

Can We Dance?

Introduction. When one becomes a Christian, everything takes on a new perspective (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 2:7-8). This also applies to certain social activities, which before we may have considered harmless, but now understand may not be proper for Christians (1 Peter 4:2-3).

One activity like this is dancing, especially in its modern form involving unmarried couples. Proms and other dances, along with shows like *Dancing With The Stars*, glamorize dancing and weaken a Christian's stance against it; so in this lesson, we will see why dancing is unbecoming of those who call themselves Christians, and we will address commonly raised objections by those who approve of dancing.

I. ***The Sin Of Lasciviousness***

A. Lasciviousness is condemned.

1. As a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19).
 - a) Translated "lewdness" in the NKJV.
 - b) Translated "sensuality" in the NASB.
 - c) Translated "debauchery" in the NIV.
 - d) Translated "licentiousness" in the RSV.
2. As what defiles a man (Mark 7:21-23).

B. Lasciviousness defined.

1. The word is defined by Thayer as "unbridled lust ... wanton acts or manners (including) filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females." The English word is defined as "exciting sexual desires; salacious."
2. Anything which excites the lust of the flesh (words, bodily movements, unchaste handling) is therefore sinful.
 - a) Of course, this applies to the stirring up of sexual desires and sensual pleasures outside the bond of marriage.
 - b) The Bible recognizes the place for sexual expression, but limits it to those who are married (Hebrews 13:4).
 - c) The excitement of lust between those not married is sinful and condemned by Jesus in Matthew 5:28.
 - (1) It is wrong to lust for another person.
 - (2) It must therefore be wrong to arouse lust in another person.

II. ***The Sin Of Dancing***

A. Non-Christians recognize dancing as lustful.

1. When describing the differences between modern dancing and dancing a couple of generations ago, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* noted, "The end product is doubtless the same -- physical pleasure in the activity of dancing and sexual awareness of a partner,

- whether embraced or half-consciously observed" (Encyclopedia Britannica, "The Art Of Dance," Vol. 5, p. 455-456).
2. "... The social dance has usually been the result of joint physical exuberance and sex stimuli ..." (Collier's Encyclopedia, "Dance," Vol. 7, p. 683).
 3. "Another motive for the dance is the sexual motive -- the dance has always been used as a means of expressing sexual desire and as a means of wooing ... We find this same sex motive in the modern ballroom dance, which has now degenerated into dull and stupid forms, but it is a legitimate opportunity for contact" (Ted Shawn, "Dance We Must," p. 6, 1938).
 4. "All ballroom dancing in pairs looks toward intercourse. In this respect the Puritans were dead right ... The development of no-contact dances has come about because one doesn't now need a social excuse to embrace a girl, but as an excitant it need not involve contact at all -- in fact, dances like flamenco or the twist are far more erotic than a clinch because you aren't too close to see one another. At its best this sort of dance is simply intercourse by remote control" (Alex Comfort, "The Joy Of Sex," p. 162).
- B. Common sense tells us that dancing is sinful.
1. How would you react if you saw an entire dance floor with people of the same sex dancing together?
 - a) If dancing was morally neutral, having no sexual overtones, there would be no reaction at all!
 - b) But most would be shocked, suspecting they had stumbled into a "gay" dance.
 2. If we would expect that kind of dance to be an expression of "gay" sensuality, how can we deny that people of opposite sexes dancing together is an expression of heterosexual activity?

III. **Commonly Raised Objections**

- A. "Dancing may turn others on, but not me."
1. For the sake of argument, we will assume that some people either:
 - a) Do not have strong sexual urges.
 - b) Have grown spiritually to the point where they can keep their urges under control.
 2. The dancing under consideration involves two persons.
 - a) Even if one is not so affected, the other may be!
 - b) In which case, the "spiritual" person becomes a stumbling block to the other person, an instrument for the other person's indulgence in fleshly lusts.

- B. "I cannot control what others think."
1. Just because we cannot force a person to think right is no reason to encourage them to think wrong!
 2. We have a responsibility not to contribute to one's moral delinquency.
 - a) We must not be a stumbling block (Romans 14:13, 21 cf. 1 Corinthians 8:13; 10:31-32).
 - b) Otherwise we fall into grave condemnation (Matthew 18:6-7).
- C. "How can anything go wrong when the event is tightly supervised?"
1. Bodily actions may be well-supervised, but no one can supervise the inward thoughts.
 2. Chaperons can inhibit only what happens on the dance floor. What about at the after party or on the way home when there is no one to restrain expressing the desires that were aroused during the dance?
 3. Ann Landers wrote, "When you turn a guy on, he can be awfully hard to turn off."
- D. "Dancing is mentioned in the Bible."
1. There are four categories of dancing mentioned in the Bible
 - a) Religious dances of the Old Testament (Exodus 15:20-21; 2 Samuel 6:14).
 - b) Expressions of great rejoicing (1 Samuel 18:6).
 - c) The play of children (Job 21:11; Luke 7:32).
 - d) Passionate dances, like that of Salome (Matthew 14:6).
 2. Do the first three categories justify Christians engaging in the modern dance today?
 - a) No, for these are nothing like what is being discussed in this lesson.
 - b) There is no trace in the Bible that men and women danced as couples.
 - (1) "While the mode of dancing is not known in detail, it is clear that men and women did not generally dance together, and there is no real evidence that they ever did. Social amusement was hardly a major purpose of dancing, and the modern method of dancing by couples is unknown" (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible, "Dancing," Vol. 2, p. 12).
 - (2) "Social dancing, as we now understand it, was almost, if not altogether, unknown in ancient times ..." (Hastings Bible Dictionary, p. 550).
 - (3) "Women seemed generally to have danced by themselves ... Of the social dancing of couples in the modern fashion there

is no trace" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, "Games," p. 1170).

- c) In fact, dancing in the form of mixed couples did not exist before the 12th century A.D. "There is no evidence of couples dancing together, however; that was to happen much later, probably in Provence in the 12th century" (Encyclopedia Britannica, "The Art Of Dance," Vol. 5, p. 452).
3. The closest analogy of the modern dance today that is mentioned in the Bible is the dance of Herodias' daughter, Salome, which was a lewd exhibition.

Conclusion. Can we dance? There are two conclusions that are certain. First, it is wrong to lust in our hearts after others (Matthew 5:28). Second, it is wrong to conduct ourselves in a way that excites lust in others; that is lasciviousness, a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). The Encyclopedia Britannica said, "Because of its physical appeal, dance lends itself to erotic purposes and has been practiced to these ends by both sexes" ("The Art Of Dance").

A final question naturally poses itself: "Should I go even if I do not dance?" We have a duty to God to live a pure life before God. Can you fulfill this duty by attending events that are filled with immodesty and sin, such as prom or other dances? We are told by God to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11). How can you pursue these while pursuing sin at the same time? Christians should not make any provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Romans 13:12-14).

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