

# **Exhaustive Biblical Defense of Nudism**

## **Part 1 - The Scriptural**

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## **Introduction**

To start, one needs to have a definition of what nudism is. Nudism, for the purposes of this article, will be defined as- “The practice of going nude while among other people for reasons other than those that are sexually related.” Along with this, knowing the major viewpoints of both the Christians who are in favor of nudism, and the Christians who are against it, may be of benefit and have been included (these will vary slightly between persons and denominations):

### **In Favor of Nudism:**

Believe that the human form was created by God, and so is good, pure, and worthy of admiration. They believe God established this in the Garden of Eden when it was mentioned in the Bible that the man and his wife were both naked and felt no shame.

Believe that man created clothes for themselves only after they sinned, and that this very well could have been a direct choice to try to cover either their shame, or the loss of spiritual glory which they had held before they sinned (though still physically nude while spiritually glorious). They did not try to cover themselves after they sinned because they were nude- the realization they had was that they had just become spiritually naked due to their sin.

Believe that nowhere in the Bible does God condemn social nudity, even after people started wearing clothing.

Believe that the sight of the nude human form is not inherently a sexual stimulant (any more than the clothed human form), and that the differences in experiences between people concerning this are due to nurture issues, and not nature issues.

Believe that lust, as noted in Matthew 5:28, is not equivalent to biological sexual excitement.

Believe that, because no evidence is found in the Bible speaking against nudism, and that no noteworthy health risks have been identified by the

scientific community against nudism, that therefore social nudity should be held as a viable activity and permissible as a whole.

### **Against Nudism:**

Believe that the nude human form is pure and holy in its own right, but that the viewing of a nude human form by other people is only appropriate in certain circumstances (i.e.- in marriage, during medical procedures, etc).

Believe that, while before “the fall of man” nudity was acceptable to God, because humanity sinned, mankind no longer is able to live at a level of innocence/purity high enough to be around those of the opposite sex in nude settings without falling into sexual temptation. This shift is pointed out by reference to the fact that God clothed mankind before removing man from the Garden.

Believe that the nudity of adults, when viewed by adult members of the opposite sex, is intended (by God) to be a sexual event. As such, lust, as noted in Matthew 5:28, is “inevitable” in social nude events. In practice (if such an event were to occur), lust would be defined as the biological sexual arousal that happened in relation to an interaction with a nude member of the opposite sex.

Believe that nudism is forbidden in the Bible, be it directly or implied.

### **What Does the Bible Say?**

This section presents some of the main issues that are brought up in regards to nudism from a biblical morality standpoint.

### **Is Social Nudity Directly Prohibited by God in the Bible?**

This would (and should) be hands down the most important issue for any Christian investigating nudism. If God has a commandment in place that says nudity in social settings where both men and women are present is wrong, then nudists would already stand guilty of sin. But, for this to be true, there has to be a commandment that says this. Below is a list of the Scriptures that deal with regulations on nudity (or that may appear like they are dealing with regulations on nudity). Unless otherwise noted, all

Scripture references are from the World English Bible (WEB). The name "World English Bible" is trademarked.

### **Scripture- Exodus 20:25-26**

" 25 If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stones; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have polluted it. 26 You shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed to it." Exodus 20:25-26 WEB

This is the first passage in the Bible that has a law mentioning nakedness. Directly, this passage does not ban social nudity. It bans people using steps to get to an altar. But what about indirectly? It seems like a strong verse against public nudity, but take a look at the verse before it:

"If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stones; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have polluted it."

Why bring up this verse? Because cutting stones allows them to fit into place better, making the altar more secure and stable. God telling his people not to cut them doesn't make logical sense, unless he wanted his people to make altars that had symbolic meaning. Nobody has forced change on an uncut stone. God may have been saying "I don't want people to force change on my stones, just like I don't want people to force change on the people I love. Change is my job."

1 Peter 2:5 mentions believers as stones: "You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." WEB

If Exodus 20:25 was meant to be symbolic, it's possible that Exodus 20:26 (you shall not go up by steps) was meant to be symbolic as well. I believe as you read through some of the other Scriptures, you will notice that clothing is continually used to symbolize Christ's sacrifice. It is regularly noted that our righteousness is not our own; it is something we put on—slipping Christ's righteousness over our spiritual nakedness. And if this is the case, then Exodus 20:26 says nothing about whether people can walk

around nude today.

## **Scripture- Leviticus 18 and 20**

Almost the entire chapter of Leviticus 18 makes proclamations against exposing nakedness. Leviticus 20 talks about exposing nakedness as well. Some people may think this is talking about nudity, but if they actually read both chapters they would realize that the chapters are talking about sex. I will start with some of the more “incriminating” Scriptures first:

“None of you shall approach anyone who are his close relatives, to uncover their nakedness: I am Yahweh.” Leviticus 18:6 WEB

“You shall not take a wife to her sister, to be a rival, to uncover her nakedness, while her sister is yet alive.” Leviticus 18:18 WEB

These commands might seem mildly problematic for a nudist, but it becomes quite clear, if a person reads more of Leviticus 18 (and elsewhere in Leviticus), what uncovering nakedness really means:

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife. It is your father’s nakedness.” Leviticus 18:8 WEB

Is one really seeing his father naked if he sees his mother naked? Obviously, it is not just simple nudity that this passage is talking about. The passage includes the concept of marriage, which is important.

