



My View on Nakedness

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***"WAIT, David! You're still a GUY!!!
How do you deal with female nudity?"***

"How can I work intimately with naked women without a moral problem?" For 25 years I had no adequate answer to this question, until coming to the understanding described below. What follows is both for couples who need more than my [short answer](#) to the above question on my "[L&D Tips](#)" webpage, and for those who reason logically from their own "view on nakedness" that any male, even an ordained minister, could not keep his mind pure during such "questionable activity." The research behind this essay not only validates my own experience of maintaining a "pure mind," but exposes the dysfunction and danger in our culture's evaluation of the naked human body, a destructive perspective often falsely presumed and preached as "God's point of view."

My SURPRISING Discovery That NUDE IS NOT LEWD

If you had grown up in a society where it was strictly taught that the universe revolved around Earth, you might have been persecuted for teaching the fact that Earth actually revolves around the Sun. Not only was the world in error, but religious leaders pulled God Himself into the framework of this mythology because they considered it to be "divine truth." A small number of honest and intelligent scientists did suffer at ecclesiastical hands for telling the truth. But no matter what society believed and taught, the geocentric idea of astronomy eventually was corrected by a careful observation of reality. Although its daily rotation still makes it appear that everything in the heavens revolves around Earth, today even young school children know that our planet is only one of several others circling a relatively small star.

We have been raised in a culture where just as powerful a myth exists about nudity. We have been strictly taught that, without clothing on, the human body is an obscene stimulus for sexual lust. God Himself has been pulled into the logic of this indoctrination to give it a firm religious standing. This belief in the lewdness of nudity makes it a moral transgression to look at people of the opposite sex without their clothing, or to allow our own naked bodies to be seen by them. But, instead of a small number of observers exploding this myth, multiple millions of people, like myself, have discovered the real truth about simple nudity. Although the naked human body may seem lewd and lustful, from how society trains the mind to see it, it is really something beautifully designed by our Creator and never intended by Him to become what society has made of it.

The nature of my job in labor and delivery makes seeing nakedness a common occurrence. But as a male raised in our culture, "*How do I deal with female nudity?*" was once my own question. The question can also be turned around and asked from the perspective of my patients, "*How do I deal with getting nude in front of this man I don't even know?*" My experiences with naked women have shown me that both I myself and the many ladies I've had the opportunity to work with have not had the problems that society predicts. The above two questions themselves only seem logical because they are asked in the context of a society that has abnormally "sexualized" the human body. Our own American society is notoriously guilty of doing this. It teaches us with religiously scrupulous zeal to think of nakedness almost exclusively in terms related to erotic titillation or sexual intercourse. My purpose in this essay is to show why such a social attitude is tragically erroneous, and why our society's strict insistence on perpetuating it is something truly "*shameful.*"

Early on in nursing school I occasionally saw female nudity. Later, as an emergency room nurse, I was frequently exposed to it. As a maternity nurse, exposure to the nakedness of women became a large part of my daily routine. But for as long as I can remember, I was taught to believe that seeing naked women would create impure thoughts. Such a prediction proved true in adolescent years whenever my curious eyes purveyed pornographic magazines. Of course, these were especially designed to stir up such lustful thinking. But I also found that my imagination could be even more troublesome when looking at fully clothed women. I clearly recall a high school teacher telling us that a woman in a bathing suit can draw more attention sexually than one without any clothes at all, because complete exposure short-circuits the imagination. When he said that, I did not

believe him. Now I know how correct he was. My experiences in the hospital verified his statement. The foundation for my faith in the *nude-is-lewd* myth began to crumble on the day it was challenged by the following incident....

