

Text: various

We are back to our Ask the Pastor series and here is my question for this week:

“Why do Baptists shy away from dancing?”

So we are going to talk about

Baptists and Dancing

I thought I would just ask the question on the internet and found some interesting articles. One of them was just recently updated (May 18, 2023), with this title: “Myth or Fact, Do Baptists Dance?”

The first thing I’d like to say is that this subject (and others like it) are features of conservative, Bible-believing churches, whether they are Baptists or not.

The church I grew up in was decidedly NOT Baptist, but likewise held dancing in low esteem (though some of our young people would go to school dances).

- As I recall, I went once or twice, because it was announced there would be a games room... I stayed out of gym where all the dancing was happening

Our message today will examine mentions of dancing in the Bible and then consider why Christians might see at least some forms of dancing as not acceptable.

I. Passages that mention dancing**A. Positively**

Ex 15.20 Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.

Ps 149.3 Let them praise His name with dancing; Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.

Ps 30.11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,

Ecc 3.4 A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance.

Lk 15.25 ¶ “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

B. Negatively

Ex 32.6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Ex 32.19 It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and *the* dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

Mt 14.6 But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before *them* and pleased Herod,

Mk 6.22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

II. What is dancing?

A. Dictionary

"a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music"¹

"to move one's feet or body, or both, rhythmically in a pattern of steps, especially to the accompaniment of music."²

B. Dancing, beauty, and art

1. God made us in his image, which includes all kinds of creativity and expressions of beauty
2. Men express beauty through various forms of art
 - a. Music
 - b. Painting
 - c. Sculpture

¹ Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

² "Dance" dictionary.com, Accessed 6/24/2023

- d. Literature
 - e. Dance
3. Children will naturally respond to some music with motions
 4. As children grow up, some become more skilled at beautiful expression by motion

Whatever you think of ballet, it is a high art form.

5. Other forms: Wikipedia has an article "List of dance styles"
 - a. African and American
 - b. Oriental
 - c. Ceremonial dance
 - d. Disco/Soul dance
 - e. Free and improvised dance
 - f. Historical dance
 - g. Latin dance/Rhythm
 - h. Novelty and fad dances
 - i. Social dance
 - j. Swing dance
 - k. "Other"

There are many specific kinds of dance listed under each category

- C. All art can express high ideals as well as dark sensuality
 1. We see this in painting, sculpture, literature
 2. We should see this in music as well
 3. And we of course see this in dance

No one really denies that some dances are meant to imitate sensuality and/or sexual acts.

It is here that Baptists (and most other Bible-believing Christians) have problems

III. The issue isn't "does the Bible approve dancing"

A. The warnings of the Bible about the world and the flesh

1. Do not love the world (but what is "the world")

1 Jn 2.15-17 ¶ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

2. Turn away from the works of the flesh

Gal 5.19-21 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ep 5.3-7 ¶ But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴ and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them;

B. The problem with dancing

1. Some dancing indulges the flesh (especially simulation of sexual or sensual activity): stay far away!

Some Christians think swing dancing is legitimate — I don't see how it doesn't imitate sensual activity.

2. Some dancing inflames worldliness

A friend of mine told me about how his mother-in-law gave up instructing ballet when she became a Christian. She realized that dancers were filled with pride, that the ballet didn't foster Holy Spirit thinking but worldly values and accomplishment.

However, one could say the same about any skill

Ballet often does have costumes that emphasize the body in an immodest way.

3. Folk dancing usually expresses different (and often wholesome) ideas

It is here where Christians may be more open to dance, but also cautious.

Conclusion:

Should Christians dance? In most couples dancing, I would say no.

In modern dancing with rock music and such, I would say no.

Ballroom dancing, though the music is better, emphasizes the wrong things, in my mind.

Folk dancing can be wholesome activity, but Christians have to think all these issues through with a priority on honoring the Lord, no matter what you do.