“You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness.” Leviticus 18:19 WEB

Is this really talking about not being able to see one's wife nude because she is menstruating? Why would this matter when a man has seen his wife nude countless times?

The passage that sheds the full light concerning the issue of Lev. 18 comes later in Leviticus:

“The man who lies with his father’s wife has uncovered his father’s nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.” Leviticus 20:11 WEB

As can be seen, and very similar to the first verse that was mentioned- uncovering nakedness in these passages is specifically speaking of sex. And if one still wanted to question whether this was true or not, what these passages don't mention is more important than what they do mention. These passages forbid uncovering the nakedness of: immediate family (blood related- parents, sisters, brothers), mother-in-law, stepmother, aunt, uncle, uncle's wife, stepdaughter, daughter-in-law, granddaughter and stepgranddaughter, brother's wife, and one's wife's sister while one's wife is still alive (1). The people that these passages don't forbid uncovering the nakedness of include: everyone else. This means that a man or woman could hang out in the company of other men and women nude as long as they weren't related closely by blood or marriage in some way. If God was trying to forbid people from being naked around each other through Leviticus chapters 18 or 20, then he did a poor job of writing up his command.

**Resource 1:** Incest: In the biblical period. (2008). *Encyclopaedia judaica*. Retrieved from: [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0009\\_0\\_09519.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0009_0_09519.html)

## **The Apostles' Commands Concerning Modest Dress**

There are two passages in the New Testament that mention specifics concerning the realm of dress. Paul's writing in 1 Timothy 2:9 and Peter's writing in 1 Peter 3:3. Both of these passages read quite similar to each other. The two passages, in context, are:

“8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” 1 Timothy 2:8-12 (KJV)

and

“1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:” 1 Peter 3:1-5 (KJV)

Both of these passages, especially Paul’s command for women to dress modestly, are seen as the Bible’s New Testament evidence of clothing laws for Christians. There’s one big problem with these passages though, and the problem is that these passages aren’t dealing with nudity nor are they dealing with clothing that is too revealing. Paul and Peter were dealing with a problem of women dressing too expensively (for their situation). More specifically, it appears these women were trying to get their self-worth from the praise other people gave them over the clothes that they wore. The apostles encouraged the women to stop seeking their worth from the things they owned/ the outer “stuff,” and to put that effort into things that actually had value- making a difference in the world and becoming someone who was more loving/humble. The apostles in these passages wanted the women to be modest in how they spent their money/sheep. Modesty in the sense of sexually tempting men was not addressed.

It is also worthy of note that the word “costly” doesn’t actually show up in the Greek of 1 Peter 3:3. Without it, 1 Peter 3:3 reads: “3 **Whose adorning let it not be** that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or **of putting on of apparel**”. If a Christian interpreted this as an permanent ban on these items, like some people assume that gold jewelry and braided hair are banned, then that Christian would be in trouble, as 1 Peter 3:3 would then be banning clothing as well.

1 Timothy and 1 Peter also run into problems when context from the rest of the Bible comes into play. Ezekiel 16:11-13 (WEB) says “11 I decked you with ornaments, and I put bracelets on your hands, and a chain on your neck. 12 I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a

beautiful crown on your head. 13 Thus you were decked with gold and silver". If God was against people wearing gold, he wouldn't have used it as an example of a blessing. We also see a similar issue in 1 Kings 3:5-13, where God blesses Solomon and says that he will be the wealthiest king in the world. Jesus later describes Solomon's clothing as splendid/extravagant (Luke 12:27), yet Solomon was never rebuked for his clothing choices. On the contrary, Jesus says God will dress us even better than Solomon was ( Luke 12:28). Clearly, expensive clothing and gold jewelry aren't what God has a problem with.

Seeing as how these other passages discredit people's claims that God hates humans wearing jewelry and expensive clothing, one can assume that other interpretations people have made about 1 Timothy 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3 might also be wrong, including what the definition of "modest" dress is.

### **Scripture- Revelation 16:15**

"Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn't walk naked, and they see his shame."  
Revelation 16:15 WEB

This passage from the Bible is used by pastors to show that God doesn't approve of nudity. If it was a passage that was intended to be taken literally, then perhaps it would have some merit, but it is a symbolic passage, with other symbolic passages around it. This is the passage in context:

"13 I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, something like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs; which go out to the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them together for the war of that great day of God, the Almighty.

15 'Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn't walk naked, and they see his shame.' 16 He gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Megiddo."  
Revelation 16:13-16 WEB

Dragon, beast, end time war- lots of symbolism. If the nudity isn't literal, then what is it?

“27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”  
Galatians 3:27 WEB

And again:

“13 One of the elders answered, saying to me, 'These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?'

14 I told him, 'My lord, you know.'

He said to me, 'These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood.' ”  
Revelation 7:9-14 WEB

And again:

“14 “To the angel of the assembly in Laodicea write:

“The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Head of God's creation, says these things:

15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing;’ and don't know that you are the wretched one, miserable, poor, blind, **and naked**; 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; **and white garments, that you may clothe yourself**, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.” Revelation 3:14-18 WEB

The nudity in these passages is a reference to people being unsaved, while wearing clothing is a reference to being saved- being clothed in Christ's righteousness.

## **Is Social Nudity Able to be Deemed Prohibited by God Indirectly in the Bible?**

Because there is no direct command in the Bible against social nudity, most arguments that are made against social nudity from a biblical standpoint come from indirect arguments: pointing to what happened in a story and adding an explanation to it, trying to add nudity to other passages where it isn't, and failing to separate the culture of the Jews from God's actual beliefs and words. I will attempt to address the indirect arguments in the order that they appear in Scripture.