I was a nursing student on a clinical rotation in a convalescent hospital. My assignment was to give a bed bath to a middle-aged woman recently crippled on one side by a stroke. I had learned the proper method of preserving the patient's "modesty" by washing one part of the body at a time, while keeping the rest under a bath blanket. This I carefully began to do. With curtains drawn, I covered her with a blanket, then removed her gown underneath it. But my patient herself was a seasoned nurse, and her understanding of nakedness and her desire for efficiency had outgrown what the textbook prescribed. With the hand she could still use, she grabbed the blanket and pulled it off, leaving her body entirely nude.

"Just wash me," she said in a very matter-of-fact way. So I began to bathe her, more quickly and much more sensibly than by the textbook instructions. Although I could have declined her idea, I could not have argued against her "common sense" approach to the job. But it wasn't her logic that startled me. What caught me by surprise and held my attention was how I was responding to her nudity. Here I was, seeing and bathing a fully naked woman. Yes, I was married and knew what a naked woman looked like. In fact, the only naked woman I had ever seen in person was my wife, whose body I loved to look at. Now I was seeing another woman, who also had a nice-looking body. Yet, her nakedness stimulated no sexual feelings. Even when bathing those body parts that men were not supposed to see, let alone touch, I had no lustful thoughts. And even though a strange man was seeing everything her external anatomy had to show, this woman was surprisingly calm. Her calmness put me at ease as well.

When I had just about completed the bath, my nursing instructor suddenly stepped through the curtains to check on how I was doing. Before she could comment, I quickly blurted out, "She wanted it done that way!" It was only then that I felt embarrassed. It was social embarrassment for not following the academic standards of practice. But there was absolutely nothing in the nakedness of that lovely lady that caused me to feel any shame or embarrassment at seeing her nude body and bathing it. This was an unanticipated experience, happening with my very first female bed-bath in my very first nursing course. I had made no mental preparations for such a full view of a naked woman. My reaction, or lack of what I thought should have been my reaction, was a real and very reassuring surprise.

After that initial discovery, every other similar view of female nudity invariably resulted in the same total absence of sexual stimulation. In my long history of hospital nursing, occurrences of naked encounters became myriad and routine, all without the *lust* that is commonly predicted. It's not because my constant exposure to nudity numbed my masculine attraction to the beauty of the opposite sex. I continue to delight in God's special design of the feminine figure. This masculine esteem, instead of diminishing over time, has only deepened. But appreciating the bare female anatomy as something especially beautiful, even when viewing very attractive and shapely women, always fails to bring me into the "lustful thinking" that society pronounces "unavoidable."

My own experience is identical to that of millions of others in similar situations where a mixed-gender exposure to nudity is common. Our unanimous testimony simply describes reality. The unrealistic view that everyone has been culturally taught is a presumption about nudity that betrays our culture's unhealthy preoccupation with sex. It is true that, assisted by this "sexualized" indoctrination about the human body, our society has taken advantage of nudity in some extremely lascivious ways. But I must reject the myth that in and of itself "nude is lewd." Even a brief exposure to what this concept proclaims as forbidden is sufficient to expose its error. Not only health-care workers, but others (massage therapists, tattoo artists, morticians, missionaries to naked cultures, artists who work from nude models, and especially those who skinny dip at clothing-optional locations) discover exactly the same thing. This simple sight of the undressed body informs any healthy mind that there is nothing indecent about our God-given human anatomy or its gender-specific differentiation. All of it is very ordinary and natural and wholesome. However, nudity, when it's misused, does become obscene, because it forces the truth into the context of a lie. Our sex-crazed society is despicable in this kind of gross abuse and exploitation of the naked human form. But there is nothing lewd about the human body itself when seen without its cultural apparel. To deny this is to declare that our Creator was mistaken in calling the creation of our first parents in their naked state "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Discovering a Healthier Way of Viewing Nakedness

