

Should a Christian Dance?

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Is social dancing a legitimate form of entertainment for Christians? Should Christians attend dances? What about senior proms, ball room dancing and other forms of dance? Is dancing an appropriate expression of worship? These are some of the questions related to dance which I've been asked throughout the years. Questions like this which revolve around dance must be examined in light of the Biblical references that mention dancing and other Biblical commands and principles that apply to the matter of dancing.

Not too many years ago every Christian heard from preachers that this was a vice that should be avoided. However, over the years leniency and the false claims of liberty from what is termed as "archaic taboos" have begun to promote the acceptance of social dancing among Christians. Furthermore, Biblical evidence is now set forth that allegedly supports dancing within the church. What does the Bible really say about dancing? Let's find out in this study. God has not left us in the dark regarding this issue.

God has given some important instruction on dancing.

This instruction is revealed in two Biblical facts.

I. Social dancing is presented in Scripture as an expression of carnality and vice (an immoral or evil habit).

To find what the Bible says about dancing, one must look at the context each time the word is used. One thing is certain when studying all the Biblical texts on dancing; in the nearly two dozen texts that mention the word *dance*, *danced*, or *dancing*, not one of them approves of social dancing between male and a female. This is because of the nature and movement of the female body which is designed to stimulate man through visual sight. To be willingly naive about the matter of dance will not change the facts of the birds and the bees! A woman's body is designed to stimulate men and certain movements of the woman's body set the tone or create the atmosphere for lust and moral failure to occur.

Let's break down this point.

A. Moral Failure and Dancing

When studying the Bible we can quickly discover several passages that portray dancing as a worldly, lustful, and sexual vice that was practiced to excite members of the opposite sex. One such account is found in Exodus chapter 32.

1. Fashioning of gods (Exodus 32:1-4)

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

2. Failure of the people (Exodus 32:15-19, 25a)

Exodus 32:15-19 goes on to say:

“And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.”

Exodus 32:25a concludes this point:

“And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:).” There was a real moral failure that was associated with this dancing party. No person in their right mind could construe this scene in any other way. The Bible is very clear on this matter. Dancing can cause moral failure.

3. Following is commanded (Exodus 32:25b)

Exodus 32:25b concludes with these words:

“Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me.”

It's impossible to be on the Lord's side and the side of social dancing at the same time. The two oppose one another. Here we discover that nakedness and sexual orgy were the outcome of this particular episode of social dancing. Although not all social dancing leads to these extreme results the spirit and purpose behind social dancing leans in this direction (lust and moral failure). Social dancing by its very design is sensual for two bodies clinging together can very easily become aroused to sexual lust. Remember that a tree normally falls in the direction its leaning! In this Biblical account, social dancing is associated with idolatry (“he saw the calf, and the dancing”) and sexual flaunting (“the people were naked”).

The rebellion of the people against God was evidenced in their dancing which in this case was provocative and sexual in nature. The Bible clearly reveals that the people danced in a manner that was sexually stimulating. This is because the people were eventually found “naked” (vs. 25). Apparently it got to the point that they were dancing without wearing any clothing. The nature of this type of immoral dance is designed to accentuate human body parts, portray sexual movements and acts, and therefore the people's nakedness was the ultimate expression and goal of their stimulating dance. We see from this passage how dancing between two members of the opposite sex can stimulate sexual vice (immoral behavior) and cause moral failure.

The nature of dance or the movement of the human body between two members of the opposite sex sets up people for lust, fornication, or adultery. You might conclude that a woman can dance in a “nonsexual” manner but this is really not a legitimate argument. This is because whenever a woman is close to a man and is moving her body with him,

stimulation is in front of him, and therefore it becomes only a matter of percentages or “how much stimulation” she expresses by her movements. A woman moving with a man is a playground for lust and sexual stimulus. Let’s stop trying to kid ourselves. You can’t get around it; social dancing creates stimulation for lust, sex, and leads to moral failure.

Mark 6:22-29 is another example of provocative dancing.

1. Sexual allurement – 22a

“And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him...”

In this account of Scripture we discover that this dance aroused sexual enticement. This is because sex is a primary component of dancing. It is designed to allure men into lust. The movements of a woman in front of a man are a breeding ground for lust to occur.

2. Distorted judgment – 22b-23

“...the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.”

Sexual pleasure leads a man to do things which he might not normally do. This has been proven over and over again. Many families and church members are totally dismayed when men leave their families behind for the fulfillment of lustful pleasure through adultery or when younger men or women become caught in the web of fornication through improper relationships with the opposite sex.

3. Scheming plans – 24-25

“And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.”

The devil was getting his way as a result of this dance but not God. This principle can always be applied when we are involved in social dancing.

4. Remorseful results - 26

“And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger (platter), and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.”

Sexual enticement will often take a person further than they want to go and keep them longer than they want to stay. All of this took place because Herodias sent her daughter to dance before the men and the Scripture says that her dancing "pleased Herod and them that sat with him." In other words, the men lusted after this woman as she danced and their carnal nature was entertained. The same result can be seen with social dancing (a woman dancing with another man). The very nature of dance is designed to please men from a sexual standpoint. Some things never change.

Can any Christian with a true heart condone social dancing in light of such statements as this? We know from this Bible text that the dancing of Herodias' daughter before Herod and his drunken companions was so compelling or sensuous that the king lost all good judgment and granted the request for the execution of John the Baptist. This was an order he did not want to give but he was mesmerized by this woman's sensual dance and was willing to give her anything that would please her. We see by this Biblical account how dancing can lead to bad choices that have adverse and negative effects in our personal lives.

Oliver B. Green has stated of this episode:

"In that day it was disgraceful both to dance and for a virgin to come into a banquet hall before men who had freely drunk"

Albert Barnes explained why this is so:

"This was a violation of all the rules of modesty and propriety. One great principle of all eastern nations is to keep their females from public view. For this purpose they are confined in a particular part of the house called the harem. If they appear in public it is always with a veil, so closely drawn that

their faces cannot be seen. No modest woman would have appeared in this manner before the court"

Dancing before men was certainly a pagan practice and in another scene we have already discover the disaster of following this pagan practice of social dancing among the sexes (Exodus 32:19).

Social dancing today has not changed even if people don't want to admit it. It is utterly disgraceful for Christians to partake in something that caters to the sinful depravity of men. It is immodest and morally degrading for Christian girls and guys to arouse sensual pleasure by moving their bodies before the eyes of others, whether modestly dressed or not modestly dressed. The body movements of modern dancing are sexually suggestive. There is no argument against this. This fact is proven by the results.

God has instructed the Christian in 2 Timothy 2:22:

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

We should make it our habit to flee sexual sins. Joseph did (Gen. 39:10, 12), but David did not (2 Sam. 11:2-4). If we hang around to be aroused then sooner or later we will fan the flame of sexual sin and be burned.

Christians should remember this Bible passage in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Sexual sin causes a Christian to sin against his body in a specific way, not merely by sinning outwardly with his body as so many suggested in that day and today. The sinning against his body refers to the way a sexual act offends the spiritual relationship that a Christian has with Christ. When a believer commits sexual sin, he or she is dragging their union with Christ (1 Cor. 6:13, 19) into the illicit relationship. Therefore, this sin causes a person to sin against his body in a unique way. He is taking the temple of God and uniting it with the temple of a harlot in an illegal relationship. Also, sexual sin causes a person to sin against their body in a unique way like no other

sin since it is so intimate and entangling, corrupting on the deepest human level.

A preacher gave this story. Some years ago a sixteen-year-old girl came to my office in complete despair. She had committed so many sex sins that she felt utterly worthless. She had not looked in a mirror for months, because she could not stand to look at herself; and to me she looked nearer 40 than 16. She was on the verge of suicide, not wanting to live another day. In short, there is NO Biblical support for social dancing whether it is barn dancing (square dancing), waltzing, slow dancing, or dancing with rock music. The attachment to the opposite sex is too alluring and should be avoided.

