**The Christian and Dancing**

**Introduction**

1. When asking about whether something is an acceptable, righteous, scriptural practice for a Christian to engage in it is imperative that we:
   1. Possess a sincere love for the truth (**cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**).
   2. Possess a willingness to give an unbiased, fair hearing of information with a diligence to vet all with the inspired word of God (**cf. Acts 17:11**).
   3. Possess a willingness to make any change necessary, however drastic it may be (**cf. Luke 14:27, 33**).
2. The question concerning the appropriateness of a Christian’s involvement in the activity of dancing, whether they are dancing themselves, or simply attending a dance, has often been raised.
   1. School dances (prom, etc.), weddings, etc.
3. What does the bible say about dancing, and is it something the Christian should involve himself/herself in?
4. Foundational Principles for Christians
5. Christians must not conform to the world, but be transformed – **Romans 12:1-2**
6. Christians must have their mind set on things above – **Colossians 3:1-4, 17**
7. Christians must not provide for the flesh – **Romans 13:14**
8. Christians must provide for honorable things in the sight of men – **2 Corinthians 8:21**
9. Christians must be a godly influence – **1 Peter 2:11-12**
10. Christians must not be concerned with acceptance by the world – **1 Peter 4:4-6**
11. Christians must take heed how they hear, always seeking truth, not justification for their desires – **Luke 8:18; 10:29**
12. Dancing in the Bible
13. One of the first arguments for the acceptance of dancing is that it is found in the bible.
    1. There are distinctions to be made.
    2. The bible records examples of godliness, and ungodliness. The bible shows us what is righteous, and what is sinful.
    3. Sometimes a topic includes subcategories of sinful versus acceptable. (EX: Wine – both intoxicating and non-intoxicating.)
14. General statements on dancing in the Bible:
    1. “Dancing…is scarcely ever mentioned in the Bible as a social amusement.” (Smith, William Taylor, *ISBE*, E-text version Copyright 2002, HeavenWord, Inc.)
    2. “Of the social dancing of couples in the modern fashion there is no trace.” (ibid.)
    3. “In summary, the dance of the Jewish people was similar to what we today call the folk dance. It was performed by both males and females, though apparently not in mixed groups.” (McCoy, Glenn. “Dancing.” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*, 385)
    4. “The Hebrew people developed their own type of dancing, associated in the main with worship. Basically, it was more like modern religious shouting by individuals, or processions of exuberant groups…the sexes never intermingled in it, except where pagan influences had crept in.” (J.D.F. “Dancing.” *Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, 196)
15. Dance in Rejoicing
    1. *meḥôlâ* – dance in a ring (HALOT); *mâḥôl* – a (round) dance (STRONG)
       1. “The basic Hebrew term translated ‘dance’ means to twist or to whirl about in circular motions.” (McCoy, Glenn. “Dancing.” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Revised and Expanded, 384)
       2. “The Hebrew employs ḥȗl and its derivatives māḥȏl and meḥōlȃ…to denote turning, twisting, whirling; hence the general interpretation of round dances is given to these instances.” (Johnston, E.B. *ISBE 4 Volumes, 2nd ed*., e-book, Eerdmans Publishing Company)
       3. **Judges 11:34** (meḥôlâ) – Jephthah’s daughter coming out to meet him after the Lord delivered the people of Ammon into his hands.
       4. **1 Samuel 18:6-7** (meḥôlâ) – women meeting Saul in celebration of victories over the Philistines.
       5. **Psalm 30:11** (mâḥôl) – mourning to dancing.
       6. **Lamentations 5:15** (mâḥôl) – joy and dance to mourning.
    2. *Choros* – a ring, i.e. round dance (STRONG); a band (of dancers and singers), circular dance, a dance, dancing (THAYER)
       1. **Luke 15:25** (*choros* – translation of *meḥôlâ* and *mâḥôl* in LXX) – joyous celebration for the return of the prodigal son.
16. Dance in Worship
    1. **Exodus 15:20-21** (meḥôlâ) – Miriam and the women after the exodus from Egypt.
