

You may have heard the saying "beauty is only *skin-deep*," which means that while someone may be beautiful on the outside, their character—what's inside, and more meaningful—isn't necessarily attractive. The first attested use of *skin-deep* was in "A Wife," a 1613 poem by Sir Thomas Overbury: "All the carnall beauty of my wife, Is but *skin-deep*." Its publication infamously resulted in Overbury's murder when its subject deduced that it was about her.

Largest Human Organ - Skin - three main functions: protection, regulation, and sensation - biologically - socially it is a canvas for a false facade - and nothing more upsetting to our vanity than a skin condition - we don't call it disease anymore - too upsetting

**Skin diseases are more common than we think: screening results of an unreferrred population at the Munich Oktoberfest.** *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 2019; - Of the 2,701 individuals in the study, at least one skin abnormality was observed in 1,662 of the participants (64.5 percent) - "Skin diseases might be even more prevalent than previously thought. Considering their significant impact on individual, family, and social life as well as their heavy economic burden caused by inadequate self- or non-physician treatment, the public health importance of skin diseases is underappreciated," said senior author Dr. Alexander Zink, of the Technical University of Munich.

Leprosy - Hansen's Disease - and Biblical leprosy - skin disease

The term "leprosy" (including leper, lepers, leprosy, leprous) occurs 68 times in the Bible—55 times in the Old Testament (Hebrew = tsara'ath) and 13 times in the New Testament (Greek = lepros, lepra). In the Old Testament, the instances of leprosy most likely meant a variety of infectious skin diseases, and even mold and mildew on clothing and walls. The precise meaning of the leprosy in both the Old and New Testaments is still in dispute, but it probably includes the modern Hansen's disease (especially in the New Testament) and infectious skin diseases.

**Exodus 4** - God and Moses - God showing Moses how He is going use him to lead His people out of Egypt - Exodus 4:6 Furthermore the LORD said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh.

Leviticus 13 1-8 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body like a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous sore. Then the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean. But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate the

one who has the sore seven days. And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day; and indeed if the sore appears to be as it was, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days. Then the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and indeed if the sore has faded, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and be clean. But if the scab should at all spread over the skin, after he has been seen by the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen by the priest again. And if the priest sees that the scab has indeed spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is leprosy.

The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body: In this sense, the priests served as public health officers and diagnosed the disease from these carefully defined criteria, not from intuition or guessing.

The methodology in this passage erred on the side of safety. If a person could not be pronounced “clean” with certainty, they were then isolated until they could be pronounced clean.

“These precautions were taken not merely for sanitary reasons, or to guard against contagion, for it is not certain that leprosy was contagious, but in order that the people might be taught through the parable of leprosy, what a fearful and loathsome thing sin is in the sight of God.” (Taylor)

Leviticus 13:45-46 “Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Once the diagnosis of leprosy was confirmed, everything changed for the leper. They lived in a perpetual state of mourning and in a perpetual state of public disgrace (he shall... cry “Unclean! Unclean!”). Furthermore, they lived in a perpetual state of isolation (he shall dwell alone).

In the days of Jesus many Jews thought two things about a leper: You are the walking dead and you deserve this because this is the punishment of God against you.

Jewish custom said that you should not even greet a leper, and you had to stay six feet away from a leper. One Rabbi bragged that he would not even buy an egg on a street where he saw a leper, and another boasted that he threw rocks at lepers to keep them far from him. One of the rabbinical writings of the time said, “If a leper stands under a tree and a clean man passes by under that tree, the latter becomes unclean.”

Leprosy, in those days, was not just a disease. It was a total condition ... physical, social, economical, and spiritual. Physically not functioning correctly (uncomfortable to painful) - Socially isolated - economically devastated, Spiritually thought to be punished by God - excluded from family, society, worship, presence of God.

Matthew 8:1-4 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

The leper knows he needs multidimensional salvation because of his request.

If he was a Greek or Roman leper, he would have said, "If you're willing, you can make me well," but he doesn't do that. He says, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." That meant clean before God, clean before his community, clean physically. He knew he needed it all, and Jesus gives it to him.

Jesus could have just spoken without touching and the leper could be healed, why touch? Suggest two reason - In the presence of God, there is either death or healing - humble thyself in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up. Instead of becoming defiled, Jesus provided healing. Also touch was needed and longed for by the man, and communicated restoration and acceptance.

Leviticus 14:1-9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field. He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days. But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows; all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

Then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds: In this cleansing ceremony, one bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water, and its blood was applied to a living bird, to some cedar wood, to some scarlet fabric, and to some hyssop. Then, using these things, the blood was sprinkled on the one who was cleansed from leprosy. Then, the living bird was let go.