1 Corinthians 7:1 gives this sound advice:

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”

By "touch" Paul is NOT necessarily saying a man and woman cannot hold hands. He is stating that men and woman should not touch each other in sexual ways. This is a euphemism for physical intimacy and how the wrong type of contact with another woman can lead to moral collapse.

Porter Bailes said:

“For two normal people to place their bodies in the close personal contact that the modern dance demands and not have impure thoughts and unholy emotions stirred, would be very un-natural. In truth, it is against all known laws of human nature.”

The natural tendency and result of the dance make it dangerous to our purity. The dance is not our friend but enemy. Jesus Christ has called us to surrender our lives and bodies unreservedly to Him. We are to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). One cannot present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice when they are dancing with an illegitimate partner in the dance hall and creating lust within their hearts. We are summoned by Christ to “deny” ourselves of fleshly sins that seek to overcome our lives (Luke 9:23) and as a follower of Christ we should carry our cross by sacrificing our lives for Him (“take up his cross daily”). Social dancing does not contribute to surrendering our bodies to the Lord and using them for His purpose and glory.

B. The Christian Testimony and Dancing

When dancing we set a bad example for other Christians including those in our family.

1 Timothy 4:12 declares:

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

Dancing sets a bad example by promoting a social vice that has been historically and Biblically regarded as evil and which is responsible for moral failure of many people. This brings up some questions. What about dancing at weddings where people are celebrating a new marriage? What about attending senior proms? What about mom and dad dancing together on the dance floor to celebrate a child's graduation or wedding? Many Christians believe they can at least dance during these special times and not violate Scripture. But we should ask ourselves some questions regarding social dancing even on special occasions.

- Do I want to set an example that social dancing is a legitimate form of entertainment?
- If we choose to dance are we not sending the message that we condone and accept dancing as a form of wholesome and legitimate entertainment?
- Do we want to put our stamp of approval on dancing?
- How can a Christians be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-15) while dancing and creating the atmosphere for lust to occur in their own heart of the heart of another person?

1 Thessalonians 5:22 reminds us that we are to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (avoid every form of evil). As parents, we should set the example of refusing to participate with dancing because of the nature of the dance. Fathers, here are some tough questions for you to answer today.

- Why would you want to dance or link up with unbelievers and promote that thing which Satan has used in public to destroy marriages and create lust in the hearts of our youth?
- What possible good can come out of dancing?

- What is little Susie going to think when she sees you dancing and wants to then dance with a nice young fellow as she grows into a young lady?
- Are you going to allow her to swing herself in front of a man and create lust in his heart?
- Are you ready to pay the price for what dancing can lead to?
- Are you willing to open up your son or daughter to something that the devil has used in society to promote abominable sex acts and lust in the hearts of our generation?

We always pay a price when we engage in those activities that are “filthy” or which are offensive to morality and decency. As fathers, let us wake up to God’s holiness and see the sins of a society that is desperately wicked. Let us see the spirit of our world or age (1 Cor. 2:12) which is constantly seeking to devour our own spiritual lives and the lives of our children.

- What message am I sending to my children, my family, and my Lord when I choose to dance with a member of the opposite sex?

Since the Bible paints social dancing as a provocative and lustful practice between two members of the opposite sex (and today the same sexes), the Christian who wants to promote purity (1 Tim. 5:22) should refuse to publically dance, not only to protect one’s own purity, but also to keep others from losing their purity (Rom. 14:13).

Social dancing is NOT an old archaic taboo of bygone years; it is still a vice or immoral or evil habit that leads to sexual stimulus, lust, and moral failure. Why would a Christian want to dance unless they want to fit in with society or enjoy the carnal delights of dancing? The Bible condemns cultural conformity (Rom. 12:2) and carnality in all of its forms (1 Cor. 3:3 - “are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”).

C. Different Types of Dancing

I was in a bookstore year’s back and began to talk to a man on the subject of dancing. I’m not sure how the subject came up. He immediately asked me if all forms of dancing were wrong. His one question was this: “What about ballroom dancing?”

In 1915 one of the greatest evangelists of all time, Billy Sunday, preached a message against ballroom dancing. The form of dancing that took place in 1915 would be considered innocent compared to the forms of dancing today. Yet a mighty man of God filled with the Spirit of God preached against it because of the physical contact between the two sexes and lust that it generates in the heart.

This poses some questions. If dancing was wrong in 1915 can it be right in the 21st century? Some will argue that NOT all dancing is the same. For instance, they will tell you that ballroom dancing is elegant and not dirty and square dancing is designed to be fun and promote happiness in one's life. This type of argument breaks down because whenever two bodies of the opposite sex are moving together it becomes a starting point for sexual stimulus and lust to occur.

Even secular sources acknowledge this. A few secular and nonbiased quotes might be an eye-opener to many of us.

- "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).
- The old textbook of social dancing by Agnes Lucille Marsh of Columbia University says: "The social dance can then be designated as love-dancing. It is the expression of a sex philosophy of a given period."
- "...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).

- "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).
- "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 they are far more erotic than a clinch because you aren't too twist 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).
- Professor W. C. Wilkinson of the University of Chicago analyzed the modern dance as: "...a system of means, contrived with more than human ingenuity, to excite the instinct of sex into action."
- 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."

The Bible, common sense, and even the testimony of unsaved people in the world confirm that social 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?

Romans 13:14

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Social dancing sets a person up for greater temptation and can lead to a moral fall. This is why we should avoid it altogether. Let's stop kidding ourselves about the matter of social dancing. It's designed to be sexual. Since this is an established fact by both Scripture and secular sources, then why dance? Why place yourself in a vulnerable position which may

lead to lust and spiritual defeat? Instead of attending dances and feeding the old nature we should be feeding the new nature by staying committed to doing only those things that are commendable in God's sight and attending those places that will not pose a threat to our spiritual lives. Let's face it, social dancing is associated with moral laxity. Sexual looseness is part of the dance scene and this is why Christians should not associate or participate with it in any way.

If social dancing is okay then:

- Why is the dance floor only half lighted many times?
- Why is there jungle music that excites the flesh?
- Why do many parents insist on chaperons?
- Why do women dance to show off their body parts?
- Why can't you go home and thank God for all that transpired at the dance?
- Why is witnessing for Christ out of place at the dance hall?

Colossians 3:17 says:

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Can you really socially dance with another member of the opposite sex and represent the holy name of Jesus Christ? Can you give God the glory for dancing with another person and setting yourself up for sexual arousal?

H. A. Ironside once wrote:

"I remember the well-known evangelist Gipsy Smith dancing across the platform one night, to the amazement of those who had gathered to hear him preach. Then he explained, 'My friends, I just wanted to show you that I can perform as gracefully as I ever did; but since the day I was converted, no one has invited me to attend a dance or a drinking party!' Why hadn't they?" continued Ironside. "Because they knew that from the day he was saved, Gipsy Smith had been out-and-out for God!"

If you want to be sold out for God in your Christian life then you must separate from the dance and stop playing with this amusement of the world system that Satan has promoted for his agenda of sex, lust and lewdness. Dancing is not a recreational activity. It is wreck-reational activity. It wrecks the Christian life. It is moral looseness. Christians should not dance

because of its very makeup or design. The nature of social dancing is lewdness and looseness. A man cannot hold a girl close to him or watch a girl swing in front of him all night without remaining pure in his thinking. The dance is designed to generate sexual stimulation between the two dancers.

D. Bible Separation – Not Bible Dancing

As a Christians, we should never want to promote that which is sinful, dirty, and impure. Social dancing is dirty dancing.

Ephesians 5:11 clearly says:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.”

