



## HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

*Learn to appreciate and give dignity to your body, not abusing it, as is so common among those who know nothing of God.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:4,5 (THE MESSAGE)

Up to this point we've dealt with the mind in terms of how we ought to think about sex. Now we turn to the hands and deal with how we ought to act concerning sex. Let's return to our main question, "How far can you go?" This is where the real, daily decisions must be made. We focus so greatly on the issue of abstinence that we seem to forget that there are lots of steps leading up to sexual intercourse. If these were thought about and dealt with properly, we would have fewer problems handling the final step of sexual relations. Figure 3 illustrates how physical sexual contact progresses and culminates in sexual intercourse.

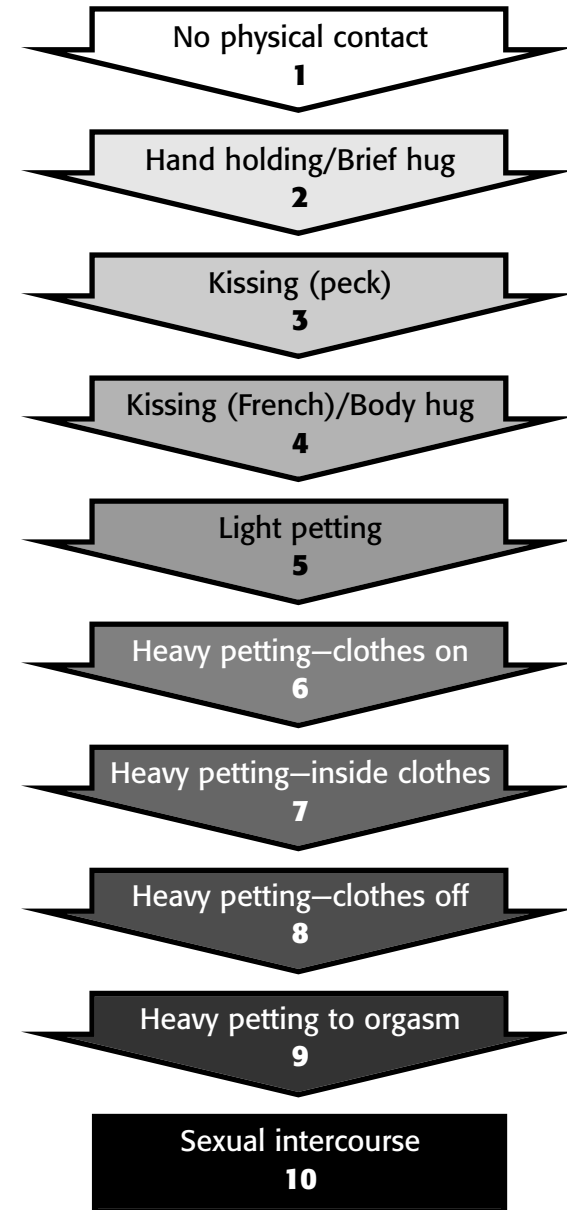


Figure 3

As you consider how to make decisions about setting limits in your physical relationship, there are a few general principles you need to keep in mind.

**1. The lower you touch on a person's body, the more intimate you become with him/her.** Hand-holding represents a small degree of intimacy. Touching a person's face is a greater degree of intimacy. As you begin to touch the breast/chest area, you are taking the intimacy to yet another level. Once the contact is below the waist in the genital area, you are reaching the height of intimacy.

**2. Along the same lines, the more prolonged the contact, the more intimate you become.** Brushing hands as you both reach for the Ketchup is not as intimate as taking a walk holding hands. Similarly, a brief "good night kiss" is a far cry from trying to clean someone's tonsils with your tongue. I think you understand the concept.

As intimacy increases, so does sexual arousal, making you more vulnerable to greater temptation. This brings us to the third principle.

**3. The further you go, the more difficult it is to come back.** Anyone who tells you that sexual contact and arousal doesn't feel good has either never tried it or is a liar. Remember that God designed it that way. As we have stated earlier, the problem arises when progressive contact takes place where it should not—outside of marriage. Using our scale (Figure 3), once you know you can move from Step 1 to 2, Step 1 is no longer enough. Once you move from Step 4 to Step 5, you will no longer be satisfied with staying at Step 4.

By nature we like to test our limits. Haven't you ever been tempted to touch the "Wet Paint" sign? Haven't you ever skidded in the door at 10:59 and 50 seconds to beat an 11:00 curfew? Haven't you then lobbied to get that curfew moved up to 12:00?

The same principle is true for sexual contact: the closer

we come to the edge, the further we want to go. It's a law of nature. I've never known any young person to go to their parents and say, "Mom and Dad, I think I've been staying out too late. Why don't we move my curfew back to 10:00?" I've never known any adult to ask a police officer for a ticket to discourage them from speeding.

Once you get going, it's difficult to stop. Even if you put on the brakes, your momentum takes you further. A car going 80 mph does not stop at the point of braking but continues farther down the road. At this point, you may still be saying, "So what's the problem with a few skid marks?" Why would God give us the equipment and the desires if He didn't expect us to use them? Good question. That's our next subject.



### THINK ABOUT IT!

- Review the principles of physical contact discussed on pages 12. How would you describe the level of intimacy you have in your relationship with your boyfriend or girlfriend? Is it appropriate?
- If you take the scale on page 11 into consideration, what does a Christian date look like?