

# From the Family Room

Creekwood Church of Christ  
Mobile, AL

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## HUGS!

Then some people came to Him bringing little children for him to touch. Then He took the children in His arms and laid His hands on them and blessed them.      Mark 10:13, 16



You may have heard about the advertisement the goat cheese farm in Virginia placed on Facebook recently. Approximately 90 goats were born at Caromont farm in less than two weeks and the baby goats were beginning to run wild around the farm. If attention was not paid to the kids, they would be unmanageable when they became old enough to become milkers. It would be hard to gather them as adults if they were not shown attention now when they are young. The farm needed baby goat cuddlers. Their advertisement on Facebook proved to be effective. The farm received over 2,000 responses for volunteers. Some of the responses were from as far away as Australia.

Baby goats are not all that need cuddling. Hospitals across the country are using volunteers to hold premature newborns and sing to them, rock them, and generally treat the babies as their own. Barbara Howell is one volunteer who does this at Women's and Children Hospital here in Mobile. Cuddling speeds development and calms sick babies. Some are so sick they cannot be held, but they benefit from the touch of a finger reaching into an incubator and stroking the baby's skin. When babies are cuddled or touched, their heart rate drops and their brows relax. Studies suggest that being held improves the babies' sleeping quality and shortens their hospital stay.

There is evidence that touch is important to adults also. The University of North Carolina conducted a study that found that hugs increase the bonding hormone oxytocin and decrease the risk of heart disease. Those in a loving relationship had the highest increases. Hugs also decreased the levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, and the blood pressure readings in women. In fact the effects of hugs that protect the heart may be greater for women.

There are many other studies that have been conducted over the last century that clearly show the benefits we receive from touch. Jesus knew this in the first century and used touch on numerous occasions to the benefit of others. In Matthew 8:1-4, we read of Jesus healing a leper. He did not have to touch the leper to heal him, but He did anyway. That was probably the first human touch the leper had enjoyed since he had been afflicted with leprosy. We also read in Matthew, Mark, and Luke that children were brought to Jesus so He could bless them. We are told that Jesus took them in His arms and blessed them.

This week let's learn from Jesus and be free with our touch and hugs. Hug your spouse, children, grandchildren, and friends today!

**RICKY**