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IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH — DANCING

By Mark K. Lewis

With immorality and licentiousness ever on the increase in our world today, living a godly, righteous life is becoming more and more difficult. Truly we need to "buffet (our) bodies, and bring (them) into bondage" (I Cor. 9:27), and "exercise (ourselves) unto godliness" (I Tim. 4:7), while at all times resisting the devil (Jas. 4:7) and approving things that are excellent (Phil. 1:10). Our youth especially are surrounded by forces that would lead them down the path to eternal destruction. We must train them while they are young (Prov. 22:6) to remember the Creator (Eccl. 12:1). The modern dance, seemingly so harmless, is one tool the devil uses to draw young people away from the Lord. Let us set forth some principles which demonstrate that Christian youth should avoid the modern dance.

1. **The modern dance is sinful because of the fruit it bears.**¹ Jesus taught very plainly that a "tree" is known by its "fruit". "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). How many countless homes have been destroyed, the destruction of which began at a modern dance? How many teenage and/or unwed mothers can trace their "mistake" to the modern dance? How often do we read of killings, beatings, and such like at dance halls and related places? "A good tree cannot bring forth

evil fruit?" If the modern dance was "good", it would not produce such evil fruit. The Christian must stay away from this ungodly, unwholesome activity.

2. **The modern dance is sinful because of the evils associated with it.** No one can deny that, in most instances, alcoholic beverages are associated with the modern dance. If not actually served at the dance, they are always "close by". Many a dance has turned into an all night "bash". Also, illegal drug peddlers are known to focalize their efforts at dance gatherings. And as "evil companions corrupt good morals" (I Cor. 15:33), Christians certainly will not want to endanger themselves by needlessly being exposed to such evil influences. "Abstain from the very appearance of evil," is Paul's wise admonition (I Thess. 5:22).

3. **The modern dance is sinful because its popularity is based on lasciviousness.** Notice how Thayer defines the Greek word translated "lasciviousness". "Wanton acts or manners, as filthy words, indelcent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." If that doesn't describe the modern dance, human words could not do it. The word "revelling" is also associated with the dance. These two activities are denounced forcefully by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21.

4. **The modern dance is also sinful because of the influence it would have on others.** Jesus said that we are the "light of the world." Light attracts. Would we want to attract people to the modern dance? Paul said we are to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God,

without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). And the great prophet Zechariah raises us to the highest standards when he says that the people of God will so live that people of the world will want to follow us, "saying, we will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23). Our influence should be such as to lead people into the kingdom of God, and not make them wonder whether or not we are true Christians.

Christian people are to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27), glorifying God in all that we do (I Cor. 10:31, Mt. 5:16) "holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:16). "Keep thyself pure," is Paul's instructions to Timothy, having "no fellowship" with evil and darkness (Eph. 5:11). The dance hall is simply not conducive to growth in the Lord (II Pet. 3:18). We are to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5), thinking only of things that are true, honest, just, pure, love, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Christians should reflect the "architectural genius" of God (I Pet. 2:5-9); in other words, people should see the wisdom of God, the Master Builder, when they look at our lives. Our lives reflect back on the God we claim to serve; what kind of "building" do people see when they look at us? No, the dance hall is no place for the Christian who would "abstain from fleshly lusts" (I Pet. 2:11), and "keep oneself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).

¹ The author is indebted to Maxie Boren and his fine article *Should a Christian Engage in the Modern Dance?* for much of the material used in this essay.

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Wives, Win Your Husbands To Christ

Author Unknown

"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let not yours be the outward adorning with the braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." (I Peter 3:1-4 RSV).

When the gospel was preached in the first century, many wives responded to its call. But in many instances, their husbands did not. Instead of obeying the truth, they became stubborn and rebellious refusing to follow the action of their wives. Their refusal was a problem in the first century. So Peter writes to inform wives how they can break down the barrier of resistance and bring their husbands to the Master.

Since wives have the same problem today, let us examine the words of the apostle Peter.

What Peter Does Not Advise

We first consider what the in-

spired apostle does not advise the wife to do.

1. He does not advise the wife to leave her husband. This would be sinful. No good could be accomplished by her deserting her husband. Paul was in perfect agreement when he said *"And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him."* (I Cor. 7:13).

2. He does not advise the wife to nag her husband. He has already heard the truth and is stubbornly refusing to obey it. Her nagging, arguing, and constant preaching will only make him more rebellious, more inclined to refuse the call of the gospel.

3. He does not advise the wife to neglect her service to God. Wives who please their husbands by staying home on Sunday and Wednesday nights; wives who go to the "beer parties," etc. are not pleasing God and will not bring their husbands to Christ. Why should he obey the gospel? Is she living different from him? The wife who neglects her service to God will drive her husband further from the Lord.

4. He does not advise the wife to be overly concerned with her outward appearance. He is not saying, of course, that she should not be clean and attractive in appearance, but that she should be concerned primarily with the condition of the heart.

What Peter Does Advise

Secondly, let us consider what Peter advises the wife to do to win her husband to Christ.

1. She must be submissive to her husband. That she must be in subjection to her husband is important not only to bring her husband to Christ, but to please God. (Read Eph. 5:22-24). This subjection must be genuine. The wife must put aside her pride and her "rights" and gen-

uinely seek to serve her husband. Her husband must come secondly only to her service to God. When the wife is submissive, the wall of stubbornness sometimes cracks.

2. She must be reverent. She must, of course, reverence God, but in our text, Peter refers to her awe, respect for her husband.

3. She must be chaste and pure. Purity must reign in her thoughts, speech, and life. Without purity, she will accomplish little. She will only disgust her husband and never bring him to Christ.

