

Reach Out and Touch

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e touched their eyes" (Matt. 9:29, NIV).

Jesus reached out and touched to show that He cares. He touched the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the poor, the dying, the outcasts, to show them and us that the greatest ministry in which one can engage is to be involved in the lives of the less fortunate.

Recent events involving two women once again demonstrate that what Jesus said and did has not lost its relevance 2,000 years later.

Two women—one young, the other old. One changed royalty into ordinary, human garb; the other saw the image of God in every suffering face. Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, dying within a week of each other, have significantly impacted all of us, individually and collectively. They have left an enduring message for history. Life should be lived and died in the service of others—to bring a little cheer to someone dying, to embrace the lonely, to feed the hungry, to care for the orphan, and to make the world a little better, a little safer for the less fortunate.

Mother Teresa gave all she had. At 18, she left her comfortable home in Albania for the city of Calcutta to teach in a girls' school. Soon she climbed the ladder of success and became the principal of Calcutta's most prestigious school. Not long after, she heard a voice speaking within, and felt a call to a different type of ministry: serving the poor and the destitute of one of the largest and neediest cities of the world. Calcutta's streets and gutters became her parish. She established a home for the sick, the hungry, and the dying. She spent her whole life in that kind of service, and she reached out and touched people around the world. The Nobel Prize came her way.

My daughter, April, once had the opportunity to meet her. Along with her college friends, April was in a busy airport where Mother Teresa landed. Everyone was busy trying to get the best picture of this great lady. April didn't want to flash a picture; she just stood and saw, absorbing everything she could from this great moment. Just then, Mother Teresa came over, took her by the hand, and placed a small medallion in her palm. Later, April told me that Mother Teresa's skin was so soft to touch that she wondered if that's what angels are like. To this day, April has not forgotten that face that moved millions around the world. Mother Teresa reached out and touched her.

Princess Diana had just begun to touch the neglected and the suffering of this world. In her brief life, she climbed the heights of royalty and fame, but found that such heights need not be fulfilling. She had her own disappointments. But she found joy and fulfillment when she looked beyond herself and saw a young man with a leg blown off by a land mine—these became Diana's call to serve, and serve she did.

While Mother Teresa's love for humanity endeared her to us, Diana's humanity made us feel close to her. Both women knew pain and suffering, and both reached out to touch and help others—trying to bring relief in just some small way. Weak and frail as they were, their lives were ones of courage and fortitude. They brought meaning and joy to thousands of the sick, maimed, and dying.

As we contemplate the lives and the contribution of these two unique women—one the mother of the world, the other princess of the world—what can we learn? They have both left us something very important. They set a precedent for us to follow in kindness, forgiveness, acceptance, service to others, and love. Most important is to touch others' lives, not just in the school or the church, but in the often-forgotten places of loneliness and suffering next door and across town.

To touch as Jesus touched. To open the eyes of the blind, to bring a little cheer where there is sadness, to identify ourselves with the suffering of this world. That is still the ministry we need to perform.—*Donald R. Sahly*.

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Dr. Donald R. Sahly joined the General Conference Department of Education as an Associate Director in May 1997. He previously served as President of Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.