

DANCING AND OTHER LASCIVIOUS ACTIVITIES ARE IMMORAL

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They met in high school. Their eyes met, and they liked each other. As time went by, he asked her for a date. After high school they continued dating, going to dances occasionally. He later asked for her hand in marriage—she consented, and they were married. A short time after their marriage, after they had established their jobs and home life, they decided that they would go to a club where people danced on the second floor. It soon became their Saturday evening habit at the same club. Each saw nothing wrong with dancing. After all, it was good exercise and they enjoyed the entertainment qualities.

One Saturday he was ill, and he insisted that she go on to the dance without him. He thought that she should not have to stay at home just because he did not feel well. About midnight, his wife had not returned home, and he went to the club to see about her. When he arrived, he soon found her entwined in the arms of another man. He was outraged and ordered her out and home. The newspaper reported that there were 17 stair steps going up to the second floor. When the ambulance came to pick up her lifeless body, they found 17 stab wounds on her body. Evidently, he stabbed her on every step as she was going down the steps in front of him. He may still be doing time in prison for aggravated first-degree murder.

The problem was not in them meeting in high school, dating, or in marrying—all other things being equal. Dancing led to her death personally—and their downfall in general. Not in conjunction with this true story—a woman who danced, admitted in an interview, that she would allow a man to put his hands in places on her body during a dance that was normally reserved for only her husband. It is evident that dance can incite one to do many things out of the ordinary. The author has never known dancing to make one a stronger Christian or convert one soul to the Lord. On the other hand, it has weakened members of the church; one was a deacon and his wife, who were members of the Moose Club—another of the Elk's Club. When we preached on these things, there was much consternation on their part that someone would dare mention these matters in a sermon. One of these couples felt betrayed by their preacher (me). They went and “joined” the Methodist church so they could strike back at me. They did not betray me, but they did betray the Lord. Why? They admitted to me that they loved to slow dance.

LASCIVIOUSNESS

Paul said, “**Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness**” (Gal. 5:19). Lasciviousness comes from “*aseigeia*, (wantonness), sexual vice of all kinds prevailed in heathenism.”¹ Heathenism is most certainly prevailing in America today. Some of the young record stars have dances that almost lead to riot. Television cameras show their every move as they gyrate across stages across

the world. One announcer cannot speak of such things without showing or calling one performer's name, and all the while they are showing pictures of her and her dance ensemble practicing their routines. The whole idea is to show those who are young, and old men who can only lust know that the "flesh market" is alive and well in America today. The clothing that these stars are wearing leaves nothing to the imagination. The tops they wear do not cover their upper torso, and the bottoms seldom cover the bottom. The idea may be to sell CDs or DVDs but make no mistake: sexuality is being peddled in a very troubling way.

The Super Bowl debacle in 2004 had emphasis given to the half-time performance when one of the stars had a part of her body laid bare with the claim that this was a wardrobe accident by the stars involved. The author did not see the half-time show, but he has seen others. Cheerleaders for the various football squads are dressed in some of the most immodest attire that we have ever seen. Some of these cheerleaders are not all that young. Tryouts are held, and I have read where those who can show the most skin in somewhat of a professional manner are the ones that get the jobs. Are we then surprised when half-naked people perform at half time? A former cheerleader of our acquaintance—a member of the church—used to dress in the skimpiest clothing and would do twirls at basketball games to flirt with the men showing her almost nakedness. She had to get married. That marriage wound up in divorce when her husband left for another woman. She later was an expectant unwed mother again when she married another man. Sometime later she came to church and responded to the Lord's invitation. She started by telling me that her first wrong move was cheerleading. She admitted living in adultery. I studied with her until she was no longer interested in the truth.

The pull of the flesh is so strong, but one can hardly tell parents this. They seem to try every way under the sun to get their young daughters to be accepted as a cheerleader. They will miss worship services during Gospel meetings in order to promote a young daughter so that she might be a cheerleader. Why do parents get angry when preachers show the fallacy of such conduct? Is dressing in such a way sinful? Yes! Is missing worship services sinful? Of course! Why get mad at the messenger for one's own lack of devotion to the will of the Lord? Evidently parents know that it is wrong to begin with, and they must blame someone. Okay, blame me for preaching the truth, but I will not take the blame for a child cheerleading. Cheering is not all that this is about here in West Tennessee. Cheerleaders put on dances that expose almost every inch of flesh during the half time at basketball games.