Dancing is an unfruitful work of darkness because of what it promotes and stands for in our society. This *principle* of Bible separation also applies to separating ourselves from the “unclean thing” of a pagan or unbelieving society and culture (2 Cor. 6:14). We are not to have fellowship with unbelievers in their worldly amusements that have traditionally promoted immoral, lustful, rebellious and addictive practices which the Bible condemns such as dancing, smoking, gambling, long hair on men, and drinking. Some Christians call these practices old archaic taboos that no longer apply to the “free Christianity” spirit of our society in which we live but the Bible calls them “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11).

Ephesians 5:3

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”

There are certain things that have been promoted and used by Satan, which simply cannot be condoned in the Christian life, or identified with in any form or measure. As a Christian we must accept this. Certain things are intrinsically evil. They are nothing more than “filthiness” as Ephesians 5:4 says. They are inappropriate and offensive to decent conduct within the Christian life.

There are filthy places and activities promoted by the devil that we must learn to separate from on the basis and principles of light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, the temple of God and the temple of

Satan and the unequal yoke with those who are participating in these devilish designs.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

Dancing violates the basic command of Bible separation which calls for separation between light from darkness, righteousness from unrighteousness, God's temple from the devil's idols of sex and lust. These are incompatible realms of existence that cannot be combined together with God's approval. They cannot coexist together without doing a great injustice to God's righteousness and holiness. Social dancing breaks down the barrier of Bible separation between the Christian and the devil's works.

1 Peter 4:3 reveals this truth about separation:

“For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.”

Peter views these vices as something that were part of the believer's experience in the past! The word “revellings” speaks of wild parties where dancing, sex, and alcohol were used. Have you ever wondered why most adult dances take place in bars and in other places where alcohol is served? Most people want to have some drinks to make them feel more comfortable dancing with a stranger. You see, one effect of alcohol is to lower a person's morality. People will do things under the influence of alcohol that they would never do when they are sober. That is why there are so many exhortations in the Scriptures for Christians to remain sober (Prov. 23:31; Eph. 5:18). It is hard enough to fight off Satan's temptations, but to lower our resistance with chemicals just makes Satan's job easier.

The Bible says that worldliness and lust, which includes drinking alcohol and dancing, should be a thing of our past, unsaved life, when we were not

a Christian. To gather ourselves in places that are nothing more than a devil's den of iniquity in the midst of a perverted unbelieving society, whose overall emphasis has been to strategically promote the traditionally worldly spirit of dancing, rock music, and other worldly vice causes a Christians to lapse back into their unsaved lifestyle and ways and hinders their Christians testimony.

God commanded his people to not copy the ways of the unsaved heathen that surrounded them in regards to their worldliness and worship.

Deuteronomy 18:9 says

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.”

Jeremiah 10:2 also says:

“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.”

Let's consider the two different styles of social dancing. There are basically two styles - fast and slow. Fast dancing requires a fast beat and very lively music. To keep up with the beat the two dancing will take part in all kinds of jiving, pulsating, shaking, and twisting movements of the body since the couple are following the way the music "inspires" them. Slow dancing involves a slow beat and slow emotional music. Slow dancing involves a guy and a girl with bodies close or pressed together, with a girl's hands on the shoulders or neck of the guy and the guy's hands on the waist, back, or buttocks of the girl. The dance movement is simply slow stepping and swaying side to side with the music.

No matter what kind of dancing it might be, the attachment of two bodies together is ground for stimulating lust and moral failure. When comparing these aspects of social dancing with Scripture, it is safe to say that born again Christians corrupt themselves outwardly and inwardly when they partake of this form of entertainment.

2 Corinthians 7:1 gives this command:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

When you dance “fleshly lusts” are fed and generated “that war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11), spiritual sensitivity becomes calloused or lost, and personal holiness (1 Peter 1:16) is compromised. Also, an effective testimony is thrown away!

Think of this; if it were possible to separate guys from girls and take away rock music, nobody would dance. Why? It’s because there would be no reason to dance since social dancing, along with rock music, is designed to illicit sexual/physical responses. The Bible teaches that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this ... to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

One thing is certain; social dancing, dancing to rock music, or anything like the dancing we have today is NOT commendable to God. Therefore, to use a few Bible references about dancing to promote social dancing (dirty dancing) is to turn them into a pretext (taking them out of context and not properly applying them). And yet this is exactly what many Christians do today in order to condone and promote their dancing habits. They will use certain Bible texts that speak favorably of a certain type of dance in order to justify their dirty dancing. This is a travesty and makes a mockery out of God’s Word.

We now come to our second major question regarding dance.

II. Some dancing is presented in Scripture as an expression of joyful celebration.

Should Christians dance in church? Is dancing an appropriate expression of corporate worship for the 21st century church? If David danced before the Lord shouldn’t this be enough evidence to promote corporate dancing in church? Where did David dance? What was David’s dance like? Should we use Jewish social customs and incorporate them in our church worship? Is there any record of the early church dancing in church? These are some of the questions we will be dealing with in this section of our study.

1. David’s Dance

2 Samuel 6:12-14 is a famous verse that is used to support the modern dance in today’s church. “So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. And it

was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.”

2 Samuel 6:16 adds to the narrative

“And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.”

1 Chronicles 15:29 records the same episode (turn)

“And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.”

When used in a positive sense the word “dance” indicates joyful, exuberant celebration that takes place before God and also before leading figures of importance. Those who want to dance in the church hang their hat on these verses. However, these Biblical texts about David dancing before the Lord do NOT answer the question regarding dancing in the church since these texts have nothing to do with corporate worship and local church ministry.

To associate and apply David's leaping and skipping to the modern rock dance in the church is using God's Word for one's own end and purpose. It is huckstering God's Word or “handling the word of God deceitfully” (see 2 Cor. 4:2).

The Hebrew word translated “dance” (karar) in both verses in 2 Samuel means literally “to whirl” or “rotate” but we read that David was also “leaping” with joy. In 1 Chronicles 15:29 the word used for dancing (raqad) means “to jump, leap, skip or spring about wildly for joy” and the word “playing” (sachaq) means “to laugh or make merry” and refers to celebration. David was obviously gyrating or twirling about with overflowing joy as the ark was being brought into Jerusalem after it had been stolen by the Philistines. Of course, many “would-be” worshippers of today will use the example of David as an example to condone what is called “sacred dance,” “praise dance,” or “interpretive dance” in the church today.

This is very misleading and mindboggling for several reasons. First, although the word “dance” (2 Samuel) is assigned to David's experience, this is NOT the normal Hebrew word that is translated for “dance”

(machowl). Therefore, David's activity was not actual dancing but "twirling about and leaping or skipping with joy." His actions were not dancing per se but simply a leaping and twirling about which was an outward expression of his joy. David did not do a modern dance as we know it today. David's "dance" was a skipping and turning of happiness and was totally different than what we call "dance" today. Instead of dancing to music he simply jumped for joy, skipped with gladness, and may have said a hearty "Amen" although the text does not say this!

Second, we discover in this account that David jumped while enjoying the Lord's blessings upon his life without the involvement of any other individual. There is no record of David celebrating with other people in what we know today as the modern dance. There is absolutely no proof that David actually danced in a manner that fits our 21st century dancing.

Third, the Scripture informs us that David danced on the way to the Tabernacle as he moved the ark (2 Samuel 6:12-14). However, the Bible does NOT say that David danced in a formal way at the Tabernacle and used his dance as part of a corporate worship experience.

Fourth, it should also be noted that none of the later kings, priests, or prophets instituted any kind of formal dance associated with Jewish worship. David did not do this and neither did any of his descendants. Neither David nor his priests took David's dancing incident as a template for how worship was to be conducted in the Tabernacle, nor was it found in Solomon's Temple, the Second Temple, nor was it in the synagogues. The Jews didn't take what happened to David as a formal expression of corporate worship.

