

Lutheran Woman's Quarterly Winter 2015 Bible Study

Taking Pleasure in Dance
Leader Guide

Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the humble with salvation (Psalm 149:3-4).

Most people who know me know I love to sing; fewer know I love to dance. Most of the time, I do not separate the two in my heart or in my body. Music and dance make my soul sing, my body move from the inside out, and my heart light and at peace. I have been a dance student, a dance teacher, a dance defender (when some would take music and dance out of schools to save money or when others think it is wrong to dance), and a dancer. God gave us the gift of dance in many forms to delight the individual souls.

What makes your soul dance? What kinds of dancing do you enjoy watching? In which kinds of dancing have you participated? Why did/do you dance?

Answers will vary.

Lord of all creation, thank You for this gift of beauty with which we can praise You. Thank You for blessing us with creativity that makes our souls sing. Thank You for the beautiful music with which you fill our ears and our hearts. You ARE an awesome God! Amen.

How does God describe dance?

Dancing is the opposite of mourning or sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 3:4: *a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to **dance**;*

Lamentations 5:15: *The joy of our hearts has ceased; our **dancing** has been turned to mourning.*

If we don't dance, we are lukewarm, dead in spirit.

Luke 7:32: *They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not **dance**; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'*

Note to Leader: See also Matthew 11:17. *'We played the flute for you, and you did not **dance**; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'*

Criticism of Dance

Dance often has a bad reputation among some Christians. Why? How can dance be abused?

Answers will vary. Used for sensual purposes, used in idolatry, used to hurt another.

How did God's people misuse His gift?

Idol worship

Exodus 32:19: *And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the **dancing**, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.*

Sensual dancing

Matthew 14:6-8: *But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias **danced** before the company and pleased Herod,*

Sensual; used to get personal gain

Mark 6:21-25: *For when Herodias's daughter came in and **danced**, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.'*

Why do we dance?

Celebrate the Story: Some dances like ballet or the American dances known as *play party games* tell a story. Ballet is studied, precise, and practiced. Play party games are often enjoyed by beginning dancers.

How do/did God's people celebrate in dance in their story with God?

You may ask before looking up passages. If so, **Answers will vary.**

Victory in Battle; spoils

1 Samuel 18:6: *As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and **dancing**, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments*

1 Samuel 29:5: *Is not this David, of whom they sing to one another in **dances**, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?*

1 Samuel 30:16: *And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and **dancing**, because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.*

Celebrating a Homecoming or Just to Celebrate

Judges 11:34: *Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with **dances**. She was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter.*

Luke 15:25: *Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and **dancing**.*

Everyone dances — believe it or not! Some claim they have two left feet; some claim they are never good enough to dance in public. Over the many years I have taught dance, I have had students with inherent rhythmic abilities that enable them to learn steps quickly. I have also had adult students that have danced for years who never quite get it right, but the enjoyment is of the gift is not measured by the ability to be perfect — just as our enjoyment of grace is not measured by our ability to be perfect. In all things we dance; in all people there is dance—sometimes with others, sometimes with nature, sometimes alone. One folk dance I learned was lovingly called *Yea Sheep!* by the dancers who occasionally leapt as sheep will do and always following the leader as sheep are likely to do. Another Israeli dance, *Mayim*, is a dance that flows quickly like its name — water — and leaves the dancer breathless for water. What unusual properties of dance does the Bible point out?

Animals dance

Isaiah 13:21: *But wild animals will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will **dance**.*

The movement of armies can be called dancing

Song of Solomon 6:13: *Return, return, O Shulammite, return, return, that we may look upon you. Why should you look upon the Shulammite, as upon a **dance** before two armies?*

Note to Leader: NIV mentions “Mahanaim.”

Emotions or feelings dance

Job 41:22: *In his neck abides strength, and terror **dances** before him.*

Note to Leader: NIV = “dismay goes before him.”