    2. **2 Samuel 6:14-16** (ḵârar – ***“whirling,”* v. 16**) – David when the ark was brought back to Jerusalem.
       1. “to whirl, dance” (Brown-Driver-Briggs)
    3. **Psalm 149:3; 150:4** (mâḥôl) – praise with dance.
    4. NOTE: **John 4:23-24; Hebrews 7:14** – OT not our law anymore, NT silent about dance in worship just as with instruments.
17. Dance to Incite Lust
    1. **Exodus 32:6, 19-21** (*meḥôlâ,* “where pagan influences had crept in.” (J.D.F. “Dancing.” *Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, 196) – Israelites worshiping the golden calf at Sinai.
       1. “the verb translated play suggests sex-play in Hebrew (see Gen. 26:8) and therefore we are probably to understand drunken orgies.” (Cole, R. Alan. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary Set (27 Volumes 2019)*, e-book, Intervaristy Press UK)
       2. “Elsewhere in the OT “play” (Heb. ṣāḥaq) may have a sexual connotation (Gen. 26:8; 39:14); the people’s “breaking loose” (Ex. 32:25) suggests that the dancing was highly sensual in this case also.” (Johnston, E.B. *ISBE 4 Volumes, 2nd ed*., e-book, Eerdmans Publishing Company)
       3. **Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:6-8** – including sexual immorality.
    2. **Mark 6:21-24** (*orcheomai* – to dance, STRONG) – Herodias’ daughter before Herod on his birthday.
       1. “The most popular dance entertainment in the first centuries A.D. was the *pantomimus*, a solo enactment of a popular story theme in stylized mimicry, often with dramatic and sensual movements and postures. It has been suggested that Salome’s dance for Herod’s birthday guests was in this tradition.” (Johnston, E.B. *ISBE 4 Volumes, 2nd ed*., e-book, Eerdmans Publishing Company)
    3. **These contexts obviously show there is an immoral, inappropriate, sensual dance which is not upheld in scripture as acceptable.**
18. **WHICH OF THESE DESCRIBES THE MODERN DANCE?**
19. Violations of Biblical Principles
20. NOTE: The bible is not written in a list format with only explicit requirements and prohibitions. It is a pattern which we must establish (**cf. 2 Timothy 1:13**) and use in our decision-making process regarding each question we face – in this case, is dancing righteous or unrighteous?
    1. **Hebrews 5:14** – senses exercised to discern good and evil.
    2. **“Where does the bible say, ‘Thou shalt not dance’?”** – Where does the bible say, “You cannot use mechanical instruments in worship,” “you cannot have one pastor,” “you cannot smoke marijuana,” “you cannot wear a bikini,” or that “such and such is unclean, filthy speech?”
    3. We know the answer to these questions – THE BIBLE DOESN’T SAY THOSE THINGS.
    4. However, we know why we do not participate in them – Instruments (silence, no authority), one pastor (silence, only mentions plurality), marijuana (required sobriety), bikini (required modesty, covering nakedness), profanity (English words not listed, prohibited filthy speech and coarse jesting – know our language/culture, and understand the stigma attached to the words).
    5. The bible does not say, “Thou shalt not dance” – However, THE BIBLE GIVES GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, AND PROHIBITIONS WHICH, WHEN CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF THE MODERN DANCE LEAD TO AN UNAVOIDABLE CONCLUSION THAT SUCH IS UNRIGHTEOUS FOR A CHRISTIAN TO BE INVOLVED IN OR ASSOCIATED WITH.
21. The Bible Condemnation of Revelry
    1. **Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21; 1 Peter 4:3**
    2. **Revelry** – *kōmos* – a carousal (as if letting loose) (STRONG)
       1. “a nocturnal and riotous procession of half drunken and frolicsome fellows…generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry” (THAYER)
       2. “The word originally signifies merely a merry-making; most probably a village festival…In the cities such entertainments grew into carouses, in which the party of revellers paraded the streets with torches, singing, dancing, and all kinds of frolics.” (Vincent, M.R. *Word Studies in the New Testament*)
       3. Goes on to cite Socrates’ description of a revelry in honor of a Greek god – “‘Crowds of women…abandoned themselves to demonstrations of frantic excitement, with dancing and clamorous invocation of the god.’” (ibid.)