To the contrary there are those other precious young people who will not submit to the pressure. One young lady was first trumpet in the marching band for a large high school of about a thousand students. She wanted to try out to be the Field Commander for the band. She won the competition hands down, but she refused to participate when the band director would not let her wear a beautiful suit that covered all the body and was not provocative in anyway. She was/is a Christian.

Her parents would have bought her the very best modest attire available. She never asked her parents about the situation. She refused on her own merit because she loved the Lord more than to be attired and perform in clothing that was indecent. She understood that the band director's mind was in the wrong place. He was desirous of her showing her almost naked body to audiences during band shows. She lost all respect for the band director. Let us understand that there are many young ladies that are in this latter category and we pray that their number will yet increase. Both of these examples started with making choices. Both of these girls were Christians. One is faithful the other is living in adultery, uninterested at this point in her soul's salvation. Remember that she told the author that this all started on the cheering squad.

The apostle Paul shows the struggle that endures. He said, **"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would"** (Gal. 5:17). In verse 19, he lists four specific sins all of which are lusts of the flesh. Eve in the long ago was tempted with three specific things, two of which were the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh. In the author's mind these four sins in verse 19 are inseparably connected. These fleshly lusts are opposed to the spiritual life that Christians are instructed to live. Thus, there is war going on between fleshly things and spiritual things. Men and women ought to dress and conduct themselves in such a way that do not incite one another to commit these horrible sins. Paul shows that the law of the Lord is contrary to the lusts of the flesh. We are fearful that the pull of the flesh is winning out over spiritual things. We do not see the concern that we used to see. The plunging necklines and the higher waistlines have almost met, and we are called "old fogies" for protesting, but that does not stop the protest. We hear young mothers say that they just cannot find longer dresses. We are not saying that this is not so, but my Carrie and our daughter have no problems finding long dresses. They have no problems in finding blouses or sweaters that are not too tight or revealing. Therefore, either the younger women are not trying hard enough or do not care enough to find things to wear that are not provocative. We must get the message across to this present generation that lasciviousness is totally opposite of all that chastity stands for.

Let us take into consideration the way that lasciviousness is used in some other passages. Jesus said in Mark 7:22 that **"Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness"** all belonged together. Focus for a moment on **"an evil eye."** Jesus said, **"The lamp of the body is the eye"** (cf. Mat. 6:22). Jesus was saying that the eye should be single, seeing only the light of truth, but if the eye is trained in another direction, all these evil things in Mark 7:22 come about and lasciviousness is in the middle of this classification of sins. Jesus said in part in Matthew 20:15: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" *Eye* here is used for a synonym for *jealousy*. It cannot be denied that our subject is tied to the eye many times in the Scriptures. Jesus

indicated that these sins under consideration in Mark 7 came from within from the heart and were preceded by evil thoughts in that heart.

The key word under consideration in this piece is found in 2 Corinthians 12:21:

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Paul had warned these Christians regarding their conduct. Paul told them to flee fornication among other things in the first epistle. Now when he goes there the second time, he does not want to be humiliated by them having not repented of their sensuality. Did the reader notice that lasciviousness followed uncleanness and fornication in the passage? It is very obvious that lasciviousness is tied to every sensual sin listed in the Scriptures. As brother N.B. Hardeman was sometimes wont to say, "This is ungetoverable." Let it be remembered that idol temples were all over Corinth. Venus and Aphrodite were only two of these, and they represented all kinds of sensuality. Adam Clarke, in commenting on part of this passage, said:

There must have been a total relaxation of discipline, else such abominations could not have been tolerated in the Christian Church. And although what is here spoken could only be the ease of a few; yet the many were ill disciplined, else these must have been cast out. On the whole, this Church seems to have been a composition of excellences and defects, of vices and virtues; and should not be quoted as a model for a Christian Church.²

It may indeed be the case that the church thus far in the 21st century has been very lax in dealing with such sensual matters. Many members are not interested in hearing about these vices. The preacher is sometimes held in disdain if he proclaims these things, but we had better be concerned about the souls of our hearers and our own souls enough to warn and plead for the proper course to be followed. Ezekiel was told that he would save his soul if he delivered the message though his hearers would be lost if they did not obey, but he would lose his soul with his hearers if he did not tell them the truth. While we as preachers wish to save all souls, we must be interested in our own souls. We cannot save our souls in "skirting" these issues.

