

Dating Wisdom

In his book, *Life On the Edge*, **Dr. James Dobson** talks about the twelve stages of intimacy as described by Dr. Morris

"If one were to walk down the average mall hallway, one would see countless couples holding hands, wrapped around each other, and even the occasional kissing duo. In fact, it has become common place to flaunt any kind of public display of affection, except when it evolves the genitals or breasts, yet even the latter is occurring more often than many Christians would like to admit. If America and the world in general have become so accepting of such sexual display of desires, why should Christians bother in abstaining from such behavior, especially when the couple is in a serious relationship? If the world doesn't have a problem with it, why should Christians? The answer is simple, Christians are not to be of this world but they are to "be transformed by the renewing of the mind" as Romans 12:2 states.

When sexual involvement (French kissing, making out, petting, fondling, hand jobs, oral sex, intercourse, masturbation etc.) is the norm, it is human nature to comply with the leading force and accept the general consensus as morally justifiable. However, morality should never be decided by the whims of a swaying populous. Titus 2:11-12 reminds us that "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age." Thus the Bible is quite clear in regards to morality. In regard to specifically sexual purity and proper sexual behavior, the Bible is explicit in its teachings. Ephesians 5:3 states, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." "Even a hint..." those three words tell us exactly what God sees as inappropriate behavior before marriage. To understand this better, we first need to know what the word "hint" means. A common definition for the word hint is "a very slight or hardly noticeable amount". Thus if a couple were making out and sexual desires surfaced, the two individuals have hinted at sexual immorality in God's eyes because Christ said, "I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)

So far we know that even a hint is inappropriate. The next question we need to ask is what counts as sexual immorality. Since the Bible doesn't offer a list, opinions are scattered all over the spectrum. On one side people argue that as long as the couple don't engage in intercourse, they are pure in the sight of the Lord. The other side argues that even the slightest (even a hint) form of sexual intimacy leads to greater desires and thus even kissing is wrong. To understand the Biblical approach to this subject, we must first understand the impact that one of the lowest levels of intimacy, kissing, has on the individual.

The lips and tongue are incredible sensitive, packed with nerves that stimulate the individual. Kissing has proven physiological effects: increase in the individual's pulse rate, increase in blood pressure, increase size of the pupils, and an increase in deep breathing. Kissing also stimulates the pleasure centers in the brain as the brain reacts to the effects of excitement or surprise that a good kiss brings. In other words, kissing is a catalyst. If kissing is a catalyst, then it has to be preparing the individual for events yet to come, or in other words: foreplay. Foreplay is sexual stimulation, preceding sexual intercourse.

The next question is whether foreplay is acceptable. To answer this we need look no further than Philippians 4:8 which states, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things." Is foreplay noble? According to Matthew 5:28 it isn't if it outside the context of two married individuals. Is it right, pure, or lovely? Foreplay is lovely in God's view because it get the individuals ready to participate in the most loving and sacred act God bestowed

upon man, but only in the context of marriage. Foreplay also doesn't hold up to being admirable, excellent or praiseworthy outside the context of marriage. Foreplay is more than a hint of sexual immorality and thus it is inappropriate between individuals before marriage. Thus if foreplay is prohibited, then so is anything that can be

classified as foreplay, even if sexual intercourse never occurs. Therefore kissing hints at sexual immorality and it is not appropriate for unmarried individuals since kissing is a form of foreplay.

In his book, *Life On the Edge*, Dr. James Dobson talks about the twelve stages of intimacy as described by Dr. Morris, explaining their importance in a successful relationship. The twelve stages are:

1. Eye to Body
2. Eye to Eye
3. Voice to Voice
4. Hand to Hand
5. Hand to Shoulder
6. Hand to Waist
7. Face to Face
8. Hand to Head
9. Hand to Body
10. Mouth to Breast
11. Touching Below the Waist
12. Sexual Intercourse

When one looks at these twelve stages, I think it is obvious that the last four stages are not Biblical before marriage, but this still leaves the other eight open for debate. I would argue that once a relationship goes beyond stage seven, Biblical standards are compromised. Even stage seven itself can cause problems for Christians if they fully partake in the entirety of face to face contact which would include kissing. The only reason I would say stage seven can be achieved without compromising Biblical standards is because hugging would fall into this category. However, even hugging can cause a couple to compromise Biblical standards if it is done in such a way as to press the couple into a sexual embrace.

The reason I mention these twelve stages is because I think too many young adults want to progress through the stages far too quickly, looking for something more exciting. What they do not realize is that they are indeed stages. What this means is that once one moves to the next stage, it is nearly impossible to go back to an earlier stage. Thus if a couple has progressed to stage ten, there is little chance to go back and stay at stage seven. Thus if a couple wants to remain Biblically pure before the Lord, they should take their time in going through each stage, making sure that they are not progressing into a stage in which they will later regret to having progressed into. I think the overall point is that all sexually arousing activities should be reserved for marriage according to the scriptures. Unmarried couple should avoid any activity that tempts them toward sex, that gives the appearance of immorality, or that could be considered foreplay. "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22) In my mind, this means anything that goes beyond holding hands. Even certain hugs are used as a form of intimacy that triggers sexual arousal between two sexually attracted individuals. Overall, the more a married couple has to share exclusively between themselves, the more special and unique the sexual relationship in a marriage becomes."