       4. **Descriptive of modern event of the “dance,” as well as night clubs, etc.**
22. The Bible Condemnation of Lewdness and Lust
    1. **1 Peter 4:3; Galatians 5:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Romans 13:13**
       1. **Lust** – *epithymia* – a desire for someth. forbidden or simply inordinate, craving, lust (BDAG)
          1. **Matthew 5:27-28; 2 Peter 2:14** – lust of the eyes – the look/thought is sinful.
       2. **Lewdness** – *aselgeia* – "wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." (THAYER)
          1. “lack of self-constraint which involves one in conduct that violates all bounds of what is socially acceptable, self-abandonment.” (BDAG)
          2. “licentiousness” (STRONG) – “lacking legal or moral restraints; especially: disregarding sexual restraints” (Merriam-Webster)
    2. **Bible progression** – lust (impure thoughts), to lewdness (indecent bodily action), to fornication (the consummation of lust and lewdness).
       1. **2 Corinthians 12:21** – ***“uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness”***
       2. **Romans 13:13** – ***“lewdness and lusts”***
          1. ***“lust”*** (*aselgeia*)
          2. ***“lewdness”*** – *koitē* – “a couch” (STRONG); “engagement in sexual relations, fig. extension” (BDAG).
23. Does the modern dance fit the description of revelry, incite lust, and involve lewdness?
    1. “Courtship dances, for example, allow the dancers to display their vigour and attractiveness and to engage in socially accepted physical contact between the sexes. (The waltz, a relatively modern example of the courtship dance, was banned at certain times because its flagrant contact between the dancers was considered indecent.)” (Mackrell, Judith R.. "dance". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11 Nov. 2022, [https://www.britannica.com/art/dance. Accessed 8 March 2023](https://www.britannica.com/art/dance.%20Accessed%208%20March%202023).)
    2. “Dance is sex with clothes on… Dancing is a way to show a partner a link to something ancestral; carnal, even. Through this incendiary and titillating experience -- showing our rhythm and ability to dance -- we provoke those who watch us…Dancing hides inhibitions way better than alcohol… In dance, we make eye contact, we touch, and we use sound to manipulate our bodies and emotions. This same behavior can be transferred to the bedroom with great ease.” (Janeskela, Jacklyn. “How dancing Makes You A Better Lover”. *Thrillist*, 26 April 2016, <https://www.thrillist.com/sex-dating/nation/7-ways-dancing-makes-you-better-in-bed>. Accessed 8 March 2023.)
    3. “It's no surprise that nightclubs are dark places. They foster feelings of lust, sex, and sometimes when we dance there, we can go through the stages of fancying, loving, fumbling foreplay, intercourse…just by making eye contact, and holding it, with someone on the other side of the dance floor.” (Lovatt, Peter. “Sex and Dancing”. *Psychology Today*, 12 March 2010, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dance-psychology/201003/sex-and-dancing>. Accessed 8 March 2023)
    4. Professor Louis J. Guyon, owner and operator of "Paradise Ballrooms," one of Chicago's largest dance halls, said: "We know that sex is the strongest impulse planted in the human race. You can just picture the effect on a boy or girl of 18 or 20, when this hunger is keenest, when knowledge and experience are lacking in the formation of judgment, of one of these dances which calls for close bodily contact and frequently brings the cheeks together and entwine the limbs. Yet, we find thousands of boys and girls dancing in this very way who do not realize they are doing anything out of the way, and whose fool parents look on complacently…When you are told that youth of both sexes can…survive this experience without mental, moral and physical pollution, you know the teller lies…If you can believe youth is the same after this experience as before, then God help your child or your charge, for you are not mentally fit for your responsibility…If you do not believe I have correctly described the modern dances and their effect, you either have not seen them performed or you are willfully blind to their true character."
