

Dancing

Introduction. We live in an age where standards of moral conduct are rapidly deteriorating. Actions that once were considered wrong are now widely accepted and practiced. Even Christians have been swept along in this tide of growing laxity. The Christian lives by a different standard than the world. Because a certain practice is commonly accepted by people of the world does not necessarily make it acceptable to God.

Our attitude toward dancing is a prime example. Dances are the primary social activity for young people in school, and now that it is Spring and near the end of school, more young people attend dances and the Prom. Obviously, the main attraction of the dances is dancing! To what extent can a young person who wants to honor Jesus participate in dancing? Can a person dance and still please the Lord? Is dancing consistent with the purity and holiness that God demands of a Christian? Let's study this subject with an open mind and honest heart.

I. ***Dancing In The Bible***

A. Dances of religious devotion.

1. Dancing is not inherently wrong or immoral, or else God could not have condoned it. In the Bible, we read of dancing that was an expression of religious enthusiasm and praise to God (Psalm 149:3; 150:4). Dancing was also a traditional form of celebration among the Jews (Judges 11:34; 1 Samuel 18:6; Psalm 30:11; Ecclesiastes 3:4; Luke 15:25). On occasion, God's people would dance for joy over some great and notable event:
 - a) After crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel danced (Exodus 15:20).
 - b) When the ark was brought to Jerusalem, David danced (2 Samuel 6:14).
2. Such dancing cannot be compared with the modern dance. These dances more resembled stately marches, with no sexual overtones. They were never performed for amusement. They were always performed in the open daylight, men with men, and women with women.
 - a) "While the mode of dancing is not known in detail, it is clear that men and women did not generally dance together" (H.M. Wolf, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, II:11-12).
 - b) "Even on those occasions where both sexes participated in the sacred professional dances, they always danced separately" (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 276).

B. Dances of sinful merrymaking.

1. Since the dance is a flexible medium, and is capable of expressing a

- broad range of human emotions, it can also be used to portray that which is suggestive and lewd. The children of Israel danced in a depraved and unrestrained fashion before the golden calf. In the absence of Moses, they had quickly reverted to paganism, with all its attendant emphasis on sexual wantonness and immorality (Exodus 32:19-25; 1 Corinthians 10:5-7).
2. Consider also the example of the daughter of Herodias who danced before Herod. Her seductive charms were so great that the king rashly promised to give her anything she desired. This kind of dancing was filled with sexual overtones, designed to subdue the reasoning of the mind and arouse the lust of the flesh (Matthew 14:6-8).

II. **What Is Wrong With The Modern Dance?**

A. It appeals to human sensuality.

1. In his book, *World History of the Dance*, Curt Sach studies the background of dancing. He says that all dances, like any other art form, attempt to say something. The steps, positions and movements are designed to convey a message. According to Sach, the whole range of modern dances are designed to express "lovemaking."
2. The Encyclopedia Britannica confirms this by stating, "To a certain extent all dancing is sexually stimulating ..."
3. Dancing's charm is based upon sex appeal. Dr. Leta S. Hollingsworth, professor of education at Columbia University, confirms this view. Although she approves of dancing, she still says that dancing "affords a partial satisfaction to the sex impulse which (among adolescents) cannot as yet achieve full and specific expression ..."
4. Someone might respond, "Dancing has sex appeal. What's wrong with that?" It is true that the sexual relationship is a gift from God, and in and of itself it is not evil. Yet, God-given desires also have God-given boundaries. Within the relationship of marriage, sex is beautiful, glorious and fulfilling (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 7:1-4; Hebrews 13:4). Outside the relationship of marriage, sex is cheap, dirty and sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5).
5. On March 13, 2004, school officials in Bend, Oregon had to stop a dance early because the student's moves got a little too racy. Mary McDermott, a teacher and Bend High School's activities director, said, "Quite honestly, it's like having sex with your clothes on." "There's no other way to dance besides being up against the other person," said Matt Baker, 17, a senior. "It's just the way people dance these days." Baker said it was unfair for students to pay \$10

to get into the dance, only to soon have it end. "There were no clothes coming off or anything," he said. But the school had heard plenty of parental and community complaints about inappropriate dancing, McDermott said. "At some point you have to take a stand and send a message to the kids and say this is not okay," said Marshall Jackson, an assistant principal. Amen!

B. It is lascivious and lustful.

1. Lasciviousness has to do with a lack of proper restraint of the desires of the flesh. In general, it describes actions that tend to produce lust. Consider the following definitions of the word "lasciviousness" which is *aselgeia* in the Greek:
 - a) Strong defines it as "licentiousness, filthy, lasciviousness, wantonness."
 - b) Arndt and Gingrich defines it as "licentiousness, debauchery, sensuality ... give oneself over to debauchery ... live licentiously ... follow the inclination to sensuality ... Esp. of sexual excesses sensuality ... indecent conduct ..."
 - c) Thayer defines it as "unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence ... plural 'wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.'"
 - d) Vine adds that this Greek word denotes "excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness ... the prominent idea is shameless conduct."
2. Anything, therefore, that tends to produce lewd emotions, create evil thoughts, or excite unlawful sexual desire is lasciviousness. Without question, dancing is dangerous for the Christian. Dancing arouses emotions that can have a rightful fulfillment only within the relationship of marriage. It is sinful for persons not married to each other to engage in those actions which inordinately stimulate their sexual desires (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 Peter 4:2-4).
3. "Lust" describes any strong desire or craving. The English word originally was a neutral term, but in the context of this study we apply the term to sexual passion. The sexually oriented movements of dancing, the physical contact and handling the bodies of the opposite sex encourages lust which leads to sin (James 1:14-15).
4. Outside of the relationship of marriage, such lust is sinful (Matthew 5:28; Romans 13:13-14). Many of the body movements involved in today's dances are highly suggestive, and often provoke lustful admiration from others, whether they are also dancing or merely

watching. If any physical contact between a male and female causes one to have desires that are not proper, one must not engage in that practice.

