

The Psychology Of Nakedness

Psychologists have shown that the human mind constantly translates visual perceptions into a theory of mind; that is, an imagination of the internal state of a person. For example, if I notice someone squinting their eyes and clenching their jaw, I conclude that he must be angry; if she flexes one of the major muscles in her face used in a smile, then I assume she is happy. The point is that a few cues of body language are instantly translated into an image of that person's inner self. Furthermore, what is important for us is they have found that clothing plays a big part of how we determine a mental image too.

Psychologists have two terms that express the opposite ends of the spectrum of observation. The first is agency, which means the ability to plan, act, and exert self-control. The second is experience, which means the ability to experience, feel, and perceive.

It may seem ridiculous that people's mental images change when they remove a sweater, but in six studies, it was proven that taking off a sweater or revealing flesh in some other way significantly changes the way a person is perceived. When pictures of a man and woman in various states of undress were shown to participants, even a relatively small glimpse of flesh strongly influenced the perception of the person. When the pictures only showed a face, they had lots of agency, or self-control. But when they saw their torso, they were suddenly perceived to be extremely sensitive to desire. Same person, same facial expression, same brief description -- but a hint of body changed everything.

Looking at a naked person filled the participants with sexual desire, and that desire drastically changed their minds. Instead of seeing the individual as having agency or control, he or she became a means to an end, nothing but a vessel for satisfaction. This is known as objectification, in which seeing a body turns the entire person into a physical object. However, this study suggested that people whose bodies are revealed because of a lack of clothing are not just mindless objects but experiencers: someone more capable of pain, pleasure, desire, sensation, and emotion; but lacking in self-control.

Paul wrote, *"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; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works"* (1 Timothy 2:9-10). He used three words to describe the godly way of dress. The first is "proper" or "modest" clothing. The word used

in the original denotes orderliness, or something neatly arranged. It does not mean modest in the sense of being opposed to what is immodest, or which tends to excite improper desires, but what is becoming or appropriate. This means that the appearance of a woman will not be offensive to anybody. The second is "modestly" or "shamefacedness." This word means a demeanor of respect and reverence toward others. It is best reflected in a discussion of godly character. One reason why the subject of clothing today is so serious is because we have forgotten how to blush (Jeremiah 8:10-12). We feel no sense of shame. We do not feel what Adam felt when he sinned (Genesis 3:7-8). Our defenses are brought down due to the abundance of the exposure accepted in society. Christians even get bogged down in discussions of what is and what is not appropriate dress. If you have to ask, it probably is not. The third word is "discreetly" or "sobriety." This word means sober-mindedness or moderation of the desires of the flesh. Immodest apparel exposes the body to the view of others, and that exposure is disgraceful and disrespectful. One sure sign of worldliness is the devotion of excessive time and money to the outward adornment of the body (cf. James 4:4). Dressing inappropriately is a sin that introduces so many other sins. Lusting with the eyes produces adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28). David not only committed adultery with a woman he saw naked, but also committed murder. But you cannot commit fornication as long as you keep your clothes on (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)!

The first step toward being modest is wanting to be. While you may think you look fashionable or even "hot," remember that your purpose in life is to exalt Christ and shine as a light in a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). Give your attention to the adorning of your true, inner self, and dress to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 3:3-4). On top of all the considerations of God and His will, what kind of message do you want to send to those who see you? Do you want to send a message of indulgence of desire and be perceived in a very negative way, or of restrained self-control and be perceived as thoughtful and strong? The answer is in how you dress!

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