

# What Does the Bible Say About Dancing?

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Few amusements are as common, or as little questioned, as dancing. It fills the wedding reception, the prom, the nightclub, and the school gymnasium, and a young person who declines to join in is thought odd, even rude. So a Christian needs to think this through carefully. The Bible does not condemn every form of dancing. But it does name a sin called lasciviousness, and the honest question is whether the dancing of our day belongs to it. To answer that, we have to let the Bible define its own terms, and then look plainly at what modern dancing actually is.

## The Bible Does Speak of Dancing

We should be fair and admit at the outset that the Bible mentions dancing, and not always as a sin. Miriam led the women in dancing when God brought Israel through the sea ([Exodus 15:20](#)). David *"danced before the LORD with all his might"* ([2 Samuel 6:14](#)). The psalmist called the people to *"praise him with the timbrel and dance"* ([Psalm 150:4](#)). Solomon said there is *"a time to dance"* ([Ecclesiastes 3:4](#)), and when the prodigal came home, his father's house was filled with *"musick and dancing"* ([Luke 15:25](#)).

So the question is not whether feet may ever move for joy. These were expressions of gladness and praise, and most often they were not what we picture today, men and women pressed together in a sensual embrace. They were the overflow of a happy or a worshipping heart. That kind of rejoicing is not our concern here. Our concern is a particular kind of dancing, and a particular sin the Bible names.

## The Sin Called Lasciviousness

Among the sins the Bible condemns is one the King James Version calls lasciviousness. It means unbridled, shameless conduct that stirs up or feeds unlawful sexual desire. The world has gentler names for it. It calls such conduct sensual, or sexy, or simply grown-up. God calls it a work of the flesh.

Paul put it in a list no one should want to be on. *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness"*, and after the full list he added, *"they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"* ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)). Jesus said it comes out of a corrupt heart, naming *"lasciviousness"* among the things that defile a man ([Mark 7:21-22](#)). And Peter described the old, lost way of life as a walk *"in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings"* ([1 Peter 4:3](#)). Notice the company it keeps there, drinking and wild

parties. That is no accident. Lasciviousness has always been at home where the music is loud, the drink is flowing, and the bodies are moving.

## **Why Modern Dancing Is Lasciviousness**

Now set that definition beside the dancing our world prizes. It is not a circle of joyful friends. It is men and women, most of them not married to each other, moving body to body in ways meant to be suggestive, often with drink at hand and the lights low. Its very aim is to be sensual, to stir desire. That is not a slander against it. It is what the dancing is for.

But here is the trouble. The desire it is built to stir is a desire God made for marriage, and for marriage alone. To awaken it with someone who is not your husband or your wife, and to awaken it in them toward you, is the very thing lasciviousness names. The Bible even shows us a dance like this and where it led. When the daughter of Herodias "*danced, and pleased Herod*" ([Mark 6:22](#)), her dance so inflamed him that he swore a reckless oath, and a short while later John the Baptist lost his head for it. A dance designed to stir the flesh is playing with something far more dangerous than it looks.

## **The Heart and the Fire**

This is finally a matter of the heart, which is where God always looks. Jesus said, "*whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*" ([Matthew 5:28](#)). If merely looking with lust is adultery of the heart, what shall we say of an act designed from the start to produce that very lust?

And no one is strong enough to handle that fire safely. Solomon asked, "*Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*" ([Proverbs 6:27-28](#)). The answer is no. This is why God does not tell us to manage temptation of this kind. He tells us to run from it. "*Flee fornication*" ([1 Corinthians 6:18](#)). "*Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*" ([Romans 13:14](#)). "*Abstain from all appearance of evil*" ([1 Thessalonians 5:22](#)). A Christian who walks onto that floor is making provision for the very flesh he is commanded to starve.

## **A Christian Is Watched, and a Christian Is Holy**

There is more here than the danger to oneself. A Christian is called to be holy and to help others toward heaven, not to be a snare to them. Peter wrote, "*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*" ([1 Peter 2:11](#)). Paul told women to adorn themselves "*in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety*" ([1 Timothy 2:9](#)), and that spirit of modesty cannot survive on a sensual dance floor. The Christian is also warned not to be the reason another person falls, that

*"no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13). The dance that tempts you tempts others through you. And your body is not yours to use that way, for it "is the temple of the Holy Ghost", and you are to "glorify God" in it (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

## **Why Start Down That Road?**

Think for a moment about where this road begins. Many parents place a young daughter in a dance studio almost as soon as she can walk, never meaning her any harm. But look honestly at much of what is taught there. The costumes grow more revealing with each recital, and the routines train a girl to move her body in ways meant to be watched and admired, long before she is old enough to understand what she is doing. We would be troubled to see a grown woman move that way in public, yet we applaud it from a small girl and call it adorable. Year by year, she is being schooled in the very immodesty the Bible warns against, and taught to find her value in being looked at.

This raises a question that reaches well beyond dancing. Why start down a road you will one day have to leave? If a thing is wrong for a grown woman, it does not become right because a little girl does it, and if she will only have to be called away from it later, it would have been wiser never to set her feet on the path at all. The course to follow is the one Solomon gave, to *"train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6)*, which means guiding her toward modesty and a meek and quiet spirit from the first, not teaching her to display herself and then hoping to undo it once she is grown. Habits formed early are not easily broken. Why plant what you will only have to uproot?

The same wisdom speaks to the prom. It is treated as a rite of passage no one is allowed to question, but consider what it actually is. It joins the sensual dancing we have already described to revealing dress, the pairing off of young couples, a late and unguarded night, and often drinking before or after. It is the revelling Peter named, dressed up in a gown and a rented suit. The fine setting does not change what happens on the floor, any more than a wedding does. A young Christian may have to be the one who says no, and that is hard at seventeen. But it is far better to stand apart for one night than to defile a heart and a body that belong to God. There will be many more dances offered in this life, and a Christian can afford to miss every one of them.

## **How to Judge It**

So how do we judge it? Not by whether it is fun, for many sins are. Not by whether everyone does it, for the crowd is no guide to heaven. The honest test is simple. Does this dancing stir the desires God reserved for marriage, in me or in others? If it does, then whatever we call it, and whatever the occasion, it is the lasciviousness God condemns. A wedding does not make it clean. A prom does not make it clean. Calling it harmless does not make it harmless.

This is not a hard word meant to rob the young of joy. God gives a better and a cleaner joy than the world's, and He gives the self-control to walk away from what would defile us. Keep your heart pure, keep your body holy, and do not trade them for an evening's pleasure on the floor. The God who made you for better things has far more to give you than the dance ever will.

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*Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.*