

Why the Problem with Dancing?

All Christians must at one time or another make decisions that may affect their influence as children of God, or their eternal destiny. Paul reminds us that we have crucified the old man, thereby destroying the body of sin that we should no longer serve sin (Romans 6:6). There should be no doubt that God has imposed a certain lifestyle upon His children that imbues righteousness (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; Romans 6:12-13, 16). Yet the world would have us believe that anything goes. The question before us now, is whether or not dancing is sinful in the eyes of God. Some will quickly run to the Old Testament as proof that it is not because King David and others danced (2 Samuel 6:14-16; Judges 21:19; Exodus 15:20-21). Why even Solomon the wisest man of his time said *“There is a time to dance”* (Ecclesiastes 3:4)! We are by no means making the argument that dancing is never found in the Bible, because we have just given proof that it is. What we are discussing here is whether or not there are types of dancing that God does not approve of.

When searching out a particular subject it is always our duty to go to God’s Word with an open mind and to maintain a balanced view that harmonizes with all scripture. This is true of the subject of dancing. Study each case of dancing in the Old Testament carefully and what do you find?

- Women dancing with women in celebration
- Men dancing with men in celebration
- Dancing designed for worship
- Dancing that reflected joy

Coupled with the definition of the Hebrew word for ‘dance’ and ‘dancing’ meaning “to whirl or twirl” we discover that it was a far cry from the type of dancing that is found in the world today. So why the problem with dancing you may be asking? It’s not that dancing is inherently evil, but the types of dancing, the environments it is taking part in, and the influence or lack of it that a Christian will have taking part in the dance. It is these issues that we will look into from God’s perspective to see whether or not it is ethical for the Christian to take part in dancing.

The New Testament and Dancing

We have just taken a brief look at the Old Testament and what it has to say about the dance and noticed that it involved nothing more than whirling and twirling by men and women alone, or women with women and men with men, never the type of provocative men with women gyrations seen today. Since it is the case that not one person living today is accountable to the Old Testament Law (John 12:48), but instead to the New Testament Law (Romans 1:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8), then it is to the gospel we must turn to discover God’s will concerning dancing.

In his letter to the Galatian Christians, Paul speaks of the works of the flesh by listing a number of activities that he says will prevent a person from being granted eternal life (Galatians 5:19-21). Among those things listed are ‘lasciviousness, and revellings’ (KJV).

- (1) Lasciviousness or licentiousness comes from the Greek word *‘aselgeia’* which is defined as referring to sensuality and sexual excesses. It also refers to filthy words, indecent bodily movements and unchaste handling of males and females. Therefore, anything that would produce sexual excesses, promote indecent bodily movements, and allows for males to handle females in such a way that sexual desires are inflamed is not conducive to the righteous behavior expected of a Christian.
- (2) Revellings; revelry or carousing comes from the Greek word *‘komos’* and denotes excessive feasting, drinking and carousing (dancing). It is said that this word was used by the Greeks to describe the type of gathering you might witness at Mardi Gras where everyone is involved in a drunken frolicking parade that promotes sensual gratification. While it is true that not all dancing involves such activities, it still can be counted as being in the category of reveling.

- (3) The reason that we are able to so qualify dancing as revelry is because of the words that Paul adds, *“And such like.”* “And such like” is rendered from the Greek *“kai ta homoia toutois”* (ASV) which is an expression that shows the works of the flesh are not limited to the individual activities listed in the text by Paul, but that anything closely linked to them will also keep a person out of heaven. In our case, dancing is linked to lasciviousness/licentiousness and revellings/revelry making it a sin for a Christians to so participate.

Before you cast this tract aside with disgust, please be honest with yourself and evaluate the types of dancing you may be or had been participating in (Ballroom, dancehall, barroom, school gym, etc.). Consider if you will the bodily contact between man and woman which is the reason the majority of men and some women dance (be honest). Bodies close together, coupled with the movements associated with whatever music is being played and the result is sensuality and sexual arousal. Now at this point you are most likely making the argument that you only dance for recreation, well if that’s the case, then why not dance in the same way that was approved in the Old Testament - men with men, women with women, or alone whirling and twirling? Not as exciting is it? Well if, it’s only about recreation then it shouldn’t matter, should it? The fact is that the majority of men and women attending dances are looking for a partner, a mate, and are hoping to get ‘turned on’ by a certain someone while dancing. But what about married couples you might be asking yourself?

Christian Principles and Dancing

There is no doubt that whether single or married, those of the world could care less what God has to say about anything. Such individuals only care about themselves, and what pleases them. They are not concerned about their souls, or the souls of those around them. However the faithful Christian, single or married, loves both the soul of those

around them as well as their own and desires to please God with all their being. While the Bible is not filled with easy to find “thou shalt nots,” it does assign principles whereby every accountable person will be judged. This is true of all activities we may involve ourselves in, and dancing is no different.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes the argument for Christian purity Establishing the case that while sin abounded through Adam’s transgression, God’s grace has abounded even more in order that salvation could be gained (Romans 5). In chapter six, he continues by posing a question that he surmises is in the minds of those Christians *“..shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”* Then he answers the question with an emphatic negation – *“God forbid!”* or *“may it never be the case!”* Then to prove his point, he goes on by describing how these Romans had become Christians when they submitted themselves to water immersion (baptism). In baptism, they had died to sin, were buried and then resurrected a new creature in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:2-6).