### **The Story of Adam and Eve**

The story of Adam and Eve is one of the biggest passages of Scripture that is used for indirect arguments both against and for nudism. The general story is- God made Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Both Adam and Eve lived nude. Upon eating the forbidden fruit, a realization about some sort of nakedness came upon Adam and Eve (what kind of nakedness is not explained), and so they sewed/tied fig leaves together and put those fig leaves on themselves. Eventually, when God went to remove Adam and Eve from the Garden because they disobeyed him, God made coverings for them out of hide/skin. God then told Adam and Eve the consequences for their sin, and kicked them out of the Garden. (Genesis 2 and 3)

Some people choose to interpret this story, as far as nudity goes, as God saying to man that man needs to keep clothing on, because if he doesn't, he will start to become sexually aroused by the naked people around him. Christians who hold this view assume that not only did man's inner spirit die in The Fall, but also that man became incapable of doing anything good, unless God controlled/acted upon the person. The clothing given by God, therefore, was the divine gift that prevented man's evil inner spirit from pushing people into having sex with each other. The clothing accomplished this by blocking people from seeing each other's genitals, which man's evil inner spirit used as a temptation device to lure people in.

Other people choose to interpret this passage as man realizing that he is now spiritually naked- unprotected from the wrath of God. God told Adam

and Eve that they would die if they ate the fruit from the wrong tree. Since the fruit didn't kill them, if God was trustworthy, then something else was going to. Since God may have been very unhappy with the choice Adam and Eve made, it made sense to think that God was going to kill them. Adam and Eve, in a panic, knew they had to hide, so they grabbed some branches and tied them together, and tried to hide among the trees in the Garden. God did eventually find them (not that it was hard), and when he did, he gave them animal skins to show them that death did happen that day, but that God put the death on something else. That death was a sign of what Christ was going to accomplish later. Adam and Eve were covered now by an animal's sacrifice, but later they would be covered by Christ's sacrifice. The animal skin was a reminder, whether they wore it or not, that it was from the death of another that they gained benefits. (Note: The Bible never says that God got angry about Adam and Eve's decision. He had no reason to- he knew they were going to eat the fruit before he created them. If anything, he was probably sad that his relationship with Adam and Eve became more distant.)

Both of these interpretations have merit according to logical reasoning, but the first interpretation has much farther reaching implications: It states that the human body became more sexualized after The Fall. It states clothing became necessary to stop people from having sex with every (opposite sex) person in sight. It states that someone can get naked and seduce others simply by flashing their genitals in the other person's direction. The first interpretation also introduces a battle over the definition of modest dress- how much skin can show and in what ways. Enforcing the first interpretation on society means that people's health can be negatively affected (getting overheated in hot places, weaker bones due to less sunlight on skin, and less vitamin D in one's body), that people's minds are negatively affected (not knowing what normal genitals look like, people becoming aroused by skin showing), and that whole groups of people end up getting condemned (nudists, artists, and anyone else who happens to be okay with nudity).

Does the Bible give any hints as to which interpretation is more correct? I believe it does. Below are two points: One from the story of Adam and Eve. One from Scriptures about temptation and defilement.

The first point rests in Genesis 3. Genesis 3 mentions that when God found Adam hiding, Adam told God "I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

(Gen. 3:10). The problem with Adam's statement is that Adam wasn't physically naked when he hid. He was wearing his fig leaf covering (Gen. 3:7-8). Again, Adam wasn't *physically* naked. If Adam wasn't naked, then it was some other kind of nakedness that Adam was worrying about.

The second point is that temptation starts in the hearts of people, not in the hearts of random objects (because rocks and trees don't have hearts). The wind and the rain can't tempt anyone. Along with this, nobody has ever accused a cut-off human arm of tempting anyone, nor do we see people saying "that toe tempted me!" Why? Because human bodies don't have free will. They are just like the rocks, the water, and the trees- just parts of the Earth that they came from. Bodies are controlled by the person living inside them. With that, vulvas and penises don't tempt people either. They are just part of the rest of creation that God made. This goes for Eve's body, Adam's body, and everyone else's bodies. They are just vessels under people's control. Evidence for this can be seen in James 1:13-14 and in Mark 7:14-15.

"13 Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God,' for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." James 1:13-14 WEB

Don't be fooled. "Lust" in the above passage is the Greek word "epithumia," which means to desire or want or crave. It is used both in negative and positive ways in the Bible (see Luke 22:15 and 1 Thessalonians 2:17 for positive examples), meaning someone could *want* a hug or they could *want* to stab someone; it was a neutral word. James 1:14 is saying a man (or woman) is tempted when that person chooses to entertain desires for anything that is immoral/unhealthy. It doesn't say a man is tempted when he sees a woman's body. It says if sexual thoughts happen to pop up and a guy says to himself- "I might let these stick around, because I enjoy them," that is where the temptation comes in. This is why doctors are not guilty of sin, but guys enjoying a strip club are. The sin is in the heart of a person, not in the body of someone else. Adam and Eve had no reason to cover their bodies for temptation reasons (and it wouldn't make sense for them to do so anyway, because they were married).

