

**The Most Neglected
Commandment in the Bible**

I Corinthians 16:20

Pastor Peter Hiett

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It has been about 13 years since I went to my first parent/teacher conference. My son was in kindergarten at the time. His teacher was a young graduate of the University of Colorado.

She informed Susan and myself that our son was doing “quite well.” (I remember this wave of relief.) Then she said, “But....there has been a problem. There was one incident.” I shifted in my seat, glanced at Susan and began constructing worst case scenarios.

Miss Kowal appeared to be very concerned as she began to share what had happened during story time. She said, “I was just reading to the children and as I paused to turn the page, I looked up and I couldn’t believe what I saw...Your son was just kissing Katy. He was kissing her. He just kissed her. He kissed her in story time... as I was reading the story!”

She stopped, waiting for our response and... I didn’t know what to say. Finally she said, “That is not appropriate.”

I think we said, “Um....sorry” and left... confused.

I’ve been a bit confused ever since second grade. My friend Tim and I climbed a tree with Leslie Brown in her front yard. I thought we both kissed Leslie in the tree. But Tim betrayed the kiss and told all the guys on the bus about me. So everyday on the bus, they’d all sing at me, [Peter sings...] “Two little lovers sittin’ in the tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G. First comes love, then comes marriage, then

comes baby in the baby carriage.” My heart learned that kisses are dangerous and something to be ashamed of.

Well, it wasn’t long after the Parent/Teacher conference with Miss Kowal that I read an article in the Rocky Mountain News about Jonathan Prevette: Sex Offender.

Convicted by the authorities, Jonathan Prevette was separated from his class at Southwest Elementary School in Lexington, Kentucky and banned from the class ice cream party. The school was very concerned about securing federal funds and therefore following federal guidelines regarding sexual harassment. You see, Jonathan Prevette, 6 years old (same age as my son), had kissed a girl in his class on the cheek, because according to Jonathan, and I quote, “I liked her.” Yeah right, that’s what all perverts say.

Well, it’s easy to snicker at Southwest Elementary in Lexington, Kentucky until you read the news. I imagine y’all read the news this week. Fifty-three year old Duane Morrison, who lived alone in his Jeep in the woods and constructed haunted houses for a living—Duane Morrison entered Platte Canyon High School in Bailey with a backpack and two handguns. He took a group of female students hostage, eventually killing one and then himself. He claimed there was a bomb in his backpack. It was actually full of sexual paraphernalia

We live in a depraved society where promiscuity, infidelity, pornography, and sexual predation run rampant and are increasing.

In Romans 13 Paul argues that God has instituted governing authorities to carry the sword for the common good. So as a society, we ought to have laws and sexual harassment policies.

Here at Lookout we have a very good Sexual Harassment Policy and a procedure for reporting. I feel bad that I haven't pointed it out to folks. (It's page on 17 of the employee handbook.)¹

You know of all the countries in the world, I suspect that the U.S has the very most and probably best laws against sexual predation and harassment. Yet the U.S. is hardly a picture of sexual virtue. We are the world's #1 producer of porn.

Maybe we need more laws. In Iran the punishment for a kiss between unmarried, unrelated men and women is 74 lashes... Maybe we need stricter laws.

Well, the Bible's standard of sexual purity is much stricter, higher than that found in the Koran.

¹ Maybe our laws don't go far enough. A couple years ago in Moscow authorities were considering a ban on all kissing in public places, even between spouses. The ban would be to improve public morality and guard against the dangers of kissing. That's interesting. They're beginning to see the power of kisses.

A communist textbook defined the kiss this way, and I quote, "A kiss is the approach of two pair of lips, with reciprocated transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide." Maybe more than just microbes and carbon dioxide are transmitted.

In Iran, it's illegal to kiss in public. A couple years ago a well known Iranian actress received a suspended sentence of 74 lashes and a \$2500 fine because she kissed a film student on the forehead at an awards ceremony. She immediately apologized and avoided flogging.

In Matthew 5 Jesus says, “Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Better to rip out your eye than be thrown in Gehenna with it.” That’s intense, but rather hard to regulate with legislation. (In a day or two all the men I know would be blind.)