4. She must have a gentle and quiet spirit. The "spirit" here means disposition or temper.

Her disposition then must be that of "a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitation and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning." (Barnes)

Her purpose in life must be that of serving God. When her purpose is that, she will control her temper; she will not seek the things of this world; she will not desire others; she will be free from the character of the world.

We close with a comment from Clement of Alexandria: "The wise woman, then will first choose to persuade her husband to be her associate in what is conducive to happiness. And should that be found impractical, let her by herself earnestly aim at virtue, gaining her husband's consent in everything, so as never to do anything against his will, with the exception of what is reckoned as contributing to virtue and salvation."

IS BAPTISM A

"MUST"?

By Walter Buchanan

Saul of Tarsus, a violent persecutor of the church, was on his way

to Damascus to persecute Christians when he was blinded by a bright light and the Lord spoke to him. During that conversation Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" Jesus said to him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Act 9:1-6).

Saul was led by the men with him into Damascus where for three days he was without sight and where he neither ate nor drank. Finally, the Lord sent Ananias to Saul. Ananias told this penitent believer to, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16).

Please note that Jesus told Saul that in Damascus he would be told what he "must" do. When Saul got there he was told to arise and be baptized. The only conclusion to which an honest heart can come is that baptism is a must if we are to please God and have our sins forgiven. Don't miss heaven by your refusal to obey such a simple command of God!

Better Sports or Better Men?

By Dennis R. Smith

It is in the annals of the sporting world that men attempt to improve themselves and it is with respect that we have to look upon one when progress is made in that direction. When one works patiently year after year he is entitled to some visible degree of success and when he excels in his given field it should be with honor that we compliment him.

But let us stop for a moment and ask a question: WHICH IS THE MORE IMPORTANT IN LIFE -- TO IMPROVE ONE'S PHYSICAL ABILITIES WHILE ALLOWING HIS SPIRITUAL TO GO UNATTENDED OR TO CONCENTRATE MORE ON THE SPIRITUAL?

I never cease to be amazed at our sporting world. It is a world of varied interests and yet a world in which each activity points to a goal of betterment. These goals are often reached on record and yet behind the fanfare and fame that attends a winner, in many cases, there is a deep longing for self-improvement. It MUST be with high goals that we live our lives and it is with each success that we are spurred to go on to bigger and better challenges, but we must not allow our goals to overshadow ourselves. There are needs, both physical and spiritual, that must not be forgotten as we dash to our improvement stations. These needs are vitally important to men, lest after a "pure strain" or "perfect game" is reached, we have cast away the most important of all -- the care of the soul. The books must balance and the scales must not tilt so which shall it be: an improved brand of sports, a higher knowledge of the game and players, more attention to our physical bodies, or the same dedication to the improvement of self and the society in which we live?

In the fifteen years of my ministry (and I have a deep interest in my own thing) I have learned that there are no short-cuts in life and nothing comes too easy. Each man's "slice of life" must be "salted and peppered" as well as "buttered and sugared." The bitter must be taken with the sweet and the milk has to be shaken before the cream comes to the top. This is true whether we are talking about sports, societies, nations, homes, churches or whatever.

Let us then look to the mirror on the wall and ask the fairest of all (self) -- is it better that I interest myself deeply in the attractions of this life and try to improve my own sporting interests, or will it be that I earnestly try to improve the brand of men rather than the brand of sports? And if so, where must I start? With self? Which shall it be better sports, or better men?

Try Beginning Again

By Gus Nichols

Perhaps some reader has tried to be a Christian, but failed. If so, why not try again? Great success does not always come from a single effort. Worthwhile things are worth trying and striving for, even if we must try again and again. In the year 1917 a tornado destroyed our home, blew us away and ruined our crops out on a farm before it tore into Carbon Hill, Alabama and left the dead and the homeless in its wake. But we did not give up and quit. The next spring we found ourselves planting again, and soon we were growing a crop.

Life is very much like that. Wars are not usually won by a single battle! But battle after battle must be fought before the victory is won. In a way, some of these battles are lost but victory belongs to those who win the last battle.

Very few spend a long life in the service of Christ without getting discouraged, and for the moment, giving up in despair. But those who overcome the world are they who (if need be) try again and again -- who refuse to surrender to the evil one. If they fail, they go down fighting -- soon to rise again.

It is easy to give up and quit when the going gets rough, as it most certainly will -- sooner or later. Long roads usually have some detours and rough places over which one must travel in order to reach the desired destiny.

The Christian life is like running a race (Heb. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:25-27). If one falls he should get up and try again. The new birth is a sort of "land of Beginning Again" (John 3:5). So is a restoration of an erring child of God (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

DYING IN HOMES

By Bill J. Graddy

Child abuse is one example of children "dying" in homes. It is inconceivable that civilized people would beat and batter a child. It is like a man hitting a woman; both are mentally unstable and destitute of truth. Home is supposed to be a place where we are nestled and nurtured until we learn how to behave ourselves. It is tragic and a national disgrace that so many children are "dying" in homes.

Parents who fail to teach their children and provide them with the educational advantages that surround us are causing their children to intellectually and socially "die" at home. What a waste to allow potentially bright people to stagnate and squander their talents by failing to develop them at home in the embryo of life!

The carry-over effect of this malady into the spiritual area is obvious. Instead of "training up the child in the way he should go" the absence of truth spells spiritual death of the child that began at home. Children have always had parents. Thus, parents must set the right example. A failure to teach righteous principles is the cause of child abuse, intellectual, social, and spiritual dwarfism. Our homes are deteriorating. We are "dying" in homes.

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How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Then the HOW becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matthew 3:8;

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledge our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47 and Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

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