What happens in a culture where it is deemed morally wrong to look at the nudity of, or expose our bodies to the eyes of, members of the opposite sex? Such instruction unnaturally infuses the body's mere nudity with a "sexual" meaning and with shame. Our culture's rigid enforcement of this *body shame* mentality, or *body taboo*, trains us to equate mixed-gender nakedness automatically with lewdness or obscenity. However, we make contradictory exceptions to these rules, such as when undressing for a physical exam, or when admiring nudity in works of art, or when laughing at toddlers who strip and romp around in the sprinkler. These and many other contradictory examples clearly challenge the *body taboo*. But, because we honor this taboo as sacred, we try with religious zeal to shield it from rational examination. We have come up with memorized answers for the above-mentioned situations: "Oh, it's for medical reasons...." or "That's just art, of course...." or "Look how sweet! So innocent...." These explanatory comments are basically meaningless, as far as offering a reasoned basis for temporarily cancelling the rules. They are like reflexive responses to subject matter that people nervously want to avoid a thoughtful discussion about. They offer absolutely no rational thought process in explaining how the *body taboo* can be set aside, although the last one about naked toddlers is a reflex that points us in a healthy direction.

After many years of working so intimately with nakedness, I began some intense study of the subject itself. The effect of all those years and of that time of research merged together in my mind to form two personal opinions about our culture's *body taboo*. First, theologically and historically, I believe the *body taboo* is a primeval deception, a latent legacy from our

diabolically deceived first parents back in the Garden of Eden, a falsehood ignored by most of our ancestors, but slowly re-adopted over the past several centuries. Second, sociologically and psychologically, I believe this taboo's elimination of ordinary, nonsexual nakedness from occasional sight makes our society the perfect environment for strategically covering or uncovering the body for sexual display. It has laid an immensely powerful foundation for pornography and for its iron-grip on our society. I also discovered in my research that I was not alone in my experience of simple nudity as something normal and non-sexual. These discoveries led me to return to what I believe is a more godly and morally sound viewpoint. I say "return," because in my studies I quickly learned that accepting socially visible nudity as an ordinary, non-moral part of life has been a universal behavior for most of human history, including Bible times and the first few centuries of the early church.

An even better reason for returning to this *healthier* attitude is that the naked human form, out of everything else in naked creation, was specifically designed by God to bear the glory of His personal image (Genesis 1:27). He made the human body a beautiful attraction and a praiseworthy display of His creative genius (Psalm 139:14), which it continues to be today. In Christian theology, the believer's body is a temple for the Holy Spirit to indwell (1 Corinthians 6:19). God never infused it, whether naked or clothed, with any power on its own to incite sexual lust, because He created nothing that would tempt us (James 1:13-14). Lustful thoughts, as Jesus said, come "out of the heart" (Matthew 15:19). Unfortunately, our culture carefully and thoroughly grooms our hearts for associating nudity with this kind of sordid, lustful thinking, and as children of our culture, we can fall into an addiction to the pornography that such thinking engenders.

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the explanatory warning of the *body taboo* actually prescribes a behavioral pattern that sets people up for a pornographic misuse of nakedness: "Nudity is lustful, therefore, when you see it, you will lust." When that kind of reasoning is socially and religiously believed, it trains us to think of nakedness exclusively in terms of sexuality. Those preaching this taboo often imagine the nude body to be a moral stumbling block, when, on the contrary, this concept itself is one of the biggest stumbling blocks over which our young people trip and fall into sexual impurity. How is that so? It's because the perpetually covered body prevents the wholesome satisfaction of the curiosity that it unnaturally creates, so that unwholesome patterns of satisfying that normal curiosity become a tempting pitfall. Also, the *body taboo* stimulates and sustains an unhealthy imagination about what actually lies hidden beneath clothing. The truth is that what garments zealously conceal is always substantially less than what can be invented within anyone's imagination. Even worse, the *body taboo's* emphasis on the sexual nature of the body creates some very unrealistic ideas about what the naked body has to offer sexually. What seems tacitly promised by the secrecy of apparel can never actually be realized on clothing's removal, because more is hoped for in nakedness than realistically exists. When nudity fails to meet what people are led to anticipate, they may become addicted to progressively more depraved abuses of the human body in trying to fulfill those unrealistic expectations. Each of the above destructive avenues of thought are artificially created by the overshadowing idea that nakedness and sexual lust are intrinsically related. While this implication is not really true, the *body taboo's* strict enforcement of it has a powerful influence on the imagination, leading it down a path that is both emotionally frustrating and morally disastrous. The lust problem that the taboo was supposed to prevent, it ends up directly promoting in a major way. This is why traditional attempts to break