When we die physically, we are no longer able to live this life. The same is true in a spiritual sense, when we die spiritually in baptism we die to a life of sinful living (or that is, should). Then when we are raised out of the waters of baptism, we are raised up a new individual we are born again, with all our past sins wiped clean so that we can start life over again. Our minds are to be transformed with a new way of thinking (Romans 12:1-2).

To the Christians at Philippi, Paul gave them marching orders as to their thoughts, *“Whatsoever things are honorable, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ..of good report, ...think on these things”* (Philippians 4:8). So as you can see, Christianity is not about the liberty to do our own thing, but is about righteous living. Let’s consider a few other principles in connection with dancing.

- (1) **Temptation** – Jesus reminds us to, *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41). Temptation ought to be avoided by everyone at all costs, most particularly the

faithful Christian. There are a multitude of Bible passages that command God's children to stay away from any and all things that will cause them to fall. You've heard it said, "play with fire and you will get burned." The same is true of temptation it's like playing with fire, but in this case the fire of passion and lust. It matters not how strong a person thinks they are, eventually sin and its temptation will win. Paul said, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

There is nothing wrong with passion or sex, as long as they are kept within the realm that God has deemed acceptable, which is the marriage bed only (1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Hebrews 13:4). Remember, the Christian life is a changed life, which means that we stay away from things that tempt us, or could in any way cause others to be tempted.

(2) **Not a Stumbling Block** – While it may be true that a married couple does not allow others to dance with their spouse, their bodily movements can and often do cause others to burn with passion. Paul reminds us that as faithful Christians, we must be very careful not to be a stumbling block to others, because we are our brother's keeper (Romans 14). For, Paul says, "None of us lives to himself, or dies to himself" (Romans 14:7). Simply put, Christians belong to the Lord, and as such are to bring glory and honor to the name they represent, whether in life or in death. Yet the common attitude of today is that it is no one's business how I live 'my' life. It's God's business, and we will be judged as to how we lived our lives (2 Corinthians 5:10). Certainly no honest person would contend that dancing could never be a stumbling block.

(3) **Influence** – Faithful Christians have a responsibility placed upon them by God to preserve their, as well as the Lord's,

influence in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Peter said, "I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your behavior honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God" (1 Peter 2:11-12). Notice that Christians are expected to maintain a positive influence before the worldly so that God is glorified. How is that possible when on the dance floor, moving your bodies in such a manner that fleshly lusts are aroused in the hearts of those around us? Dear Christian, we are to shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15).

(4) **Virtue** – Paul said if there be any virtue, think on these things (Philippians 4:8). Peter laid out several things that the Christian is to add to his/her faith and one of them is 'virtue.' In fact, virtue is not something we are to add when we get around to it, but we are to add to our faith 'diligently' (2 Peter 1:5-8). Virtue is that quality in a person that makes them morally good, intrinsically excellent in the moral sense. Only those spiritual mature understand the need to take part in activities that promote purity and righteousness.

Dancing is no more a virtuous activity, than is drinking or gambling. How is it possible for a faithful Christian to exhibit godly morals and influence society for good when grinding and bumping on the dance floor?

Conclusion

One last thing that the Christian ought to consider other than ones influence and causing others to stumble, is the atmosphere often associated with dancing. Locations where dancing occurs are more times than not spots that alcohol is consumed, and school dances are by no means immune from such

things. While it is true that being in a restaurant that serves alcohol does not necessarily make a Christian unfaithful by eating in such an establishment; the same cannot be said for the dancehall. They are not apples to apples comparisons, due to the difference in activities taking place.

One cannot find a single New Testament passage that authorizes a Christian, or anyone for that matter to participate in the sinful activity of dancing. Remember, we must have Bible authority for all that we do (Colossians 3:17). Paul commanded that we are to abstain from EVERY species of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). If it is the case that Jesus is our example – and He is according to Peter (1 Peter 2:21); then should the Christian not examine every activity they about to take part in to see if their Lord whom they serve and honor would approve?

Dancing in all its styles today is an activity that every person should abstain from, but especially a Christian. It is wrong and sinful because it diminishes our influence for good and purity. It is wrong and sinful because when practiced it can lead us into temptation. It is wrong and sinful because it tarnishes our virtue and causes others to stumble and lose their souls. It is wrong and sinful because it does not and cannot bring glory and honor to the one who bought us by His death at Calvary.

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What Saith the Scriptures? Concerning The Ethics of



Dancing



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