



# Is Dancing Dirty?

**truth about biblical dance**

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Dance is a forgotten element of Biblical worship that is slowly being restored to Christianity today. The sister of Moses, named Miriam, danced as she crossed the Red Sea after the exodus. King David danced as the Ark of the Covenant was moved to Jerusalem. Even Y'shua (Hebrew name of Jesus) spoke of how dance accompanied the return of the prodigal son in Luke 15:25. The book of Psalms is full of references to dance and highly active movement. Psalm 149 says to praise the Almighty with “dancing and making melody.”

So, if dance is such a good idea, then why don't churches do the electric slide or the hokey pokey during Sunday services? Well, history indicates that dance was once practiced by New Testament believers. In the book, *Dance in Christian Worship*, the author suggests that in the first five centuries of the faith, “dance was still acceptable because it was planted deep in the soil of the Judeo-Christian tradition.” After the rise of the Catholic Church through Roman Emperor Constantine, the dance as a type of worship was performed only by the priests. During the Dark Ages the priestly theatrical dance morphed into liturgical processions. And by the time of the reformation, Martin Luther and others had totally removed dance from the order of service. The statutes of the synod of Lyons prohibited dancing in 1566 and imposed the punishment of excommunication upon those who led dances in church.

For over 1500 years, religious consensus seemed to indicate that dance belongs to the heathen nations or bars, and not to those who seek to follow the Messiah. Such continued to be the prevailing thought until recently when modern media instigated the popularity of dance through radio, television, dance clubs, reality competitions, and even worship centers.

A survey of the Bible explains how dance, like singing or preaching, can be used for the glory of the performer or the glory of the Almighty. King Solomon said “there is a time to dance” in Ecclesiastes 3:4. The Bible uses over 50 different Hebrew and Greek words to describe the various types of dance movement. Dance can also be accompanied with flags and banners raised high in celebration. “We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners,” Psalm 20:5. The waving of flags is symbolic of the wave offerings given during Temple times.

The Scriptures do seem to suggest an approval of dance while in the right context. Provocative dancing was indeed involved with the sin of the golden calf and the beheading of John the Baptist. The Apostle Paul in his letters often speaks of the need to stray from fleshly behavior. So, what’s a believer to do about dance?

No where in the Bible is dance considered to be sin. It was practiced during Biblical times and definitely has a place in true scripturally accurate worship settings. Those wishing to take the next step in this restoration would do well to study the subject in depth, learn traditional congregational moves, begin choreographing their ideas, and discuss this subject with church leadership. More churches should allow interpretive dance, waving of hands, and congregational dance or “Davidic dance” that takes place in circles and does not encourage lasciviousness. The circle dances that are making their ways back into the church actually mirror the steps that were performed during the Second Temple.

According to Matthew 11:17 and Luke 7:32, dancing represents one’s joyful response to the good news of salvation. This type of praise should be openly accepted by all church leaders who want to worship in spirit and in truth.