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians contains the most extensive discussion regarding church discipline in the New Testament. In Chapter 5, Paul instructs the church to enact church discipline in regard to a man sleeping with his mother-in-law while remaining unrepentant and proud.

Well, that’s helpful, but it sure would be nice to get some rules for the stuff in between a lustful thought and unrepentant sex with your mother-in-law.

When I was a Youth Pastor, we spent hours trying to decipher Biblical texts in order to produce some laws for the kids, answering the question, “How far is too far?” and in the end we kinda just had to make stuff up.

See, the Bible has an extremely high standard of sexual purity and yet one that’s almost impossible to regulate with legislation ‘cause it has so much to do with the heart.

Well, in all of the New Testament 1 Corinthians has the most detail regarding sexual purity and also church discipline because, of all the churches, Corinth appears to struggle most with sexual sins. So Paul writes his letter in tears over their failure and rejection of Him.

But when we get to the end Paul does issue one final command: 1 Corinthians 16:20b,

“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

After all that, “Greet one another with a holy kiss”? Well, surely that must be an anomaly.

2 Corinthians ends this way, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (13:12)

The highly theological treatise of Romans ends with 2 chapters of greetings and this verse, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” “Greet” is in the imperative tense. It’s not optional—it is a command. Well, it’s just for old nuns, right?

Paul ends 1 Thessalonians this way, “Greet *all* the brothers with a holy kiss.” “Holy kiss all of ‘em.” So we think “holy” must mean without feeling, including some sort of antiseptic barrier.

Well, St. Peter reveals what the holiness is. 1 Peter 5:14, “Greet one another with the kiss of love”—“agape.” Peter doesn’t use the word “eros.” He doesn’t mean erotic kisses. Yet “agape” doesn’t mean without feeling—just the opposite.

In Luke 7, Jesus (same guy that said the thing about lust—30 years old and single) is at a formal dinner with the community religious leaders. A woman, probably a prostitute, crashes the banquet by washing Jesus’ feet with her tears and covering them with kisses. When Simon the Pharisee grows indignant, Jesus reprimands him for not being like her. The Pharisees seemed to have a hard time with kissing. They kissed, but it was highly regulated through religious legislation.

So if you’re thinking these kissing commandments are just cultural, I’m sure there is a cultural element. However, it may be working in just the opposite direction of that which you would suppose.

According to scholars, Greco-Roman society has no such custom and neither did the Jews. So the kissing

commands were not social customs, they appear to be Jesus' custom.²

It's also clear that the early church took these commands quite literally. The Kiss of Peace became an integral part of the church liturgy—there were kisses at baptisms, funeral, ordinations. Most important was the kiss at communion (body broken and blood shed). It was also the custom to go to the prisons and kiss the “Marturos”—martyrs—before they were executed, in specific to kiss

² The most thorough and respected Biblical dictionary, the Anchor Bible Dictionary, has this to say, “There is general agreement that the ‘holy kiss’ had its origin in the practice which emerged in the early church among the believers themselves, with the impetus probably coming from the shape of their life with Jesus himself. Nothing analogous to it is to be found among any Greco-Roman societies, nor indeed at Qumran. The social context of the practice involves the form of salutations emerging among the believers themselves, with the impetus probably coming from the shape of their life with Jesus himself. Nothing analogous to it is to be found among any Greco-Roman societies, nor indeed at Qumran. The social context of the practice involves the form of salutations emerging among the first Christians. The holy kiss is to be seen in a living context of people who are building a new social reality, rather than in restrictive eucharistic or liturgical terms, laden as these terms are in any case with centuries of dispute and controversy. Paul draws the concept of holiness into the regular workaday world in which people live out the oneness which they have experienced in baptism and the church.”

their wounds (body broken and blood shed).

Tertullian, the church Father, asked if any prayer could be complete apart from the Holy Kiss. Clement of Alexandria complained that church was full of the sound of kissing. So over time the kiss became more and more regulated and legislated because kisses (like wine at communion) can be abused—they are dangerous.

By the 3rd Century when the church went political, kisses were no longer allowed between the sexes.

