



## **Sermon: Is Dancing Sinful?**

### **Introduction**

We live in an age where standards of moral conduct are rapidly deteriorating. Things that once were considered wrong are now widely accepted and practiced. Even Christians have been swept along in this tide of growing laxity.

Our attitude toward dancing is a prime example. Can a person dance and still please the Lord? Is dancing consistent with the purity and holiness that God demands of a Christian? Let's study this subject with an open mind and honest heart.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines the word "dance" as "1. to move one's feet or body, or both, rhythmically in a pattern of steps, esp. to the accompaniment of music. 2. to leap, skip, etc., as from excitement or emotion; move nimbly or quickly: to dance with joy. 3. to bob up and down: The toy sailboats danced on the pond. 4. to perform or take part in a dance... 10. a successive group of rhythmical steps or bodily motions, or both, usually executed to music."1

### **A. What Kind Of Dances Occur In The Bible?**

#### **1. Dances Of Religious Devotion**

In the Bible, we read of dancing that was an expression of religious enthusiasm and praise to God. On occasion, God's people would dance for joy over some great and notable event. For example, following God's deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, "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" (Exo 15:20). Later, when David brought the ark of God back to Jerusalem, he "danced before the Lord with all his might" (2Sa 6:14). Such dancing cannot be compared with the modern dance. They were never performed for amusement. They were always performed in the open daylight, men with men, and women with women. There were no sexual overtones to these dances. Instead, they were more akin to stately marches.

#### **2. Dances Of Sinful Merrymaking**

Since the dance is such a flexible vehicle, and is capable of expressing a broad range of human emotions, it can also be used to portray that which is suggestive and lewd. The

children of Israel danced in an depraved and unrestrained fashion before the golden calf. In the absence of Moses, they had quickly reverted to paganism, with all its attendant emphasis on sexual wantonness and immorality (Exo 32:19-25; 1Co 10:5-7).

Consider also the example of the daughter of Herodias who danced before Herod. Her seductive charms were so great that the king rashly promised to give her anything she desired. This kind of dancing was filled with sexual overtones, designed to subdue the reasoning of the mind and arouse the lust of the flesh. (Mat 14:6-8).

## **B. What Is Wrong With The Modern Dance?**

### **1. It Appeals To Human Sensuality**

In his book, *World History of the Dance*, Curt Sach studies the background of dancing. He says that all dances, like any other art form, attempt to say something. The steps, positions and

movements are designed to convey a message. According to Sach, the whole range of modern dances are designed to express "love-making." The *Encyclopedia Britannica* confirms this by stating, "To a certain extent all dancing is sexually

stimulating..."<sup>2</sup> Dancing's charm is based upon sex appeal. Dr.

Leta S. Hollingsworth, professor of education at Columbia

University, confirms this view. Although she approves of dancing, she still says that dancing "affords a partial satisfaction to the sex impulse which (among the adolescents) cannot as yet achieve full and specific expression..."<sup>3</sup>

Someone might respond, "O.K., dancing has sex appeal. What's wrong with that?" It is true that sex is a gift from God, and in and of itself it is not evil. Yet, God-given desire also has

God-given boundaries. Within the relationship of marriage, sex is beautiful, glorious and fulfilling (Gen 2:24; 1Co 7:1-4; Heb

13:4). Outside the relationship of marriage, sex is cheap, dirty and sinful (1Co 6:9-11; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5).

### **2. It Is Lascivious**

Lasciviousness has to do with a lack of proper restraint of any desire of the flesh. In general, it describes things that tend to produce lust.

