

NAKEDNESS

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(LIGHTLY REVISED WITH PERMISSION)

What does the Bible say about nudity?

I know of people who live in nudists camps, and I think it is wrong. To me, nudity should be private, between a husband and wife, not something you share with anyone or everyone.

I must admit that I was originally taken back that anyone would need to ask this question. However, I suppose one of the signs of the times is that people just do not know, or want to know many of the principles of right and wrong any more. I will give some thoughts on the subject.

It is certainly correct that living in a nudist camp is absolutely wrong. But in order to stay close to the Biblical terms, instead of nudity, I will use the Bible word nakedness. It is true that Adam and Eve went without clothes when they were created. However, they were at this time in a state of innocence. Though they were intelligent creatures, they had no more sense of right and wrong than a baby does today. However, as soon as sin entered the world, they were ashamed of their nakedness and sought to cover themselves. From that time until now, God has treated nakedness outside of marriage as a shameful and sinful thing.

Several actions concerning nakedness (outside marriage where the bed is undefiled - Hebrews 13:4) are condemned in the Bible:

It is a shame and wrong to uncover your nakedness to others. The priests were warned to wear undergarments so that their nakedness would not be discovered when they went up the steps to the altar in their robes. Their undergarments (substantial linen breeches) were to cover from their loins (waist) to their thighs (Exodus 28:42). When the children of Israel made and worshipped the golden calf, Aaron “made them naked unto their shame” (Exodus 32:25). Isaiah 47:3 speaks of the shame of having your nakedness uncovered.

It is a sin to uncover the nakedness of another. This is seen as leading to other sins (see Leviticus 18:6-18).

It is wrong to look on the nakedness of others. Ham’s son was cursed because Ham saw the nakedness of his father and went and talked about it (Genesis 9:22-23). Habakkuk 2:15 speaks of the wickedness of those who get someone drunk in order to “look on their nakedness.”

One important point I need to make concerns the Biblical definition of nakedness. We sometimes get the idea that nakedness refers only to having no clothing at all. However, this is neither true in the Bible nor in the English dictionary. One of the definitions for “naked” in my English dictionary is “without conventional or usual clothing.” Many people do not know that the Bible often calls improper covering of the body nakedness. Most often it refers to the wearing of undergarments or what areas are covered by other garments which cover personal areas and serve the same purpose... This explains the nakedness of Saul (1 Samuel 19:24), of David (2 Samuel 6:14, 20; 1 Chronicles 15:27), of Isaiah (Isaiah 20:2-4), and of Peter (John 21:7). It is interesting that Peter did not want Jesus to see him naked. David’s nakedness he admitted was vile

In Isaiah 47 we read that any woman showing her bare thighs even in water was naked and had God’s disapproval. This raises all sorts of other problems with swimming, tennis in short skirts and other activities.

We understand this definition in practice as well. If a person had no clothing except for a 6-inch square piece of cloth taped to the middle of their back, we would still consider them to be naked. The Bible teaches that improperly covered bodies are still naked. This is interesting in an age when many outer garments do not cover as much as garments did a short time ago.

The 1960s was the age of rebellion and the mini skirt was the fashion of the day and, consequently, undergarments were regularly seen and this led to an epidemic of unwanted teenage pregnancies. This was the decade of free love and decadence.

In the New Testament women are instructed to dress modestly at all times and the main reason is to prevent lust and sexual attacks and any normal person would realise the sense of this. It also shows God's concern for the health and safety of women.

There are no comparable instructions for men as to the modesty of their dress although nakedness in them is also wrong. It seems that God is concerned with the safety of women and holds men responsible for their well-being.

We do not and cannot have the innocence of children. Therefore, we are not to be seen in our nakedness or just in our undergarments or what substitutes for undergarments. To do so is shameful and to look on the nakedness of others is sinful. Certainly, in working with young children and in working with the sick and elderly, there are times when caretakers will see their nakedness and there is nothing wicked in this (though proper respect should be given and the eyes should be averted whenever possible). God also makes an exception for a husband and wife. In fact, this is part of the significance of them being made one flesh. However, to purposely uncover our bodies for others to see or to gaze upon the nakedness of others to satisfy our own prurient interest are both sins in the Bible. This rules out any sort of nudist camp and many other things that are practiced today.

(see [Women's Dress](#) by David C F Wright on this site)

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