

Four Biblical Reasons for Christians to Cover their Nakedness

Some Christians believe that biblical modesty pertains only to putting on costly clothing, and not to a lack of clothing. While the Bible certainly warns against showy, attention-grabbing garb (1 Pet. 3:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:9), God also address a lack of clothing.

An older preacher once told me that, in India, it would be wrong for preachers to tell Christian women to cover their midriffs. Likewise, he said, it is wrong to impose our "American custom" of covering our breasts on topless Christians in Africa. You heard me right. (This in a continent where HIV and AIDS are at all-time epidemic levels.) Another Christian once told me that if you converted a man in Africa, who had a harem of wives, it would be wrong to tell him to divorce all but his first wife ([see Rom. 7:2-4; Ezra 10]). Both of these men believed that biblical teaching, regarding nakedness and multiple marriages, pertained only to the violation of social móres. In like fashion, some Christians, who would never invite a guest into their home in only their undergarments, will, nevertheless, go to the beach, pool, park, or gym in attire that covers the same amount of flesh as their undergarments. In response to those who teach that nakedness, or a lack of clothing, is not addressed in the Bible, here are four Biblical reasons for Christians to cover their nakedness:

1. The word "naked" or "nakedness," in the New Testament, can indicate nudity or simply a lack of clothing, which the Bible treats as something that should be remedied - See Mt. 25:36-44; Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 5:3; 11:27; Jas. 2:15; Rev. 3:17, 18; 16:15; 17:16.

2. Displaying physical nakedness (a lack of physical clothing) in public, is viewed as shameful in both the Old Testament (Exo. 20:26; 28:42, 43; Isa. 47:1-3; Lam. 1:8; Nah. 3:5) and in the New Testament, where John says, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:18). The Lord's illustration, comparing (by analogy) the Christian's spiritual depravity with physical "nakedness," would have made absolutely no sense to the Laodicean church, unless there was a premise of "shame" in being physically naked, which would be understood by the Christians there. John's teaching was a spiritual precedent from God. It was not based on a "social móre" because nakedness wasn't considered a "shame" within the pagan Laodicean culture.

3. Removing clothing to expose the body to the opposite sex incites sexual arousal, which should be reserved for the "marriage bed" (Heb. 13:4; Prov. 5:18-19). The first reference to Solomon's bride having her clothes removed in his presence, was in her dream (S. of Sol. 5:3) only after their wedding ceremony (S. of Sol. 3:11), and not before; although some Christians today feel we can remove our clothing in the presence of the opposite sex when at the beach, pool, park, gym, etc.

- Is it any wonder that surveys find that roughly 90% of adolescent boys go to the beach to see girls unclothed, and 90% of adolescent girls go to the beach to be seen by boys unclothed?

- Is it any wonder that scantily-clad women are a lucrative marketing technique today?

- Is it any wonder that the best-selling book *Every Man's Battle* (Arterburn et al., 2000) specifically deals with the day-to-day problem many men have, lusting after scantily-clad women in advertisements, billboards, while exercising, driving, in the work place, while watching entertainment and on the internet?

- Is it any wonder that the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* is the most lucrative issue of the year?

- Is it any wonder that, when women in the world are trying to attract a man, they wear less clothing to get his attention? This was told to me by a former colleague, from another country, as a technique she used to woo her (now) American husband away from his former wife (Prov. 7:10).

4. Related to the previous point, the "shamefast" woman of 1 Tim. 2:9 does not want to be a stumbling block, inciting lust in men by her apparel, or lack thereof. Many women (or even men) do not realize the result that wearing tight, see-through clothing, or even a lack of clothing produces on the opposite sex. Psychologists, sociologists, Hollywood producers, executive advertising firms, and teenage men will readily admit that women exposing their thighs, backs and breasts induces arousal in men. Yes, this is an uncomfortable subject to discuss with our

children and brethren, but it is the way God made us - a fact of life that must not be ignored. The World and Even Some Erring Believers Get the Point - Do We?

It is possible that for some Christians, who are advanced in years, for whom "the caperberry (i.e., aphrodisiac, JBG) is ineffective" (Eccl. 12:5, NASB), it may be easy to forget how easily the adultery of the heart was committed in their youth: "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt. 5:28). Let's not forget the great battle against adultery of the heart, being fought by (1) young men (or women) with "raging hormones," and/or (2) single Christians who are not married and, thus, may be more-easily tempted to burn with lust (1 Cor. 7:8,9). The teaching in this article is not "Victorian tradition," but should be common sense, based on scriptural precedents, stated above. These are principles that even the world and many (otherwise erring) denominational believers understand. Do we?

- by Joshua Gurtler

Forgiveness (3^d in a series)

We have been instructed to forgive others "just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Last week we observed that God is not only willing to forgive us, but He is also 'aggressive' in His desire to forgive. By that we mean that He 'goes the extra mile' to make it possible for us to be restored to a right standing with Him – and we should also be willing and anxious to forgive those who sin against us,.

With these points in mind, we must emphasize that God's forgiveness is conditional. That is to say, He requires us to do certain things in order to be forgiven. For the alien sinner those conditions are clearly stated in what we often refer to as 'the plan of salvation'. One must hear (Romans 10:17), believe (Hebrews 11:6), repent (Luke 13:3), confess Christ (Romans 10:10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38) in order to be saved. Omit any of these requirements, and salvation cannot be obtained. For one who has already become a Christian but sins again, the terms of pardon involve repentance, confession, and prayer (Acts 8:22). Would we argue that – since God has imposed these conditions – He is not a loving and forgiving God? Of course not! As already observed, He is willing and ready to forgive, but His conditions must be met.

What about us? What should we do when someone sins against us? The answer is obvious – forgive them "just as" God does. That means that it is proper to expect them to meet the appropriate conditions of forgiveness. Jesus taught that our forgiveness is to be conditional: "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). Some are uncomfortable with the idea that our forgiveness should be withheld until the sinning brother repents. They suggest that the loving thing is to forgive unilaterally and unconditionally. But, think! In doing so we would not be taking important steps to bring our brother back from sin. We would not be motivating him to be right with God. We would actually be facilitating his continuation in a sin that can cause his soul to be lost.

- by Greg Gwin