6EqUc6EWCejZhqI4R-2FGhK-2Bfw64pYP69r0wyBe-2BdP3vgYcCeFoYgnBdBHwVkhANBkwFy-2BM8lr4Liny5pdRkKpzbbxQpSpYzuLwPuDa-2FdeBhRdoEtefmqLJc2MyycrQl1jjOSoUgkvH3NS49XtxKNwSgPdbsYzLw0dPKN5tdkX53UICMR4CcTLau2tyUhrCVByTUsB)   
[Homeowner's Attorney, Arbery Family's Attorney Respond to New Video. *WTOC 11*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq9S-2Fvqzcy0KNJY9APUE0bRBMIBCTbZjGHOybxkLKn30sncIkff6Ik9UMhvCCFoBQ-2ByVQk5mgAdNMwJu6e9Y0me4OrqCg6ffIvdU5y90CHXuSovZkiLzewzkz7fT0xMX03g-3D-3DNgOc_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGUMOjLUrv6Ylecf-2FXIiZJtZ1ljRSgN19pQBnxLUKI-2FIOvIJv29cegmptwGgSE4B8JGz8-2BUzKEwGRQAjU31vfVVxDgHwh5X1dRi4rzdNQahYzQuE-2FnRyesPd2KEsnmT13XVuKx-2BoJaNStA3KAVy-2BFoo0d5HCIk8n5Ijw1rwEAN0RfDLIOdEIwqXBIV189Nlf-2FXaEsOddOubSf1jOxnL067hU7KH-2FYLL52OGav6BZeVojb)    
[The Death of Ahmaud Arbery: Big Questions about the Rule of Law and the Death of a Young Black Man in Georgia. *Albert Mohler*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq6mkmIsmzAiz7Hf2pDR12Pu-2FmO5H4YP2b3lnjELKsuoRQW44sadKyCLSuVCOG3Sw1w-3D-3DIIlX_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGZSZ4eIRlEWmjQg1xiUjaRuOv-2BYWxMJ0-2FLWGfIBv9XpRXLBVVAIJEJUY8cWe67IOWiypgrPOrU7wg5D5nfv4XSuUKqioJBfqgNmsTamG-2BCNUX4E6T0r2HFGkq4IXwREYKBytGSY-2F4Nvniry8Zqz5chSQUZJCfAqNkwUk98IJYzKF-2BsTXr17XL5LRE9m85Q-2FT-2FYvdPHzx-2FxEpdl7V-2BIEZmMKoj9s6iDGVsqwuxBKH95gr) (Briefing for Monday, May 11, 2020, Part II. Both audio file and transcript on the site)   
[Ahmaud Arbery Died for the Indefensible Principle of White Control. *Religion News Service*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq3QiBA3mchmS9A70bKeKvNOrJs58sklvuUD8ALzIwn5YqQBCUE7uUjjlnnGe9Gv58PnJqlVM-2FHZMmfisiKsU8M3t8-2FrdVZ4uLB0m1z1rEnOQs4kJakNIR5wedXHA9BED4ga-2FiKdi9uO3RprFXHGMLJ0-3DwgWA_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGQm7X3VSlaFJoo4BdquM88u-2BJfbZ34FF7TG7ajfxnwoTwQ3ZpeTamNIcQ83gUbbrQydGg-2B9MXSPz-2Bv-2BRMqvoStcfFsS9Go0pOWyG-2FRU7qBoj4wmII4bovujdzJnQi2xl-2B-2BaUhEw7AXhGFgZbEAWeK1KZm-2BiOsJ7B-2F7xrLIsOkN82G-2BeiKSQmJIrJK8ks3sOmKH5qf-2BdMxeULkebl07ubTP0ocHHiPUmA5am1OVqrW5FF)[Ahmaud Arbery and the Trauma of Being a Black Runner. *Christianity Today*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlqzwRuwSGFN2rzD1qZCNFRDb3vdUvpnBdkTusg-2FYdC3UKB6Uj4RPMNSnx6BjjMRJe8g8IKHJxtN-2Fp-2FmmYy9W1R9-2BdWhPCdJ-2BiywivA9aRplUa7JMBNnXliT7u-2Fj4qbvaU3CoxmmyZ9igJNHXMaaQLQhs-3DmEUf_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGZL2fp5-2FXF9YPUS4yqGSY61V1Z3y63xQWgpqVxskpnXfMZID9bUxsSha0RQdWkAbnDrHjRuh98PNPZ9SPw5AgKLaCdjV4kobPY2m-2BG9BI1cVANOMCYtk2q7HgYTCQy7Jb13z7KixUK2wLP7Vxi-2BD7gF-2FXBzMqtjq523L2JpDS7QtwzdyYNQzItO3cYTonenLDrxFvBFn2tQjaEr1taiZQxfZ3ZjQNCLl-2Fs6O4KFb4KRO)

**Applying the News Story**

Today's lesson gives us an opportunity to think carefully about racism. It has become common to label any shooting incident involving a black person and a white person as racially motivated, but unbiased investigations reveal that such is not always the case. In some situations, the racial identity of the individuals involved is incidental to other factors in the confrontation.

