

# 1.2

## THE HANDS OF JESUS

**LESSON BIG IDEA**  
I will be the hands of Jesus to people society casts aside.

**FOCUS VERSES**  
**Mark 1:41**  
And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

**LESSON TEXT**  
**Leviticus 13:42-46; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-16**

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD**  
God is willing to touch and heal people society casts aside.



### Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

## LESSON CONNECTION I

We don't know where she lived or if she even had a home. We don't know whether she normally huddled in the doorway of a local tavern, or if she kept clear and out of sight of society. We don't know where Jesus found her. But wherever she was and whatever her status or circumstances were, she must have been miserable. She, likely, heard voices in her head or experienced sleepless nights with thoughts of self-harm or violence. If we could go back in time, we would not be surprised to see an unkempt, wild-eyed woman, talking to herself and snapping at those who came near. Her name was Mary. She was from Magdala, and she had seven demons living in her.

Then came Jesus. Although she is mentioned in all four Gospels, we find no specific details of Jesus' initial encounter with Mary. The Bible simply says: "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils" (Luke 8:1-2). At some point Jesus cast seven devils out of Mary. Her life must have been a mess before Jesus touched her. We find only a few instances in Scripture where anyone had more demons than Mary.

Mary is a classic example of how drastically Jesus can change a life. She went from being a devil-possessed, socially unstable outcast to being a Bible heroine. She is mentioned by name twelve times in the Gospels, which is more than most of the disciples or other nonfamily women in Jesus' life. Mary traveled with Jesus and was at His crucifixion and burial. Not many people had that privilege.

But perhaps the greatest honor of her life was being the first person Jesus appeared to after His resurrection. Having gone to His tomb with the other women on the morning Jesus rose from the dead, Mary and the others found His tomb empty. They went to tell the disciples. Evidently Mary hung back in the garden alone at some point in the morning because three of the Gospels tell us she spoke with Jesus, thinking He was the gardener. Then she recognized His voice and became overwhelmed with emotion. Perhaps Mary was more passionate toward Jesus because He had shown her such great mercy by touching her life when she was untouchable.

**Teacher Option:**  
*Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.*



## **SG** TEACHING OUTLINE

**Icebreaker:** What is the biggest change you have seen God make in someone's life?

**Lesson Connection:** Share the Lesson Connection on page 363. **I**

- I. THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW REQUIRED LEPERS BE SEPARATED FROM SOCIETY
  - A. Lepers Were Considered Unclean
  - B. Lepers Lived Alone outside the Camp
    - » *What are some things we can do to reach out to lonely people without making them feel embarrassed?*
  - C. Lepers Cried Out, "Unclean"
  - D. God's Love Extends to Those Who Are Unclean
  - E. We Must Show God's Love to People Considered Unclean
    - » *Since love believes the best of people, how can we love people without worrying they will take advantage of our love?*
  
- II. GOD IS WILLING TO TOUCH AND HEAL PEOPLE SOCIETY CASTS ASIDE
  - A. The Leper Begged Jesus to Be Made Clean
    - » *Tell about a time when you faced a difficult situation in your life and began to pray in faith. What happened?*
  - B. Jesus Was Moved with Compassion
    - » *What would the compassion of Jesus look like if He lived in our world and our society?*
  - C. Jesus Touched the Leper and Healed Him
  - D. Jesus Was Not Afraid of What Others Might Say about the Mercy He Showed to Outcasts
  - E. I Will Be the Hands of Jesus to People Society Casts Aside
    - » *Who are some people we as a church need to become more aware of and compassionate toward? How would this compassion impact our church?* **V**

### **Internalizing the Message**

#### **Prayer Focus**

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- That those who are lonely would find Jesus close to them
- That God would baptize us with compassion for those who need Jesus

## LESSON COMMENTARY

### I. THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW REQUIRED LEPERS BE SEPARATED FROM SOCIETY

One of the oldest known groups of societal outcasts are lepers. Before certain medical treatments were available, lepers were required to stay separate from the population. This separation was not just the result of prejudice; it was based on a biblical mandate related to public health:

*And if there be in the bald head, or bald forehead, a white reddish sore; it is a leprosy sprung up in his bald head, or his bald forehead. Then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, if the rising of the sore be white reddish in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh; he is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague is in his head. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. (Leviticus 13:42-46)*

#### A. Lepers Were Considered Unclean

Considering lepers unclean was understandable. Mosaic law said they were unclean; their skin disease could potentially infect others. The uncleanness was a medical issue, not an issue of the person's worth or personality. The contagious disease was the concern, and the resulting quarantine was not designed to devalue the person who contracted leprosy.

People are often defined by things that publicly manifest in their lives. Someone who is painfully shy may be viewed as socially challenged. There may even be legitimate issues at play in the lives of people who have addictions or who make bad lifestyle choices. It is not wrong to be aware of the challenges some people have; it is not wrong to set boundaries when it comes to unhealthy relationships. It is wrong, however, to discard people who have such issues or to regard these people as irredeemable.

