



Taking Pleasure in **DANCE**

by Sheila Lutz

**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?

Opening Prayer

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 _____

(see **Ecclesiastes 3:4** and **Lamentations 5:15**).

If we don't dance, we are _____

(see **Luke 7:32**).

Criticism of Dance

Dance often has a bad reputation among some Christians. Why? _____

How can dance be abused? _____

How did God's people misuse His gift?

Exodus 32:19 _____

Matthew 14:6–8 _____

Mark 6:21–25 _____

Why do we dance?

Celebrate the Story: Some dances such as 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?

1 Samuel 18:6 _____

1 Samuel 29:5 _____

1 Samuel 30:16 _____

Judges 11:34 _____

Luke 15:25 _____

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 “just right,” but the enjoyment 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 followed 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?

Isaiah 13:21 _____

Song of Solomon 6:13 _____

Job 41:22 _____

What other examples of dancing do you see in everyday living? _____

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?

Exodus 15:19–21 _____

2 Samuel 6:14–16a _____

Psalms 87:7 _____

Psalms 150:4 _____

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 Jacquie C., Orlando, Florida.)

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?

Jeremiah 31:13 _____

Psalms 30:11 _____

Jeremiah 31:4 _____

How should we dance?

2 Samuel 6:14a _____

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

Isaiah 29:19 _____

Psalms 126:2 _____

Nehemiah 8:10b _____

Psalms 149:3–4 _____

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. These mimic the movement found in God's creation on the earth, in the water, and in the heavens. 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.”

Closing

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)

Sheila Lutz has been a student of dance for most of her life, performing on dance teams in high school and at Illinois State University. For more than 40 years, she has been a member of Folk Valley, a family dance group for which she and her husband, Don, are round and square dance leaders.