



# The Sense of Touch

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 19 | Conjugal Love

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Touch

Shake hands with someone and discuss. p.1

### 2. Read

The sense of touch. pp. 1-2

### 3. Touch, Activity

Think about the ways in which we touch people and rank whether they are proper in all relationships, or in marriage with one partner. Discuss p.3

## New Church Concept Five Senses

Each of the five external senses - touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight - has a correspondence with one of the internal senses.... As regards the correspondences of the senses, the sense of touch in general corresponds to the affection for good; the sense of taste to the affection for knowing; the sense of smell to the affection for perceiving; the sense of hearing to the affection for learning, and also to obedience; while the sense of sight corresponds to the affection for being intelligent and wise. *Arcana Coelestia* 4404

## Touch

Shake hands with each student as he or she enters the room, *or* invite students to greet the student sitting on either side of him or her by shaking their hands. When finished, ask a question such as, "Why are handshakes important?" or "How does shaking someone's hand affect your relationship with him or her?" "What can you learn about a person by shaking hands with him or her?"

## Read

The sense of touch is an important part of most relationships. We shake hands when we meet someone to express good will and show acceptance. One of the ways parents love their children is by hugging and holding them. We pat friends on the back to congratulate them and hug them to show care and concern. The Writings explain why this sense is so powerful.

"To touch with the hand" means to communicate and transfer to another person what is yours, because the whole power of a person is transferred from the body into the hands. What the mind wants the body to do, the arms and hands actually do.... This power is natural power, and the communication that takes place is by means of the body. But spiritual power is to will the good of another, and to will to convey to another as far as possible what is with oneself. See *Apocalypse Explained* 79

When we touch another person, as with all aspects of friendship, we should keep in mind what is best for our friend as well as for ourselves. Progressively deeper sharing of our mind, heart and a commitment to the other's welfare should precede more intimate touch shared with another person. Our most intimate forms of touch are a gift from the Lord. He intends these expressions of love to be symbols of and a blessing for the deep friendship and lasting commitment to the spouse that is a key part of a marriage relationship.

Every love has its own special sense. The special sense of conjugal love is the sense of touch. The love of joining oneself with one's partner, arising from a love of uniting good loves and true ideas in useful activities has the sense of touch because this sense is the common one of all the senses and consequently draws contributions from the rest. See *Conjugal Love* 210

It can be difficult to know what another person intends—especially whether a person who touches you outside of marriage intends what is good. The Writings warn us about how hard it can be to know what is behind someone’s actions:

Not only does an upright person love what is good and just in another person, but so also does an unprincipled person. When an unprincipled person deals with a good and just person he is not afraid of losing his reputation or his honor. With an unprincipled person, though, the love of good is not the same as love of the neighbor, because he does not really love others, but he only loves them so far as he can use them. See *Arcana Coelestia* 5132

Respecting appropriate boundaries of touch in friendship protects our future happiness and the future happiness of our friends and the potential power of the more intimate expressions of affection for their intended use. The key issue is the love underlying the touch. The Writings use the word “chaste” to describe attitudes and actions that have a heavenly love behind them and “unchaste” to describe attractions that are mainly external and physical.

### The Power of Jesus’ Touch

A leper came and worshiped Jesus, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (Matthew 8:2-3)

Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And He laid His hands on them and departed from there. (Matthew 19:13-15)

Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him. (Matthew 20:29-34)

### New Church Concept Touch

That between married partners, communications of love and its delights are effected by the sense of touch. That thereby communication of minds also is effected, is because the hands are the ultimates of a person, and in ultimates his prior things are present simultaneously. By this sense, moreover, all things of the body and all things of the mind are held together in unbroken connection. Hence it is that Jesus touched infants, that by touch He healed the sick, and that they were healed who touched Him. Hence also it is that at this day, inauguration into the priesthood is made by the laying on of hands. The innocence of parents and that of infants meet each other by means of touch, especially by touch of the hands and so are conjoined. See *Conjugial Love* 396

### Touch After Death

Almost all the people who arrive [in the spiritual world] from this world are as astonished to find that they are alive and that they are just as human as ever, that they are seeing and hearing and talking, that their bodies are still endowed with the sense of touch, and that nothing at all has changed. *Heaven and Hell* 456

## Touch

Each of our senses serves the things we love. For example seeing things relates to our love of understanding them and influences us in a variety of ways. Our sense of sight is delighted when we see beautiful things. The same is true of all of our other senses. The sense that is especially dedicated to marriage is the sense of touch.

The special sense of conjugal love is the sense of touch.

The love of joining oneself with one's partner, arising from a love of uniting goodness and truth, has the sense of touch because this sense is common to all the senses and so draws from the rest. See *Conjugal Love* 210

With this in mind, look at the following list of ways in which friends touch each other. Put an X on the scale to indicate where you think each type of touch belongs along the continuum of a casual acquaintance and the marriage relationship, assuming that the people touching are a man and a woman.

|    | Type of Touch               | Marriage | Casual Acquaintance |
|----|-----------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1  | Shaking hands               |          |                     |
| 2  | Hugging                     |          |                     |
| 3  | Brushing someone's hair     |          |                     |
| 4  | Sitting on someone's lap    |          |                     |
| 5  | Kissing on the mouth        |          |                     |
| 6  | Backrub                     |          |                     |
| 7  | Holding hands               |          |                     |
| 8  | Giving a pat on the back    |          |                     |
| 9  | Foot rub                    |          |                     |
| 10 | Kissing on the cheek        |          |                     |
| 11 | Linking arms                |          |                     |
| 12 | Dancing close to each other |          |                     |

(Note: You may intentionally avoid touch that is too intimate. One of these might be touching parts of another's body normally covered by a bathing suit.)

*Group option: Share your responses and discuss.*

1. Imagine that you have just shaken hands with someone. You cross the room and moments later overhear the same person saying nasty things about you. How might you feel?
2. In what ways might physical intimacy become a negative force in a relationship?

The Lord provides a married partner for each person—either in this world, or in the next world. Before the spiritual and legal commitment of marriage to one partner it is unwise to act as though that commitment already exists and the person will be your spouse in good times and bad. Does the idea that a good friend of yours who is a member of the opposite sex may actually be *someone else's* future married partner affect the way you might touch them?