Nonetheless, it's hard in some other situations, including the one in today's news story, to rule out racial profiling. While none of the news reports have stated a racial motive, some published opinion pieces about the incident have. Still, we have no way of knowing what was in the hearts and minds of any of the three men involved in this tragic incident.

So our aim with this lesson is to consider the kinds of questions we ought to ask ourselves when we suspect -- or are told by third parties -- that racism is a factor in tragic incidents. We can also use such questions to examine the everyday assumptions we make about others who are unlike us.

**The Big Questions**

1. In what ways, if at all, might the reaction of the public and the subsequent actions of law enforcement officials have been different if all three of the individuals involved in this shooting were white?

2. In what ways, if at all, might the reaction of the public and the  subsequent actions of law enforcement officials have been different if all three of the individuals involved in this shooting were black?

3. In what ways, if at all, might the reaction of the public and the subsequent actions of law enforcement officials have been different if the victim had been white and the two men with the guns black?

4. Are there other reasonable explanations that fit the circumstances that don't assume racism is the primary (or the only) motivation?

5. In what ways, if at all, do your answers to questions 1-4 help you decide if racism was likely a significant factor in this shooting incident? More importantly, what do your answers indicate about your *own* views and prejudices -- and the views and prejudices you presume others have -- concerning race and relations between people of various races? In what ways might your own views actually be wrong -- and how do you account for that possibility?

**Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**Deuteronomy 19:15**  
*A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained.* (For context, read 19:15-21.)

The need for more than one witness to convict someone is part of the Law of God as given to Moses. This verse is not an exact fit to the shooting of Admaud Arbery, since the McMichaels had not even one witness that Arbery had done anything wrong. They had only suspicion and that was based on what? A stereotypical assumption that a stranger in their neighborhood must be up to no good? A stereotypical assumption that a black man in a white neighborhood must be up to no good? There's no way of knowing, but clearly, they were acting on suspicion rather than observation and evidence of a crime.

**Questions:** Why do you think this rule was included in the Law of Moses? What principles for how we act toward others can we extrapolate from this verse?

**Ruth 2:5-8***Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment." Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women."* (For context, read 2:1-13.)

Ruth, from Moab, had come to Israel with her widowed Israelite mother-in-law Naomi. No doubt Ruth was recognizably a Moabite (a group despised by most Israelites), through her facial features, manner of dress and accented speech. Although she knew that the Israelite owner of the field, Boaz, was a relative of Naomi's by marriage and she hoped to be favorably received by him, her decision as an outsider to join the other indigent gleaners had potential dangers. She could not be certain of any protection from harassment or even rape.

Fortunately, Boaz became her protector, and thus her story turns out much better than Arbery's, who was also an outsider in the neighborhood.

**Questions:** Has there been a time when you were a stranger somewhere and found a protector rather than a predator? If so, explain the circumstances. When have you, or someone you know, assumed a self-appointed role of enforcer of law? What was the outcome?

**James 4:1-2***Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. ...* (For context, read 4:1-10.)

These verses can be read as being about entitlement.

From the news reports, it sounds as if the confrontation with Arbery was driven in part by an assumption that he wasn't *entitled* to be where he was.

**Questions:** Have you ever felt entitled, or even called, to determine who has a right to be in certain spaces, or who should be allowed to speak or act in those spaces? How would you explain that choice to someone who called you on it?

When have you been wrong in your assumptions about people? When have people been wrong in their assumptions about you?

**Acts 17:26 (The Message)***Starting from scratch, [God] made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him.* (For context, read 17:22-28.)

**Questions:** How should we hear this verse? Is it perhaps saying that there is only *one* race, the human race? If that is the case, what are the implications for you?

**For Further Discussion**

1. Respond to this, from a TWW team member: "Police officers (like most people) have a tendency to tunnel vision: Once assuming a guy is the suspect/perpetrator, it takes some doing to get someone to reconsider. Once 'Hey, that looks like the burglar' and/or 'Yeah! Let's go after him!' gets said, vision narrows."  
    The same team member also commented that, given that the elder McMichael has a law enforcement background, in his opinion, it is more likely (should the McMichaels be at significant fault) "that the underlying problem is the increased assumed authority found within law enforcement personnel." That team member has mentioned before the differences arising in the shift from police as "peace officers" to "law enforcement officers."  
    "I'm not denying that racism and animosity exists -- in all directions" says our team member, "but not prejudging this particular case, I note that the "law enforcement" attitude is more universal.