Brian Edwards was correct when he said:

"...neither can we allow every hop, skip and jump of holy joy to be called dance...it is equally false to suggest that David leaping with joy demonstrated an artistic form of religious dance. The only Hebrew word that refers clearly to dance (maol) is not used of David's joy before the ark or of any activity in worship."

Those who want to promote dance in the church today will use David's dancing as a proof text for their modernized dance that is accompanied by the sound of a perverted rock culture. Of course, this is total misconception of David's dance or joyful whirling, leaping, and skipping.

Pastor Donald Kilmer, missionary to the Zulu tribes in Africa, was commenting in a group discussion while on the internet. The discussion revolved around dancing in the church. Apparently this is something he faces overseas as well.

Pastor Kilmer comments as follows:

“In the Bible when Believers danced it was always in the community at the time God did something special for them. When churches say they dance before the Lord in a worship service, they are not following the teaching of the Bible. If God does a special work or miracle in your life leap for joy, but when you go to church to thank God, worship in a decent and orderly way. Don't draw attention to yourself. Rather help people think about God. God is looking for people who will worship Him in a true way.”

Elsewhere Pastor Kilmer states:

“Another comment on the idea of 'Praise Dancers'. It appears some people assume that having praise dancers in church is acceptable. Where do you find praise dancers in the Bible? In this discussion, the case of David was mentioned as well as the case of Miriam and the ladies of Israel. Neither of these is even closely related to what so-called praise dancers are doing in churches today. First of all, consider how often David or Miriam danced. There is only one record of doing this in their whole lifetime.

“Furthermore, where did they dance? Often people assume it was in a worship service of some kind, but in neither case was it so. In the Bible when we find dancing in a worship service of some kind it was always false worship (e.g. Exodus 32 when the people of Israel tried to worship Jehovah before the golden calf & the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel in I Kings 18).

“Furthermore consider how they danced. Of course, I haven't been to the churches of those who commented in this discussion (referring to his online discussion), but I have been to other places where they danced in church and it was not following the style indicated in the Bible.”

Dance defines the direction the church has moved with the acceptance of rock music in many local churches today. Rock music is encouraged and defended and therefore dance, which goes along with rock music, is also practiced. A cultural and spiritual decline has taken place in many churches with the introduction of the modern dance. No, modern-day Christians are

not dancing (leaping and skipping) like David but dancing to the beat and sound of Lucifer's drums and the rock sound of a perverted culture.

2. Rock Music and Dancing

Christians who listen to CCM (Christian Rock Music) should not be surprised when their bodies feel the urge to get involved with their music through dancing. CCM is sensual and appeals to the flesh; therefore when the flesh responds it wants to dance. Many times dancing is the result of listening to sensual music. Since Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) is sensual (appeals to the flesh), it's no secret that the flesh wants to respond to this type of music with dance.

And this is exactly what is taking place in the modern church. Since the church has accepted, encouraged and defended CCM it's no surprise that the churches are now dancing. But if the music used for the so-called "sacred dance" of today was replaced with true godly and Biblical music, the church would stop dancing and the question about dance would no longer be an issue.

This is because fleshly music produces dancing and without fleshly music there would be virtually no dance. The audience moves with the music. In most churches today music is the essential ingredient that makes people move. A carnal beat triggers a sensual response or movement in a person and takes the focus off of Christ ("looking unto Jesus" - Heb. 12:2). And if it is a sensual response how can God be part of it (see Gal. 5:19-21)? Paul's listing in these verses is not intended to be exhaustive but representative of the type of fleshly sins which control the life of an individual. Rock music and dancing can be placed in the "such like" (Gal. 5:21) category which are sins that are comparative in nature to the one's mentioned that control Christians and create lust in their hearts.

Rock Music and dancing create a worldly and carnal atmosphere even when it's done in church, under the disguise of Christian words, and in the name of Jesus! As we've already seen, the Bible records how the people adopted the pagan customs of the heathen around them and how they danced to excite the flesh in one another. Exodus 32:19 records, "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." The dancing actions

of Herodias' daughter caused lust to swell up in the heart of Herod. Matthew 14:6, "But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod."

The dancing of this woman with the gestures of her limbs and movements of her body was obviously done to sexually arouse the King and others. This is because the steps of most dancing are the gestures of sinful and immoral acts. Of course, not all dancing is as sexually stimulating as others but in general, the movements of women dancing in front of men become an easy way to arouse lust in the hearts of men. This is why dancing should never be promoted within the confines of the local church assembly.

A God-fearing woman should realize this and never dance in church for this reason. As a general rule, the movements of dancing women are not edifying to men but can become a stumbling block to men during a church service and the Bible condemns this type of activity. Romans 14:13 declares "that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way." Women dancing in front of men give the flesh an opportunity to work in a man's life (Rom. 14:13). We also know that social dancing is a breeding ground for lust to occur and the potential for lust is even greater. This is why the Christian should not hang out at the dance halls and beer holes of a worldly society that promote dancing.

There is nothing good that comes out of the dance so why get involved with the dance? If the modern dance does not burn you it will blacken you! It will soil your Christian testimony and life (James 1:27). Like the birthday party for Herod, so are the modern dance holes of society. They are filled with wine, women and song (the worldly trio). The concoction and mixture of dance, booze and lust go together.

Since this is true, why would a Christian want to go to the dance and listen to ungodly music, be exposed to lust and cater to a worldly atmosphere with unbelievers and endorse what the dance stands for and promotes – sex, lust, and marital infidelity. Even worse, why would any Christian attempt to Christianize something like this (dance) and bring it into the hallowed halls of the church? This is like trying to put perfume on a skunk or giving a pig a bath. There is nothing good in the modern dance and therefore churches should not promote any form or style of it in their services.

As a Christian and local church do you really want to promote and endorse what the dance represents? Do you want to fellowship and take part in these types of dark expressions of a society that is spiritually depraved (Eph. 5:7, 11) and promote dance in the church under the disguise of sacred dance? The Bible is very clear that we should “come out from among them and be ye separate” from their evil ways and “touch not the unclean thing” which would include their lustful dancing habits which feed the flesh (2 Cor. 6:17).

“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness” (2 Cor. 6:14)? Can a Christian who represents righteousness and light really participate with the darkness of the dance and what the dance represents? Can a Christian who wants to live the pure Christian life really justify what goes on in the dance hall and cater to the atmosphere of the dance room? Even worse, how can we bring dance into the church and label it interpretive dance or identify it as dancing in the spirit?

Once again, the basic commands and principles of Bible separation should keep a committed Christian away from dancing at the world’s drinking parties, country clubs, and other drinking hell-holes. Such principles as the unequal yoke (2 Cor. 6:14), incompatible realms and incongruous relationships (2 Cor. 14-16), association, partnership, sharing endorsement, sanction, cooperation (1 Cor. 10:20; 2 John 10-11; Eph. 5:7; 11; 1 Tim. 5:22), appearance (1 Thess. 5:22), filthiness (Eph. 5:4), purity (1 Tim. 5:22 – “keep thyself pure”) compromise (Psalm 1:1) and worldliness (Rom. 12:2) to name just a few. Of course, these commands should also keep the Christian from dancing in church! This is because it’s bringing the world into the church.

The dance is dirty and is a very distinct and definite form of worldliness. And as we’ve emphasized in this point, the rock music which accompanies the dance is a tool of the devil to arouse the base affections and desires of people. Rock music and dance work together to promote fleshly actions. This is why watching popular shows on TV which promote social dancing can also inspire the base nature to rise up in people.

Psalm 101:3 gives this sage advice:

“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.”

One of the problems with many dances is that they are clearly designed to excite lust both in the participants and even in the viewers. Some dances are extremely provocative and feature moves that imitate sexual actions. If a dance is wrong to participate with it on the ground of what it portrays and promotes in a participant, it would also be wrong to view it because of its very provocative nature.