What other examples of dancing do you see in everyday living? **Answers will vary.**

Praise the Lord for dance. Praise the Lord in Dance

In all things we can praise God. Because we all have the ability to praise, we have the ability to dance — even if it's only a tapping toe or a drumming finger. Ancient dances of praise were danced in a circle, lifting

joined hands to God the Almighty whom they praised in the center of the circle, and stamping out the Evil One if they turned their backs to the outside.

Martin Luther said: *The devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles, flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God. ... Music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. Thus it drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets all wrath, impurity, and other devices.* (*Praying the Gospels with Martin Luther: Finding Freedom in Love*, Paul W. Meier)

Music and dance are intertwined for me. Even if I need to have my body still, my soul is moving within me.

When and how did God's people praise Him with music and dance?

Worshipful dancing

Exodus 15:19–21: *Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and **dancing**.*

Dancing in thanksgiving

2 Samuel 6:14–16: *As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and **dancing** before the Lord,...*

See also: **1 Chronicles 15:29a** (same as 2 Samuel 6:16a)

*And as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David **dancing** and celebrating,*

Prayer and praise of temple dancers

Psalms 87:7: *Singers and **dancers** alike say, 'All my springs are in you.'*

Praise of the people

Psalms 150:4: *Praise him with tambourine and **dance**; praise him with strings and pipe!*

Dancing for Joy/Dance is Joy

Dancing is a gift from above. Although they may not recognize it as a gift, educational experts say it improves math skills, study skills and outside-the-box thinking. Some think that those involved in the arts are more intelligent and successful (*Why Music & Arts Should Be Kept In Public Schools* By Jacourie C., Orlando, FL.) When my son went to college to pursue a music degree, the counselors assured the parents that a degree in the arts was not a deterrent to obtaining a post-college career, because employers liked graduates who were able to analyze better than those who pursued only one discipline.

What does God give us through dance?

Joy

Jeremiah 31:13: *Then shall the young women rejoice in the **dance**, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.*

Release from Sorrow

Psalms 30:11: *You have turned for me my mourning into **dancing**; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.*

Merriment of the Heart

Jeremiah 31:4: *Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the **dance** of the merry-makers.*

How should we dance?

With all your might — with abandon and love for the Lord

2 Samuel 6:14a: *And David **danced** before the Lord with all his might.*

Since dancing is Joy, what do we receive through dance?

Joy in the Lord

Isaiah 29:19: *The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.*

Laughter, Joy, Gratitude

Psalm 126:2:

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'

Strength in our Joy

Nehemiah 8:10b: *And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*

A praise-filled heart, an ability to make music by repeated praise; God's favor and pleasure showered down upon us.

Psalm 149:34a: *Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He adorns the humble with salvation.*

Why should we dance? Why do I dance? Because it is the beauty of movement put to the beauty of music — two of the wonders God created in us. Square dancers extend hands to one another in friendship, joy, and smiles in eight-count movements. Contra or longways dancers get to enjoy reels, jigs, waltzes, and a few other dance forms while moving with each person in a long line of dancers. Round dancers and ballroom dancers enjoy the ebb and flow of a variety of dances and rhythms from a one-step (simple walking step) to the intricacies of dances that include the tango, foxtrot, or, my favorite, the waltz. Most dancers aren't interested in lifts and the most difficult moves possible, but some have been given the gift to perform them. Most dancers are wrapped up in the beauty of the music, the companionship of their partner(s), and the grace of movement — beautiful gifts from God. Sometimes when I dance I feel like the famous cartoon dog who has his feet flying and his eyes closed in sheer bliss, and I think, "Behold what manner of love the father has given unto me — unto us."

Pray Psalm 149 together.

*Thank you Father for the beautiful dance of life so we may behold the beauty You have given unto us.
Amen.*

*"Dance then wherever you may be.
I am the Lord of the Dance," said He,
"and I'll lead you all wherever you may be.
And I'll lead you all in the dance," said He.*

From Hymns for Now (CPH 1967)