

8.3.20 – What is Normal?

We are going to expound on another quote from Aaron Frost's book entitled Christian Body - Modesty and the Bible. This quote touches on a problem that we see in many other areas not just what the Bible says about nakedness.

Here is Aaron's quote:

To me, "normal" has become a very fluid concept. Culturally speaking I've been around the block a few times. I am rarely surprised, but always amazed, how people with narrow, stubborn minds will demand a rigid status-quo and insult the moral integrity of any who may differ from their own specific opinions. (As if their own culture defines what is "righteous" and "appropriate" for all people of all cultures and all time.)

I am accustomed to "normal" being a line at a right angle to a surface. I know that it has other meanings because I did not meet the science and math definition until high school. Instead of relying on my understanding, I looked the word "normal" up online. I was amazed by the variety of answers for such a simple word. Here are some examples for your amusement:

Normal is defined as the usual or the average.

Conforming to the standard or the common type; usual; not abnormal; regular; natural.

A word made up by this corrupt society so they could single out and attack those who are different.

This should be enough to see that "normal" can be and is a fluid concept.

Looks like the last definition is the one Aaron and we are dealing with.

I recently found some types of bias that are part of the problem that amazed Aaron. This may just be giving attitudes a different name, but it

sometimes helps to look at things a different way or with different names.

Confirmation Bias

Only looking for confirming evidence while avoiding disconfirming evidence. Tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or hypotheses. Supportive for own desired conclusions irrespective of quality or negative evidence. People like their version of crazy. Makes sense to their current understanding as it exists now in their own mind. People also tend to interpret ambiguous evidence as supporting their existing position. Problem is that does not make it correct. We all have this bias. My kids are smarter than any other kids I know, or my wife is, or my church is, or my political party is... We can not and should not get rid of this bias. We just need to be willing to admit or be aware of it when seeking truth. As with all biases it is hard to get the person having it to see the bias. It may take a road block or a large speed bump to open the person's eyes to the bias.

Congruence Bias

Testing one's own theory by looking for positive evidence and cherry-picking evidence. This one overlaps the one above. Bible study is often done with these biases. When the person finds a few verses that seem to say what he believes, he stops looking even if the context would indicate he is misinterpreting the verse.

Belief Polarization

Occurs when 2 people with opposing prior beliefs both strengthen their beliefs after observing the same data. When people encounter ambiguous evidence, this bias can potentially result in each of them interpreting it as in support of their existing attitudes... This widens rather than narrows the disagreement between them. Genesis 3 seems to play this part with the conflict between the textile position and the naturist position. God clothed them, so we need to wear clothing. If God wanted us to wear clothing all the time, He would have given instructions with the "coats". These are the two "normal" interpretations

of that passage. You will not have much success changing either person's position.

Belief Perseverance

When beliefs persist after the evidence for them is shown to be false. Folks hate finding themselves alone on opinion and/or not actually knowing any better. The need to save face actually puts on a mask that others can not see you nor are you able to have a clear view. This is close to what we have been calling "belief worship". What we have always believed can not be wrong and we try to force God to fit what we believe instead of seeking what God is like. The beam and mote parable might be addressing this bias especially the last sentence.

We do not have the experience of living in many different cultures like Aaron has. Going from the textile position to the naturist position gives a little taste of the change in dress requirements. We were surprised by *how people with narrow, stubborn minds* treated us when we tried to explain what we believed the Bible said about nakedness. That treatment opened our eyes to the abuse the "religious" people in the New Testament were giving Jesus. We also found ourselves questioning other traditions and we found others that were wrong.

This treatment is what tyrants need to gain control. The *people with narrow, stubborn minds* do not do an in-depth Bible study before they judge what the Bible says. They just try to force you to conform to their belief by any means available. They could be used to promote and enforce any false Bible teaching. Yes, tyrants are in the political area. In religion we call them legalists. A doctrine that appeals to the legalist will be forced on everyone who does not see the "light". Add some charm and some help from government to the person presenting the doctrine and he can become a religious tyrant.

The more truth you learn in any area, the easier it is to see that if logic does not get your position accepted then *insult the moral integrity*, character or motivation of the person. A meme we saw recently had a

quote from Plato *No one is more hated than he who speaks the truth*. It seems that once you give yourself permission to hate someone, there are no rules of interaction i.e. anything is acceptable behavior. Riots are an extreme behavior which is justified by hatred which is based on false information.

The last part of the quote is the hardest to justify or understand: (*As if their own culture defines what is "righteous" and "appropriate" for all people of all cultures and all time.*) Bias has to be part of the reason for the behavior, but there have been so many changes in my life time that affect how we do things that it should be easy to see the *all-time* part is wrong. I used a slide rule to do physics problems in college and the first few years I taught high school physics. When I retired the students had no idea what one was. I remember attending a one room grade school with an out-houses for restrooms a big coal stove for heat and water from the farm across the road. I remember the first televisions, the first microwave ovens, the first calculators, the first cell phones, the first computers, the first emails and shopping on line to mention a few "firsts". Except for the very young, they lived through some of these changes. "That is the way we have always done it" just isn't true for most of us in many areas today.

If changes in the world around us is not enough to convince people that what is proper dress or undress, the variety of dress in public should be enough to show that there is more than one "righteous or appropriate". There is Amish and Mennonite dress, fundamentalist dress, Hollywood dress, business dress, labor dress, professional dress which depends on the profession, foreigner dress which depends on country and religion. How can one group say that all the others are wrong because they are not like us? It almost seems that they are "willfully ignorant". Some of the problem may be how cultures of the past are shown in films. Imagine the outcry against a film that showed the disciples fishing naked or Jesus laying aside his garments, putting a towel around his neck and washing the disciple's feet. If that is not enough to make the point, have

Isaiah naked for over three years or King Saul naked prophesying or the poor going naked all the time.

Here is a long quote from Fig Leaf Forum that illustrates the problem that this treatment causes in the Christian cause. It was written by Pastor Hook. *Once there was a certain man who came to our services several times. He was a brother to a lady in the church. This lady came to me and explained that her brother was an alcoholic and had lost his family and his job because of it. She wished that I would have a sermon especially for him in reserve in case he should come again. I did. He came back. I was ready for him. I took the Bible and showed him what liquor would do for a person, how God felt about drunkards, and what their final address would be. He never came back. But I had cleansed my hands of his blood!*

Now I cringe to think how stupid I was. A drowning man had managed to surface in a frantic hope for help, and I yelled, "Get out of that water or you will drown!" I bound heavy burdens on the weakest man and did not extend my little finger to lift him out. I taught the truth, didn't I? But not the truth which could lift him out of slavery, humiliation, self-hatred, depression, and despair. I didn't have to tell him what liquor would do and where it would send him. He knew that better than I did. But I did not tell him of God's love and acceptance and what God could do for him. I did not offer him the loving embrace and shared strength of a hundred other disciples present. With his last strength, he struggled to the oasis in the burning desert and found it to be a mirage. He perished of thirst beside what should have been the refreshing pool of the water of life.

This treatment can be done on either side of the "What the Bible says about nakedness" issue or any issue for that matter. Satan loves *people with narrow, stubborn minds will demand a rigid status-quo and insult the moral integrity of any who may differ from their own specific opinions.* They spread and enforce his deceptions. *Truth is not told, it is learned.* Your best friend or the greatest preacher can be deceived. You need to study for yourself to know the truth.