Let's bring this up-to-date. If you are watching "Dancing with the Stars" then you had better clean up your Christian life. These types of TV shows are worldly, carnal, seductive, impure, and unchristian in every way. If you think that social dancing is a fun and clean exercise or past time then you need to renew your mind with God's Word (Rom. 12:2).

3. Dancing and the Arts

Many will ask, "Surely you are not against using the arts for God's glory and reaching the lost?" However, those who embrace the Bible to condone dancing in church are being naive about the whole matter of the modern dance which is often accompanied with a rock beat. They also misconstrue certain Bible verses in order to try and promote their form of modern dance and assert that they can *remake* what is evil for God's glory.

Some Christians will argue that rock music and dance is only considered evil because of the way the culture produces, performs and uses it. Since this is considered to be a fact God has now called us to redeem all forms of art for His use and glory. However, as stated above, this is a gross violation of the command of Bible separation which says we are to "separate" from those things in the culture which Satan has strategically promoted to use for his evil purposes such as rock music and social dancing (2 Cor. 6:14-17; Rom. 12:2). Rock music and social dancing is 100% sensual and is intrinsically designed to be this way. Therefore, we should not imitate it in our worship and church services in any way or form, to do so makes a mockery of God's sacred holiness.

Some Christians also feel that if you paste the name of "Jesus" on some type of cultural expression or add some Bible words to a social art form that it suddenly and magically makes everything okay. Not so!

Job 14:4 declares an enduring Bible principle:
“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.”

In short, you can't bring something clean out of that which is unclean. This is true regarding physical law but it's also true as a spiritual law. God has always commanded us to maintain a distinction between the clean and the unclean (Lev. 10:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-17). This has been true in both Old and New Testaments.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was asked about redeeming the theater in his day. This was his reply. “The suggestion is about as sensible as if we were bidden to pour a bottle of lavender water into the great sewer to improve its aroma. If the Church is to imitate the world in order to raise its tone, things have strangely altered since the day when Our Lord said, “Come ye out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing” (Quoted from *The Sword & Trowel*, Sept. 1879).

4. Celebration and Dance

Now let's look at several other references that speak of dance in the context of celebrating something that has occurred in connection with one's life. There are various verses that speak of this type of celebratory dance.

1 Samuel 30:16

“And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.”

This text is referring to the Amalekites victory over the Philistia and Judah, including Ziklag. They were celebrating. The word for “dancing” (chagag) means “to move in a circle, to march in a sacred procession, to observe a festival.” Another similar word is used twice in Judges.

Judges 21:21 also states:

“And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.”

Judges 21:23

“And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.”

This is a rather strange episode that occurred in Israel’s history. Men, you don’t want to get your wife in this way! Here is what happened. The Israelites conceived a plan, based on a loophole in their oath, which they suggested to the Benjamites. The oath said the Israelites could not “give” (vv. 1, 7, 18) their daughters to the Benjamites but it said nothing about their daughters being “taken.” So the men did steal themselves wives from their daughters. The ladies were participating in a local harvest feast where they would dance in the fields near the vineyards to celebrate the harvest that was given to them. Notice again that it was the ladies dancing alone but the men planted and hid themselves in the fields so they might catch a wife.

Matthew Poole remarks:

“The vineyards were near to their dancing-place. Catch ye every man his wife; take them away by force or violence; which they might the better do, because mixed dances were not used by the people of God in their solemnities, but the women danced by themselves, and therefore were more liable to this rape.”

The word “dance” in verse 21 means “to twist or whirl” in a circular or spiral manner and the word “dances” (mechowlah) focuses on the actual dance that the women were performing as they moved about. The word “danced” (chuwI) in verse 23 again refers to a twisting or circular pattern.

Again, we discover from these references that dance was not associated with any religious activities but with certain cultural activities. Furthermore, we can determine that there is no support that the children of Israel used dance as an expression of Hebrew worship.

Exodus 15:20 gives us another verse on dance:

“And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.”

The word “dances” (machowlah) is the same Hebrew word found in Judges 21:23 and is used several times in the Old Testament. Again, it refers to an

actual type of dance which in this case was conducted in joyful celebration over the Egyptian victory.

Once again, we notice that only the women danced together while celebrating. The men were not socially dancing with them in any fashion. There was no such thing as coed dancing! This dance was shared only shared with other women. This is significant. Nowhere in the Bible do we find men and women dancing together even in the Jewish, cultural expression of dancing.

Judges 11:34

“And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances (machowlah): and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.”

In this verse Jephthah’s daughter celebrated victory.

1 Samuel 18:6

“And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing (machowlah), to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.”

Here we find that the women of Israel were dancing at the return of David and Saul after the death of Goliath. Once again, it was the women dancing together. There were no men present in this dance.

Jeremiah 31:4

“Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances (machowl) of them that make merry.”

Jeremiah 31:13 adds:

“Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance (machowl), both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.”

In these verses Israel is promised a future restoration that would include a joyful dance. Again, both the young and older men (women excluded) would dance together in joyful celebration.

Lamentations 5:15

“The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance (machowl) is turned into mourning.”

Here is a reference that speaks of joy being turned into mourning which would exclude the joyful act of dancing.

Ecclesiastes 3:4

“A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

Yes, according to an ancient, Jewish, cultural expression, there is a time to express joy through dancing, but it's not in church!

In all of these verses we see that dancing was a cultural Jewish expression that took place in connection with different types of celebrations. However, one must understand that all of these cultural, celebratory dances were not “social dancing” between two members of the opposite sex and none of them were done in the context of Hebrew corporate worship. Furthermore, God has NOT COMMANDED us to APPLY cultural practices, such as Jewish dancing, betrothal, veiling (1 Cor. 11) or other customs to our local churches today. Truth and what a church practices should not be determined by some ancient cultural practice that is recorded in the Bible. The fact that some cultural practice is recorded or mentioned in the Bible does not make it acceptable and proper for Church life and ministry.

A social custom of the Jewish people that was practiced thousands of years ago certainly is not applicable to a church service today nor does any custom take precedence over apostolic instruction as revealed in the epistles which are directed to the church (2 Thess. 2:15).

Nathan Stone said this about dance:

“There is no command to dance anywhere in the Bible ... as such (it) is only mentioned occasionally in the Old Testament. It is never mentioned as part of worship in the New Testament. Many customs mentioned in the Bible obviously have only local and passing significance.”

5. Church Dancing

Many people ask, “You can’t possibly be against the Scriptural type of dancing that takes place in the church?” They bring up this question because they think they have some proof texts in the Bible that prove there should be dancing in the church. Probably the two best known verses on dance are in the Psalms (Psalm 149 and 150). They are consistently used to promote dancing in the 21st century church.

We have already dealt with David’s dance and discovered that David did not dance in the sanctuary where God’s people would meet for worship.

Pastor Kilmer correctly observes:

“Let’s look at the story of David in 2 Samuel 6:12-18. In all of David’s life he is found dancing only one time. Where was David when he was dancing? Notice that when he arrived at the tabernacle he offered sacrifices, but he didn’t dance there. He danced or leaped for joy in the community as he moved the ark of God. If you read Exodus 15 you will see that Miriam and the ladies of Israel danced after they were saved at the Red Sea. Verse 20 shows that they were not at the tabernacle, but in the community when God did a special work.”

The same was true regarding the verses stated above that deal with celebratory dancing and it’s once again true regarding these two verses in Psalm 149 and 150 regarding dance. This type of dancing (celebration dance) was not promoted in the united worship among the saints. These Bible texts never say that dancing was promoted in the sanctuary or meeting place of God’s people.

Psalm 149:3

“Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.”

Psalm 150:4

“Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.”