2. Evaluate this, from Albert Mohler's comments on the Arbery shooting: "It simply has to be conceded that this [delay in the arrests of the McMichaels] is over against the background of the fact that throughout much of American history there has been a danger of young black men being wrongfully detained and indeed lynched in extrajudicial violence. What does extrajudicial mean? It means outside the legal process, outside the courts. There is no honest person looking at American history who does not concede that that was a pattern that is simply a blight upon the nation's history and it is in this case and in all other cases an impetus to make certain that justice is done. That's why we have a Department of Justice. That's why we have a justice system. And now every single American has to depend upon our justice system doing what it is assigned responsibility to do, and that is apply the rule of law justly."

3. Discuss this [account](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlqzwRuwSGFN2rzD1qZCNFRDb3vdUvpnBdkTusg-2FYdC3UKB6Uj4RPMNSnx6BjjMRJe8g8IKHJxtN-2Fp-2FmmYy9W1R9-2BdWhPCdJ-2BiywivA9aRplUa7JMBNnXliT7u-2Fj4qbvaU3CoxmmyZ9igJNHXMaaQLQhs-3D_DFA_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGdhN7UxxOE0eKQ3GF8Dwx33dv3YwpEvdMU9Oo2BkjqioPyrk5J4ze89MMzxXjm7D5gZXMr0J5btI-2Fs0v1zJ3v7z750dm4SfmDVzCKgIOaVDYu3TnyvZjVx36lRkozS-2FXLylymQTuVlEtM1cX8drj8FYPpf2-2BESTDbhmL1d-2BCqc-2Bzka-2B1yXiCkj8-2FlhkuAhvoPjqsPS2mwWtyG352BBO4q2rYtxIkOpeHH8ZhNiK0Fwg0) from Dante Stewart, writing in *Christianity Today*. "I was on my morning run as the sun was rising in the blue California skies. There was hardly anybody out at that time. You learn real young not to run too early in the morning or too late at night.  
    "I guess I forgot the lessons, the safety agenda my parents taught me. They knew what would happen. I brought my identification like my wife tells me to every time I leave. During the run, I wasn't worried about anything, and I felt good. I couldn't wait to check my pace on my fitness tracker.  
    "Then it happened. I looked in the distance, and there was this white man on his porch taking photos of me. Every shot he took, I got more confused. I said, 'It's a good morning out here, isn't it?' as if me being respectable was going to shield me in this situation or get him to finally see me as a human.  
    "He didn't answer. Here we go again.  
    "My fear quickly turned to rage. I wanted to fight for my dignity in the face of being documented by a stranger and being told I didn't belong here. Policed by a man standing on his front porch. Right there in Southern California, the ghost of Jim Crow's 'What are you doing here, n--r?' showed up.  
    "But ultimately, I felt powerless. I couldn't even call the cops because they might've mistaken me for the aggressor."

4. Comment on this, from TWW team member Stan Purdum: "Arbery's looking around in the building under construction reminds me that I did this very thing myself in the last place I lived. They were building a new house next door, and one day, after the workers had gone home but before any doors were hung, I went in and looked at the construction, just because I was interested in it. Don't know if anybody saw me, but if they did, they would have been my neighbors who would know who I was. Also, I was a white guy in a white neighborhood, which may be apropos of nothing, but who knows?"

**Responding to the News**

This is a good time to consider the circumstances in which our vision becomes "tunneled" to the exclusion of what might be the truth of a situation.

We can also write out what other questions like those in "The Big Questions" above that can help us take a fuller view of matters where we tend to accept one-note narratives.

**Prayer**

O Lord, let us be quick to see the "family resemblance" between ourselves and those who are different from us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Other News This Week**

**People Adapt to Loss of Physical Contact During Pandemic  
*The Wired Word* for the Week of May 17, 2020**

**In the News**

On March 18, an unnamed human resources specialist tweeted on Twitter: "I've been super teary today, I live alone and the thought of not getting a hug for anyone for MONTHS is desperate." She hasn't touched or been touched by anyone in the two months since.

