

Shall We Dance!

When one becomes a Christian, everything takes on a new perspective:

St. Paul says:

- ✠ “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What that means? We must look at ALL aspects of life around us in the right Christian way; not as the world looks and acts. This applies to many social activities, which before we may have considered harmless but now understand that it may not be proper for TRUE Christians.

St. Peter warns us not to act like the people of this world who walk in lewdness, lusts, etc., to avoid God’s judgment:

- ✠ “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles -- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:3-5)

One example of such worldly acts is dancing; especially in its modern and popular forms.

What is wrong with dancing? Well, let me explain why dancing is not accepted by TRUE Christians. I will also address commonly raised objections by those called Christians, who seek to approve of dancing.

The Sin of Lasciviousness

A. Lasciviousness Condemned...

1. As a work of the flesh in Galatians 5:19 (KJV, ASV).

- a. Translated "lewdness" in the NKJV
 - ✠ “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness” (Galatians 5:19)
- b. Translated "sensuality" in the NAS.
- c. Translated "debauchery" in the NIV.
- d. Translated "licentiousness" in the RSV.

2. As that which defiles a man (KJV).

- ✠ “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23)

B. Lasciviousness Defined...

1. The Greek word is aselgia, defined as “unbridled lust...wanton acts or manners (including) filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females”

2. The English word lascivious is defined as “exciting sexual desires; salacious”.
3. Anything which excites the lust of the flesh (words, bodily movements, unchaste handling) is therefore considered 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 such to those who are married
 - ✠ “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).
 - c. The excitement of lust between those not married is sinful, condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ:
 - ✠ “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28)

So, it is wrong to lust for another person and it must therefore be wrong to arouse lust in another person.

Having defined the sin of lasciviousness, one must now ask: “Does popular dancing arouse the lusts of the flesh, and therefore qualify as lasciviousness?” The answer is YES.

The Sin of Dancing

A. Non-Christians Recognize Dancing As Lustful...

1. “The popular teen-age dances of the mid 20th century have no set steps; the dancers respond spontaneously to the beat of the musicians. The degree of satisfaction attained by young people “twisting” or “shaking” to the blare of amplified music in dance halls, further enlivened by psychedelic lighting, is different from the pleasure derived by their elders waltzing to the ‘Blue Danube’ - but it is only a difference of age and time. Fundamentally, both age groups are enjoying the pleasure of dancing in their own way... 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 (1979 edition).
2. “...The social dance has usually been the result of joint physical exuberance and sex stimuli...” – Collier’s Encyclopedia, “Dance”, Vol. 7, p. 683 (1964 edition).
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.” - Dance We Must (1938, reprinted 1950), p. 6 (from a series of lectures given by Ted Shawn at George Peabody College for Teachers).

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.” - The Joy of Sex, Alex Comfort, p. 162 (1972).
5. The Roman orator Cicero says: “No man who is sober dances, unless he is out of his mind, either when alone or in any decent society, for dancing is the companion of wanton conviviality, dissoluteness, and luxury.” - New Unger's Bible Dictionary (1988).

B. Common Sense Tells Us That Dancing Is Lustful

Both common sense and the testimony of people in the world confirm that dancing is an activity which has the arousal of sexual desires as its main appeal. Should Christians be making provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts? Let us see how the Bible answers this question:

✠ “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14)

So, the answer is “make NO provision for the flesh”. But almost invariably, those who desire to dance or allow their children to dance raise some objections...

Commonly Raised Objections

A. “Dancing May ‘Turn On’ Other People, But I Don’t React That Way...”

1. For the sake of argument, let's assume that some people either:
 - a. Do not have strong sexual urges.
 - b. Have grown spiritually to the point 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 Can't Control What Other People Think...”

1. Just because we can't force a person to think right...that is no reason to encourage them to think wrong!
2. We have a responsibility not to contribute to one's moral delinquency.

We must not be a stumbling block; as the Bible taught us:

✠ “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way... It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (Romans 14:13, 21)

✠ “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Corinthians 8:13)

- ✠ Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31-32)

Otherwise we fall into grave condemnation

- ✠ “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes” (Matthew 18:6-7)

C. “How Can Anything Wrong Go On. It 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...
 - a. What about afterwards...on the way home?
 - b. When there is no one to restrain expressing the desires that were aroused during the dance?

D. “Dancing Is Good Exercise...”

1. There are many alternative forms of exercise that do not excite the lusts of the flesh in yourself or others.
2. Are you willing to become a stumbling block to others, just so you can get some exercise? Isn't that rather selfish?

E. “Dancing Is Mentioned In The Bible...”

1. There are four categories of dancing mentioned in the Bible. From ancient studies, these dances involved crossing of hands over chest with simple moves; as shown in many religious dances in Africa and the Far East. The four categories include:
 - a. Religious dances of the Old Testament
 - ✠ “Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea” (Exodus 15:20-21)
 - ✠ “Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod” (2 Samuel 6:14)
 - b. Expressions of great rejoicing:
 - ✠ “Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments” (1 Samuel 18:6)
 - c. The play of children
 - ✠ “They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance” (Job 21:11)

† “They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not weep” (Luke 7:32)

d. Passionate dances, like that of Salome, before King Herod

† “But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod” (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 here.

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 (1977).

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 (1979).

3. The only thing close to the modern dance today that is mentioned in the Bible is the dance of Herodias' daughter, Salome (and look what happened!).

Conclusion

1. Shall we dance? There are two things we can be sure of...

a. It is wrong to lust in our hearts after others:

† “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28)

b. It is wrong to conduct ourselves in any way as to excite the lusts in others; that is lasciviousness, which is condemned as a work of the flesh:

† “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21)

2. That popular dancing is condemned can only be denied...

a. By those ignorant of the Scriptures.

b. By those hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

3. Again, let us read what others have said:

“Because of its physical appeal, dance lends itself to erotic purposes and has been practiced to these ends by both sexes.” - Encyclopedia Britannica, “The Art of Dance”.

Let us also remember the words of St. Paul:

✠ “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:12-14)

Finally;

✠ “***He who has ears to hear, let him hear***” (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8, 4:35; Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6, 13, 22; 9:10; 19; 13:9)