Some people assume that Mark 7:14-15 is only talking about food. I think Jesus was going even deeper when he made his statement. He said: "14

Hear me, all of you, and understand. 15 There is nothing from outside of the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man.” Can anything going into our 5 main senses automatically make us guilty of sin? If you hear someone screaming racial slurs, are you guilty of sin? Or do you become guilty of sin when you start screaming them yourself? If someone is holding you down and forcing you to drink poison, are you guilty of sin? Or do you become guilty of sin when you choose to drink it by choice because you are looking for a high? If your next door neighbor starts a fire and you smell burning human flesh, are you guilty of sin? Or do you become guilty of sin when you burn your spouse's arm with a hot stick because you are mad at him or her? In the same way, if someone walks up to your front door completely naked, you aren't guilty of sin because your eyes see them. It isn't what your senses take in that makes you guilty of sin, it is the choices you make with what you have seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and felt. God wouldn't declare seeing naked bodies to be a sin, because then new mothers would even be guilty of sin. When it comes to Adam and Eve, it makes no sense to say that God commanded the use of clothing to keep other people's hearts in check. Doing so would mean that other people would have no responsibility for their actions (or power over their actions), because your clothing would control them like a remote for a remote control car.

### **Exposed Nudity Is Usually Associated With Shame in the Bible**

This is true. Most of the time in the Bible when nudity is mentioned, it also carries with it the connotation of either shame or poverty. Some examples of this are:

“47 Because you didn't serve Yahweh your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things; 48 therefore you will serve your enemies whom Yahweh sends against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in lack of all things. He will put an iron yoke on your neck, until he has destroyed you. ” Deuteronomy 28:47-48 WEB

“5 Isn't your wickedness great? Neither is there any end to your iniquities. 6 For you have taken pledges from your brother for nothing, and stripped the naked of their clothing.” Job 22:5-6 WEB

“ 'Behold, I am against you,' says Yahweh of Armies, 'and I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame.' ” Nahum 3:5 WEB

Is there an explanation of why this is?

Yes. First, many of the verses that mention nakedness are directly referring to either physical or spiritual adultery, not simple nudity. Adultery itself is shameful and a sin, and so these passages are self-explanatory as to why a notion of shame is present. The full list of passages that include this concept (sexual deviancies, with nakedness included in the passage, are in this list also) is- Lev. 18:6-19; Lev. 20:11,17-21; Lament. 1:8; Ezekiel 16:36- 37; Ezekiel 22:10; Ezekiel 23:18,29; Hab. 2:15. Second, while the Bible does not give a definitive answer as to whether humanity started regularly wearing clothing because of the aftermath of Adam and Eve, or whether it was because humanity needed to stay protected from the elements (weather, etc), or for decoration, cultures found within the Bible had a tradition of wearing clothing. Clothing was the norm, and to be found without clothing was seen as being caught out of one's element, a.k.a. an embarrassing situation. That said, often times in the Bible, whether a writer was writing to a specific audience, or was writing about a specific audience, the writer would connect nudity being exposed publicly as an experience of shame/embarrassment, because this is what the culture defined it as. This is also why poverty and nakedness were connected together as a note of shame, because the very poor sometimes weren't able to afford adequate clothing when they would have wanted clothing, and so it was a constant embarrassment to them. This cultural context of shame because of the lack of clothing can be seen in these passages (the full list)- Deut. 28:48; 2 Chron. 28:15; Job 22:6; Job 24:7,10; Isaiah 20:3-4; Isaiah 58:7; Ezekiel 16:39; Ezekiel 18:7,16; Ezekiel 23:29; Hosea 2:3,9; Amos 2:16; Matthew 25:36,38,43-44; Mark 5:15; Mark 14:51- 52; Luke 8:27; Acts 19:16; Romans 8:35; 2 Cor. 11:27; James 2:15; Rev. 17:16. Thirdly, exposing the nakedness is sometimes used as a metaphor in the Bible for God choosing to uncover and remove the layers of lies, deception, and pretense that a person or nation has put forth, in order to reveal the truth that is present (that person's or nation's sinful state). This comparison is directly stated in Lamentations 4:21-22. The full list of this use for exposing the nakedness in the Bible is- Isaiah 47:3; Lam. 4:21; Micah 1:11; Nahum 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:3; Rev. 3:17-18; Rev. 16:15. These three main reasons listed, along with the

story of Adam and Eve, are why nakedness is often associated with shame. None of them stem from a command from God to wear clothes.

Along with all the verses that have negative connotations where the words naked or nakedness are mentioned (or the topic of nakedness comes up), there are also verses that have other meanings. The following list records almost every mention or reference to nakedness in the Bible, and those that are not present should be able to be found elsewhere in the EBDN. This list is here so that the reader can contrast it to the other references of nakedness already mentioned, so that they can see if it lines up with the concept of social nudity being shameful or not. Each reference or group of references includes a note about it:

1 Sam. 20:30; Ezekiel 16:7-8 are neither positively nor negatively referencing nakedness. Ezekiel 16:4,22 seems to use it as a metaphor for poor. 1 Samuel 19:24; 2 Kings 5:14; Isaiah 20:2; Micah 1:8 mention nakedness in relation to a prophet or prophetic matters. Job 26:6; Hebrews 4:13 hit upon the idea of nothing being hidden before God. 2 Sam. 11:2 is about David seeing Bathsheba bathing. 1 Kings 22:38 mentions a pool where prostitutes bathed. Exodus 32:25; 2 Chron. 28:19 have a mistranslation that is present in the King James version of the Bible, where the Hebrew word for “uncontrolled/unbridled” (para’- long first a sound) was replaced with the word “naked.” Ezekiel 44:19 was a regulation for the priests while they were in the temple. Genesis 39:12 is where Joseph may have fled nude to get away from a woman who wanted to have sex with him. Ezekiel 23:10 seems to refer to a nation getting symbolically raped. Job 1:21; Eccl. 5:15 mention how a person is naked in both death and birth.