In the 13th Century in Britain they finally stopped kissing people and substituted an antiseptic kissing tablet called an “osculatorium.”

In the Eastern church they still kiss; they kiss icons. Yet I doubt those kisses look much like those of that harlot as she kissed Jesus’ feet at Simon’s house.

Here in America, even at the most Bible thumping, literalistic church, if you went around and kissed everybody with the kiss of love (obedient to scripture), I bet you money they’d kick you out and call the police.

Now some of you are sitting there terrified, terrified I’m gonna make you kiss that stinky person sitting next to you. Well, I’m not. You can wrestle with this scripture on your own.

But perhaps a great place to at least attempt obedience would be at your small group with all the lights on and your husband or wife and everybody present.

See, I ask the male elders and staff not to even be alone with a woman, and we have windows installed in all the office doors.

Now I want you to listen very carefully. If you think anyone in this church, other than your husband or wife (but including your father and mother) kisses you in a way that feels at all erotic and you tell them to stop, but they don’t

immediately back off, I want you to tell me or one of the elders, and we will enact church discipline. Is that perfectly clear?

But now the Bible still commands you to “greet the brethren with a holy kiss.” . . . **Isn’t that dangerous?** I suppose. Yes! Obedience is always dangerous, but disobedience is even more dangerous.

You know the most famous story Jesus told is about kissing. We call it the story of the Prodigal Son. A better title might be “The story of the Prodigal Father—the Prodigal Kisser.”

You’ll remember that this son comes to his father and says, “I want my inheritance money.” Which in that culture meant, “I wish you were dead, and I want your stuff.” The father gives him the money. Then the son goes to a far country where he blows it all in profligate living. The older brother claims he blew it on hookers—immoral erotic kisses.

Now, you do understand that erotic kisses are not necessarily immoral. In the covenant of marriage they are holy and mandatory. They are a sacrament of fidelity that pictures our exclusive fidelity to Jesus our bridegroom, a sacrament of fidelity. But outside of marriage they become like an evil sacrament of infidelity.

Well, the son blew his inheritance on profligacy, hookers, and unholy kisses. Then he returns with a depraved plan to work as an employee and get his father’s stuff, but he doesn’t want to be his son.

The father sees him from a great distance, runs to him out on the road, and before the son can say a word, the father grabs him, embraces him, and kisses him. He does not say, “Listen, boy, now we’re gonna lay down the law.” He grabs his son and kisses him over and over and over and

over again. It's at this point the boy crumbles—he repents. He longs to be a son—a son of his Father, the Prodigal Kisser.

But you see the Father heals the boy of immoral erotic kisses with passionate holy kisses.
He heals the boy not by building a fence around the boy's heart but by creating in him a new heart.
He heals the boy not with law but the Gospel of grace.

Civil laws can protect us from some of the pain of the fall, but no law can make you good. No law can give you a new heart. And if you put your faith in laws, it will only lead you deeper into sin and finally Hell.

So if you think God's kissing command leads to promiscuity, I think the reality is actually just the opposite.

In fact, all the politicians and lawyers with all their regulation and faith in legislation are far more likely to be sexually promiscuous than Jesus and all His kissing disciples.

It's as if all people were made for intimacy. You know without it, infants will die and little children will grow insane. We were all made for intimacy, legitimate intimacy, and without it we're like starving people that will eat poison if only for a moment it will fill our empty gut.

Joe Dallas, the former President of Exodus International, writes,

Intimacy is like water, our need for it turns into a craving that will drive us to do almost anything to get it. We may even drink gutter water if our thirst is intense enough, and we don't think there's any other way to satisfy

it. When a strong emotional need has been sexualized, its satisfaction can be sought in a number of illegitimate ways, including homosexuality. But when that need is being met legitimately, homosexual behavior holds less appeal.

There's a song by Steve and Annie Chapman that says,

Daddy, you're the man in your little girl's dreams. You are the one she longs to please. There's a place in her heart that can only be filled with her daddy's love. But if you don't give her the love she desires, she'll try someone else, but they won't satisfy her....Don't send her away to another man's door. Nobody else can do what you do. She just needs her daddy's love.

Get the point?