Another passage that we ought to take a serious look at is Ephesians 4:19, where Paul said: "**Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.**" Please notice that they gave themselves over to lasciviousness. They had no moral objection to lewd conduct or wantonness. Why? Paul is talking about Gentiles whose hearts were hardened unlike those Gentiles in the church who were "**past feeling.**" They were wholly hardened to the truth. There was a total lack of emotion regarding moral issues. Their heart was rock hard to the truth. They may give mental assent to what is said, but their conscience is as seared over as it can get; thus, there is no

remorse or regret for their actions. If these Gentiles in Ephesians 4 do not remind us of America today, we had better watch out. We are near the point that our hearts are hardened to the truth and really do not care about such things as lasciviousness and all the things that go with it. This was voluntary action on the part of the Ephesians. No one forced them to this conclusion for their lives. When the reaction to the truth is stated as being like this, the heart is as hard as a rock, being completely insensitive to pure ideals. There was no sensitivity to the immorality they were committing. Hearts that are past feeling are near the point of no return—no hope—without God. Whose heart can be tendered, who is past feeling in these sensual issues? The conscience is silenced and has become calloused. Until those calloused consciences can be pricked with the truth, there is no hope for their return. After a while, it is impossible for them to return—a thought over which there is some disagreement. Purity of life and conscience has escaped these who willingly, by their own choice, turned their lives over to Satan.

In Ephesians 4:18, the fact is stated that their understanding was darkened, and the text does not tell us how this happened. When this happens there is an indulgence in sin without remorse. A man who indulges in low vices will weaken his mental powers and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion.

Another important passage dealing with our subject is found in 1 Peter 4:3. Peter by inspiration was comparing the Jews in their former days to the Gentiles. He shows how they indulged in the same vices as the Gentiles. Here is the way he said it: **“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.”** Notice that Peter used the word *in* before lasciviousness thus we have *en aselgeiais*. All these sins are in the locative case with *en*. “In unbridled lustful excesses’ is an alternate reading, according to Vine.³ They were walking in the indulgence of corrupt passions—the word walk being often used in the Scriptures to denote the manner of life. Again and again we notice that lasciviousness is inseparable from lust. The affair or action starts with lust and grows into something greater. When Peter used the word *we*, it does not mean that he himself was walking in these ungodly ways, but was here speaking of Christians in general. The author believes that the revellings mentioned were lascivious feasting that were set to songs. Paul alludes to these same things in Romans 13:13 where he said in part: “...Not in rioting, and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness ...” It is not difficult to see the unclean songs and wantonness that he refers to in those drunken feasts.

The abominations practiced at their idol feasts, where they not only worshipped the idol, but also did it with the most impure, obscene, and abominable rites. This was the general state of the Gentile world, and with this monstrous wickedness Christianity had to struggle everywhere. In all these years, Christianity is still

dealing with these atrocities. The battle is for the minds of our young people first of all. We must change minds regarding the terrible nature of sin before we can get the soul in position to hear and understand what it means to be lost eternally. We cannot stop the atrocities. Our duty is to educate, educate, educate!

DANCING IN CHURCH

Why, I can now hear someone saying that brother Davidson is beside himself and must be crying wolf when there is no wolf. Such a conclusion is indeed wrong, as we will see.