The story of Noah and his son Ham is also worthy of investigation when considering the notion of whether social nudity is shameful or not, but was large enough that it deserved its own section, and so has been included elsewhere in the EBDN. It’s story doesn’t change the overall generalization that can be made though.

## **The Story of Noah and Ham**

Noah was the man who God told to get into an ark with a bunch of animals because the rest of mankind was about to get wiped out. He had 3 sons,

one of which was named Ham. The story of Noah and Ham comes up as an argument against nudism because some Christians assume Ham merely saw his father nude and so his father cursed Ham (actually, it was Ham's son who was cursed, but this could be considered an extension of Ham) for Ham's sexual deviance. But did Ham really only happen to see his father nude? This is the story:

“20 Noah began to be a farmer, and planted a vineyard. 21 He drank of the wine and got drunk. He was uncovered within his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. 23 Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it on both their shoulders, went in backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were backwards, and they didn't see their father's nakedness. 24 Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done to him. 25 He said,

“Canaan is cursed.

He will be a servant of servants to his brothers.”

26 He said,

“Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem.

Let Canaan be his servant.

27 May God enlarge Japheth.

Let him dwell in the tents of Shem.

Let Canaan be his servant.”

28 Noah lived three hundred fifty years after the flood. ” Genesis 9:20-28  
WEB

The two key verses that are worth looking at are verse 22- “Ham, the father of Canaan, **saw** the nakedness of his father...” and verse 24- “Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had **done** to him.”

Recall what Leviticus 18:6 said:

“None of you shall approach anyone who are his close relatives, **to uncover their nakedness**: I am Yahweh.” Leviticus 18:6 WEB

Many other passages in Leviticus mention uncovering someone's nakedness. The phrase is a reference to sex. Due to this, one could also assume that Ham's seeing/beholding his father's nakedness meant that Ham raped his father. Would Noah really have put an actual curse on his grandson if Ham had only walked into the tent and accidentally found Noah naked? What is the cultural context of this story? Considering everything in mankind just got wiped out a little while ago, where would these people be bathing? Probably in a river. And given what we know of ancient cultures, men bathing in a river together would have been normal. The Bible says something was done to Noah. Noah being the victim of a rape would also explain why Ham's brothers walked in backwards, because their father was probably bleeding, and they would have wanted to honor their father's self-esteem and dignity.

## **The Story of David and Bathsheba**

This is another story often used by opponents of nudism to show that nudism is bad. The story goes as follows:

“2 At evening, David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to look at. 3 David sent and inquired after the woman. One said, 'Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, Uriah the Hittite’s wife?’

4 David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in to him, and he lay with her (for she was purified from her uncleanness); and she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, 'I am with child.' ” 2 Samuel 11:2-5 WEB

Opponents of nudism claim that this story shows that the viewing of the nudity of members of the opposite sex automatically causes sexual passion to be aroused; and because of this, it leads to sex and other sins. One of the biggest issues with this passage is that it's an isolated incident. There aren't other examples of a male seeing another female bathing, or of a female catching another male bathing in the Bible. And considering that in history, there have probably been a million or more incidents where someone accidentally stumbled upon someone of the opposite sex while they were bathing, this one incident that happens to be recorded in the

Bible is of little significance concerning what kind of effects social nudity has on people.

Another issue that causes problems for this story being used against nudism is the multiple references in the Bible to men who saw a beautiful woman who was clothed, and who either raped them, took them as a wife, or that it was implied that they would have been willing to steal these women for themselves. These references in the Bible include Gen. 34:1-2; Gen. 12:11-12; and Genesis 20:1-2. Already, there are three times as many instances, and more of varying types, that give evidence that sexual passion doesn't have to have any innate link to the sight of a nude body. David very well could have seen Bathsheba buying food in a marketplace, or sitting out in her yard, and it may have had enough of an effect on him that he still would have chosen to have sex with her.

As well, the cultural context of the times has to be taken into account. In David's time, everyone was already regularly wearing clothing. Seeing the nude body of someone of the opposite sex was taught to be a sexual thing, because the rabbis would have been teaching that the proper place for male and female combined nudity would be only in the marriage bed. Therefore, because of David's upbringing, his body responded with arousal because that's how his mind had been trained to react. Along with this, men in David's day were permitted to have more than one wife, and David did. David's wives before Bathsheba included Michal (1 Sam. 27), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:42), Ahinoam (1 Sam. 25:43), Maacah (2 Samuel 3:3), Haggith (2 Samuel 3:4), Abital (2 Samuel 3:4), and Eglah (2 Samuel 3:5). He had all of these wives at the same time. He could have had a different lover every night of the week. With this in mind, David's sexual beliefs may have been quite a bit more lax and willing to try to sneak in a quick one-nighter with an incredibly beautiful woman like Bathsheba. The passage does say she returned to her house afterward. All this being said, again, simply shows that David's action wasn't necessarily linked to some inherent evil in seeing someone else nude. Nudity has to be taken in context, and what happened with David is not characteristic of all who choose to engage in social nudity.

