

The Real Scandal

The term Christian Naturist sounds like an oxymoron to the average church-goer. It is considered taboo. There is a stigma around it, often due to ignorance of the actual ethical philosophies of naturism. Many Christians who believe that naturism is not only permissible as a believer, but can also enhance one's faith in many ways, get the impression that they are all alone in the world-- that if they were found out by others, it would be downright scandalous.

Could it be that the real scandal is that they are made to feel this way? Could there be a greater scandal at work? Let me set the stage with an example that sadly, is all too familiar in this day and age.

I will warn you, it's about to get real in here. What follows is not for the faint of heart. With that out of the way, let's take an honest look at the culture around us and the typical church's response.

Our culture is overtly sexualized. This plays itself out not just in the porn industry but also leads to fornication, adultery, divorce, rape, prostitution, human trafficking, pedophilia, gender confusion, and everything in between. It looks a bit like Sodom and Gomorrah out there! Marketers use sex to sell everything from bras to burgers and shove images of objectified women (mostly) in our faces constantly, whether we want it or not.

As a result, women are plagued with self-esteem and body image issues, feeling as if they are not good enough if they don't look like an airbrushed model from the magazines.

Around 50-75% of men in evangelical churches struggle with pornography to some degree or another. That's an alarming statistic that should cause us all to repent and seek the Lord and real answers in his word. We are indoctrinated and conditioned to view the body as lewd, indecent, obscene, and lust enticing. Nothing could be further from the truth. This age old lie from Satan has us all messed up. The lie is that the body is shameful. The real shame is that the Gnostic heresy of dualism is alive and well in the church today, and most are unaware of it!

The church's efforts to combat this pervasive epidemic is to hide the body and resist every sort of temptation, as if that were possible! It's proven to be a losing battle in our culture. Man-made methods of will-power combined with the guilt and shame of accountability is the church's best idea to curb the lust problem, but all it does is put money in the software developer's accounts and does nothing about the root issue. Guys can cheat any system out there if they are determined and addicted enough.

All of these feeble attempts exchange the truth for a lie. The lie keeps the world in bondage. The truth (according to Jesus) **"shall make you free" -John 8:32.**

How does this lie manifest itself in marriages? Divorce is rampant because we call evil good and good evil. Husbands who grew up with a sexualized view of the body are trapped in the allure of the forbidden. Wives don't trust them as a result. As a couple they don't connect with each other intimately to the level that God had planned for them. This makes the husband feel unloved and he acts out through porn and masturbation, which makes the wife trust him less and feel like she is never good enough. The vicious cycle continues on and on. Her lack of trust, his feeling unloved, over and over again. Until the wife in desperation and in a moment of weakness tells the husband to take care of himself! How far have they both strayed from God's perfect plan for marriage! It's not what she wants. It's not even what he wants. More importantly, it's not what God wants or intended for them.

There has to be a better way! And there always has been. God's plan was perfect, if followed correctly. Sin has perverted everything God made very good in the beginning (After creating male and female in his image he said, **"it was very good."** -Genesis 1:31 **"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."** -Genesis 2:25).

Christian naturists are not only aware of this scandal, they are repulsed by it and by the many seemingly innocent and culturally acceptable ways it plays out. Professional cheerleaders flaunt accentuated bodies in sensual ways to the "delight" of adoring fans. Not many in the church would admit to watching them closely, but instead simply accept it as a part of sports and entertainment. That display, as well as what is on every textile beach is often times more sexual in nature than any nude beach. Bikinis prop up and hide just enough mystery to cause men with corrupted minds to wander and fantasize. However, this is generally accepted in our fallen culture. Those sensual dance moves sadden the hearts of true Christian naturists who have learned to honor the body as God's image, and people as his image-bearers. A renewed mind with the humble (true meaning of modesty) appreciation of God's masterpiece with the respect it deserves has an almost unbelievable way of making the lust problem evaporate!

The church's response, again, is prudish in nature, not knowing or acknowledging that prudery is the evil twin of the sexualized view of the body. Though they are thought to be opposites, they are indeed cut from the same cloth.

David L. Hatton has written a wonderful book entitled, "Meeting at the River - A Tale of Naked Truth." I will conclude this article with a few quotes from that book that go along with this idea that the true scandal is not that a Christian would embrace the naturist lifestyle, but that everyone else is operating under the same lie that the crafty serpent fed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.

"In one breath, the body is declared a holy temple. In the next, it is called a lustful enticement. This is why God withholds His hand of deliverance from believers who get entangled with lustful images of the naked body. He cannot liberate their minds when they believe their defilement comes from the beauty of His handiwork. It is in that very beauty that His truth flourishes. If they

knew this rightly, the truth would set them free. Instead, they shun that beauty! But tell me, brother, how well does this false teaching of shame deliver those trapped in such corruption?"

Most Christian naturists believe the same things the church preaches about fornication, adultery, lust, and pornography. They do not stand for these things. Quite the opposite! They have zero tolerance for them. They have accepted the truth about the body as the glory and image of God, his prized creation. They share the conviction that the "modesty" movement of the Victorian era and Puritanical values has had a reverse and damaging effect on society, causing many of the very troubles it was meant to address.

I love the church. It's the bride of Christ. I'm not angry at the church, per se, but rather at the ancient serpent who stole our innocence and pulled the wool over our eyes! We are to be in the world, but not of the world. God calls us to **"present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable... And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."** -Romans 12:1-2.

Lust abounds where minds are not renewed, in the corrupted minds of men and women who believe the lie. That is the real scandal. This is our culture. It is not working. Who could say that it is? Truth has to change us at a personal level.

Hatton makes the following assertions that support the sad reality of this real scandal, but give hope to overcoming it once and for all: "Widespread religious support for a demonic lie cannot alter its falsehood." And, "Christians will never have a radical reformation in how they view the naked body, until they can distinguish their devotion to culture from their understanding of Scripture." And thankfully, "Truth always turns a wayward world right side up!"