In about 1974, I was preaching in a mission meeting in New York out on Long Island. I was dubious when I first walked into the building. The pew Bibles were *Good News For Modem Man*. I told the preacher that he should take those up and throw them away and that if he did not, I would preach on the errors of such a senseless book that same night. He agreed to take them up. This was a weeklong engagement, and each night the audience was being promised a treat on Friday night. I had no clue as to what the treat was, and it did not pique my interest a great deal. However, when Friday night came, and at the prescribed hour of 6:30, one hour before our worship was to begin, all were assembled for the treat. As they marched in, they were singing while walking down the center isle and took their positions down front. We had a singing group composed of members of that congregation, some of which I had not seen earlier during the meeting, or some may have not been members there, but I know that there were several whom I had not met earlier during this engagement. Some of the women standing in the front row were dressed in leather or faux leather pants, while others had on leotards. The more they “performed,” the more provocative they became so that they were gyrating with their hips and making motions with their legs that embarrassed me beyond belief. Needless to say that, whatever my lesson that night was to be, it changed immediately. I apologized to the visitors who might have been there and told them that this kind of conduct did not take place in faithful churches of Christ. I preached for an hour and a half on what we had just witnessed. Faces were turning red as that singing group was sitting there in the audience. They heard one sermon for sure. Whether they ever heard another I do not know. I left town that night never to see that place again even until this very day.

I was not surprised when the *Wall Street Journal Online*, with a cover date of October 14, 2004, said the following in part:

WINDCREST, Texas - At a concert here a few miles outside San Antonio, young adults in clingy leotards and sequined vests shimmied and shook through the aisles as shouts from the crowd rose above the music. The dancers were here to “minister” at a gospel festival at the New Creation Christian Fellowship Church. “There’s power, deliverance, healing and declaration in dance,” said one dancer, “Lady” Michelle Nurse. “It’s a form of praise and worship.”⁴

I am wondering if they might have learned this from us! One preacher went on to say:

“When you put women in leotards in the church, it’s going to open the doors to problems because it attracts unbelievers in a fast and powerful way—and worldly women who want to show off their bodies,” says the Rev. Ron Brown, who bristles at the thought of putting a dance ministry in his First Missionary Baptist Church, a 100-member congregation in Desoto, Texas.

Mr. Brown is correct in his judgment of this matter. Worldly women want to show off their bodies, whether it is in a church building or not. A church building is a way to try to justify the passions that run deep and affect the moral conduct of not only their own souls, but those also that lust after them.

In the *USA Today* Life Section D on Monday, October 11, 2004, Karen Thomas, a *USA Today* writer started with this headline: “The Young and the Shameless.” In the article, there are two covers from two different magazines. One of them is not identified, but the other is *GQ*. “Lindsay Lohan Isn’t Teasing,” *GQ* says on its cover. Ms. Thomas says “Lindsey Lohan, 18, *The Mean Girls* star isn’t afraid to flaunt her sex appeal in photo spreads.” She is shown with her thumbs in her hip huggers as if she is pulling them down. Ms. Thomas has a sub-headline that says, “Today’s brat pack of ‘It’ girls has it all, except age, modesty.”⁵

Am I surprised? No, not anymore! It is a common happening almost every day. Whether we are talking about churches or the media, we are going in a worldly direction. There is no reason to blush anymore. Sex appeal sells books and newspapers. Cosmetic people understood a long time ago that sex appeal sold cosmetics. I have never seen a wrinkled-up, old, or young-faced ugly woman put on the billboards or on television peddling cosmetics.

There is no doubt in my mind that evil thoughts, evil eyes, adultery, fornication, drinking booze, mixed swimming, pornography, immodesty, and dancing all go together. We are losing the battle for the most part, or so it seems to me. Will we let our voices be stilled? Will we let God’s Word lie silent before us?

ENDNOTES

1. A. T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Power Bible CD 2.4 (Bible Program).
2. Adam Clarke, *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*, Power Bible CD 2.4 (Bible Program).
3. *Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*: W. E. Vine p. 310.
4. Kourtney Stringer, “Spirited Debate: Dancing in Church Splits Congregations,” *Wallstreet Journal Online*, October 24, 2004. <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB109770949087844809>>.
5. Karen Thomas, “The Young and The Shameless,” *USA TODAY*, LIFE SECTION D, page 1.~