

The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now:

*Listening to your Longings:
The woman with the hemorrhage*

Warm-up Question

When have you found yourself saying, “if only...?”



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Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?



If only I can touch

Read [Matthew 9:18-26](#)

Bible Story Reflection

If only – two simple words of deep longing, hope, or often regret. “If only” can look at the present, expressing a wish that may be difficult to fulfill: “if only I knew what to say.” “If only” can look in the rearview mirror, expressing a regret for what wasn’t, an impossible desire to change something that has already occurred: “if only I would have known what to do.” “If only” can look to the future, longing for something that may or may not be: “if only they would find a way to understand each other.” If only – two simple words that capture powerful feelings of the human heart.

The story of the woman with the hemorrhage is a story within a story that both highlights the themes of the narrative that surrounds it and speaks its own powerful truths. In the surrounding story, a leader of the synagogue seeks out Jesus and asks him to lay his hands on the leader’s dead daughter and restore her to life. As this story unfolds, the sick woman cautiously comes up behind Jesus and touches his cloak, seeking to be made well. Both stories uplift powerful, embodied need. Both stories express deep longing. In both stories, longing reaches out to Jesus.

The story of the woman with the hemorrhage is an invitation for each of us to hear in her words the words, and therefore the feelings, of our own hearts and lives. It is a call for each of us to name our own “if only...” experiences, and in so naming them, bring them to Jesus. Furthermore, in this woman, we find an embodied need that acts in an embodied way in the presence of one whom she believes can help her. Through her embodied longing and her embodied actions, we are invited to embrace our own embodied needs, name them, and seek the healing and life-giving touch of the embodied Messiah.



Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you identify with the woman with the hemorrhage?
2. Talk about a time when “if only” captured the depth of your feelings.
3. Who are the people with whom you can share your “if only” experiences?
4. What difference does it make to name your “if only experiences,” rather than keeping them to yourself?
5. How easy or difficult is it to cry out “if only” to God?
6. How do you think the woman with the hemorrhage would tell her own story?
7. What does it mean to you that Jesus is the incarnate, embodied God?
8. When have you experienced Jesus’ life-giving touch?
9. How is Jesus’ life-giving touch embodied today?
10. How are you called to be the life-giving touch of God amid the “if only” cries of others? Be specific.

Activity Suggestions

Paint a picture that illustrates an “if only” experience from your life.

Spend 2-3 minutes each day practicing mindful meditation. Sit comfortably. Bring to mind an “if only” experience. Pay attention to your breathing. Intentionally slow down your breathing. As you inhale, say in your mind the name of Jesus. As you exhale, say in your mind “have mercy.”

Bring to mind an “if only” experience from your life. Fill a basin with water. Take a bar of soap and slowly, carefully, deliberately wash your hands. As you do so, pay attention to the feel of the soap and water, the scent of the soap, the sound of the water splashing, the look of your hands. As you wash your hands, remember your baptism, that you are claimed and named as God’s beloved child. In your remembering, picture Jesus washing your hands and washing your “if only experiences” into new life.

Prayer Concerns

Those struggling with chronic illness, those who feel helpless, those weighed down by regret

Closing Prayer

Bring your healing touch to the “if only” cries of my heart, O God, and make me whole. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

