

SHALL WE DANCE?

The scene is one of confusion. Four gaily costumed couples have come together to form a square. The caller has begun the night with simple steps and routines. Now that some have begun to feel confident in their ability to follow directions, he decides to mess with their minds a little. The next number begins. Fiddles twanging, the music starts and the caller begins his chant. Routines begin easy, but the calls come faster and faster as they become more complex. Inevitably, someone loses track of what they are doing and they bring the coordinated efforts of seven other people to a screeching halt. The first square to lose it becomes the butt of good natured laughter that is easy to dispense and accept because anyone could be the next casualty. Square dancing is a celebration of community and of fellowship.

This scene is one of fellowship also, but involves only two. Even in the midst of a crowd. The degree of fellowship involved will depend on the familiarity desired and the social dance being played. These are touching dances and are beautiful in their grace and the coordination of the movements of two people. They range from the stately waltz to the erotic tango to the rambunctious polka. Involvement ranges from hilarity to the purely sensual. These are dances for lovers. The movement of one body against another, combined with eye contact and body language, forms a duet of messages both sent and received. It is no surprise that dances are the meeting place of lovers in the fairy tales of our time. In the slow dance, with your partner's body held tight against you as intimately as is mutually acceptable, you gaze into their eyes and it seems your souls are beginning to unite. And you wish the moment could last forever.

Sometimes it seems as though the music will never stop. Your aerobic instructor does not seem to understand that they are likely to need CPR skills for you soon. You are not real keen on being dependent for your continued existence on someone foolish enough to expend that kind of energy all at once and keep smiling. The only plus to the class seems to be that your skin tight exercise outfit is showing the improvements in your muscle tone to whatever interested observers happen to be hanging around or exercising behind you. If the interest level increases, you might have occasion to use those sensual movements incorporated in the exercise routines. Probably though, you will just respond to any overtures of interest with a polite, albeit flattered, refusal.

This last scene involves darkness and clothing that in no way inhibits movement. You can feel the music in your body. The beat stirs your blood as you move out onto the floor. There is no concentration necessary for this dance. Your body responds to the music and the night takes on a rhythm of its own. You move from side to side and twist with the music, heart pounding, blood pumping. It is a celebration of youth. Of vitality. Of glorious life itself. It is a form of release as the tensions of the week melt away in the exertion. No thinking is needed. No partner is needed. The animal side is awake and doing well and the carnal nature inherited from birth revels in the license being given it. As the tempo increases and self consciousness decreases, the dance becomes more wanton. The base nature is being fed and its desires begin to control your entire being. This phenomena is why many primitive tribes would dance exuberantly before they went to war or before they killed their captives. Feeding the needs of the flesh dampens the power of the spirit that knows better.

It should be apparent that these are all familiar scenes to one of us. A testimony of sorts follows.

I loved to dance at one point in time. I believe that dancing as an expression of joy and vitality is a God given gift. I believe that there will be dancing in heaven, and it is therefore appropriate in the church. I just can not do it there. As many others have perverted the gifts God has given them, I abused His gift of grace and rhythm. The places I danced in most often involved drinking first to

loosen inhibitions. It kind of makes you wonder, when you have to get God created barriers out of the way first to enjoy an activity. First I danced to please a lady I cared for. After a time, I moved from self-consciousness to a simple pride in my ability to do it well. When I could dance without concentrating on it, I was free to use the dance itself as a means of touching and provoking response in my partner. And dance in my life evolved from simple enjoyment to a sensual pleasure.

Pulled from that world into a new Life with Christ, I find myself cleansed of many of the temptations I struggled with before. I now worship to the sweet music of the songs of Zion and I find something remarkable has occurred. Others who danced in the world, dance before God in willingness to give to Him what they gave to the god of the world. Yet, when I contemplate what it would be like to dance before the Lord, I can no longer feel the rhythm of the music. It simply and suddenly leaves me. And I find myself loathe to seek after that from which I feel I have been delivered

Now I find myself, as a man, being responsible before God as the priest of my family. I find myself trying to guide the spiritual development of my children, knowing that I, not the pastor or the church, will answer for what I make of these precious lives entrusted into my care. Then along comes prom night. The event that has evolved in our society to a rite of passage. In a world where our children have few ways of defining what constitutes adulthood, this event signifies a step toward independence. In the eyes of their date at least, they will be dressed as an adult and treated as a man or a woman. With no resource of scripture to fall back on, knowing that they might well have inherited a love and ability for dancing, knowing my own failure in this area, I dread the question that will come sooner or later. Can I go to the prom?