Again, these verses are normally quoted in order to promote and sanctify dancing in the church today. The fact that they appear in the Old Testament and are put in the context of Jewish culture should be the first indicator that they cannot be directly interpreted for church worship today. Applying a Hebrew cultural expression of dancing among the same members of the

sex to a modern church service of today, where women dance in front of men, is a total misapplication of this verse to contemporary Christianity. Furthermore, since dancing had nothing to do with corporate worship in the Old Testament it surely should have nothing to do with corporate worship in the New Testament.

The word used for “dance” (*machowl*) means exactly that – “to dance or dancing.” The claim is made by contemporary Christianity that the Bible clearly shows dancing should be part of the worship experience according to these texts. However, there is no proof that these verses which include “dance” were intended for corporate Hebrew worship and there is no evidence that dancing was actually used in the people’s time of sacred worship.

There is no direct reference to the sanctuary or house of the Lord when it speaks of people dancing. Psalms 149 and 150 do not teach there was a formal sacred dance in Hebrew corporate worship. This is significant.

Psalm 149:1

“Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.”

Psalm 150:1

“Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.”

God never said, “Dance in the congregation of the saints” or “Dance in his sanctuary” or “Dance in his courts with praise.” You won’t find it in the Bible. Not once. The Psalms mix together both *congregational* Hebrew worship and *cultural* worship in the same chapters but it is very important to make the proper distinctions between the two. The one (singing and praise) is said to occur in the meeting of the saints while the other (dancing and praise) is not.

Many expressions in the Psalms show how the devout-minded Hebrew of all ages worshipped in the courts of the Lord's house where he was accustomed to worship (Psalms 65:4; 84:2; 92:13; 96:8; 100:4; 116:19) but this place (God’s House) was never a scene of dancing. The verses where “dance” is directly mentioned NEVER point to the sanctuary and congregation of the saints – the sacred meeting place of God’s people.

Instead of using dance as a corporate expression of worship, the dance mentioned in the above verses (Ps. 149:3; 150:4) was referencing a customary joyful expression among the Hebrew people in various phases of their lives and on special occasions.

Brian Edwards correctly remarks:

“The two Psalms (149, 150) that are so frequently quoted do not obviously refer to dance in the service of worship but as an expression of holy joy in God. It may be inferred that this permits it in worship. But inference is not an authority; at best it is a suggestion.”

If dance were such a vital aid in worship, why would God have overlooked it, especially when He was so clear on every other detail of Old Testament worship such as singing, instrument playing, choir leaders, orchestra conductors, and teaching (1 Chron. 9:29; 15:16, 27; 28:14; 2 Sam. 6:5)?

Dance was the exception, not the rule, throughout the Old Testament and it never was included in corporate Jewish worship. Dancing was NEVER used as a formal part of Hebrew worship in the setting of the tabernacle or temple. We have also discovered that the dancing of the Old Testament was not like the modern, formal, well-planned, rehearsed dancing movements like today. They were often steps of spontaneous movement that were a reflection of joy. They certainly were not steps designed to follow the rhythmic patterns of rock music.

To state it succinctly, nowhere do we see specific instructions for dancers or dancing during corporate worship. It's interesting that whenever God's glory appeared in the Temple, the Bible records that the people “stood” (not danced – Ezek. 10:19).

The whole idea and concept of praise dancers and interpretive dancing in the church today lacks support from the Bible. The solemn worship occasions in God's House were never accompanied with dancing. In fact, the corporate, sensual type of dancing with suggestive movements (pelvic thrusts or other sensual movements) in response to the rock music, which is occurring in today's churches, bears no resemblance to Old Testament forms of cultural dancing which took place outside the church. This type of dancing that is taking place in the church today is unbiblical for three reasons. First, dancing did not occur in the corporate gatherings. Second, it was not done among members of the same sex. Third, the cultural dancing

of celebration was never accompanied with rock music which in itself generates a fleshly response in people.

Since modern dance within the church is associated with rock music, which in itself is sensual, a service where there is dance can very easily cause sensual responses in men. Women that dance in church, who move themselves around in front of men, or even jump up and down and twirl around as David did, are actually distracting men from true worship and might cause them to stumble, while they display their bodies before the entire church. This is a travesty or mockery of the holiness of God and purity should always be upheld in the local assembly (Ps. 89:7; Heb. 12:28).

Who should we think about when we worship? We should think about God! When women do performances at church like dancing they make people think about the performer and in the end they are not worshipping properly. Corporate dancing draws a congregation to the dancer and not to the Lord. How do we see the Lord when a person is dancing in front of us? How can I find the Lord's presence or reflect upon Him when someone is doing dance moves in front of me? Here is a good question to ask. Do we go to church to please ourselves or to please God? All true worship draws attention to God - not to people (Ps. 29:2; 96:8).

I don't want to be redundant, but before leaving this point, it is necessary to stress once again that there is no record that *social* dancing was part of Jewish culture and life. Social dancing between a woman and man are never condoned in the Bible. We have discovered that in all the references to joyful dance it was the women who were seen dancing together without men. This is significant. *There is no record of men dancing with women.* We have observed in the Bible verses dealing with dance that many times it was simply a natural expression of holy joy that overcame a person which caused them to "twirl around" "jump or leap" or "make a round" in their movements. But this joyful expression was always done outside of God's meetinghouse (tabernacle or temple) and it was never an activity between men and women (Ex. 15:20; 1 Sam. 18:6). This is an important point and is completely opposite of the practice that is occurring today in the church.

6. The New Testament and Dancing

In the New Testament we find little mentioned about dancing and there is certainly no mention of Christians dancing in their local church services. This should cause some red flags to be raised if one wants to condone the practice of dancing in the hallowed halls of the church. We read about children playing or dancing in the market place (Matt. 11:17, Luke 7:32), the seductive dance of Herodias' daughter (Matt. 14:6; Mark 6:22), and the celebration in dance over the return of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:25

“Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.”

The total absence of New Testament references regarding dancing in the local church setting should inform us to stop the dancing! The New Testament epistles, which are directed to the Church, give no support whatsoever to the notion of “sacred dance.” The early church fathers categorically denied dancing in the church because of the nature of this practice.

Ambrose said:

“For what modestly can there be where there is dancing and noise and clapping of hands? (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, Vol. X, Book III, Chapter VI, Verse 27).

“But she who is modest, she who is chaste, let her teach her daughter religion, not dancing.” (Ibid, Book III, Chapter VI, Verse 31).

There is simply no Biblical or historical evidence to indicate that dance had any part in the worship of the early church. Many today call the modern dance with the rock sound a “revival” or “renewal” when dancing is never once mentioned in connection with the early church services of worship (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14). There is not one place in the New Testament where dance is found in relationship to the local church. Not one!

Just because one reads about a specific cultural action or personal experience elsewhere in Scripture (like David's dance or the dancing in the prodigal son story) does not mean that God has ordained the same action, experience, or expression of worship for corporate church life today.

Adopting cultural expressions and customs for our church services is an unwise practice since the custom itself may not be an appropriate expression to use for corporate worship. We must ask ourselves what is normative for today and ordained for New Testament Christianity and assembly life.

Some have suggested that the silence of the New Testament about dancing in the church leaves us with the responsibility to prove that drama, dance and other forms of entertainment are *not* permissible for church life. But this is unwise to think this way. The complete failure to mention dancing as part of New Testament worship is significant. The argument of silence is an important argument. If God had intended dance to be part of church ministry and worship there would be some mention of it in the New Testament epistles. What we read about in connection with first century church life and worship is singing, praying, breaking of bread together, fellowship and doctrinal teaching and preaching (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:14-15; Eph. 4:11-12).

We never read about drama and dance (the arts) as having any part in church worship and ministry. Therefore, it is never sensible for a Christian to think that he can create some different form of worship that has never been used before in the hallowed halls of the church especially when it has been used for Satan's purposes. In addition, we must never assume that we can do something just because the Bible does not spell out "Thou shalt not dance in church." This is because there are other important principles to consider about certain actions related to church ministry and life.

