

A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing

What is an embrace? An embrace may be physical; an outward show of our affections for someone; but we may also be embracing something in our hearts and minds; something spiritual; a Biblical truth; and we might also be embracing a besetting or secret sin.

In regard to physically embracing someone, I recall from BMT, rules about PDA, or the Public Display of Affections. This from AFI 36-2618:

Paragraph 2.13.6. (This is current): When in uniform or civilian clothes (*in an official capacity*), Airmen must not engage in public displays of affection including, but not limited to, holding hands (except when holding a young child's hand), walking arm-in-arm, *embracing*, caressing, and kissing. Public displays of affection are inappropriate as they violate a long-standing custom of the service and may be service discrediting since indiscriminate displays of affection detract from the professional image the Air Force intends to project to the public. Brief displays of affection, such as a modest kiss or embrace, may be permitted in situations where physical contact is commonly accepted etiquette such as weddings, graduations, promotions, or retirement ceremonies; and upon departure for or return from deployments.

Before God saved me from my sins; before I ever even heard of the Book of Ecclesiastes, I knew, when I was on-duty, I represented the USAF, and that it was a time to refrain from embracing! No PDA!

This is an AFI; but what does God teach us from His Word about how we should govern ourselves when it comes to physically embracing someone?

Shouldn't we be prudent and cautious; especially if/when we embrace someone who is of the opposite sex? Who is NOT our husband/wife? If you understand what SIN has done to the flesh, you should also understand what Paul wrote in Romans 7:18:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing

am not saying that it is a sin to greet someone who is of the opposite sex with an embrace, but your embrace better be brief, guarded, and in a way that does not kindle sinful affections or dishonor Christ! Christian, there is never a time when you are OFF DUTY from being a Christian!

There ARE good and wholesome embraces:

Many greet each other with an embrace; we hug our husbands, wives, children, and grandchildren! And we should embrace those whom we love! An embrace communicates the unspoken language of your love for them!

Have you ever considered that embracing doesn't have to be taught!

We embrace our loved ones if we are about to depart on a long trip; (I can remember embracing my wife and children when I deployed overseas); people embrace when they may never see each other again; and then there are the final embraces of loved ones or friends who are about to die, those whom we shall never again see in this life! Ruth 1:8-18

Ruth embraced more than Naomi, she embraced Naomi's people, Naomi's country, but MOST IMPORTANTLY, she embraced Naomi's God!

What and WHO are we embracing today. This is something that we may NOT have considered in our day to day walk, but what we MUST consider is; in the mind of God, there is a time to embrace, and there is a time to refrain from embracing!

If you are going to physically embrace someone, especially someone who is NOT a family member; (give them a hug), your affections in embracing them MUST be sincere, from a pure mind, yes, because you love them, but mainly because you love Christ! 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17. 23

A sincere physical embrace toward one whom you love conveys your unspoken affections toward them; a careless & thoughtless physical embrace, especially when between a man and a woman who are not married, might kindle affections that are sinful; maybe not for you; but you must think of the person that you are physically embracing!

As believing men and women; WE MUST ALWAYS make sure that when we do embrace someone, that it is sincere, and is coming from the love of Christ in us toward that one whom we are briefly embracing.

I am not teaching you that you SHOULD NOT embrace others or give them a hug; but what we MUST know IS WHAT God is teaching us; to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

An embrace ought to be the unspoken language of love for the soul of the one whom you are embracing; husbands & wives; parents, your children should know your love for them in how you treat them, but also in your loving embraces. Mark 10:13-16

An embrace is the unspoken language of personal comfort & consolation to someone in their difficult time or in the loss of a loved one; but it is also the unspoken language of dear friendship and kinship between brothers and sisters in Christ in their greetings and departures.

Both Paul and Peter in their epistles wrote, òsalute or greet one another with an holy kiss; this holy kiss was, in all probability accompanied with an embrace: 1 Peter 5:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:26

In Luke 7, we have the account of Simon, who was a Pharisee, when he invited the Lord Jesus to eat at his house; and there was a woman in that city (who was a sinner), who had an alabaster box of very costly ointment.

And when she knew that Jesus went to eat at the Pharisees' house she came and sat at His feet weeping and kissing His

feet. Simon was insulted by this woman being there, but he was also offended by the fact that Christ allowed her to touch Him. Her affections were an outward display of love to Christ, which they knew nothing of!

Luke 7:44-50

Let your embraces for others be because you love Christ, and because you want to communicate the love of Christ to them. Have you ever considered that you are personally embraced by God? Isaiah 40:11, Acts 10:44

But then, in contrast, there are times to refrain or restrain yourself from embracing someone else:

This is VERY important (as already mentioned) in the embracing of those that are of the opposite sex. Oh, that we might be wise and prudent in this; because, when this type of embrace does not come from the love of Christ within you; it's a thoughtless embrace; it's NOT wholesome, sincere, and sanctified. We need to be cautious and MORE apt to refrain from these types of embraces; you might be sincere, but the other might not be!

Listen, I don't want to tap dance around this, especially from the vantage point of the one who wrote Ecclesiastes; let us NOT forget the sin that wreaked havoc in Solomon's life! The Proverbs are replete with warnings about the sexual sins of fornication and adultery; sins that started with an unholy touch and an unsanctified and insincere embrace!

James 1:15: Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death

The wisest man on the planet (save Christ) could NOT stop this sin!

Nehemiah 13:26, 1 Kings 11:1-8

This is why Paul wrote: 1 Corinthians 6:18: FLEE FORNICATION! Now I know the concentration from these passages targets the dangers of strange women; but women, beware and be warned of sinful & strange men, whose embraces are sinful and not sincere.

Proverbs 5:15-23, 1 Corinthians 7:1

We learn this wisdom from Solomon, a man who should have refrained from embracing many strange women; women who turned his heart away from His God. The fact is, we MUST all be very cautious about getting into the habit of physically embracing people of the opposite sex.

There are other times when we MUST refrain from embracing:

When you, as the church gather together to hear the Word of God! It's not a time for husbands & wives to be holding each other arm in arm; this is a time for you to refrain from physical embracing so that you might be focused on embracing Christ, in the truth of God's Word.

Proverbs 4:5-13, 1 Corinthians 7:35

Don't let physical embraces and affections stop you from embracing the wisdom of God from His Word! If you're going to GET WISDOM from God, you've got to be able to refrain from embracing WHEN you're sitting before God!

If you would seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and set your affection on things above, THEN you MUST LEARN to REFRAIN from physically embracing in the presence of God!

There is a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing!

Learn from the wisdom of God as to when these times should be in your life; commit this to prayer, and ask the Lord to keep you from sinning in this thing of embracing.