News 25 November 2026 | English article

Sophie Cunningham Draws Pushback From Christian Leaders After Topless Maxim Photoshoot

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Courageous expressions of patriotism and gender sanity"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

WNBA star Sophie Cunningham is facing pushback from Christian leaders after posing topless in Maxim magazine's November/December 2026 issue, just weeks after her public testimony about Jesus on Theo Von's podcast won her praise from pastors across America. Princeton professor Robert P. George said the photos make it impossible for him to hold her up as a role model for young women, and evangelist Justin Peters criticised a Texas megachurch pastor who had praised her as a Christian example. The Christian Post reported the backlash on 23 November 2026.

Three weeks ago, pastors were calling her a masterclass in evangelism. This week, some of the same Christian voices are saying she can no longer be a role model. What changed was a magazine cover, and the argument it started is about what a public Christian life is supposed to look like.

Cunningham, the 30-year-old Indiana Fever guard, appears on the cover of Maxim's November/December issue and discusses her views on faith and dating in an interview inside. She posed for several photos in the shoot, including one showing her without a shirt, with her long blonde hair covering her breasts. Some Christian leaders say posing topless conflicts with the values she professes, and the sting is sharper because she drew national attention this year for opposing male athletes in women's sports.

The sharpest criticism came from Robert P. George, a prominent Princeton University professor and McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, a Catholic conservative legal scholar. George posted on Facebook that while he is grateful for Cunningham's "courageous expressions of patriotism and gender sanity", he cannot label her a role model.

"I can no longer, however, share the view of those who urge young women to regard her as a role model," George wrote. "I wouldn't want my own daughter and granddaughters to do that."

"Her pornifying herself in photographs for Maxim magazine makes that impossible. I'm mystified as to why she would do such a thing."

"She doesn't need the money. It will not, I suspect, add much to her celebrity," George continued.

"Young women, and young men, desperately need good role models today. Sophie Cunningham could have been one."

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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