The worker is not alone in her experience of what is known as "skin hunger," aka touch starvation or deprivation. Some people have remarked that they are listening to Bruce Springsteen's song, [Human Touch](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq9mQh3HGS5wtkxMy67YtUhhEcvAWZBsopmU-2F8uQi-2BdtRPlGbtGH0KsB0qU7eZplPeg-3D-3DOaun_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGeedOj6xY-2B9SZ60vHvvnMT8eAH-2FYnyg77soklAUP1lFtoIrNKPwRqq9vvqNPUMqnyAvGvZKK-2BF-2B9Im1vV8BiauZ10XE4j-2BJHnUT0o9i-2FhN8ZzcxnFHliySKpCZZbNkp-2FxCeWZeLlFLSayvXxnl8rgVi3nvCgAyosb8mxoHj6ltIVsZHu5yN645-2F6XupV73FBg-2B7z7irnoAKINVtxCf4863Y6rW0ut0k-2BLZwqhtuXffrR), a lot more often since the pandemic began.

Most of us have a biological need to touch and be touched. When that need is unmet, we can experience skin hunger.

At the county jail in Skagit County, Washington, Chaplain Chris Hoke saw a profound hunger for human touch among the inmates. But many hid their hunger behind a tough guy facade, perhaps to protect themselves from taunts or worse, or to project an image of strength and self-sufficiency.

In a men's Bible study in Burlington, Washington, one former county jail inmate said he discovered a kind of "intimacy with Jesus when two men are touching each other and praying for each other," he said. "You could feel the energy ... the power of Christ going through that person's hands and going into your body."

"I think ... God came ... to touch us," Hoke said. "Jesus crossed such a span between us, so that we could be one. And so I think the touch is just the beginning of that, of a love story."

"[Touch is] a really important factor in our growth and development," said psychologist Sarah Schewitz. In the 1950s, Harry Harlow conducted an experiment with baby monkeys, who were taken from their mothers and allowed to choose between surrogates made of wires or terry cloth. The infants consistently preferred the comforting, soft mother substitute they could hug, regardless of which "mother" had food.

Before the outbreak of the coronavirus, some sectors of contemporary culture (businesses and education, for example) were already moving toward more restrictive norms with regard to human touch, in part to protect institutions and individuals against litigation. Tiffany Field of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami worries that Covid-19 may make us even more averse to physical contact, at a time when "we need human touch the most."

Playwright Eve Ensler, who goes by the pseudonym V, is concerned that as touch becomes associated with pestilence and death, we may begin to see others as pariahs to be feared and avoided.

But while there are obvious dangers of contagion, losing the warmth of human touch is also risky. Without friendly physical contact, we may experience the weakening of our immune systems, which would have the effect of making us potentially more susceptible to disease.

In addition, some social scientists say the loss of human touch would likely lead to greater incidence of depression, anxiety, loneliness, stress, sleep disorders, suicide, aggression and violence.

On the other hand, physical contact with other people helps us solve problems, build trust and relationships, thrive and succeed in individual and team endeavors, which positively impacts human health. Alberto Gallace, a neuroscientist at the University of Milano-Bicocca, says that sensory modality optimizes the "chances of survival" and increases feelings of well-being for social creatures. Skin-to-skin contact is beneficial for mental, emotional and physical health.

According to several bloggers who write about this issue, when physical touch is not possible, we can still pursue emotional, intellectual and spiritual intimacy to mitigate skin hunger. We might reach out to people via video chats or phone check-ins, letters and care packages. We could arrange to watch a church service, movie or TV series at the same time, even though we are physically in different locations.

We can also engage in physical activities to simulate pleasant sensory experiences to help our bodies adjust to temporary social distancing from other people. We can exercise, enjoy long, hot baths or showers, wash and blow-dry our hair, give ourselves facials, scalp massages, manicures or pedicures, hug stuffed animals or body pillows, swaddle ourselves in comforters or weighted blankets, cuddle with pets, knead bread dough, plant and care for gardens, and leave fresh produce or flowers at the edge of friends' driveways, at local hospitals, or at the mailbox for our postal carriers.