Now if you're a father and your child has fallen into some form of sexual deviancy, I'm not saying it's your fault. God makes each person differently with a unique set of weaknesses. I'm just saying if you want to help your kids, give 'em more kisses... holy kisses.

Get the point?

You have a father too, and you need to surrender to His kisses. It's His kiss that leads you to repentance and makes you new. He creates and recreates with a kiss.

In the beginning the Father bent down, took some earth and breathed into it. And Adam becomes a nephesh, a soul.

In John 20 the resurrected Christ appears to his disciples, breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit”—pneuma, breath, like a kiss.

You have a Father. And you have a Mother. She’s called the church. You need her kisses as well, for the Father kisses you through her—the Lord’s body, the Church.

And so turn to your neighbor and pucker up. Just look and hold that pucker. Kind of strange, huh? Even gross. Breath, nourishment, life passes in and out of the interior of that person through those lips. Pucker up, look at ‘em. Those lips are packed with nerve endings. They’re tender, sensitive, and vulnerable, and that hole in the middle leads down into that person’s chest, right next to their heart. Kisses make you vulnerable.

Some of you have been terribly abused by unholy kisses. They make you never want to risk kissing ever again. Well, you’re not the only one who’s been betrayed with a kiss. Remember Jesus?

See, that’s what amazes me most about the kissing commandment. Jesus was betrayed with a kiss and then we’re all commanded to kiss. Paul felt betrayed by the Corinthians. They hurt Paul. Then Paul commands everyone to kiss.

You see, to be betrayed by your enemies hurts, but... to be betrayed by your friend, that hurts like hell.

Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay his life down for his friend.”

Judas kissed Jesus, and Jesus called him “friend.” It would’ve hurt so much less if He had called him “enemy,” but he called him “friend.” I mean he received Judas’ kiss. I mean, Jesus drank the kiss in, so the betrayal hurt to the core of his being.

A kiss makes us vulnerable to the wounds of evil.

Who is it that can hurt me most? The ones I kiss the most—my wife, my kids, my mom, you, my family—that is my church. So it's tempting to just play church. But if you do church like Jesus, church will hurt.

You will give your heart, and someone will hurt it. A deacon may disappoint you. Your small group may gossip about you. A pastor may sin against you. If you keep on giving holy kisses anyway, it's called forgiveness, and you begin to look just like Jesus. But you will be tempted to stop. You'll be tempted to guard your heart—encase it in arrogance and law.

C.S. Lewis wrote,

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give your heart to no one... Lock it up safe in the coffin of your selfishness. In that casket it will change. The only place outside of Heaven where you can be safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.

I think my old friend, Tim, was stuck in Hell. He was mean. Several years ago they found his body alone in a hotel room in some far country. I believe it was Bangkok, Thailand. They said he had a reaction to some medication. He teased me for kissing Leslie Brown and what Tim needed more than anything was a good kiss—the Father's kiss. I hope he has it now.

Duane Morrison lived in a Jeep in the woods. I understand the attraction. Alone you're safe from the dangers of love. It wouldn't surprise me if somewhere in

Duane's past he had really been harmed by unholy kisses. So he hid in his Jeep, and the Jeep became his haunted house. He starved for intimacy until Wednesday last week he tried to get it at the point of a gun, and all along what he needed most was a good kiss—the Father's kiss.

Well, we can hide our hearts in far countries and Jeeps in the woods, and we can hide our hearts in legalism and religion like the Pharisees. But once you hide your heart in Hades, you're not only scared of kisses because of the pain of evil, you're scared of kisses because of the pain of good—it burns you.

You see,
 if I'm trying to be selfish and you kiss me,
 your kiss hurts my selfishness.
 If I'm trying to be arrogant and you give me a kiss,
 the kiss burns my pride.
 If I'm trying to be mad at Susan and she kisses me,
 the kiss messes up my anger.
 If I'm trying to be your enemy and you feed me, give me
 something to drink, and shower me with kindness,
 it's like you're heaping burning coals on my head
 and burning my entire paradigm of reality.

Good kisses judge us and burn away evil.

