

THE BIBLE AND DANCING

A matter of great concern in the church is the tendency of young and older folks wanting to participate in the modern dances with those of the opposite sex. No valid arguments in defense of dancing can be made from the scripture, but much can be said against the practice, from the scripture and the “fruits” of dancing. Let’s see what the Bible has to say. Dancing be defined as *“the expression of joy by rhythmical movements of the limbs to musical accompaniment, is scarcely ever mentioned in the Bible as a social amusement”* (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, II, p. 1169). The nearest exception to this is found in Matt. 14:6, and Mark 6:22 where Salome danced (a solo) before Herod who was highly pleased with her performance and had John the immerser beheaded to please Salome and her mother. With the sexually explicit of modern jumping up and down in “dancing”, and the early practice and instruction of dancing in our public schools, and the general practice of dancing in the world, calls for our giving attention to our writing.

Dancing in the Old Testament can come under two headings. First, **public rejoicing**. The maidens of Israel danced, led by Jephthah’s daughter (Judges 11:34). The Israelite women honored Saul and David danced, in celebration of the victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:6; 21:11; 29:15). In both instances, women only were doing the dancing, which can hardly be compared to the type of dancing so popular today.

Second, **religious dancing**, as acts of worship, or in some way related **to** worship. The women of Israel danced at the Red Sea in celebration (Exo. 15:20) The maidens of Shiloh danced at an annual feast (Judges 21:19ff). The prophets of Baal danced around their altar in their idolatrous celebration (1 Kings 18:26). David danced in front of the ark of the covenant, followed by his uncovering himself before the maids of his servants (2 Sam. 6:14-21). The Israelites danced around the golden calf while Moses was upon the mount to receive the ten commandments (Exo. 32:6, 19-21). They rose up to play, and it was a great sin before God. Paul tells Christians to not do what they did (1 Cor. 10:7). General references to religious dancing are found in Psa. 149:3; 150:4. In these dances, “women seem generally to have danced by themselves” and “of the social dancing of couples in the modern fashion there is no trace” (ISBE, II, p. 1170).

Now to the New Testament and it’s teaching on dancing. True, nowhere in scripture is specifically stated, “Thou shalt not dance,” just as it is not specifically stated, “Thou shalt not gamble,” “Thou shalt not smoke marijuana,” or “Thou shalt not use heroin,” or “Thou shalt not drink Falstaff.” However, we do find lists of things that were then and are now specifically condemned, followed by the term “and such like” (Gal. 5:19-21). The Modern Literal Translation renders this term “and things like these things.” Dancing between males and females as practiced in today’s world was unheard of in Biblical times, so to find it’s likeness to what is condemned, we can look at the fruits of dancing, and other passages that allude to such activities, as if the Holy Spirit well knew what could be understood in the first and twenty-first centuries on this subject.

First we need to observe that dancing between males and females was gradually developed to stimulate sexual activity. “To a certain extent all dancing is sexually stimulating” (Ency. Britannica, VII, p. 14). “The dancing of the modern ball room is a refined form of stimulus” (Hasting Ency. Of Religion and Ethics, X, p. 359). Dr. Aleta Hollingsworth, professor at Columbia University, wrote, “Dancing affords a partial

satisfaction to the sex impulse which (among the adolescents) cannot as yet achieve full and specific expression." Men with men or women with women would bring dancing to an end, except between homosexuals.

Solomon wrote, "Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" (Prov. 3:14-15). In my life as a preacher, I have had 2 women to confide in me that they committed fornication one time, and both women stated that their sin followed an evening on the dance floor. Of course, this would not happen among pre-teens in a chaperoned dance, but by helping them learn to dance, and encouraging it, they are being prepared for such actions of which we speak. Fornication and adultery follows the sinful lust or desire for one of the opposite sex, which thus begins in the heart and is completed in bed. Unless a dance **is** chaperoned, it virtually **always** is accompanied by the drinking of alcoholic beverages. This is true with ballroom dances, and country dances even where alcohol may not legally be allowed. One law official once told me, "You show me where the dance is, and I'll show you where the alcohol is." Many sexual affairs have their origin in the dance hall, as well as many rapes. Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 5:16-20)

The model prayer to the Lord teaches that He will not lead us into temptation (Matt. 6), and yet we run headlong into temptation and sin. Paul said we are to make no provision for the fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh (Rom. 14:13). "Lasciviousness" is condemned in Gal. 5:19. The English word for such is defined as "exciting sexual desires." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T. defines lasciviousness as "indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females."

Note what the Ency. Britannica, Vol. 5, p. 455-456, reads:

"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."

Alex Comfort, wrote in 1972 in "The Joy of Sex", that "All ballroom in pairs looks toward intercourse." The very idea of dancing among young people being all right because it is being "chaperoned" is foolish. If there is no danger or no sin, WHY have to chaperon it in the first place? Plus the fact, that when they get into high school and out in the world, who is going to chaperon them then? You may chaperon their bodies while young, but you can't chaperon their hearts. True, many young people may go astray and even commit fornication, but **why** rush them headlong into a path that leads them into conduct that they will eventually regret, if they are really concerned about their souls' destiny?

Much much more could be written on this subject, but these brief thoughts should be well considered. Do you **really** love your children? Guard them, guide them, and teach them the way of the Lord. Don't push them on to the dance floor at any age to make them popular, or to do things because everyone else is doing them. Solomon admonished, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6)

Don Tarbet