

Real Questions From Real People – Dancing

by Micky Galloway

“I do have questions on the subject of dancing. Is it sinful to dance publicly? What about at a wedding? Is it proper? What scriptures if any, condone dancing? I am getting married within the next couple years, and this topic is splitting my relationship.”

Dear _____ ,

I appreciate your question regarding dancing, dancing publicly and dancing at a wedding. A few years ago, I was asked to conduct a wedding where the young bride wanted to have dancing at her wedding. She had not been a Christian very long. The groom had been a Christian longer than she had, but did not want to have dancing at the wedding. He was convinced it was wrong, but his bride’s family wanted the traditional wedding reception that included dancing. We had to work through that issue. I will tell you how that was resolved in a moment, but right now let us consider the general nature of dancing. This is an age old problem in the church, and it continues to present itself anew with each rising generation.

You asked about dancing in the Scriptures. Please consider that there were basically two kinds of dancing found in the Bible. Which more closely defines, describes and depicts the modern, social dance?

Dancing which expressed worship and joy (Psalms 149:1-3; 150:4).

“About the methods of dancing practiced by the ancient Hebrews but little is known. Probably the dancers in some cases joined hands and formed a ring, or part of a ring, as in some heathen representations. The description of David’s dance: he ‘danced before Yahweh with all his might ... leaping and dancing before Yahweh’ (II Samuel 6:14-16) suggests three features of that particular display and the mode of dancing which it represented: violent exertion, leaping (Hebrew *mephazzez*), and whirling round (Hebrew *mekharker*)” (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia). “Women seem generally to have danced by themselves, one often leading the rest, both in dancing and antiphonal song ... Of the social dancing of couples in the modern fashion there is no trace” (Ibid). Consider these illustrations: (1) Miriam and the women of Israel after the Egyptians were destroyed (Exodus 15:20-21); (2) Jephthah’s daughter (Judges 11:34); (3) the women of Israel who met David when the Philistines were defeated (I Samuel 18:6-7); (4) King David before the ark of the covenant when it was returned to Jerusalem (II Samuel 6:12-16). This type of dance was an occasion of public rejoicing (for victories or other blessings granted by God). It was typically segregated by gender.

Dancing which is associated with lustful and idolatrous activities.

Please consider these illustrations. (1) Israel before the golden calf in Exodus 32:19. When Moses came down from the mount, “*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.*” (2) The daughter of Herodias. “*And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him*” (Mark 6:21-22). Herod and others derived pleasure from her dance. Clearly her dancing was seductive and suggestive and due to her dance, John lost his head!

The Bible does not say, “Thou shalt not dance.” However the Bible does contain principles and instructions that may include a whole category of things, such as gambling, social drinking, etc. However, lasciviousness is the problem with the modern, social dance. Paul in a list of sins, including “*lasciviousness*” said, “*they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Galatians 5:19-21). The word comes from (Greek *aselgeia*) and is defined as: “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence” (Thayer). It involves the absence of

moral restraint (Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:19; I Peter 4:3). It is further defined as “indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.” (Fritzsche, from Thayer). Webster defines this word as, “Wanton, lewd, lustful, tending to produce lewd emotions; the synonym of licentious, lecherous, salacious, the antonym of chaste.” Who would deny that the modern dance most certainly involves indecent bodily movements, the unchaste handling of males and females? If this element was removed from the modern dance you would find guys dancing with guys and girls dancing with girls.

Every Christian is commanded to “*flee youthful lusts*” (II Timothy 2:22). Dancing destroys your Godly influence. Read Matthew 5:13-16. How can I help someone else to live a godly life when I participate in dancing? A few years ago an older man asked a question about ball room dancing, or what about square dancing? Though I haven’t dealt with various kinds of modern dance, consistency means something. I asked the older gentleman, “How can you justify ball room dancing and then when your grand daughter wants to go to the senior prom possibly object? Haven’t you compromised your influence?”

What about dancing at weddings? If you are dancing with your husband, save it for the privacy of your wedding night. Regarding the traditional dance with the bride’s father, someone denies that there are lascivious thoughts and perhaps so. However, a DJ or band is brought in to play the music for all others who wish to dance. When such provisions have been made for others to dance and encouraged by the father dancing with his daughter, we are providing the occasion and encouragement for others to commit sin. If dancing is wrong in other settings, does it cease to have a lascivious appeal just because it occurs at the wedding reception? But then someone says, “I can dance without having evil thoughts.” Can you control the thoughts of your partner(s)? Can you control the thoughts of the spectators? Jesus said, “*Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! For it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh*” (Matthew 18:7).

Let us not forget our moral principles on the wedding day. One can have a modest wedding gown, leave out the drinking and dancing and still have a very beautiful and memorable day. Let us not let the world dictate our wedding day.

Now regarding the couple I mentioned earlier. The bride was concerned that her family might be disappointed that she wouldn’t have the traditional reception. Indeed, the wedding was for her and her husband. It was their day! She simply did not make preparations for a DJ and a dance floor. The reception was for visiting and eating. There was no alcohol or dancing. The bride and groom circulated around the audience and visited with those who honored them by coming to share their joyful occasion. It was a very memorable day for all.

You did mention something that gives me concern. You said, “I am getting married within the next couple years, and this topic is splitting my relationship.” If you and your fiancé are having trouble resolving this issue now, what is going to happen as you face other important issues down the road? Is insisting on having the dance at the wedding so important that one would split the relationship over it? I’m getting the sense that you do not want the dance because you believe it is wrong. Is it a matter of necessity to have the dance? Regarding the couple mentioned above, though at that time she may not have been convinced that it was wrong, she was willing to acquiesce to her husband because he did believe it to be wrong. One of the greatest blessings in marriage is to help one another to go to heaven.

I probably haven’t answered all your concerns, but hopefully this will help.

Brotherly,
Micky Galloway