For now, we may not be able to satisfy our skin hunger by touching one another physically. But with a little creativity and the grace of God, perhaps we can touch each other's hearts.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Human Touch is Essential. How Are People Coping With 'Skin Hunger'? *The World*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq-2Fj9dLAd15oixFlz45zWmmLVYYJpDbIvpYDCdoJ3jk8AwG7rUo888b-2BB2-2FoZnDeuKoGvJ0tLNBW7WwkHoI4ibt3QH0Co9bqLIenXcH7FmENubfsA8Byi4B2mWutebGYsIA-3D-3DEMCn_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGep34bAd8YfIoh8cFgfB-2FRjurxLtwoq02y8A0wcXanHntY8fUdJRH59R1Fh4XeeqIQln8ISmPoZpl-2Fsg5aP-2Fn2yRp4GomxVrLpAL-2BNnoNsKEJ7FjKxyaCrEy4qyoYDVH6xXSZkIQ-2BJ00YpbYk0TYLkNCO6sOU7LVVq1ATiQXLZGs-2Fn76pg1qU-2B4GLOnfjbiitLSJu9GejdzmYC4RPi2kNsVHPX-2BU5spJVWxjIOkxYHdU)[Skin Hunger Helps Explain Your Desperate Longing for Human Touch. *Wired*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq6TImHFP92qINKJEdFDW77BkyRUpGe4v4JxMibEJ7lGO2A-2BGn96vxjye8ULxfy10VWTiDkGRvSw82QOvwsasKsA-3DQMjh_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGV-2Fn6fcK95yXRUjer7OkD1tLf3to2h07FrJNrKnrWyaWr1-2BnP4NU1sjp0RiSIZNRCSMDN-2FRlx2aFzChvWCp3OgKhOddm4OpzyshpcffokKCyjx-2FQLPMUC515MnqY2Etvjo1ZD09zrM5ZRIXhkOoKwteS4rbOV5t4jIa7bLgcLsCC0s7BNMOJPRRgn4wbVBo4LHH0zSJXRUsgCHQ1bPs5Rf206otpOlE9atUmhq6dU5CI)[What Happens When We Can't Touch Each Other? Skin Hunger. *Refinery29*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq2v0-2FjLgVLmQDe5QbIU1E29-2FSfEqP-2FE55p1zcVJiJieLBbB1hp7RuTp9gLnXTb2zPLTfRgLGffzi4bzp-2BJLXuzew2l-2FnFg8wj6dnt-2B6JPTruBFxr-2BNbNF4kmAS6w6SG3eg-3D-3DXJR2_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGQKULZHJtuToYcuu-2BtZlbIFlxG0jmc0oLe-2Bk7LJGfuo4ANJFyU9F8Z89-2FLxPkXP0tkbKBJrfy3aVpRkM-2FiE-2F92RPUnQLdyc1oRcK6Msorxw4Tc9QBZCStRBOCUdixWySbEpoW-2BuLbviGr6CR-2BRElc-2FEpvQm2IQZX9n6o9L7FifoXFcUMUj-2BNqeKzDUA7FW4jqseRUcctRoqGFld7Y6ei3u3VsrE7O1scM6fufUvhD8as)[Power of Touch a Transformative, Healing Force. *CBN News*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq6NMYgBF7pEh-2BLmpaolFnWMyc4IRt2BorciB6Qm47G0nNYNwbLiy0NegMgTc2GLMsKvZj0mirI0NulGXGTL90UvV6vc9NIkU2zjdI76KPIx-2FPaPIdaU0vJzvcAQu0KK-2BYw-3D-3DxUP9_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGQhEDcRLDWBE9eBWv3FouOarGIWoj84KiFSfzdyLy47BnXg-2B7UTdKUngr5f6Q023fTsUFmpK8G2eUJxe7sdaa8helsZTDfjyu1IwpzDYTgKzE57cJc6qqnifyXupXKuOWSOSgQ42-2ByTvG3jTyLUarVsMzKueXcltGIRBsiLCDfElB1qjOZwtm5AKZBbLKhaJiEGGul91M2iqZC53CYvGNMXgcGzJ9aU4javzKl8IDf4x)[What to Do If Covid-19 is Giving You 'Skin Hunger.' *Yahoo! News*](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq9HIvP0FwXtrJAPFQ9M54ENH9EbxJyxrYL-2FVuFQ2kP9swRhKiKz49zXeFRdJhDuYnv3FBCl-2FjrKPxcUu6ysD4M8-3DdkmB_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGVq5spa0eUb9KaP3RjNFjWa-2B-2B-2BYzpHYctdEgFlPL2LM0kshCO8oy2awaDi8p9vTeOYEUcr0KVmDZgWHARz9mVjSS-2FvICJzy9-2Fze63YQO8RJeLAFSynpz5RqEj0IZFMu7RjXWRWLHBBlgKDsYMNjbOgeWLe2YIpMtfUZ-2BtIhjkZx7QK8D4uLqzNVw5qehSDtvPMPURkApmFuuk-2FuIRZEaKNXu5e2hgRv41D1nYO-2Bs3hMD)

**Applying the News Story**

For this lesson, we will explore a few of the more prominent ways touch is used in the Bible. We are not addressing inappropriate, violent or sexual touch in this edition*.*

Touch can communicate that someone matters and is cherished. It can convey the power of God to heal, forgive, and restore. It can help us evaluate the truth of the Resurrection and other matters of faith.