Judas' kiss hurt Jesus, and I think Jesus' kiss judged Judas. The judgment was good, but Judas would not surrender to that judgment, and so he judged himself—hung himself.

In this novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, through one of the characters, Dostoevsky tells the myth of the Grand Inquisitor. In the story Jesus comes to Seville, Spain during the Inquisition.

Jesus heals the crowds and loves the people, but as you may remember, the Grand Inquisitor has Jesus arrested and imprisoned. He locks Him in the dungeon. Jesus will not defend himself so the Grand Inquisitor hurls accusations at Jesus for 12 pages. He's angry over all the pain that Jesus has caused.

He tells Jesus that He has joined those who are "correcting his work," those who are ridding the world of the terrible burden of having to choose the good in freedom, those who will tell the masses whom to marry and whom not to marry, when to have children and when not to have children. In other words, they will legislate and regulate every kiss, relieving humanity of the terrible burden of having to decide, the terrible pain of walking in love.

He sentences Jesus to death. The Grand Inquisitor then falls silent, waiting for Jesus to answer. Dostoevsky writes,

The Grand Inquisitor falls silent and waits for some time for the prisoner [Jesus] to answer. The prisoner's silence has weighed on him. He has watched Him; He listened to him intently, looking gently into his eyes, and apparently unwilling to speak. The old man longs for Him to say something, however painful and terrifying. But instead, He [Jesus] suddenly goes over to the old man and kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips. And that is His only answer. The old man is startled and shudders. The corners of his lips seem to quiver slightly. He walks to the door, opens it, and says to

Him, 'Go now, and do not come back...ever. You must never, never come again!' And he lets the prisoner out into the dark streets of the city. The prisoner leaves.

"And what about the old man?"

"The kiss glows in his heart..."

The kiss burns him. It's the kiss of love.

The holy kiss is judgment. If we resist it, it burns us, but when we surrender (though it may burn) it makes all things new.

Kisses make us vulnerable.

Kisses judge us, and

Kisses change us.

You know when you were a kid and mad at your mom and your father made you kiss your mother, and you didn't want to kiss your mother—cause the kiss would hurt, but you kissed your mother anyway...

The kiss changed you just a little, didn't it? It was like a sacrament. As if something more than physical was going on, there was, like, a transfer of wind, breath, spirit.

According to one study, husbands who kiss their wives every morning:

Live 5 years longer than those who don't

They also have fewer accidents

Suffer much less illness

And earn 20-30% more than the non-kissers.

It's like life, soul, and spirit really can pass through kisses.

A holy kiss is a kiss of love, and love isn't a law or a regulation. Love isn't biology, chemicals, and hormones. Love is a Spirit, and the name of the Spirit is Yahweh.

Joe Bayly was a Christian author and minister. He had a rebellious son named Tim. He tried to reach Tim with arguments and rules—but still Tim rebelled. Tim left home, left the faith, and lived a profligate life in the far country. It was a commune in an old house in Chicago.

Tim's rebellion and immoral lifestyle just broke Joe's heart.

One night around 11:00 p.m., he got a call, "This is the police. Your son was arrested for a DUI. We have him here in the town jail."

Joe got out of bed and drove a half hour in the bitter cold to that town. But when he got there they told him, "We don't have a Tim Bayly here." Joe thought perhaps he had heard wrong so he drove to the next town and then the next and the next and the next.

Finally around 4:00 a.m., he decided to drive to that old house in Chicago where Tim had been sleeping. The door wasn't locked. He stepped over bodies, looking for his boy. Then in the faint light of the darkened room, he saw him asleep in a sleeping bag, strewn across an old mattress. Quietly he walked over to the mattress and stood over his boy. Then, moved with compassion, he bent down... carefully, so as not to wake him, bent down and lightly kissed him on the cheek, then left.

In the months that followed, Tim started visiting his parents. Then he started going to church, then he re-committed his life to Christ, and then he announced he was going into the ministry. Today, Tim's a Presbyterian pastor in Indiana.

Well, before Joe died and years after Tim had returned home, on a walk one day Joe turned to Tim and asked, “Tim, what brought you back?”