#### B. Lepers Lived Alone outside the Camp

In the case of lepers, as Leviticus dictated, they were instructed to stay away from the population and live outside the camp. As a result, leper colonies sprung up and have existed in many cultures throughout the centuries. Again, while the hygienic reasons are sound, the resulting emotional ramifications are enormous.

*What are some things we can do to reach out to lonely people without making them feel embarrassed?*

### C. Lepers Cried Out, “Unclean”

How humiliating and hopeless lepers must have felt as they were required to cry out “unclean” to anyone passing close by. Being clearly defined as unclean or undesirable can have devastating consequences on people. The stories are all around us:

- A man who feels stupid because he was emotionally berated as a child.
- A teenager who threatens to take her life because she feels invisible.
- A recluse who becomes a street person because he was bullied.

### D. God’s Love Extends to Those Who Are Unclean

God is not like everyone else, and neither are His people. First Peter 4:8 instructs believers: “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” Love makes a way, providing a way of escape. Love rescues people from the “leper colonies” of sin, abuse, abandonment, and wrong choices.

### E. We Must Show God’s Love to People Considered Unclean

The apostle Paul described love in I Corinthians 13. Notice how the actions of love mentioned relate to others:

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Since love believes the best of people, how can we love people without worrying they will take advantage of our love?*

## II. GOD IS WILLING TO TOUCH AND HEAL PEOPLE SOCIETY CASTS ASIDE

Jesus was God manifested in the flesh. God inserted Himself into our world so He could demonstrate how we should live. Both Jesus and the epistle writers encouraged us to emulate Jesus. We should therefore take note that Jesus was known—even criticized—for associating with sinners and social outcasts. The Gospels also reveal that Jesus was not afraid to supersede the Law and touch the lepers.

*And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself*

*to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter. (Mark 1:40-45)*

*Tell about a time when you faced a difficult situation in your life and began to pray in faith. What happened?*

### **A. The Leper Begged Jesus to Be Made Clean**

Not surprisingly, when the leper came to Jesus, he begged to be healed. More significantly, he made the faith-filled statement: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Mark 1:40). It implies he had either seen Jesus do miracles or someone had told him about Jesus' ministry. Either way, it is important to understand that God does not heal everyone. Many times He waits for people who need help to express their faith to Him. That is why many churches give opportunity for people to make public statements of faith or encourage people to step out of their seats and walk to an altar where they can express their faith in God.

### **B. Jesus Was Moved with Compassion**

The Book of Mark tells us that when this outcast called out to Jesus, Jesus was moved with compassion. We face a major challenge in our print-rich, media-rich world. Advertisers, news-spinners, and social architects are constantly pulling on our heartstrings. Consequently, our emotions can be dulled toward those who are needy or less fortunate. We could describe this state as being "compassioned out." So many hyped-up and emotionally charged appeals surround us that it is tempting to turn off our compassion. In fact, we can feel as if we have run out of compassion. At that point believers must learn to be moved with God's compassion, on behalf of the people God wants to touch.

*What would the compassion of Jesus look like if He lived in our world and our society?*

### **C. Jesus Touched the Leper and Healed Him**

Mark 1:41 reveals that Jesus was so moved with compassion that He did the unthinkable; He touched the unclean leper. Jesus did not do so carelessly; He touched the man for the purpose of healing him. The story is told of a missionary to Ethiopia several decades ago. When the missionary first arrived in the country, she and her family were not readily received by the general population, so they began to minister to a leper community. The missionary explained what a challenge it was to go to the leper colony with her children. But God used those efforts to begin a great work in Ethiopia. Today there may be more Jesus name, Holy Ghost filled believers in Ethiopia than there are in America. But someone had to be willing to go and touch the unclean.

#### D. Jesus Was Not Afraid of What Others Might Say about the Mercy He Showed to Outcasts

Since God looks on the heart, believers must be ready to minister to anyone God puts in their path. A man recently told of a vision he had. In the vision he went to Heaven. While there, he saw a man who looked familiar, who was sitting on a throne. When he inquired about the man, he was told this was the homeless man he had seen on several occasions and written off as crazy. The heavenly guide then told the backstory of the homeless man: he was born deaf and had suffered much abuse and neglect, but he had faithfully done all he knew to do and helped others. Because of his faithfulness, he was honored in Heaven, although people on Earth had viewed him as a tramp.

The story is reminiscent of the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 15. Jesus told this story in such a way that many scholars believe it was a true story about two men who had lived near one another. From this story we learn the importance of obeying God despite what others do or how others treat certain individuals. Public opinion and peer pressure are powerful forces in the lives of adults, as well as children and youth. God has always searched for men and women who are willing to do His work regardless of public opinion.

#### E. I Will Be the Hands of Jesus to People Society Casts Aside

The heart of the issue is: how will we be the body of Christ on Earth? How will we reach out to those around us? God may want to use each of us to reach someone no one else is willing to reach. Our job is not to calculate who we should reach out to. Our job is to be available to reach out and touch anyone God puts in our path. We are privileged to be “blessing distributors” in a world where people are in desperate need of blessings. All we need to do is pay close attention to our merciful God and His promptings to touch people our cruel world has shut out.