As we touch others, we can transmit those same truths to them: that they matter to God; that God cherishes them; that God's power to heal, forgive, and restore is available to us today; and that God wants to touch us and invites us to reach out to touch God in faith, that we might know the truth God has revealed to us in Christ.

Healing is frequently associated with human touch in the Bible. When Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed, he touched her hand, and the fever left her (Matthew 8:14-15). Another time, Jesus touched the eyes of two blind men and restored their sight (Matthew 20:29-34). Once when he was teaching in a synagogue, he laid hands on a woman who had been crippled for 18 years, and "immediately she stood up straight and began praising God" (Luke 13:10-13).

In Matthew 8:1-4, a leper came to Jesus to ask for cleansing. Because Mosaic law specified that lepers were unclean, and that anyone who touched an unclean person would be cut off from the Lord's presence (Leviticus 5:3 and 22:3-6), Jesus would have been perfectly justified to heal the man with a word, which he did on occasion (e.g., Mark 3:5-13). But Jesus made a point of touching the leper as he healed him.

Because of his disease, the leper had been physically and socially isolated, cut off from the fellowship of God's people and unable to participate in sacred meals. By touching the leper, Jesus communicated more than physical healing; he welcomed the leper back into communion with God and his people.

Great crowds followed Jesus. Sick people pressed in to touch him, hoping for healing (Mark 3:7-10). Perhaps they also suffered from "skin hunger," since illness often shuts people off from view and limits their social exchanges.

**The Big Questions**

1. What kind of effect does a lack of human touch have on you? On others you know? Who specifically do you miss touching during this time of increased social distancing?

2. How are you caring for yourself and meeting your own need for physical comfort during this stressful time? How are you nurturing relationships if you can't touch one another physically for a time?

3. If you are sheltering in place with family/friends, have you been able to share hugs, holding hands, etc.? If so, how has that affected your quarantine experience? If you are sheltering in place alone, are there non-physical touches that you have given or received? How have these affected your quarantine experience?

4. Does the memory of positive human touch help relieve your own "skin hunger" while we are more isolated physically? Or does it make you feel more deprived?

5. What, if anything, is your church doing to address the need people have for human touch while doing what is required to protect public health?

**Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

**Luke 8:44, 54-55**  
*[The woman] came up behind [Jesus] and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. … But [Jesus] took [the girl] by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat.* (For context, read 8:41-56.)

In this incident, crowds press in to touch Jesus as he passes through town (v. 42). Some probably thought that if they could just get close to Jesus, some of his healing power might rub off on them. Some might have been hungry for human touch, or maybe even for a touch from God.

A leader of the local synagogue, Jairus, knelt before Jesus to beg for the life of his only daughter, who was dying. She was about 12 years old (vv. 41-42). As Jesus made his way to the house of Jairus, a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for as long as Jairus' daughter had been alive came up behind Jesus and touched the tzitzit on his prayer shawl. Immediately, power went from Jesus' body to heal the woman.

The nature of the woman's affliction suggests a kind of hidden shame she may well have carried within her until the moment Jesus healed her. She would have felt the burden of her ritual and physical uncleanness every day for 12 years, and also been aware that, if others knew of her condition, they would have avoided her like the plague, to avoid "catching" any "uncleanness" from her. Surely this would have made her feel obligated to self-isolate to some degree.

The woman's act was audacious, to say the least. A woman in her condition was considered impure, and anyone who had physical contact with her would have been seen as guilty by association (Leviticus 5:3 and 15:25, 27). That meant that she couldn't participate in temple worship for 12 years. It also meant that she was considered a "carrier" of a kind of virus that had the power to infect others.

Then Jesus invited the woman to bear witness to the healing God had provided to her. How embarrassing it must have been for her to admit her condition, not just one-on-one with Jesus her healer, but in front of all those people! Yet after living in the shadows for 12 years, she could finally tell her story and be restored to social interaction and the spiritual life of the community (vv. 45-48).

While Jesus conversed with the woman, people came from Jairus' house, announcing that his daughter was dead. Jesus urged Jairus not to fear, but to believe, and she would be saved (vv. 49-50). When he arrived at the house, he touched the girl and brought her back to life.

Scripture teaches that Jesus is fully God and fully human. That means that when the woman with the hemorrhage touched him, she touched the perfect God-man. And when Jesus touched the dead girl, his was a human touch and the life-giving touch of God.

**Questions:** When, if ever, have you reached out to Jesus, in desperation, hoping that he might relieve you of some long-standing burden, pain, or trauma? Or when, if ever, have you sought his help for someone you hold dear? What happened?

**Mark 10:13-16**  
*People were bringing little children to [Jesus] in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.* (No context needed.)