**God, the Angels, and the Saints in Heaven Are Always Mentioned as Being Clothed In the Bible**

This is another indirect argument that those who are opposed to nudism make. They say that all the time in the Bible, when pictures concerning heavenly things are given, that people are always wearing clothes. While most of the time this is true, there are some important points that are also in Scripture that need to be taken note of. First- the “white robes” which are mentioned countless times in Scripture are openly described as symbolic:

“9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. 10 They cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation be to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

11 All the angels were standing around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before his throne, and worshiped God, 12 saying, 'Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen.'

13 One of the elders answered, saying to me, 'These who are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?'

14 I told him, 'My lord, you know.'

He said to me, 'These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes, and made them white in the Lamb's blood.' ”  
Revelation 7:9-14 WEB

and

“6 I heard something like the voice of a great multitude, and like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of mighty thunders, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns! 7 Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready.” 8 It was given to her that she would array herself in bright, pure, fine linen: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ...14 The armies which are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in white, pure, fine linen.” Revelation 19:6-8,14 WEB

(Matthew 22:8-14 is similar to these.)

## **Is Social Nudity Promoted in the Bible?**

Did God ever endorse or command for people to be nude around others in the Bible? If God commanded it, then it would seem inarguable that social nudity was acceptable. There are a few stories that imply that God may have been, or is, okay with social nudity, but there are no general commands telling people to walk around nude. Here is what can be found in the Bible:

### **Adam and Eve**

This story was already discussed at length in another section of the EBDN, and so the full story is not included here. The main point from the story is that when God created Adam and Eve, he left them nude, and there were no noted plans to change the situation. Since God is perfect, and doesn't change, one could come to the conclusion that his ultimate ideal of man coexisting among others nude (without negative consequences) was still attainable. This notion is further backed by the fact that when Jesus died, he restored to mankind the ability to walk again in the holiness that they had previously lost (through the power of the Holy Spirit). There is also a Scripture that deals with a similar situation, in which Jesus points to the creation story and actually holds the creation story's account as a higher authority than the prevailing law that existed during Jesus' day. This story in Scripture goes as follows:

“3 Pharisees came to him, testing him, and saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?'

4 He answered, 'Haven't you read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall join to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?' 6 So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, don't let man tear apart.'

7 They asked him, 'Why then did Moses command us to give her a bill of divorce, and divorce her?'

8 He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. 9 I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery.' ” Matthew 19:3-9 WEB

What this passage seems to indicate is that God's original design holds precedence over current standards. If this is the case, then being naked around others is okay with God. This wouldn't mean that clothing was immoral though, as it is assumed that Adam and Eve existed in a favorable climate at the time, and we know that Jesus wore clothing and yet was without sin.

### **Jesus Came to Recover What Was Lost**

It is well known that Jesus died so that what was lost by the sin of man could be restored. Many Christians accept that they have gained back access to Heaven, many Christians accept that now that the Holy Spirit lives inside them they can walk holy, yet they fail to believe it is possible for mankind to be restored in the area of holiness where walking amongst others nude is concerned. The problem with their viewpoint is that it is self-contradictory. If man's gaining of some forbidden knowledge caused them to act in sinful ways, and because of this man forever was destined to wear clothing, then how could the Holy Spirit overcome the other areas of sinfulness that the forbidden knowledge opened up? How could anyone be allowed into Heaven who had gained the forbidden knowledge that forever changed them? But the fact is, people have been given access to Heaven despite the fact that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was eaten from. This shows that the Holy Spirit is entirely powerful enough to give man the ability to walk in complete holiness. It is also worth noting that God has complete knowledge of both good and evil, and yet walks completely holy. If man has the same Spirit working inside him that God does, then lacking power isn't an excuse for inability, and knowledge is shown to be an ultimately irrelevant point. With this in mind, there is no reason man is incapable of returning to walking nude around others like they were before the Fall.

Scriptures noting that Jesus came to restore what was lost are:

“19 For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him; 20 and through him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether things on the earth, or things in the heavens...” Colossians 1:19-20 WEB

“They will rebuild the old ruins. They will raise up the places long devastated.” Isaiah 61:4 WEB (Isaiah 61 was read by Jesus in Luke 4:14-21)

### **Did the Prophets Go Naked?**

There are actually several instances in the Bible where the topic of nakedness and the prophets happen to cross. One of the times there is even seen a specific command from God for a prophet to go naked. But what kind of nakedness was actually being called for in these passages? Was it a call to full nudity, or to something else? The Scripture references are:

Isaiah 20:2-4

“2 at that time Yahweh spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, 'Go, and loosen the sackcloth from off your waist, and take your shoes from off your feet.' He did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3 Yahweh said, 'As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia, 4 so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.' “ Isaiah 20:2-4 WEB

So in this passage, God very specifically commands Isaiah to walk around naked. The Hebrew word for “naked” there is “ ‘arom,” and it means “fully or partially nude.” It is the same Hebrew word that is used to describe Adam and Eve in the Garden when they were naked (Gen 2:25). So here it appears there is a clear command from God for someone to go nude, and for 3 years at that. It’s worth noting that God won’t ever command someone to sin, and so if Isaiah was nude in front of the public, it would also mean that being naked around the opposite sex can’t be inherently sinful.

Micah 1:8

“8 For this I will lament and wail;  
I will go stripped and naked;  
I will howl like the jackals,  
and moan like the daughters of owls.” Micah 1:8 WEB

In this passage, Micah was mourning because God’s people had been in sin and God finally declared judgement on them. The word for “naked” in this passage is again “‘arom.” This passage gives less context than the Isaiah passage for one to assume that Micah would have been fully nude (because being only in one’s undergarments was considered a type of being “nude” back then), but it is still mentioned none-the-less, and so is included here.