It seems now as though our reply should be, "I don't know. Can you go to the prom? Can you take the God that you are betrothed to, the one that you carry inside of you, to the prom? If you enter wholly into the wrong type of dance, will He enjoy being relegated to a submissive role by your body? Even if you or your date is not wearing them, will He be comfortable in the midst of the revealing dresses being worn to declare a state of womanhood? When you observe the subtle touching and that which is not so subtle, will He like what He sees? After the prom, will He like the activities that couples amuse themselves with till the early morning hours in a small town where everything shuts down early? More importantly, will He even choose to stay with you? And if He does not, what is there between you and any temptation or lust that Satan brings against you? Or act of destruction?"

It is easy to suppose that we are just creating a worst case scenario. That is exactly right! The supposition is that getting a date to the prom will make you somehow fit in with your friends and become one of the crowd. You don't really intend to do anything except maybe a slow dance or two with your date, maybe a snack, then come home. If you choose to go, perhaps that is all that might happen. But if your date is not living for God, you will not have total control over the direction the evening takes. What often happens is more like a roller coaster. You make a small decision to get in and sit down. Then you just hang on for the rest of the ride and pray when it is over that you are not messed up for life. Very few of the many people who have died in drunken accidents, lost their innocence on prom night, or became parents as part of the celebration, set out to do it. All they did was give free rein to their bodies. By choice, by alcohol, or by being lost in the rhythm of the night. Once the carnal nature has control, you are playing in Satan's home court. Since the fall in Eden, that nature belongs to him.

Is it wrong to dance? We honestly do not believe that all of it is wrong. We know that there is beauty in dancing in the Spirit before the Lord. We believe that enjoyment can be had in certain forms of dancing, especially between men and their wives. But knowing how easily temptation

arises, knowing how many forms of dancing cannot be pleasing to our Lord, we choose not to. We choose not to give a foothold to the carnal nature that so badly wants to dominate our lives again. We worry that you might.

Can we tempt you instead to forsake the dangers of this world's prom night for a future date with a heavenly lover? Your dance card was entirely filled and reserved by Him long ago. The first time you will see Him face to face will be on your wedding day. But we promise that you will be carried away in His arms to the sound of special music. A wedding march. Believe it or not, He dances divinely. Best of all, He would just die to have you as His partner. When you are held by Him, when your soul joins with His, the moment will really last forever. Will you wait for that dance?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever watched a couple dancing a social dance such as the waltz and wished that you had the training, nerve, and grace to do it?
2. Do you feel that the exercise outfits that are worn for aerobics are really the best design necessary to properly exercise?
3. Have you ever been involved with a dance or watched a dance where the music seemed to take on a life of its own and the dancers seemed totally abandoned to the beat? What was the setting for the event?
4. Do you feel some forms of dancing are acceptable? Do you feel some are not? What makes the difference to you, if there is one?
5. Many people do not dance in front of others because they feel clumsy and uncoordinated. Suppose you are one of these. If you could suddenly acquire the grace and skill needed to dance with someone you care for, would you then?
6. King David danced before the Lord in the sight of all of Israel and embarrassed his wife. What do you think when you see someone dancing before the Lord? Is it a sacrifice? A pure form of worship? Exuberance? Embarrassing to you? Have you ever done it or thought about doing it? Why or why not?
7. Have you ever been to a prom? If not, why not? Do you feel there are spiritual reasons not to attend one?
8. Do you feel that most of the attire you have seen being worn to proms appeals to the carnal nature or the spiritual? Do you feel any of the typical activities of a prom event and its aftermath are pleasing to God? Which activities?
9. Have you ever entered activities that could be spiritually dangerous, such as slow dancing or going parking, and consciously made a decision beforehand with your date as to how far certain activities should progress? Does the idea of such a discussion seem foolish?
10. Is it easier to make decisions beforehand or in the heat of the moment? Should you even put yourself in a position to have to make such decisions?
11. What if you truly care about your date and they have a very different idea of a proper stopping point than you do?
12. Have you ever known anyone whose life was changed forever, or ended, on a prom night?
13. Do you feel you are strong enough to resist Satan on his turf and with his temptations entirely on your own strength after the Spirit departs?
14. Do you honestly see any potential spiritual harm in dancing? Is it better to err on the side of safety and abstain or okay to go ahead and enjoy it, just being as careful as possible?
15. Do questions such as these make you uncomfortable? If so, why?