

## The Bible & Dancing

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Is dancing sinful? There are generally two occasions that prompt this question: high school prom and a wedding reception. Can Christians who are teenagers participate in a high school prom? Can Christians dance at a wedding reception? There may be other times when dancing is considered; however, these are occasions in which dancing is expected in our society.

As with any moral question, we must go to the Bible for our answers. What does the Bible say about dancing? Consider the following passages in which dancing is noted.

**Exod. 15:20:** "Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing."

**Judges 11:34:** "Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. She was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter."

**1 Sam. 18:6-7:** "As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

**2 Sam. 6:14:** "And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod."

**Psa. 30:10-12:** "Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!" You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!"

**Eccl. 3:1, 4:** "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

As you read these passages, what do you notice? Who is dancing? Who is dancing with who? Why are people dancing?

In these passages, women are dancing either alone or with other women. In the instance of David, he danced alone as an expression of worship. These passages present dancing in a positive light; however, there are also passages in which dancing is presented in a negative light. Consider the following:

**1 Sam. 30:16:** “And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.”

**Matt. 14:6-7:** “But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.”

These two examples describe dancing which is sinful. In 1 Samuel 30:16, David invaded the Amalekites as they were eating, drinking, and dancing. The Amalekites were celebrating a victory over the Philistines. While they were partying, David invaded them by surprise.

In Matthew 14:6-7, the daughter of Herodias danced at Herod's birthday party. She was dancing to seduce Herod. She accomplished her purpose and was able to persuade Herod to execute John.

These two examples show how dancing can be used to be sensual, entertaining, and seductive. Dancing can accompany false religion and drunken parties. When dancing is used in such ways, dancing is sinful.

Additionally, there are other important concepts the Bible identifies as sinful which could involve dancing. Now, consider these passages:

**Rom. 13:12-14:** “The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

**Gal. 5:19-21:** “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

**1 Pet. 4:3:** “For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.”

One of the striking features of these passages is that dancing is not listed. Does this mean dancing is not sinful? These passages use terms and phrases like “*sensuality, drunkenness, orgies, things such like, passions, and drinking parties.*” These terms describe people who come together to let loose and gratify lustful desires. They are not people who have come together to honor God.

Where do people go to party, carouse, and let loose? Yes, we have to think and use wise judgment to answer this question; however, this question has an answer. Teenagers might go to the prom to carouse and engage in sensual behavior. This type of behavior will most certainly be

found at a bar or night club. This type of behavior might even be seen at a wedding reception. There is any number of situations in which people may engage in the kind of behavior condemned in these passages.

### **Conclusion**

No, there is not a passage in the Bible which says, "Thou shalt not dance!" However, the Bible is not a book of rules and regulations. While there are actions that are specifically prohibited and encouraged, the Bible identifies attitudes of the heart which produce certain types of behaviors. When we engage in any activity as a way to gratify lust, whatever we are doing is sinful whether the Bible identifies the specific action or not.

The Bible teaches us to be sober and to learn self-control. God's grace trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives (Titus 2:12). Drugs, alcohol, and unrestrained hormones will lead to all kinds of sexual immorality.

As Christians, we must not participate in activities in which sensuality and unrestrained behavior are encouraged. We certainly must not create an environment in which sensuality and unrestrained behavior are encouraged. Of course, this is not how our society thinks. However, we are to be different.

We are to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:16). We cannot reflect the brightness of God's glory through any activity in which lust is encouraged and gratified. Failing to reflect the glory of God is the Biblical definition of sin (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, we must make proper application of the moral principles of God's word in our daily lives.