

THE HOLY KISS

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I would like us to take into account some of the Elim, Pentecostal and charismatic churches, and others, where people of the opposite sex kiss and hold each other, even first time visitors to the church.

Is this wise or could it be taken as abuse?

You may be alarmed at my suggestion of abuse. As a schoolteacher, if I comfort a very distressed and upset child by putting my arm around him or her it is claimed to be sexual abuse and the parents can take legal action against me. If I were to kiss that child on the forehead as an act of sympathy I would be in serious trouble, yet that act would be innocent and spontaneous in such circumstances

Should there be a salutary warning that this should not be done by Christians in church meetings and the like?

The New Testament says, Lay hands suddenly on no one. (1 Timothy 5.22). It refers especially to the choosing of elders, and what we commonly call ordination, but the principle is a general one as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7 and as we shall see.

Romans 16.16, and elsewhere, states Salute one another with a holy kiss. This was apparently both a communal feature and a cultural matter of the time and commentators have said that this was a peck on the cheek between brethren, that is to say males. 1 Corinthians 16.20 says Greet the brethren with a holy kiss and the word for brethren here, and elsewhere, is male.

You will remember that Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss. There is no Biblical authority for such kissing to be between members of the opposite sex. In fact, it is forbidden as will now be explained.

A man must not touch any woman in any way apart from his wife (1 Corinthians 7.1 ff). Touch here means any contact and the next verse indicates that such a touch could lead to temptation and immorality, however remote that possibility may appear.

A man and a woman in any church kissing and hugging can mean that they will feel each other, and not necessarily with hands, but because of the closeness of their bodies. A man may feel her breasts in his chest for example, and that could produce arousal for both parties.

We conducted surveys on this issue among Christians willing to take part. About 32% said that such kissing and hugging was a turn on and gave them improper and sexual thoughts. Others confessed that this lead to affairs and break up of marriages and families. Others were adamant and quite fierce insisting that there was nothing wrong in this activity and those who said that there was were absolutely stupid and judgmental and they accused the researches of being utterly ridiculous.

However, a famous evangelist and Bible scholar said, “ It is the first drink that makes someone an alcoholic, the first cigarette that makes someone a smoker, and the first kiss or hug that creates an affair”.

In the first century AD, and in the Mediterranean countries even today, the kiss between people of the same sex was and is practised. It was not a kiss on the lips or between people of the opposite sex. We must remember 1 Corinthians 7.

In our day, shaking hands without being on top of or very close to one another is the accepted greeting.

God is the God of justice and morality. There are strict laws about fidelity in Leviticus 20 which forbids adultery, incest and sodomy. The Lord Jesus said that if a man looks upon a woman with lust he has already committed adultery with her in his heart and the same could presumably be said of a woman thinking the same about a man (Matthew 5.28). A kiss or a hug between people of the opposite sex could lead to temptation. Throughout the Old and New Testaments we are told to resist temptation.

As an aside, Leviticus 20 states that we are not to see the nakedness of anyone except our spouse. And nakedness does not only mean nude but scantily dressed or inadequately covered.

(See [article A Woman's Dress](#))

People will dispute this and vehemently say that there is no harm in a kiss and a hug or even a cuddle in a church setting or elsewhere, and the majority of people do it. If it can be non-sexual and give no false ideas and will not result in temptation that may be all well and good. But things happen and sometimes without any engineering on our part and what we thought we would never do, sometimes we do do and things happen. Consider the survey mentioned above.

It happens among Christians particularly if they are lonely, feel unloved or their marriage has lost its joy and become boring, or if they fancy someone.

So that I am not accused of being prejudiced or too severe on these matters, let me tell you that I have made this mistake and as a Christian. It all started with a kiss on the cheek, then a hug and, while I never expected anything to become improper, it turned into being that, and yet I had been so circumspect and moral for over forty years.

I did not expect to fall by the wayside and neither did any of the people who knew me. It is one thing to trust others but to trust one's self can be another thing.

No wonder Paul says that so that no impropriety could possibly happen let a man have his own wife and a woman her own husband and let them love each other and not touch anyone else in any way whatsoever.

We had a married brother in our assembly who used to greet everyone at the door before the meetings. As we sat towards the back of the hall and on warm days the doors would be open and we could see this brother. When the sisters arrived, particularly the young ones, even visitors, he would greet them with an arm around their waist or a little lower down and some of the sisters complained to me about this. I took this up with him privately and he was furious and motioned to strike me. As a result, he influenced people to get me to leave the assembly.

If this non-kissing and non-hugging is not followed and impropriety takes place, relationships and marriages and, perhaps, children will suffer. Breakdown of marriages can be very painful physically and emotionally and, indeed, can be devastating.

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