While it is possible that some of the people who brought little children to Jesus hoped he might heal them with a touch, as he cured so many others, this passage does not tell us whether any of the children were sick or injured. It is just as likely that people brought the children to Jesus just to receive a blessing,

The disciples seem to labor under the misconception that Jesus couldn't be bothered with insignificant infants and troublesome toddlers. They rebuke those who brought the children, but Jesus was incensed. It was unjust to bar little children from the presence of the king God had sent into the world, when the kingdom of God belonged to them.

"The littlest hands can touch the deepest of our beloved hearts," according to an online contributor identified only as ApolloM. That certainly appears to be true in Jesus' case. The littlest hands of the smallest baby touched his heart, so he in turn took them in his arms and blessed them. We get the impression that Jesus probably enjoyed the encounter as much as or more than the children did.

By welcoming little children into his embrace, Jesus was affirming their worth, even though others discounted them.

**Questions:** What do you think made Jesus such an attractive personage that people wanted to bring little children to him to be touched? What other encounters with children can you recall Jesus having? What do you think children enjoyed about Jesus?

Do you enjoy being around children? Do children enjoy being in your presence? What can you do to grow in your love and appreciation of children?

How can we use touch in life-affirming ways, to assure people that they are of inestimable value to God, so cherished that God gave his own Son to gain eternal life for them (John 3:16)?

**Luke 15:20**  
*[Jesus continued,] "So [the son] set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.* (For context, read 15:1-32.)

The parable of the Prodigal Son portrays a father who by all rights would have been justified if he had washed his hands of his inconsiderate younger son, who couldn't wait for his father's death to get his hands on his inheritance. The father had acquiesced to his request to receive his benefits early, and watched his son leave home, to squander what he had spent a lifetime building. After the boy spent everything, he began to feel the pinch of poverty and the humiliation of hunger.

Finally recognizing and regretting his foolish mistake, the son re-evaluated his situation. He reasoned that his father's hired hands were better off than he was. He decided to humble himself, admit his sin to his father, and beg for a job, not expecting any special treatment, such as a son might get, but only asking for the privilege of working as an employee.

As he was making his way home and rehearsing his speech, his father spotted him in the distance and ran to meet him with open arms and enthusiastic kisses. The father interrupted his son's expression of remorse, gave him "a complete makeover" with a new set of clothes, a feast and a party to celebrate his return home, restoring him into the heart of the family.

Jesus told this story after members of the religious elite grumbled about the fact that he welcomed sinners and ate with people they considered unworthy (v. 2). Jesus wants the scribes and the Pharisees to understand that God rejoices when sinners repent (vv. 7, 10), just as the father rejoiced at the return of his repentant son (v. 20).

And how did the father express his love for his son and joy at their reunion? With a lot of loving human touch. There could be no question in the son's mind that his father loved him after that lavish display of affection.

**Questions:** Have you ever felt like you've blown it so badly that God could never forgive you, much less want you back? What do you learn from the way this father treated his son?

Have you ever felt that God's grace seems just a little too lenient at times? What do the father's actions of acceptance and welcome suggest to you about your own perspective?

How can you use touch to effectively mirror God's attitude and behavior toward those who have fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23)? When physical touch is not available, how else can you communicate how God feels about people?

**Luke 24:39-40**  
*[Jesus said,] "Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.* (For context, read 24:36-43.)

On the day Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples were talking together about the reports they had heard about his appearances. Suddenly, Jesus stood in their midst. But they were terrified, thinking they were seeing a ghost (vv. 36-37).

So Jesus invited them to look at his nail-scarred hands and feet, and to touch him and see that he was risen from the dead, and not some apparition. As further evidence, he ate a piece of broiled fish in their presence (vv. 41-43).

Here we see how important touch was for the disciples as they sought evidence that would confirm the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

You might say that Jesus welcomed a certain amount of scientific methodology when it came to matters of faith. At the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, when Philip told Nathanael about Jesus, and Nathanael asked whether anything good could come out of Nazareth, Philip invited his friend to "come and see" for himself (John 1:43-46).

"O taste and see that the LORD is good," wrote the psalmist (Psalm 34:8). Don't just take his word for it; check God out for yourself.

John says they had "looked at and touched" the word of life with their hands (1 John 1:1-3)

Most people today probably would not say that they have touched Jesus' resurrection body. Yet millions believe that he is alive, and rejoice in that assurance.

**Questions:** On what is your faith in the resurrection of Jesus based? Have you tested that belief, and if so, how have you done so? Can people "touch" the risen Lord today? How might that be possible?