    5. “[Dancing is] The vertical expression of a horizontal desire legalized by music.” (George Bernard Shaw, 1856-1950, Irish playwright and socialist)
    6. Prom night promiscuity is a common occurrence and has become a cliché of our culture commonly depicted in entertainment.
24. The Bible Requirement of Sobriety and Holiness – **1 Peter 1:13-16**
    1. **Sober** – *nēphō* – (1) to be sober, to be calm and collected in spirit (2) to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect (THAYER)
    2. **Focus on hope** – **1 John 3:3** (pure as He is pure)
    3. **Holiness** – not as close as you can get to the world, but to God.
25. The Bible Requirement to Abstain from Every Form of Evil
    1. **1 Thessalonians 5:22** – ***“form”*** – a variety of someth., kind (BDAG)
       1. Many different “forms” of evil – **cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10**
       2. Yes, dancing is not sexual immorality…
       3. …BUT DANCING INVOLVES LEWDNESS, LUST, IMMODESTY, AND INDECENCY – which is a form of evil. (And leads to sexual immorality)
    2. **Abstain** – “The word ‘abstain’ is literally, ‘hold yourself constantly back from’” (Wuest, Kenneth S. *Wuest Word Studies in the Greek New Testament (3 Vols.)*, e-book, Eerdmans Publishing Company)
    3. **2 Timothy 2:22** – flee!
26. The Bible Requirement to Be Salt and Light
    1. **Matthew 5:13-16** – we are to season the world and expose the darkness with the light of Christ.
       1. Would dancing help or hurt your influence with the world on exposing matters of immorality and indecency with the light of Christ?
       2. Is dancing a “good work” which men may observe which will lead to them “glorify[ing] your Father in heaven?”
    2. **2 Corinthians 8:20-21** – is dancing an activity we should engage in if we are trying to make sure the world sees we are sanctified, holy, and purely devoted to the will of God?
       1. NOTE: “I’m only going to the dance, but not dancing. This is okay.” – same questions apply. Would we go to a bar, but just not drink?
27. Attempts to Justify Dancing
28. “I can dance without lusting.”
    1. ***“let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)***
    2. ***“make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” (Romans 13:14)***
    3. What about others? Can you ensure they will not lust after you? OF COURSE NOT – ***“Owe no one anything except to love one another…Love does no harm to a neighbor.” (Romans 13:8, 10)***
29. “It is socially accepted. Nobody else has problem with it.”
    1. The world is not our standard – ***“do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2)***
    2. They may think it strange, but we still must not participate – ***“they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.” (1 Peter 4:4)***
30. “I am only attending the dance. I don’t intend to do any dancing myself.”
    1. Can you go to a place that is inherently and inseparably linked with sin and not be guilty of condoning the sin there? – through indifference.
    2. How will people there know that you never danced while you were there?
       1. ***“providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” (2 Corinthians 8:21)***
    3. If you aren’t going to dance because you know it is wrong, then why would you want to go to the “dance” in the first place?
31. “I only go to chaperoned dances.”
    1. Does not the fact that a chaperone is required tell you something about the event?
    2. “Chaperoned unrighteousness is still unrighteousness.”
32. Common Accompaniment of Dancing
33. Drinking (**1 Peter 4:3**)
34. Profane Music (**Ephesians 5:3-5**)
35. Immodesty (**1 Timothy 2:9-10**)
36. Lust (**Matthew 5:27-30**)
37. Sexual Immorality (**Hebrews 13:4**)
38. ***“You will know them by their fruits…” (Matthew 7:16)***

**Conclusion**

1. An honest look at scripture, along with an honest estimation of the activity of the modern dance, brings one to an inescapable conclusion that it is a sinful activity.
2. If we are truly seeking to imitate Christ, we will understand why dancing is wrong.
3. If we are seeking to fit in with the world, and to fulfill our own desires we might struggle to see the truth on the matter.