The point is this; if you want to dance for joy like David did then do it in the presence of the Lord outside the church. But when you come into the church there needs to be order and reverence for God's House. All activity that seeks to draw attention to oneself through outward show, ostentatious display (see 1 Pet. 3:3), which can potentially create wrong impressions from the opposite sex (Matt. 14:6), must be forbidden on the basis of the principles of order and decency (1 Cor. 14:33, 40), reverence (Ps. 89:7; Heb. 12:28) and even God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Yes, dancing in church does draw attention to oneself. Paul is very clear when giving instructions about personal behavioral patterns that draw attention to oneself, which exhibit selfishness and outward show, and which create confusion in assembly life. The idea being promoted today that there are different

expressions of worship will never override the principle of order and reverence for God's house.

Dancing in the corporate worship of the church also distracts others and can embarrass others. The fundamental requirement of all worship is not to "let go and forget everyone around you" but to "edify" one another in the church (1 Cor. 14:3, 4, 12) and place no stumbling block before others.

Romans 14:13

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

People might tell you, "I worship in my own way" but this is not good enough! This self-styled display of worship in dancing falls short of edifying others and honoring God's holiness. God has designed holiness to be the integral part of all worship (Ps. 29:2; 96:9) and a woman dancing in front of men is not holiness! Church is not about the people but about God!

Once again, we know that historically dance was never described as being part of the tabernacle or temple worship. Dance (not social dancing) was to some extent part of Hebrew culture but it was NOT part of Hebrew worship. God never intended dance to become part of worship. It is worth repeating; if dance was to be part of the regular Jewish worship, then why did God overlook it when giving important details about Old Testament worship? God was very specific about the details of Hebrew worship.

In the New Testament the same story about dancing is given. The New Testament references to dance are recorded in the account of children playing (Matt. 11:17; Luke 7:32), the actions of Herodias' daughter (Matt. 14:6; Mark 6:22), and the celebration over the return of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25). None of these references have anything to do with worship in the temple or church. In both Old and New Testaments there is no mention of "sacred dance" or dance that was used in the worship of God's House.

There is no Biblical or historical evidence that dance had any part in the actual worship service of God's people within God's House – tabernacle, temple or church. If dance were essential to worship in God's House one would expect the Bible to give us clear guidelines for it, command us to use it, and then give us some illustrations where it is used in the Christian church. We do read about preaching, teaching singing, and praying in the

local church but we never read about dancing (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15). Dance was NEVER related to the sacred activity in Hebrew or New Testament worship. There is a total lack of Biblical evidence for sacred dance in the corporate meetings of God's people for worship.

Edwards once again remarks:

“The idea that dance [is]...essential to worship and evangelism is evidently false on two grounds. Firstly, if [it] were essential, we would expect the Bible to give us clear guidelines for [its] use, or at the very least it would command us to use [it] and give an illustration or two of [its] employment in the Christian church. To claim or imply, and exaggerated important for the arts is to fly in the face of Scripture. Nothing is essential that is not found in the Word of God, Secondly, the history of the church proves beyond question that the church can be alive and vigorously evangelistic without dance.”

7. Ignoring the Dangers of Dancing

Instead of promoting dance within the church, the church should preach against the dangers of the modern dance, as it did for many years, instead of becoming soft on sin. The type of social dancing that we have today should be considered as a vice or a moral evil. Yes, it's true dancing is not specifically mentioned in any of the New Testament lists of vices and sinful practices from which Christians were to refrain. However, as previously mentioned, this list was not meant to be exhaustive. In fact the list of vices mentioned in Galatians chapter 5:19-21 (the “works of the flesh” or sin nature) include such things as fornication, adultery, uncleanness, lasciviousness (unbridled lust). All of these sins would certainly be underlying sins connected with social dancing, at least in thought, if not in outright practice.

Paul ends with these words: “and such like.” In other words, there are many actions which copy or mimic the type of sins mentioned in this ugly list. Dancing would be one of those things that can be categorized “and such like.” However, it should be noted that in the list of the works of the flesh Paul does mention “revellings” or revelries (Gal. 5:21). Revelries (1 Pet. 4:3) are wild parties that usually include drinking and dancing. Times have not changed all that much.

The New Testament is also filled with cautions about the emotions and passions that are part of any physical contact between the sexes. We are specifically warned to flee temptation, especially lust and sexual temptation (1 Cor. 6:18, 1 Tim. 6:9-11, 2 Tim. 2:22). While some couples who engage in social dancing may not delve into immoral behavior, 1 Thessalonians 5:22 reminds us that we are to, "abstain from all appearance of evil" (avoid every form of evil). The best way to avoid evil is to avoid those temptations that can easily lead to some specific evil.

In spite of what the dance stands for and represents, some parents have claimed that public social dancing is a better alternative than couples isolating themselves and engaging in petting and other intimacies. However, rather than discouraging sexual intimacies, social dancing makes physical intimacies more attractive and inviting. Some parents will say, "My child is not that bad and he would never go too far." As parents we should not be so naive to think that our children could never be tempted to sin nor should we knowingly place them in situations that are a seedbed to spawn lust and sexual sins through bodily contact with the opposite sex.

We are called upon by God to "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Of course, refusing to dance does not by itself keep one from immoral behavior. If the heart is set on doing something wrong, no precautions or rules will help (Matt. 5:28). However, we must remember as parents that the most important of all times of life is that of youth. This is the sowing season; the harvest comes later.

Galatians 6:7-8

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Some young people might agree that the above description of relationships between the sexes may apply to others, but that they personally have pure motives when they dance; they merely want the friendship and fellowship dancing would seem to provide.

But is attending dances worth the risk? Maybe you should also reexamine who your real friends are and how you are interacting with them?

1 Corinthians 15:33 declares:

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”

When our companions are trying to make bodily contact with us in inappropriate places while dancing we should reassess our companionships, make better choices, or change the way we relate to one another (2 Cor. 5:17). The associations formed at a dance can lead to later involvement in dances and settings where drinking and drunken behavior are permitted which become a serious threat to a Christian lifestyle of purity (1 Cor. 15:33). Friend, I’m not a killjoy. My deep and sincere desire is to save our young people from joy-killers!

Our society is now paying a heavy price for its libertine attitude toward moral standards in the form of fornication, broken relationships, divorce, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and the emotional havoc placed on friends and family through pregnancies that stem from immoral behavior. These tragic consequences of lowered moral standards are being seen in increasing numbers in our churches.

In the face of this moral erosion God is calling all Christian adults and parents to abstain from social dancing for themselves and their children in light of God’s desire for His people to be a separate and holy people (2 Cor. 6:16-18, Titus 2:11-14, 2 Tim. 2:21-22). Dad and mom, do you want your daughter in the arms of a man where sexual temptation and intimacy are occurring? Do you want to light the fire or flame of lust in your young boy by allowing him to dance with indecently dressed girls? A young man and girl should not place themselves in tempting dance positions that can lead to sexual thoughts and intimacy. The Bible warns us to “keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22), flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18), and “make not provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). In other words, we should not set ourselves up for a spiritual fall. Social dancing sets us up for moral failure.

8. Attending School Proms

It is estimated that large segments of Christian youth in certain parts of the country are attending high school dances and participating in senior proms. Many parents feel social dancing is good for their child’s development. However, the parent’s words of caution about sexual purity are very hollow when they encourage temptation and lust to occur in their children’s lives through social dancing.

Today's Christian teenager needs to view proms from a Biblical perspective and be willing to separate from these types of worldly atmospheres that lead to temptation. We live in a society that encourages teenage girls to reveal more and more flesh but God expects them to dress differently. 1 Timothy 2:9 instructs the women to reveal themselves in "modest apparel" or "well arranged" apparel that appropriately covers them and does not highlight their body. Dancing and proms are places where immodest apparel is worn by women in order to captivate the eyes and minds of men. But God has called us to walk in the Spirit in order to starve our fleshly desires (Gal. 5:16-25).