*Who are some people we as a church need to become more aware of and compassionate toward? How would this compassion impact our church? *

#### **Teacher Option:**

*Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.*

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

It was surreal. The band was playing. The crowd was settling in. Joanne was about to walk across the stage to accept her master's degree in education, which represented six years of classroom instruction, countless hours of study, and a ton of research, along with her student teaching and writing. Her heart raced. Her eyes involuntarily teared up. How did she get here?

As preliminaries began, Joanne's thoughts floated back to her dysfunctional childhood—the fights and the hours she'd spent hiding in the basement to escape the wrath of her alcoholic parents. She remembered first grade when she discovered everyone else had already started learning to read, but she had to go to the remedial reading room down the hall. A few summers later, she endured her parents' volatile divorce and the emotional distress of parting ways with her beloved sister who went to live with her dad and his new wife.

But then Joanne thought of a moment in the fall. One day at recess, as she sat in the corner of the playground, God sent her a kind teacher who took a few minutes to share her own story of childhood abuse and of surviving the breakup of her home. This story gave Joanne hope on many occasions throughout her life. It helped her move through her teens without a father. She wondered if she would have made it without that little boost.

Next, Joanne's mind jumped to all the other people who had touched her life over the years: the church youth leader who had faithfully picked her up every Friday night, the wise lady at church who had taught her how to survive the unwanted advances from guys in high school, the pastor who had preached passionately and helped her understand the love of God and the power she could experience by being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit, and the people who had sponsored the scholarship program making it possible for her to go to college.

Life was a maze of hardships, but God seemed to place helpers at key places along the route. Joanne was extremely thankful for everyone who had cooperated with God and invested in her life. Suddenly she felt a nudge. The student next to her whispered, "They called your name." Joanne quickly jumped to her feet, carefully mounted the stage, and gracefully reached for her diploma. She could hear someone shouting her name. The voice was unmistakable. It was her youth leader's wife, cheering as if her own child was receiving a diploma.



# 1.3

## WATER FROM THE WELL

### LESSON BIG IDEA

I will show mercy and share God's love with those who have made life-altering mistakes.

### FOCUS VERSES

**John 4:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

<sup>14</sup> But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

### LESSON TEXT

**John 4:5-42**

### TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God will share living water with anyone who comes to the well.



### Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

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2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

## LESSON CONNECTION I

Carl sort of stood out the first time he walked into our church. His polo shirt—which may have been his nicest—had certainly seen better days. He sported cargo shorts and well-worn tennis shoes. His shaved head, face, and hands all bore scars that told many stories, some too horrific for public consumption. He shuffled through the main doors and shook the greeter’s hand. Carl chose to sit on the back row closest to the door in case he needed to make a quick exit. He came by invitation of a lady in the church whom he barely knew. But there he was, not knowing what to expect.

**Teacher Option:**  
*Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.*



Little did Carl know that sitting near the door would guarantee everyone in the church would see him as they came in. One by one they approached him and excitedly shook his hand. “So glad you’re here,” one said. “Thank you for coming; you’re going to love it!” another promised. The pastor, assistant pastor, and a slew of other ministry leaders introduced themselves. Carl couldn’t understand it. *If only they knew*, he thought to himself. As soon as service was over, Carl made a beeline for his truck and scooted out of the parking lot.

However, something about the warmth of the congregation made him come back again the next week. The second service was not much different than the first—cargo shorts, back row, and lots of love and handshakes. After the service, Carl once again rushed out to his vehicle, but as he started the engine, something caught his eye. One of the church elders, Sister McGrady, was hurrying down the steps of the church, waving at him, yelling, and asking him to wait.

Carl was shocked. This lady was obviously in her 70s and couldn’t walk well. The steps were clearly causing her trouble as she clung desperately to the rail for balance. When Sister McGrady finally got to Carl’s truck, she gripped the side mirror for balance and support as she caught her breath. “Carl,” she said, “I didn’t get a chance to shake your hand today and wanted to tell you that we love having you here. You don’t need to feel like you have to run off after church. We all have a past here. We love you and just want the best for you.”

Carl was dumbfounded. After a few seconds, he mumbled some words of thanks and then sped away from the church. He pulled over into an empty restaurant parking lot not too far from the church and wept. No one had ever said anything like that to him before. No one had ever shown him that type of love and compassion. And it wouldn’t be the last time.

Shortly after this interaction, someone started giving Carl a Bible study and discovered his past. He had lived a life of drugs, involving both using and dealing. Carl had experienced gang fights and trauma that left his body scarred and left him feeling irredeemable. However, because a handful of people in a small Pentecostal church looked beyond his past, loved him unconditionally, and envisioned what he could become, Carl found a new home and became a new creature in Christ. Within a couple months, he was baptized in Jesus’ name and filled with the Holy Spirit.