

Social Dancing
Assemblies of God USA

This Assemblies of God Perspective reflects commonly held beliefs based on Scripture which have been endorsed by the church's Commission on Doctrinal Purity and the Executive Presbytery.

Should Christians participate in social dancing or even attend dances? What does the Bible say on this subject? What are the concerns about dancing and its impact on one's spiritual commitment?

To dance or not to dance has perplexed Christians for generations. It's an issue that church leaders have neglected to address in recent years.

Those who see nothing wrong in dancing advance several arguments in its favor: a) dancing helps one gain poise and social graces, b) the Bible talks about dancing, c) some non-Pentecostal churches organize and sponsor dances for their young people, d) dancing is an enjoyable activity for developing friendships, e) nearly everyone dances so one has to participate to be accepted.

The church should be concerned about the development of its people socially as well as mentally, physically, and spiritually. But is 'dancing' the best means of developing a person in those four areas? In allowing individuals to participate in dances, does the church put at risk the spiritual welfare of some individuals who may potentially run the tragic gauntlet of backsliding and ultimately losing their salvation? Does a church that condones social dancing risk spiritual decline for embracing forms of the world known to harbor destructive influences?

To find what the Bible says about dancing, one must look at the context each time the word is used. Of the nearly two dozen mentions of *dance*, *danced*, or *dancing*, not one of them refers to social dancing between a male and a female. When used in a positive sense, the word indicates joyful, exuberant celebration either toward God (as worship) or toward a conquering hero (like David). We are not told what kind of dancing was taking place when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments, but we do know that Moses was angry with the inappropriate celebration and revelry (Ex 32:19). We also know from the context of Mk 6:22-29 that the dancing of Herodias' daughter before Herod and his drunken companions was so compelling or sensuous that the king was willing to forego good judgment and grant the request for the execution of John the Baptist—an order he did not want to give. In short, **there is no biblical support for social dancing as we know it today.**

It is true dancing is not specifically mentioned in any of the New Testament lists of vices and sinful practices from which Christians were to refrain. This is probably because dancing was not something the early New Testament Church struggled with in marking its separation from a worldly society. However, the New Testament is filled with cautions about the emotions and passions that are part of any physical contact between the sexes. We are specifically warned to flee temptation, especially lust and sexual temptation (1 Cor 6:18, 1 Tim 6:9-11, 2 Tim 2:22).

While many couples who engage in social dancing never delve into immoral behavior, 1 Th 5:22 says we are to "avoid every kind of evil." **The best way to avoid evil is to avoid those temptations that can easily lead to the evil.** Some have claimed that public social dancing is a better alternative than couples isolating themselves and engaging in petting and other intimacies. But rather than discouraging sexual intimacies, **social dancing makes physical intimacies more attractive and inviting.** The Assemblies of God has historically opposed social dancing because it can potentially lead innocent people into temptation and sin.

However, refusing to dance does not by itself keep one from immoral behavior. **If the heart is set on doing something wrong, no precautions or rules will help.**

Some young people might agree that the above description of relationships between the sexes may apply to others but that they personally have pure motives—they merely want the friendship and fellowship dancing would seem to provide. But is attending dances worth the risk? Clearly the state of our society—the world we have been called out of—suggests there is more at stake. We have too long heard that moral standards and convictions on purity and holiness are outdated and we should help free our people from legalism. **Society is now paying a heavy price for this libertine attitude toward moral standards** in the form of fornication, broken relationships, divorce, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and the emotional havoc placed on friends and family of willing

participants, etc... These tragic consequences of lowered moral standards are being seen in increasing numbers in our churches.

In the face of this moral erosion **the church calls all Christian adults and parents to abstain from social dancing for themselves and their children in light of God's desire for His people to be a separate and holy people** (2 Cor 6:16-18, Tit 2:11-14, 2 Tim 2:21-22).

Concerns

It is estimated that large segments of Christian youth in certain parts of the country are attending high school dances and participating in proms. It is ironic that at the same time we recognize the importance of getting our youth involved in "True Love Waits" rallies, some of the same parents feel social dancing is equally good for their child's development. The caution to be sexually pure is hollow when temptation is encouraged through involvement in dances. **Just one life lost for eternity because of a freer interpretation of biblical morality is more than any individual, parent, or church should allow.** God is not willing that any should perish. **Neither should the church be negligent in warning of those practices which may allow it to happen.**

Parents and church leaders must also be aware of the seductive and enticing atmosphere of most dance settings. **The music, the immoral lyrics, the dim lighting, and the immodest attire of some who attend all encourage levels of intimacy that often leads to greater temptations.** Though some defend public school dances as not fitting this description, **the associations formed at a dance can lead to later involvement in dances in settings which are entirely threatening to a Christian lifestyle,** where drinking and drunken behavior are permitted.

Some Christians in various parts of the country are establishing "Christian dance clubs" utilizing Christian contemporary music in an attempt to eliminate objections to dancing because it often takes place in unwholesome, even evil, settings. The very idea dancing is often connected with other vices should sound a caution to those who attempt to sanitize an activity which at best poses great moral risk.