1 Samuel 19:23-24

“23 He went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then God’s Spirit came on him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.  
24 He also stripped off his clothes, and he also prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' ” 1 Samuel 19:23-24 WEB

These Scriptures are talking about King Saul, the one who came (chronologically) before King David and also tried to kill him. The Scriptures note that the Spirit of God came upon Saul here, and he started prophesying, and then later stripped off clothing and stayed that way while prophesying for roughly a whole day. Again, the same word “‘arom” is used to describe Saul’s nakedness, though it isn’t entirely clear how naked he was.

## **Related Issues Concerning the Morality of Nudism**

### **The Issue of Lust**

Many Christians assume that a nude body automatically inspires lust. They are used to the culture they live in, and many times these cultures (in the world) are known for playing up the sight of nudity as a big sexual occurrence. On top of this, their own church cultures often teach that mixed gender nudity has no place but in the establishment of marriage, and that

people will lust if they are around people of the opposite sex who are nude. But, nowhere in the Bible does it state this. As can be seen from the investigation of the story of David, there were many other factors involved in David choosing to commit adultery with Bathsheba, and so one can't simply say "It was the mere viewing of nudity that caused his fall." On the contrary, the Bible shows that it doesn't take the removal of clothes for a man to want to do sinful things to a woman (Gen. 34:1-2; 2 Sam. 13:14; [indirectly] Gen. 12:11-12). As well, documentation of history shows that early Christians participated in the Roman mixed-sex nude baths (3).

Lust isn't a simple matter of nudity. Jesus did indeed speak of an adultery that a person could commit without performing the physical act with another person. He called it an adultery of the heart. Perhaps the definition of an 'adultery of the heart' will clear up people's misconceptions on the issue of lust. Jesus said: "28 but I tell you that everyone who gazes at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:28 WEB. That word "lust" can be replaced with "desire." Too many times the false assumption is made that "lust" in this passage means "physical attraction." Too many times the word "lust" is equaled to involuntary biological processes. But what does the Scripture say- "everyone who gazes at a woman to lust after her..." What kind of desire was Jesus talking about? He was talking about an *active* desire, a desire that a person *is choosing* to walk in.

There is a difference between active and passive desire. If a person was choosing to put into words their passive sexual desire, they might say "Huh. My sex drive is pretty revved right now," to themselves. They could also mention this same statement to someone else, and this other person might acknowledge that the person with the revved sex drive was merely stating an observable fact (no hidden extra meanings attached). Passive desire becomes active desire when a person chooses to act on/engage their passive desire. The first person from the last example might turn his passive statement concerning his sexual arousal into an active engagement of the desire by turning his sexual attention toward the other person and saying, "Have sex with me." These two statements/actions/attitudes of the heart are very different.

Putting this into the context of what Jesus was saying- if Jesus was saying that passive desire for a woman was considered adultery, then every time the devil threw a picture of a bikini clad woman into a man's mind, the man

would typically be guilty of sin (because the picture caused involuntary sexual arousal). But most Christians would agree that unless the man chose to engage the picture, that the man wasn't guilty of sin, because people can't control every single thought that comes into their minds. This is why lust is an active desire, because it is a choice. A person has to act on their sexual urges (in thought or deed) for it to be lusting.

Mentioning that lust is a choice may not seem like much, but the concept is a fundamental difference from what mainstream Christianity believes. If a typical mainstream Christian man saw a woman nude for any length of time and was sexually aroused around her, he would automatically assume he was lusting. "That lust is rising up in me," he might say. But the problem is, is that it isn't lust that was rising up in him, but merely biological sexual arousal. It is what he chooses to do with that arousal that turns it into lust or not. For example, if he chose to take that sexual arousal and imagine all the different ways he could have sex with the woman (who wasn't ever going to be his wife), that would be lusting. But, if this same man, instead of fantasizing about the woman, merely chose to act normal and didn't choose to act upon the arousal he was feeling, no sin would have occurred.

The significance of this idea is even more important when discussing nudism. This is because social nudism, in its basic nature, isn't inherently sexually arousing. This is backed by verifiable scientific documentation (4). If the same man from the last paragraph was around a nude woman and it wasn't sexually arousing to him at all, and so he did not desire her in a sexual way, where then can a finger be pointed saying lust was involved? If those two people were able to entirely and continuously act like normal (behaved) people under nude circumstances, where is the sin? It doesn't exist. But many Christians don't think this is possible, and so they call social nudity sin.

Note: Even in nude settings, people are able to tell which people are physically attractive to them and which people aren't, just like they would in a clothed setting. The ability to find someone beautiful doesn't change just because clothes come off or go on. But this doesn't mean there is going to be a sexual response to this, and it doesn't mean people aren't able to behave while around these people.

Note 2: People who are raised in non-nudist settings and experience social nudism for the first time may undergo some physical/mental arousal, but

this wears off as the mind adjusts to the fact that it isn't in a sexual situation (which it had been trained to believe for so long). Many people experience no outward physical arousal during this adjustment, even during their first experience.

Note 3: While social nudity in and of itself is not inherently sexual in nature, some people do choose to engage in sexual promiscuity while in nude settings. This is not typical of all people who engage in social nudity. Nudists, and those who practice social nudity, are simply regular people like everyone else- some of them choose to use their time for good purposes, some of them choose to use their time for bad purposes. Clothing doesn't make the man, the man makes the clothing.