Tim looked at his Dad and said,

Don’t you know? Dad, remember that night years ago when you got a call that I was in jail? Dad, that was my friend. It was a prank. When you came to the house I only acted asleep. Dad, I was wide awake. I knew you’d driven all night in the cold, and I wondered what you would do to me and all you did was bend down and kiss me gently on the cheek. Dad, the kiss brought me back.

So the Father ran to the prodigal son on the road, showered him with kisses, and brought us all back.

The kiss made the Father vulnerable to unspeakable pain.
The kiss judged the boy, burning away evil.
And the kiss made the boy new.

It makes all things new.

The kiss is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Jesus is God’s kiss in a broken world—

Body Broken, Blood Shed.

Jesus is the word, the life, the breath from God’s lips,
through whom all things are created and recreated.

Jesus is the kiss that makes us
in the image of the Great Kisser.

So what am I saying?

“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

And where are we gonna get the strength to do something that painful?

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul writes, “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered “paradidomai” to you that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed “paradidomai”...It’s the same word—delivered and betrayed.

You know that Judas wasn’t the only one to betray Jesus. So did the Romans. So did the Jews. So did Paul... So do we.

I think he’s saying it right here in these verses. Whenever we sin we betray Jesus and deliver him up “paradidomai” for crucifixion.³

“On the night that Jesus was betrayed (with a kiss) He took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he also took the cup after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.’”

So we invite you to come to the table. But it is judgment, so if you don’t want it you can stay in your seat or just walk by. But if you want Him, tear off a piece of the bread and dip it in the cup. Black cups are wine. Purple cups are juice. Then take the wounded body of God’s Witness, Marturos. Touch the wounded body to your lips and ingest God’s kiss.

³ He’s already done it in all eternity but whenever we sin in space and time we continue to pound the nails.

You see you betray him. He knows it, and yet He kisses you. He will not stop kissing you—even if it hurts like hell. He’s that vulnerable to you. There are no words to describe what He suffers for the love of you. When you see it, the kiss judges you and burns away evil, and when you surrender to it the kiss makes you new.

[Peter sings...]“If you want to know if He loves you so, it’s in His kiss.”

BENEDICTION:

[A movie clip is shown from The Princess Bride. A grandfather is reading a story to his sick grandson. The grandson had been hesitant at first to see the grandfather or to hear the story. At one point he had asked his grandfather to skip the kissing part. At the end of the story, the hero, Wesley, has rescued his true love, Buttercup.]

Grandfather: They rode to freedom. And as dawn arose, Westley and Buttercup knew they were safe. A wave of love swept over them, and as they reached for each other...(The grandfather has just stopped reading.)

Grandson: What? What?

Grandfather: No, it's kissing again. You don't want to hear it.

Grandson: I don't mind so much. (He gestures for his Grandfather to read.)

Grandfather: Okay.

[The scene changes back to the story of Westley and Buttercup.]

Grandfather reading (off screen): Since the invention of the kiss, there have been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind. The end.

[Cut to the grandson's room. The grandfather snaps the book closed.]

Grandfather: Now I think you ought to go to sleep.

Grandson: Okay.

Grandfather: (standing, readying to leave) Okay. Okay. Okay. All right. So long.

Grandson: Grandpa? (The old man stops, turns.) Maybe you could come over and read it again to me tomorrow.

Grandfather: (There is a pause; then...) As you wish... (And his smile is enough. As the grandfather steps out the door.)

Boys and girls, I know that you don't naturally like kisses, but come back for story time next week, and we'll

tell the story again, and we'll ingest the story again. And before you know, you'll be kissing the King. You see the Lord is King, and you are His bride. And so He's bound and determined to turn you into a great kisser. And so believe the story. It's called the Gospel.

And before you leave, let me say for some there is a whole lot of pain associated with this sermon. Don't fear. Wherever sin has abounded, grace will abound all that much more. And the story will be all that much better one day, but you may need some help now. We have a prayer ministry team that will be down front, and they would love to pray with you.