**For Further Discussion**

1. Comment on this, from Rachel Held Evans' *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church*: "Just as God comes to us through water and wine, God comes to us through touch, through the holy acts of holy hands. Through touch, God gave us the power to injure or to heal, to wage war or to wash feet. Let us not forget the gravity of that. Let us not forget the call."

2.  Stanley Kunitz, American poet, wrote "Darling, do you remember the man you married? Touch me, remind me who I am." When, if ever, have you ever been reminded of who you are by someone's touch? What exactly did that touch call forth in you?

3. Standup comedian Lane Moore wrote in *How to Be Alone: If You Want To, and Even If You Don't*, "Having someone touch you in a safe, gentle way -- even for two seconds -- feels like it changes your whole world." When, if ever, has your whole world been changed by someone's touch, and how was it changed?

4. Discuss this, from a TWW consultant: "In our state, the government organization in charge of foster care *prohibits* foster parents from hugging a foster child. A foster mom friend of ours once told me that they ended up disobeying the rules and hugged a 10- or 11-year old girl (whom they eventually adopted). The girl looked at them and said, 'This is the first time in three years that anyone has given me a hug.' I almost teared up hearing that, and expressed disgust that the rules could be so cruel. The mom told me, 'That's the same thing that [foster boy's name deleted] told us when we got him.' Apparently, this is common."

5. Farshad Asl, an Iranian-American businessman, created this acronym to define the meaning of human touch:

T - Treat people with love and respect  
O - Over-deliver and under-promise  
U - Understand first, respond later  
C - Connect through open communication  
H - Humbly serve others

How well does this communicate the importance of human touch for you? Is there anything you would add to this definition? How can you follow these five guidelines when physically more distant or isolated from people?

6. Discuss this, from Turkish playwright Mehmet Murat ildan: "Touching a flower is touching life; touching the sun is touching life; touching the skin, touching the sand, all of this means touching life! No touch, no life! … We touch people mostly without touching them; we touch them with our words, with our smile, with our eyes, with our courage, with our madness, with millions of different ways! What are we? We are contacting beings without contacting!"

7. "I don't want to forget what it feels like to have someone touch me. I don't want to forget what it feels like to touch other people." -- A.E.M., *Phoenix Incandescent* What do you think would be the effect on society if people forgot what it is like to touch and be touched? How do you think you would be changed if you forgot what that is like?

8. Read 1 Kings 19:1-13. What did the angel's touch convey to Elijah when he was exhausted, depressed, and suicidal (vv. 5-8)?

9. With the necessary emphasis on teaching children what constitutes "bad touch," are we spending enough time on helping them understand the importance of "good touch"?

**Responding to the News**

Watch the Gaither Vocal Band sing [He Touched Me (Video 4:45)](http://url6748.thewiredword.com/ls/click?upn=FXq18njYKHucetmqt-2BDlq9mQh3HGS5wtkxMy67YtUhiEVupUzqo85-2Fb1k5-2FelvummCgKof5JCwtq2M7xDrciFg-3D-3DXAy0_2Bkgba3oAouSOj-2BLDiRS8b3L-2Brhg-2FgPERpG5-2Ff-2FE8Qr4vijYdYV85HlFKYbm3wRaJr-2Bq5rRiZNGEJq5t17erU4qASCde8Ewq5LLYdP0J-2FvM7WoKAiISkucS54QDLi-2BzEBff5nlSSWFCDnbOtkFhyzAUWrrmJZbApvcyMDi6Wy0m7aucIyUtwSIGxxXkAfAQibVpcy-2FKul5-2F-2FNqOe-2BfbFxL87YE-2FBr-2Fm8LWnTvKyhkAvRbeCp6UDMccKiahZYb6Nby-2FVeVFSFt-2Fyy6HSAo1dNGbI5bSRynl0Q5Cjm94Z6nLucZ5j1PSiOoDNJsCtDsE8qaIrjz8GczUxK9zlohjuh28Rm7uXK3uNhSpNWlPSWLr7Hgcx1K-2F-2B3vU4JjKqwwqVXKHLgSua1qmI997t10xmfQbyfhDnyMpMvdfYOXBo8-2FT23F84t-2FuEpundeZBMO-2Ft1mHlM2NNWZSP2K7mG8U8LX164yz4NU9ZTn69evtGERqHaW-2B5DDP18rB4v9lRFQETYA), and reflect on how Jesus has touched your life and made you whole. Thank God for all he has done for you!

**Prayer**

O God, we long to feel the touch of your hand, to heal and bless, to lift up our heads, strengthen our weak knees, and assure us of your faithful love and our worth. May your Spirit cause your life-giving touch to flow through us to convince others of your unending love and their worth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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