

The Loom: Year 2, Unit 2 Introduction Addition

How We Think about Classical Nudity

One issue you'll need to settle before beginning Unit 2 is the question of viewing nudes in paintings and sculpture. Your family will need to decide where you stand in the spectrum of possibilities concerning how much and in what manner you choose to view the classical nudity found in the tradition of painting of Western Civilization. Here are a few of our thoughts on the topic.

God made the body. We know that He made it good. We also know your children are young. Nudity is included in the visual language of Western painting, and thus found on museum walls, in history texts, and art texts. Your children may or may not be ready to view such samples of artistic expression. It's up to you. Here are questions for your consideration and to help determine what they're ready for and how to handle it.

1. Does God forbid nudity in art altogether? Answering this question takes thought and prayer. Certainly, after Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the Tree of Knowledge their eyes were opened to their nakedness, and God caused the first recorded deaths and clothed them with the skins of animals. From then on, there is no record of God encouraging people to glorify their bodies in art or in any other way. However, the Scripture also does not condemn the body; the Bible is not against the pleasures of the flesh: eating, drinking, and sex (within the context of married love) are all seen as good gifts from our Heavenly Father.
2. Should boys and girls have the same viewing opportunities? It seems that children are easily embarrassed by nudity in art, and we think this is good. While not wishing to raise prudes who will be inhibited in a marriage context, neither do we want to "awaken love before she pleases" (Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, and 8:4). Arousal and sex are for the marriage bed, and it is an established fact that boys are more aroused than girls by visual stimuli. Little girls can be affected, too, however! We believe that this is one area where classical education can overrule the wise counsel of Scripture if not carefully handled. We encourage you, therefore, to prayerfully and carefully work to discern how any viewing of nudes is affecting your children, male or female.
3. Should teenage boys spend time looking at potentially erotic pictures? Definitely not. We have raised three teenage sons, and they all made it very clear to us that they needed to heed the warnings of 2 Timothy 2:22 and "flee youthful passions." They were therefore uncomfortable viewing nudes in high school, and we profoundly respected their reasons for not doing so. Even if your teenage son or daughter says he or she is unaffected, again we advise prayer and watchfulness to make sure that you are not tempting them to sin.

To sum it up, our position would be, "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." Married adults, who are looking at art for the sake of understanding the artist's message, or technique, can probably handle nudes. But most children may not be able to. You could treat nudity in art and alcohol identically: a matter of conscience for the individual Christian adult, but probably not something the teenager (especially males) should indulge in.