And about the kissing thing... I kissed Andrew and Alan and some of that stuff. You do what you feel God leads you to do. So don't get all stressed, but if you think God's calling you to give someone a kiss, a holy kiss, do it. All right? In Jesus' name, amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

~ *Matthew 5:27-29*

Policy

LMCC will allow no form of harassment including sexual harassment or hazing. Harassment is defined as any form of non-verbal, verbal, or physical behavior that results in an employee being threatened or violated in any way. A supervisor who harasses or solicits favors (sexual or other) from an unwilling employee in return for promotion, wages, continuance, employment, or any similar promise will be terminated immediately. Unwelcome sexual propositions to an employee will constitute sexual harassment and will not be tolerated.

Procedure

Any employee who feels harassed may discuss the problem with his or her supervisor, Senior Pastor, or an elder. Any report of sexual harassment is to be treated seriously and a report given immediately to the Senior Pastor or an elder.

An employee who files a harassment complaint will be treated fairly and courteously throughout the investigation.

~ *LMCC Employee Handbook*

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. . . . I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at

all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? . . . All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

~ 1 Corinthians 5:1-7, 5:9-12, 16:20

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

~ 2 Corinthians 13:12

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

~ Romans 16:16

Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

~ 1 Thessalonians 5:26

Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

~ 1 Peter 5:14

There is general agreement that the “holy kiss” had its origin in the practice which emerged in the early church among the believers themselves, with the impetus probably coming from the shape of their life with Jesus himself. Nothing analogous to it is to be found among any Greco-Roman societies, nor indeed at Qumran. Lowrie (1955: 242), following Cabrol (*DACL* 2: 117-30), has suggested that Jesus originated the practice. Judas kissed Jesus in the garden, a sign which would convey one message to outsiders but would be the usual form of greeting and hence arouse no suspicions to the inside group. Others see the beginnings of the kiss in the post-resurrection appearances (Benko 1986: 82). While clearly the erotic kiss is virtually unmentioned in the NT, there is no polemic against it. . . . The social context of the practice involves the form of salutations emerging among the first Christians. Each of the occurrences of the “holy kiss” appears in the context of greetings, and Paul appears to have taken leadership in establishing literary greetings. . . . He was certainly the first popular ethical teacher known to instruct members of a mixed social group to greet each other with a kiss. . . . The holy kiss is to be seen in a living context of people who are building a new social reality, rather than in restrictive eucharistic or liturgical terms, laden as these terms are in any case with centuries of dispute and controversy (Selwyn 1952: 244). Before we describe it as “one of the most ancient of rituals” (Bigg *1 Peter* ICC, 198) we must try to understand how it departs from 1st-century usage and what purpose it was meant to serve. . . . Paul draws the concept of holiness into the regular workaday world in which people live out the oneness which they have experienced in baptism and the church. If the Christians at Philippi and elsewhere were to be greeted as “saints” (4:21), the “holy kiss” is nothing more

than the kiss which “saints” give each other when they meet. The admonitions to kiss one another serve to stress the liberty to express without inhibition to all people of whatever background, rank, or gender, the ardor of *agape* in any context.

~ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, “Kiss”

Kisses, tears and embraces. . . On a broad historical view it is, of course, not the demonstrative gestures of Friendship among our ancestors but the absence of such gestures in our own society that calls for some special explanation. We, not they, are out of step.

~ *C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves*

The analogy of skin—soft, warm, and touchable—conveys the message of a God who is eager to relate in love to His creations. Christ was saying to us: Let the world first see the beauty and feel the softness and warmth of the Christian community, and then let it realize the underlying internal framework.

~ *Dr. Paul Brand & Philip Yancey, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*

A kiss is the approach of two pairs of lips, with reciprocal transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide.

~ *A Communist Textbook*

Kiss the Son,

lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

~ *Psalms 2:12*

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” ~ “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I

suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

~ *Luke 7:36-47*

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. . . . I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”” And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

~ *Luke 15:13, 15:18-24*

Intimacy with our peers is like water: we always need it to a degree. But if we’ve gone without it for a long period, our need for it turns into a craving that will drive us to do almost anything to get it. We may even drink sea water or gutter water if our thirst is intense enough and we don’t think there’s any other way to satisfy it. When a strong, emotional need has been sexualized, its satisfaction can be sought in a number of illegitimate ways, including homosexuality. But when that need is being met legitimately, homosexual behavior holds less appeal.

