

# It's That Time Again

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The end of the school year always brings with it the school prom, reviving the question of whether dancing is appropriate behavior for a Christian. Whether the older “cheek-to-cheek” style or the modern “disco” styles are considered, the issues differ little. What the latter lacks in bodily contact it more than makes up for in repulsive bodily movements. There are only three types of activities open to any person. Which of these three is acceptable for one who has pledged his or her allegiance to Christ?

1. Those that positively promote spiritual welfare
2. Those that neither promote nor weaken one spiritually
3. Those that definitely promote temptation and spiritual weakness.

God's word so constantly urges us to do those things that spiritually edify that the numerous passages need not even be cited. It is not only **acceptable** for us to “exercise ourselves unto godliness,” it is **demand**ed of us! The areas that are indifferent or innocent (neither actually edifying nor weakening to our spiritual growth) are permissible – as long as they do not cause another to sin (1 Cor. 8:8-13). Thus, there are times and circumstances when even things harmless in themselves are not permitted. Does it even need to be stated that all things in the third category are prohibited the followers of Jesus, the sons and daughters of God? **It is verily so!**

Please note a fair sampling of scripture:

- “Be not fashioned according to this world; But be ye transformed. (Rom. 12:2);
- Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:17);
- “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them” (Eph. 5:11).

Now, into which of these three areas does dancing fall? Does it promote one's spiritual welfare? If so, how? Has anyone ever converted (or even tried to) one's partner while dancing? Do people pray, study the Bible or otherwise worship while dancing? Does dancing provoke meditation on spiritual and pure themes? Surely, the matter is beyond argument dancing **in no way** promotes spirituality and is therefore not in the scope of activities demanded of Christians.

Is dancing in the second category – things that are innocent in themselves, thus permissible? If so, why does the prom have to be carefully chaperoned? Have the godliest men and women from ancient times to the present including a host of elders and preachers, wasted countless hours and effort warning against a practice that is, after all, harmless and acceptable?

Do the most dedicated men and women you know dance? Would you be disillusioned if your preacher or your elders attended the prom and danced? If it is harmless and innocent, why would you be disillusioned? If it is harmless and innocent why do even non-Christians call the Christian on the dance floor, “hypocrite”? **It is nothing in the realm of innocent, thus permissible, activity!**

Dancing falls into the third category – it promotes temptation and spiritual weakness and is therefore “off-limits” for those who let Jesus rule their lives. Do we need to catalog some of the tragic “fall-out” from this worldly practice? While drinking is not allowed at the actual prom, the strictest sponsor can't control what goes on outside. The mother who so loudly defends her daughter's “right” to attend the prom might “sing a different tune” if she could hear her date reporting and boasting to his friends the morning after. The New Testament specifically forbids “indecent bodily movements” and “unchaste handling of males and females” in its prohibition of **lasciviousness** (for just such the word means). I dare anyone to write a better definition of dancing. Although lasciviousness is called a “work of the flesh” which will keep one out of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21), some go light on rejecting the Lord and say, “I don't see anything wrong with it.” They would be more honest if they said, “I don't **want** to see anything wrong with it.”

Some parents say, “I'd rather my kids be at the prom with chaperones than parked in some remote spot.” Yes, and I'd rather my kids see an X-rated movie than an XXX-rated one, but they'll do neither – with my permission, much less my approval. Since when does the mention of a greater evil justify the practice of the lesser? Those who go to the prom are surely not going to be encouraged to better control their fleshly passions after the prom. Some kids say, “I won't dance; I just want to attend.” We confront temptation unavoidably every day, but it is a different matter to intentionally place ourselves where we know temptation will abound. Can one pray, “Lord help me to be stronger,” and then purposely go where the pressure is on him to be weaker? Even if you don't dance, your very presence at the prom will compromise your influence for good with some people you know.

The whole issue comes down to this: shall we try to raise our friends to the level of wholesome, unquestioned behavior as the Lord teaches or shall we allow our worldly friends to lower us to their worldly, destructive practices? After all, just **who is our Lord?**

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, May 21, 1981, of which I was editor.]

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