addictions to the lie of pornography notoriously fail when they are based on strengthening and reinforcing the lies of *body shame* and the *body taboo*. Lies must be fought with truth, and in this case, "the naked truth."

The above understanding, in many cases, can prevent the tyranny of porn addiction and diminish the allure of pornography. But the truth can be rejected by the human will, and what I have shared cannot stop the misuse of nudity in our culture. The naked body can and does become a focal point for lustful thinking when accompanied by immodest behavior, such as facial expressions or body postures purposefully meant to arouse sexual desire (see the PORNOGRAPHY poem below). But the plain and simple nude body, no matter how attractive, is just too frank, too realistic, too ordinary and unsophisticated to create that lustful effect by itself alone. When average people (which exclude psychopaths and sex-fiends) find themselves in an environment free from the sexual expectations of our society's *body taboo*, it usually takes very little time for the sight of normal nakedness to dispel this dysfunctional pattern of thinking. There are still a few "naked cultures" in the world where even the genitals are publicly visible without any mental immodesty. Missionaries and foreign visitors coming into such an environment find that they adjust to the sight of nudity almost immediately, just as new nurses do in the hospital. From such a *naked culture's* perspective, our own social pattern of abusing nakedness for sexual display might be considered a form of insanity. That would be an accurate evaluation. The human mind must first be irrationally trained with a "sexualized" or "pornographic" view of the body for such a perverse practice to develop and persist. The undeniable proof of this is that our society's unhealthy indoctrination of the *body taboo* is so thorough and so successful that it undergirds and nourishes a flourishing pornography industry. We would first have to introduce the *body taboo* and get those living in a "naked culture" to fully adopt it, before pornography could ever invade and gain a foothold there. Unfortunately, multiple times in the past, Western society has done exactly that. As a minister of the church, I confess that my Christian ancestors in missions were blindly guilty of infusing their Gospel message with the *body taboo* and zealously spreading it in the name of God. They may have done so unwittingly, but it was nonetheless an adulteration of the simple "good news" of Christ. Modern missionaries, if they have been properly trained in cross-cultural principles, have learned not to make this grave moral mistake. Sadly, however, Western churches have failed to apologize publicly for this error, because to do so without hypocrisy, they would have to repent of the *body taboo* themselves, stop preaching it, and change their attitude toward the naked human body.

Despite our culture's devotion to dressing for show and obsession with undressing for sex, the divine glory and appealing beauty in the bare human body remains as wholesome today as when God first created humans naked and without shame (Genesis 2:25). He sovereignly makes us remember that original fact each time we shamelessly rejoice with awesome delight at the birth of naked infants. Throughout the Bible, unless it alludes to or is the result of coercion, sexual misconduct, or physical or spiritual poverty, nakedness by itself is never portrayed as a shameful or immoral condition. Unless it is motivated by impure desires, seeing nakedness is not a shameful or immoral action. As I discovered almost 30 years ago upon becoming a nurse, a few moments of viewing a naked person of the opposite sex, in a normal, nonsexual context, can overturn a lifetime of false instruction about how the mind is supposed to react. It's a falsehood with a history as far back as Eden, a lie embraced today sincerely and even religiously, but nonetheless a lie. Just as light dispels darkness, a brief dose of the "naked truth" can

suffocate the oldest deceit the devil hopes to keep alive. The real obscenity hidden beneath clothing springs from our own confused and misdirected imagination. That "vain imagination" was born the day Adam and Eve, with their new, Satan-fed "knowledge," decided on their own, independently from God, that fig-leaf coverings were "good" and their own nakedness was "evil." If their new notion was that clothing was now a moral necessity for humans, then God's question to them points definitively to the real instigator of such thinking, "*Who told you that you were naked?*" (Genesis 3:11).