~ *Joe Dallas,*

Former President of Exodus International

When I was only 14 years of age, I dated an 18-year-old boy. I really needed his love and if the conditions to keep that love were to have sex with him, I felt I had no choice. ~ I felt so guilty afterwards. I can remember sobbing in my bed at night, after I’d come home from being with my boyfriend. I wanted so much to have my virginity back, and yet, It was gone--forever. I began to feel so lonely inside, but there was no one I could turn to. Certainly not my father, who would really “hate” me if he ever knew what an awful thing I had done. ~ After two years, I broke up with my boyfriend, but soon had another, and went through the same cycle with him. And then with another. ~ Isn’t that ironic? The very thing I searched for--unconditional love--was being offered to me conditionally . . . “If you love me, you’ll let me.” ~ I’m 27 now, and about six

months ago I wrote in my journal to the Lord, these very words . . . ~ “I felt lonely tonight—intense loneliness. And I realized that what I was lonely for was a ‘daddy,’ to be able to call him up when I hurt and hear him say he understands and to listen to me. But, I never had that with my dad. And so I am lonely without that link to my past. ~ “There’s a song by Steve and Annie Chapman that says, ‘Daddy, you’re the man in your little girl’s dreams, you are the one she longs to please. There’s a place in her heart that can only be filled with her daddy’s love. But if you don’t give her the love she desires, she’ll try someone else, but they won’t satisfy her . . . Don’t send her away to another man’s door. Nobody else can do what you do. She just needs her daddy’s love.”

~ Letter quoted in
Focus on the Family, February 1989, p. 6.

And he [Judas] came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

~ Matthew 26:49

“We shall allow them or forbid them to live with their wives or mistresses, to have or not have children—all according to the degree of their obedience to us—and they will submit to us with cheerfulness and joy. They will tell us the secrets that most torment their consciences, they will tell us everything, and we shall solve all their problems, and they will trust to our solutions completely, because they will be rid of the terrible worry and the frightening torment they know today then they have to decide for themselves how to act. ~ And everyone will be happy, all the millions of beings, with the exception of the hundred thousand men who are called upon to rule over them. For only we, the keepers of the secret, will be unhappy. There will be millions upon millions of happy babes and one hundred thousand sufferers who have accepted the burden of the knowledge of good and evil. They will die peacefully with Your name on their lips, but beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. . . . I turned away and joined those who were endeavoring to correct Your work. I left the proud and turned to the meek, for the happiness of the meek. What I have told You will happen and our kingdom will come. I repeat, tomorrow You will see obedient herds, at the first sign from me, hurry to heap coals on the fire beneath the stake at which I shall have You burned, because, by coming here, You have made our task more difficult. For if anyone has ever deserved our fire, it is You, and I shall have You burned tomorrow. Dixi!” ~ The Grand Inquisitor falls silent and waits for some time for the prisoner [Jesus] to answer. The prisoner’s silence has weighed on him. He has watched Him; He listened to him intently, looking gently into his eyes, and apparently unwilling to speak. The old man longs for Him to say something, however painful and terrifying. But instead, He suddenly goes over to the old man and kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips. And that is His only answer. The old man is startled and

shudders. The corners of his lips seem to quiver slightly. He walks to the door, opens it, and says to Him, 'Go now, and do not come back. . . Ever. You must never, never come again!' And he lets the prisoner out into the dark streets of the city. The prisoner leaves." ~ "And what about the old man?" ~ "The kiss glows in his heart . . . But the old man sticks to his old idea." ~ "And you too, stick to it?" Aloyshea cried bitterly. Ivan laughed. ~ "You know what," he said, "it's all nonsense really, a meaningless poem by a scatter-brained student who's never written two lines of poetry in his life." ~ Aloyshea stood up, walked over to him, and, without a word, kissed him on the lips.

~ *Fyodor Dostoevsky,*
The Brothers Karamazov

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

~ *Genesis 2:7*

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship ["proskuneo" - to pray, to kiss] the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

~ *John 4:23*

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

~ *John 20:21-22*

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