**Resource 3:** Ward, R. B. (1992). Women in Roman baths. *The Harvard Theological Review*, volume 85 (issue 2), p. 125-147. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1509900>

**Resource 4:** Bancroft, I., Fithian, M., Hartman, W. E., & Johnson, D. (1992). *Nudist society: The controversial study of the clothes-free naturist movement in america* (Rev upd su ed.). CA: Elysium Growth Press.

## **Random Arguments Used Against Or For Social Nudity**

### **Jesus Never Walked Around Nude Or Directly Promoted Social Nudity**

Probably the most significant response that can be given to this is that the choice to wear clothing, or not to, was a very low level moral issue in Israel at the time. First off, people probably didn't have too many deviancies in this area with the already strict Israeli code of law in place. As well, people would probably have had weather appropriate clothing in existence to still be somewhat comfortable with what they wore. Because of this, Jesus would not have had many natural occasions, if any, to confront someone concerning whether the issue of nudity in public was alright. And because clothing is often necessary during cold seasons to keep warm, and because it can be beneficial during hot seasons to protect from sunburn and other sun-related problems, it was probably not worth Jesus' time to

preach about the goodness of nudity when other more important matters were present in society. Jesus did confront people on there not being a need to wash their hands before eating, but a situation rose up in which he had to respond to it one way or another. It would be worth asking if Jesus would really have confronted the issue of a person needing to wash their hands if no situation had arisen where he needed to act. Surely there were many laws that Jesus could have addressed that were incorrect during his day, but it doesn't seem he chose to address many of them, or if he did, it wasn't recorded. Social nudity could easily fit into this category of laws, and so there is a legitimate reason that there wasn't an addressing of the issue.

Also, God may have purposely told Jesus to wear clothes like a typical man would while Jesus was on the earth so that he could minister to a larger amount of people. Numerous times it is seen that Jesus had to leave certain places because people attempted to run him off (or tried to kill him, either way). Because certain actions or words that Jesus performed set off triggers in people that caused a loss of ministry opportunities at that particular location, there very clearly could have been certain things that, while holy in action, Jesus was commanded by the Father not to do, so that Jesus could minister in the most efficient manner to the greatest number of people. If compared to the standards of today, it could easily be seen why God would ask Jesus to stay clothed, because most people, even if they were trying to preach the gospel, if they were nude in public, would quickly be hunted down by the local authorities and arrested. In Jesus case, the constant struggle with trying to avoid authorities to get a chance to preach to the masses would probably have been just too great a price to pay in order to spread a truth about something that was so minor of an issue. Examples of Jesus' liberties that he may have been able to use all the time but didn't include: walking on water (Matthew 14:25-26), changing the properties of materials in the universe (Matthew 4:2-4), and walking in his glory (Matthew 17:1-2).

And so what opens up the door for God to give the go-ahead for Christians to practice social nudity now? For one, there are plenty of circumstances where the morality of social nudity is being attacked, which means the truth about it should be defended so that further depths of incorrect doctrine don't increase in influence in the world. Second, there are a lot more followers of God to spread the gospel now than there were in Jesus' time, which means there is greater room for diversity in ministries. Thirdly, Jesus' main ministry was to the Jews, who valued clothing as a society, but other

societies don't care as much about clothing (as the Jews did), and so Christians who believe in the wholesomeness of social nudity would be more likely to not have their ministering rejected in those societies, and it also may actually open doors to reach people that Christians who were against the idea of social nudity couldn't open.

### **The Song of Solomon Is a Biblical Sign that Viewing Nudity of a Person of the Opposite Sex Should Be Saved for Marriage, as It Is God's Sign of How Beautifully and Wonderfully Romance Can and Should Be Expressed, and of How Sacred Marriage Is.**

**Response:** "8 There are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and virgins without number. 9 My dove, my perfect one, is unique. ..." Song of Solomon 6:8-9

Solomon had more sexual experience than the vast majority of men today. This proves that the beauty of Solomon's words was not connected to any level of how sacred marriage should be, and so therefore the Song of Solomon has no bearing on the issue of social nudity. One might even say it backs the notion that a person can be entirely romantic with a spouse even though the person has seen other people nude. Again, social nudity is not inherently linked to sexuality, so don't take that statement as a backing for polyamory.

### **People Were Baptized in the Nude During Early Christianity**

There isn't extensive evidence either way regarding this practice. But given the cultural standards of the day, it would be unlikely for the women to have been required to be nude in front of the men. There is some evidence that there were indeed nude baptisms that took place during the beginning few hundred years of Christianity, but no indication that this practice was widespread (5)(6). It is also worthy of note that other unnecessary rituals were added into the practice of baptism, including the practice of an exorcism beforehand (7), which means that earlier Christians were already confused in what God required and approved of concerning the practice. This would be an indication that past Christian routine concerning the matter couldn't be held up as a moral authority for or against nude baptisms.

**Resource 5:** Guy, L. (2003). "Naked" baptism in the early church: The rhetoric and the reality. *Journal of Religious History*, volume 27 (issue 2), p. 133-142.

**Resource 6:** Latourette, K. S. (1975). A history of Christianity, volume 1: Beginnings to A.D. 1500. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. p. 194.

**Resource 7:** Leeper, E. A. (1990). From Alexandria to Rome: The Valentinian connection to the incorporation of exorcism as a prebaptismal rite. *Vigiliae Christianae*, volume 44. p. 6-24. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1584244>