This seems to be a picture of Jesus' death and its spiritual application; a "heavenly" being (as a bird is "of the heavens") dies in an earthen vessel. The death of the bird is associated with blood and water. The blood is connected with life (applied to the living bird), and then applied to the one cleansed.

Cedar is wood emblematic of the cross

Jesus was offered drink from a hyssop branch on the cross (Matthew 27:48), and when David said purge me with hyssop in Psalm 51:7, he was admitted that he was as bad as a leper.

After the sacrificial ceremony the cleansed leper had to wash their clothes and shave off all of their hair, as if they were a brand-new baby. This appears to be an illustration of being “born again”.  
(10-20) On the eighth day.

Leviticus 14:10-11 “And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil. Then the priest who makes him clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Leviticus 14:14 The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

Trespass offering and a burnt offering - The sacrificial blood was applied to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe, to sanctify and consecrate the cleansed leper. This was the same way that the priest was consecrated.

Leviticus 14:17 And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering.

Therefore, a cleansed leper had a special calling and a special anointing. One could not go through such a ritual as this and not be changed.

**First Customer - Numbers 12** - The disension of Aaron and Miriam - Does God only speak to Moses - God points out how he speaks to Moses in a special way - Moses is humble and God Speaks to him face to face - plainly. God’s presence departs and Miriam gets leprosy - Aaron freaks - Moses cries out to God - God answers and says she is to be ousted out of the camp 7 days, then she can return.

When Jesus healed the leper in Matt 8 and Luke 5, why did He send him to the Priest, because it wasn’t just a physical healing Jesus wanted, Jesus wanted a total healing - accepted, adopted, adored again. By society, family, and God. Total new life.

In the Gospels, in Jesus' ministry, there is a disproportionate number of what the world would consider losers, outcasts, unimportant, defiled that Jesus is reaching out to and touching and pulling in to community and very often making leaders.

Gentiles are racial outsiders, Women outsider“women of ill repute.” well, caught in the act, harlots. Lepers, lame, blind, sick. Tax collectors were political outsiders. Jesus takes the people the world sees at the bottom and brings them in. Jesus looks at the people the world sees on the outside and brings them in. Into Himself and into His family. He looks at people and sees them to core and still loves them. He sees the opportunity for beauty healing of a leprous heart.

Think of all the people that make choices to try and get inside think there is healing - choose over safety, health, wellbeing, family, etc.. think there's healing in a pride of lions, they love you only as much as you can help them. Called to the Good shepherd and His Flock.

What kind of church would we have to be if we're going to embody the ministry of Jesus in ourselves? Spectrum of churches to the right - sectarian fundamentalist, separatist, On the other end to the left, mainline, or mainstreamed churches. On one end the emphasis is conversion and very little meeting the social and physical and economic needs of people, regardless of what people believe.

Do you know why they don't do that? Legalism is a love killer. Because legalist say, “I'm a good person by law; that's why God loves me. Out there is nothing but the bad people.”

But when the emphasis is meeting needs, you are calling people to be good so don't call anybody to repent. They would never tell anybody they're sinners. They would never tell anybody to convert. As a result, the helper says, “I'm a good person by service; that's why God loves me.” Both people don't have hearts bursting with love, because they have received the love of God.

The gospel produces people who don't despise the world or just reflect the world, but they love the world. They're different from the world, but they love the world, because Jesus, as utterly different as he was, died for his enemies, spent himself saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Grace changes everything - result in greater conversions and service - lives changed and needs met - as you meet needs, people will want to be change, and people are changed they will want to meet needs.

Personal application to be like Jesus: Do you see Jesus touching this leper? Look at Jesus' character.

John Gerstner regarding if you look at Jesus Christ and the gospel this is what you see, “In Jesus Christ we see virtues combined that never anywhere else are combined. We see tenderness without weakness, strength without a milligram of harshness, humility without one ounce of uncertainty. You see unbending convictions and yet complete and utter approachability. You see power without the slightest insensitivity. You see passion without the slightest prejudice. You see total integrity without any rigidity. Never unthinking. Never a false word. Never a misstep.”

That is absolute beauty. In Jesus Christ you're looking at God through human nature, but Paul says that can be formed in you and me. Mark says, "Follow him. Become like him."

[2Co 3:18](#) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2Co 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The key is humility - 2 Chronicles 26 - King Uzziah    2 Kings 5 Naaman a Syrian General

Think back to the leper healed by Jesus - With the cross in the near future, and people being born again - healed of the curse of sin, Jesus wants the priest to be reminded of this ceremony - don't miss out on the one who became leprous - physically falling apart, cast out, rejected by men, forsaken by God the Father - so we could be made whole, restored, redeemed, accepted adopted, adored.

Beautiful to the Core