

## Christian Control Methods

Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit to become like gods, people have been looking for ways to control others as if they themselves were gods. Sometimes it is necessary to govern others like our children, a classroom, employees, citizens, and so on. That is not the control that we are discussing in this article. We are going to look at using scripture to try to control believers especially as it relates to naturists. We plan to discuss three methods or doctrines that are used; forsake the appearance of evil, don't place a stumbling block in your brother's path and tradition (that is the way we have always done it).

The verse that the idea of forsaking the appearance of evil comes from is **I Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.** The Greek word for "appearance" is translated that way only in this case. Other possibilities are "shape" and "fashion" which changes the whole meaning of the verse. Don't just forsake stealing, but forsake lying, adultery, murder and the list goes on. If you look at the verses before this one, you can see that this interpretation fits. **1Th 5:19-21 Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.** These verses are "do this and this and ... not appear like this or this.." type verses.

Let's explore the verse the way it is translated in the KJV and as usually applied. There are only three words that need interpretation. Abstain has little chance of being misinterpreted so let's go to the other end of the verse. Is evil restricted to the ten commandments and other commands in scripture or could it include what the denomination determines is evil? This is where it can impact naturists. Most churches see social nudity as if it were adultery which is near the top of the evilness scale. This position is not based on scripture. There was a lot of nudity mentioned in the Bible and not a single verse condemning nonsexual public nudity. Yes there is a command about not "uncovering the nakedness" of near relatives in Lev 18, but if you read the end of the chapter you will see that "uncovering the nakedness" is a euphemism for "have sex with". Any other interpretation is just wrong and making the passage say what you want it to, not what it actually says.

If evil is what a denomination or church determines it is, than the leaders of the denomination or church control you if you respect or fear their opinion enough to follow it. The local pastor will not care what the Bible says. He is not willing to get in trouble with the denomination leader or his congregation over one member who thinks he has Bible proof that the pastor, the congregation and the denomination leader are wrong. Even independent church pastors usually fear the

congregation and "like minded" colleagues enough to ignore what the Bible says and do what they can to keep the truth suppressed. If you disobey the gag order that is sure to come with suppressing the truth, you will be invited to find another church...or be thrown out.

This evil (control) is not applied to just naturism. It can be applied to the color of car you may drive, the style of glasses you may wear, the style of clothing you may wear. Keep in mind that at a minimum the clothing must cover the genitals, however, the clothing must show which genitals you actually have since women may not wear pants as they pertain to a man. So stupid, since when that was written both men and women wore robes. I could mention more evils (control) like the rules relating to alcohol, dancing, movies/TV, but you should see by now that if we depart from the Bible for a definition of "evil" it can mean anything the leaders want it to...in other words, anything they do or do not want you to do. They become your "Holy Spirit"...or god.

Now let's look at the word "appearance". It, like evil, is hard to make definite. What appears evil to me may not appear evil to you so how do we decide which of us is right. If I eat at a restaurant that serves alcohol, does it look like I am abusing alcohol. If I attend a naturist venue, does it appear that I am an adulterer or a pervert? Is appearance the important objective in the verse? I believe the Holy Spirit wants us to avoid evil and not just look like we are being good. Someone who looks better than they are is called a hypocrite which is what Jesus Christ called the Pharisees. The way I read the account, He was not pleased with them. I do not think the Apostle Paul, a converted Pharisee, would be asking us to look good. We would probably be better off avoiding sin and let the appearance take care of itself. What others think of your behavior is not nearly as important as following the leading of the Holy Spirit which is away from sin. You have far more control trying to follow the Holy Spirit than controlling what others think of your behavior. Again as with "evil" there can be a list of non-biblical requirements to not "appear" evil. No beards because Charles Manson had a beard. No wire rimmed glasses because John Lennon wore wire rimmed glasses. No plastic glasses because Roy Orbison wore plastic glasses. No eating at restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages because someone might think you're drinking alcohol. You laugh, but all of these are rules of different churches we've visited. No visiting naturist resorts because naked people have sex. Where does it stop, no breathing because the unsaved breath...the use of avoiding the appearance of evil as a control method has no limits to it if you are set on abusing the power.