Here are some principles you can apply to the prom.

- Does the prom promote God-honoring music?
- Does it encourage Biblical modesty in dress and behavior?
- Is it a place where you can be free from the snares of temptation?
- Would participating strengthen your testimony before saved and unsaved friends?
- Does it promote personal holiness?
- Can you glorify God in your body when you attend the prom?
- Does any element of a prom exalt God and give the right opinion and proper view of who He is?

The objective answer to all of these questions is "no." God wants believers to "approve things that are excellent" (Phil. 1:10). Simply stated, the worldly practice of the prom is not one of those excellent things. Steer clear of the prom and plan better. There are other God-honoring options for celebrating. You will never regret placing your life on a higher spiritual plain and keeping yourself pure.

The tendency for Christian teens is to conclude that their willpower alone is enough to fend off any temptation. But the Bible warns of this kind of pride and gives the proper response to temptation – run! (1 Cor. 10:12, 13; 2 Tim. 2:22). As a teen, you should not play games with temptation. Attending a prom is opening up yourself to sexual suggestion and temptation. Holiness is not an option; it's a command from God (1 Pet. 1:15). God has summoned us to not touch "the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:17) and a prom would fall under this category and be included in the "such like" additions to

the listing of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:21). We cannot ignore this command without seriously damaging our Christian life.

Parents must be aware of the seductive and enticing atmosphere of the prom and dance atmospheres. The music, the immoral lyrics, the dim lighting, the immodest attire of many who attend all encourage levels of intimacy that often leads to greater temptations and fornication. Again, the Bible commands us to “flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18) – not incite it or see how close we can get to the line. As a young person, God commands you to “Flee also youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22). This would out of necessity include the dance where lust is promoted and glorified.

An American preacher was asked by a number of young men to come and give them a straight talk on some specific subject. There were about thirty college students present in the room. The preacher spoke to them of the impure thoughts generated by the dance and where these thoughts often lead to. He then said, “Now, young men, I have tried to be frank with you and I want you to be as frank with me.” Has what I have said about the dance been true in the experience of any of you here present?” Every young man in the room raised his hand. Why? It’s because dancing promotes lust, illicit thoughts, and leads to moral collapse.

Titus 2:12 declares that God’s grace continues to discipline our lives: “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

Dancing provokes sexual passion and inflames lust. This cannot be denied. Dancing is an appeal to the sex instinct in a person. Take sex out of the dance and there would be no dance. Dancing breaks down moral restraint and causes people to give in much more easily to the suggestions of the flesh. The spell of social dancing is the spell of illicit physical contact which causes people to not only sin in their hearts (Matt. 5:28) but also become involved in illicit relationships.

Some Christians in various parts of the country are now establishing “Christian dance clubs” and utilize Christian contemporary music in an attempt to eliminate the moral objections to dancing because dancing often takes place in unwholesome, even evil, settings. This type of reasoning is skewed because of the very nature of the dance – it’s sexual in nature and

its overtones. Trying to change the scenery of the dance is similar to rearranging the furniture on the Titanic. It is a worthless cause.

Evangelist John L. Bray shares this:

“And whether the modern dance is held in a church or home, or our in the some dimly-lighted night club – it still has the same taste of sin in it.”

Since social dancing is clearly connected with adultery, fornication and the inspiring of lust, we should sound an alarm to those who attempt to sanctify an activity which poses great moral risk. God forbids us to *mimic* the world system and love its allurements (1 John 2:15-17). The Bible commands: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:17). This means we should not participate with the unsavory patterns and immoral behaviors of those who are unsaved. Dance is a very definite and distinct form of worldliness. It is an expression of the flesh (Gal. 5:21). Dancing is a mockery of that which is wholesome. God has called us to live differently than the unsaved (“not fashioning ourselves to our former lusts” – 1 Peter 1:14) and walk in holiness.

1 Peter 1:15-16

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

Dear Christian friend, if you want to remain pure and represent God’s holiness, then stay away from the filthy, rotten dance! Steer clear from the world and its lustful allurements. Dancing has historically been a questionable practice and vice deemed unfit for Christian participation until the modern church has let down its guard.

In Matthew 26:41 Jesus taught:

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Social dancing certainly causes a person to enter a time of temptation.

A Christian who once danced but who ceased the practice said:

“I can say from experience and conviction that dancing does not contribute anything to the highest in Christian living. There is great danger that it will tear down what is worthwhile.”

9. Approved Dancing

Can a case be made for Biblical dancing? Is there a proper place for dancing? One old-time preacher said, "If you want to dance with your own marriage partner around the kitchen table in the privacy of your home then do so." A married couple might want to dance in the privacy of their home as they share their lives together in God's plan for marriage (Gen. 2:24). No chaperone is needed!

In addition, we should not categorically forbid dancing as an individual expression of joy before God (2 Sam. 6:14). The Bible does not do this and neither should we. Once again, the Christian might dance for joy when reflecting on the blessings of God. If you want to dance or twirl in the privacy of your own home, then do so. You can twirl all you wish! You might jump for joy when thinking of God's great blessings that He has given to you.

I remember when I was still attending Bible College. It was during the late evening when one of the men in my house jumped on his bed and began shouting, "I'm saved, I'm saved, I'm saved." He was jumping up and down for joy. Now this was real dancing! It was simply an expression of His joy for what God had done in his life. However, like David, he did not dance in the church. He did not express this practice in church because the Bible calls for decency and order in the local church services (1 Cor. 14:33, 40) and forbids us to distract other believers by our actions (dancing on a church pew is a distraction!). Instead of distracting others, we are called upon to build them up and edify them (1 Cor. 14:12).

Yes, there is approved dancing but don't bring your dance into God's sacred house and do not think for one moment that God is pleased with you when you hang out at the dance halls, which cater to worldly music and promote promiscuous dancing (Eph. 5:11), where men can hold women in their arms and move about with them, arousing fleshy desire.

The dance being promoted today along with rock music (both in dance halls and the church) is not a response to God but a response to fleshy music and creates fleshy results in the hearts and lives of God's people.

10. Questions on Dancing

I would like to conclude this study with some important questions that one can ask in relationship to the modern dance. Here are some personal questions to ask yourself if you want to go to the dance.

- How many older, more mature and wiser Christians do you know who dance?
- Do you think you would be comfortable if you took Jesus with you to dance?
- Would you be happy if Jesus came and found you there?
- What about the dance music?
- Does it lift you up spiritually?
- Does it strengthen you morally or in any way?
- Does it build up or tear down your emotional life?
- Why do you want to go to a dance in the first place?
- What is there that would make a Christian want to go?
- What does it offer?
- What do you expect to get there that you will not get anywhere else?
- Do you think you will come away better or worse?
- Does what happens at the dance lend itself to proper Christian behavior? Would you feel you were a good influence as a Christian if you attended dances?
- Would you feel free to witness for Jesus Christ while there?
- How would you feel if your pastor, parents or your Sunday school teacher were there?

The Bible says, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:24). This means that if you have doubts about doing something but do it anyway, then your action becomes a sin. Remember: if it’s doubtful; it’s dirty! And dancing is dirty.

There is a set of spiritual guidelines which are simple but may be helpful to you in making your decision. In everything a Christian does, he should (a) Do it to the glory of God – upholding His holy character (1 Cor. 10:31), (b) Thank God that you can do it (Eph. 5:20), (c) Do it in the name of Jesus, as if He sent you to do it (Col. 3:17), and (d) Pray for God’s blessing and His guidance in all you do (Phil. 4:6, 7).

John Newton's life rule was this:

"I make it a rule of Christian duty never to go to a place where there is not room for my Master as well as myself."