My Conclusions

This may seem to be a long answer to "*How do I deal with female nudity?*" I could say much, much more. For so many years I struggled intellectually with the conflict between the socially fostered *body taboo* and my routine, nonsexual involvement with nudity. At last I did my homework. Surprisingly, I found that historical, biblical, cultural and psycho-social research only confirmed the normalcy of my own experiences. It was the *body taboo* that proved to be abnormal.

I often distill my philosophical thoughts into poetry, and below are links to some poems I've written that give a poetic synopsis of many of the concepts shared in this essay. The first two poems summarize my initial research: "THE DIVINE STORY OF NAKED GLORY" and "CHRISTIANS AND NAKEDNESS." The third poem, "I SING THE BODY IMMORTAL," confronts an unbiblical devaluation of matter and the physical human body which I believe was passed down from Gnosticism's influences on early Christian ideas of spirituality. Gnosticism may actually be the historical source responsible for the development of the *body taboo* in later Christian teaching. This poem also highlights the true biblical hope (Romans 8:23-24a) of which Walt Whitman's poem "I Sing the Body Electric" falls short, yet unwittingly anticipates. "PORNOGRAPHY" is an older poem of mine written to decry the pornographic misuse of the body without maligning nudity itself. The final one, "NURSES AND NUDITY," simply describes what I had learned from experience, but was never able to put into words until I discovered the truth about the phenomenon of human nudity through research.

As both a nurse and an ordained minister, I wish to see a radical, biblical reform in the church's thinking. I'm in favor of a sober emancipation of the naked human form from its artificially-created social shame. But I totally oppose the pornography that enslaves souls by harnessing and harvesting the false shame of the *body taboo*, which so many well-meaning people, especially religious people, mistakenly continue to support and spread.

(You must have [ACROBAT READER](#) on your computer to double-click on the poems below.)

[THE DIVINE STORY OF NAKED GLORY](#)
[NAKEDNESS AND CHRISTIANS](#)
[I SING THE BODY IMMORTAL](#)
[PORNOGRAPHY](#)
[NURSES AND NUDITY](#)

During my research, I discovered a Bible teacher, Dr. James McKeever, whose study of Scripture supports much of what I've shared above. His view of nudity is explained in a chapter called "Nudity and Lust" from his book, *It's in the Bible*, which is now out of print. Linked below is a scanned, image-only Acrobat Reader file of that chapter: [NUDITY AND LUST](#)

If your thinking has been stretched by what I've said, you may want to validate whether or not it's being stretched in the right direction. On another web page ("[REBUILDING A GODLY VIEW OF THE UNCLAD HUMAN BODY](#)") are links to some of the research that stretched my own mind in this area. You may also [email me](#) with questions you may have. I realize my viewpoint is at odds with our society's common thinking, but I have seen how that common thinking is at odds with simple human nature, with healthy human experience, with most of human history, including Biblical history, and with a sound creational view of the human body. If you are in total agreement with the *body taboo* and decide to continue to support it, that is your personal choice. I feel it is an unfortunate one, in light of theology, history, and the experiences of so many others who have discovered that the *body taboo* is not an honest description of reality. At the same time, I realize and accept the fact that each person is responsible before God to follow what their conscience allows or doesn't allow (Romans 14:12-23). My purpose and hope in writing this essay, however, is to strengthen the "weak" conscience (Roman 14:2,3) with the truth.

to return to "My L&D Tips" webpage...

[L&D Tips](#)

[\(back to TOP\)](#)