Causing your brother to stumble is the second of our control mechanisms and can come from a number of different verses:

**1Co 8:13** Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

**Jeremiah 18:15** Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;

**Malachi 2:8** But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.

**Romans 14:21** It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

**Proverbs 28:10** Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

Causing a fellow Christian to stumble is a very real concern, but it also makes for a great control mechanism. We will try to show what it is and what it is not in terms of how it applies to naturism. Also keep in mind that as it relates to naturism we firmly believe that the renewed mind in how we view the body is the cure, not the stumbling block. The legalist pastor will try to use it as the opposite, but the Truth is out there and It will make you free!

You have a right to be naked in your own home even by most textile standards. None of these verses would forbid you from being naked whenever you are in your own home anywhere in the house with any member of your family, spouse, kids, dog or even pets. We are not sure it matters if your brother knows that you are naked as much as possible at home according to these verses. The trouble comes when he sees you naked.

I believe we need to temper the stumble, especially the offence part, with **Rom 12:18** **If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.** The author of the first verse above also wrote this verse while guided by the Holy Spirit for both verses. This verse in Romans suggests that you may not always avoid offending your brother. It may seem like a cop-out, but I think we need to depend on the leading of the Holy Spirit for this area. What is written below may not apply to your situation but might help see the stumbling block and control mechanism.

If someone visits with no invitation you probably should meet him at the door with at least a bathrobe covering and some warning to others in the house that are naked. How you handle it from there depends on how well you know the person and what his visit is interfering with. The verses do not give the uninvited person the right to control you to prevent his stumbling. If you invite him to your house, then you need to be dressed appropriately to respect his current beliefs on the subject. If he invites you to his house the same rules apply...you should be properly attired. Basically any use of naturism that would lead someone away from salvation or weakens the faith of a saved person is causing him to stumble which is different for different cases. The weaker brother does not have the right to control your naturist activities, but you should not flaunt your naturist activities to their hurt.

You will not be long in the naturist mindset without being accused of causing your brother to stumble with your naturist activities or much worse. This is a position like answering the question, "Do you still beat your wife?" If you confront him with naturism he might find a biblical solution to a struggle with pornography or she might find a solution to body image depression. If you keep him in the dark about naturism you deny him access to the potential cure. If you share the cure, you could be accused of causing one to "stumble". What you need is the leading of the Holy Spirit and a knowledge that those who seek to make a difference in other people's lives for God will be attacked.

Then we have the Traditions of Men. The important part is...do they fit the scriptures? They often do not. Here is our Lord Jesus dealing with a tradition of the Pharisees;

**Mat 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. Mat 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? Mat 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.**

Notice the Pharisees were trying to use their tradition to control/criticize the disciples of Christ Jesus. Also note that traditions can be used to set aside scripture. Surely the Pharisees could use Numbers 15:32-36 to justify their position about the grain harvesting.

**Num 15:32-36 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found**

**him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.**

That combined with **Exo 16:27, 28 And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?** would make a strong case for their tradition, but Jesus Christ did not approve their tradition, which means they missed at least the spirit of the command and maybe even the letter of what was originally given.

Wearing clothing at all times with few exceptions is a modern tradition of men as it was not always so. It requires inexpensive clothing so the poor do not have an excuse for not following the tradition. Those who could afford the clothing might pretend poverty just to enjoy the freedom afforded without clothing. During Bible time clothing was far from inexpensive. The poor often had no clothing just to have enough money to buy food. Therefore our current clothing requirements are a tradition since they would not have been possible in Bible times and will not appear in the Bible.

Like the Pharisees above, the clothing traditionalists have verses to back their position but they have to avoid many other verses and misapply all of the ones they're using. A church doctrine should fit all the scriptures not just the select verses with no mention of the ones that do not agree with the doctrine. As with the other controls, clothing tradition varies from group to group and from time to time. The controls can say what color, style, material and so on for clothing.

If the reason for a control/rule/requirement is to avoid sin, that is an example of playing god. Convicting others of sin is not your job.

**John 16:7,8 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:**

It is the Holy Spirit's job. When we try to convict others of sin, we get in trouble with this verse:

**Rom 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.**

According to this verse, telling someone what activities are sin is like walking into a business establishment and acting like you are the boss of everybody there. It would not work because they already know who the real boss is. The analogy suggests that we do not know who the real spiritual Boss is. If we know Him well, we will also know the pretenders.