Strong defines #766 ASELGEIA (as-elg'-i-a) as "from a compound of 1 (as a negative particle) and a presumed selges (of uncertain derivation, but apparently meaning continent); licentiousness (sometimes including other vices): KJV--filthy, lasciviousness, wantonness."<sup>4</sup>

Arndt & Gingrich define ASELGEIA as "licentiousness, debauchery, sensuality... give oneself over to debauchery... live licentiously... follow the inclination to sensuality... Esp. of

sexual excesses sensuality... indecent conduct... licentious desires..."<sup>5</sup>

Thayer defines "lasciviousness" as "unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness,

shamelessness, insolence... plural 'wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.' (Fritzsche)."6

W. E. Vine says this Greek word denotes "excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness; 'lasciviousness' in (Mar 7:22), one of the evils that proceed from the heart; in (2Co 12:21), one of the evils of which some in the church at Corinth had been guilty; in (Gal 5:19), classed among the works of the flesh; in (Eph 4:19), among the sins of the unregenerate who are 'past feeling'; so in (1Pe 4:3); in (Jud 4), of that into which the grace of God had been turned by ungodly men; it is translated 'wantonness' in (Rom 13:13), one of the sins against which believers are warned; in (2Pe 2:2), according to the best mss., 'lascivious (doings), ' RV (the KJV 'pernicious ways' follows those texts which have apoleiais); in (v. 7), RV, 'lascivious (life), ' KJV, 'filthy (conversation), ' of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; in (2:18), RV, 'lasciviousness' (KJV, 'wantonness'), practiced by the same persons as mentioned in Jude. The prominent idea is shameless conduct. See WANTONNESS."7

Without question, dancing is dangerous for the Christian. Dancing arouses emotions that can have a rightful fulfillment only within the relationship of marriage. It is sinful for persons not married to each other to engage in those actions which

inordinately stimulate their sexual desires (Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:17-19; 1Pe 4:2-4).

### **3. It Is Lustful**

"Lust" describes any strong desire or craving. The English word originally was a neutral term, but in the context of this study

we apply the term to sexual passion. Outside of the relationship of marriage, such lust is sinful (Mat 5:28; Rom 13:13-14).

### **4. It Is Associated With Much That Is Evil**

Dancing is associated with much that is evil. It is often

accompanied by drinking and drug abuse. It involves one with evil companions. It results in a lowering of morals and a weakened spirituality. It is often the doorway to fondling, fooling around, and unbefitting familiarities. It can culminate in

fornication. We should avoid anything so closely associated with evil (Mat 7:15-20; 1Co 15:33; 1Th 5:22).

### **5. It Destroys One's Influence For Good**

Brother Marshall Keeble once said, "A dancing foot and a praying knee are not found on the same leg." We must strive to set a good example (Mat 5:16; Phi 2:15). The world is watching. Others are quick to notice any inconsistency between our creed and our conduct. Dancing destroys your influence for good.

### **6. It Places A Stumblingblock Before Others**

Someone might say, "I can dance without any ill effects. It doesn't cause me to think dirty thoughts. It doesn't give rise to unlawful desires." First of all, anyone who would say this is not being honest with themselves. However, for the sake of argument, let's grant that they are being truthful. Now the question is, "What affect does dancing have on my partner?" Therefore, let us demonstrate a modest decorum, both in word and deed. This applies to dress and conduct (1Ti 2:9-10)!

### **Conclusion**

The Christian must examine his heart! Does it increase my love for God and his word? Does it increase my spirituality and make

me a better Christian? Or does dancing arouse lustful desires within me or my partner? Does it serve as a stepping-stone to baser things?

We are driven to an inescapable conclusion. The dance belongs to the world; the Christian belongs to God. When a Christian obeys the gospel, his life is forever altered (Rom 6:4; 12:1-2; 1Co 6:19-20). God's people must be representatives of purity and holiness. If you dance, you do so, not as a Christian, but as one who has turned his back on Christ. If you dance, you do so, not to God's glory, but to your own shame.

1 Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed. unabridged, (1987), s.v. "Dance."

2 Encyclopedia Britannica, 1956 ed., s.v. "Dance."

3 Leta S. Hollingsworth, The Psychology of the Adolescent, p. 122.

4 BibleSoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary, (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft & International Bible Translators, Inc., 1994), s.v. "ASELGEIA," #766.

5 Arndt & Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, s.v. "ASELGEIA," #766.

6 Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, s.v. "ASELGEIA," #766.

7 W. E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft & Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, 1994), "Lascivious, Lasciviousness: ASELGEIA," #766.