C. It is associated with much that is evil.

1. Dancing results in a lowering of morals and a weakened spirituality. It also involves one with evil companions.
2. It is often the doorway to other sins. We should avoid anything so closely associated with evil (Matthew 7:15-20; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). Besides provoking lustful desires, here is what can happen at a dance:
 - a) Some can drink alcohol resulting in drunkenness or use illegal drugs.
 - (1) "Revellings" or "carousings" is listed as a "work of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21.
 - (2) "Revel" is defined as "to rebel, carouse, a wild party or celebration." In 1 Peter 4:3, New Testament writers always associated dancing with sexual immorality and drunkenness.
 - b) Some can wear indecent and immodest clothing.
 - (1) Every Christian must demonstrate a modest decorum in dress (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4).
 - (2) We need to be content to follow after what we are supposed to follow after (2 Timothy 2:22).
 - c) Some can commit fornication after the dance.
 - (1) To "flee fornication" means to get far away from it, not get as close as possible to it.
 - (2) Modern dances lead closer to fornication, not further from it (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

D. It destroys one's influence for good.

1. Brother Marshall Keeble once said, "A dancing foot and a praying knee are not found on the same leg."
2. We must strive to set a good example (Matthew 5:16; Luke 14:34-35; Philippians 2:15). The world is watching. Others are quick to notice any inconsistency between our creed and our conduct. Dancing destroys your influence for good.
 - a) From "A Teenager's Answer to 'Shall I Go to The Prom?'" by Sherry Burgess: "With a week and one-half to go, everyone at school was buzzing with excitement. Then, one night, I suddenly thought of an argument I just could not rationalize away: my sister! You see, I have a little sister who is twelve years old. She is a Christian and is really trying hard. Although the whole school might not mind if I went to the Prom, and although no one else might find out, there would be one special person who would know for sure that I went -- my younger sister. I imag-

ined Melissa thinking as she entered high school, 'If Sherry went to the Prom, then why can't I go to this dance too?' Suddenly, I wasn't concerned only about my own soul, but was also the possibility of causing my little sister to stumble by my actions and being finally lost (Matthew 18:6)."

- b) I heard of a young man named, Tommy, who was a member of the church, and who went to the Prom with his non-Christian date. They did not dance. They just went to the Prom because it was the thing to do. Their picture was taken, and then put in the yearbook. From that date forward, anytime someone saw that picture, they would assume that Tommy and his date danced at the Prom. What else would they conclude?
3. Consider this another way. Every school-sanctioned dance must have a chaperone. Why would they need these if it were a wholesome activity? Could a Christian chaperone a dance? If you, as a parent, could not in good conscience, chaperone a dance, how could you let your children attend it? The very fact that some say, "I am just going to the Prom; I am not going to dance," is clear evidence they are unsure (Romans 14:23; Psalm 1:1). If dances or the Prom is a wholesome environment, it would be right to engage in whatever took place there.
- E. It places a stumblingblock before others.
 1. Someone might say, "I can dance without any ill effects. It does not cause me to think dirty thoughts. It does not give rise to unlawful desires."
 2. First of all, anyone who would say this is not being honest with themselves. However, for the sake of argument, let's grant that they are being truthful. Now the question is, "What effect does dancing have on my partner?" We must avoid causing lust (Romans 14:21).

Conclusion. The Christian must examine their heart! Does it increase my love for God and His word? Does it increase my spirituality and make me a better Christian? Or does dancing arouse lustful desires within me or my partner? Does it serve as a starting point to baser desires? What is your real reason for wanting to go to a dance? Is the reason for wanting to go a worldly one? What kind of people will be at the dance? Will they be the kind of people with whom a Christian would and should want to associate? What kind of activities will taking place there? Would I want to be seen by other Christians at such a function? Would I want to take other Christians with me to such a function? If Christ should return, would He be pleased with me for being at such a function?

We are driven to an inescapable conclusion. The dance belongs to the

world; the Christian belongs to God. When a Christian obeys the gospel, his life is forever altered (Romans 6:4; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God's people must be representatives of purity and holiness. If you dance, you do so, not as a Christian, but as one who has turned his back on Christ. If you dance, you do so, not to God's glory, but to your own shame. So I hope you will seek wholesome, godly activities for yourself and your friends and I hope that you will decide to never dance. If you do, you will grow stronger, not weaker; you will gain real friends, not lose them; you will reap the fruit of the Spirit, not the works of the flesh. More importantly, you will be making an important step in letting God rule your life.