



A Time To
Dance

Embracing the Call to Dance for Him

Tanya Lisa Perez

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has blessed me in so many ways throughout my life. He has guided me through many rough times, and I will forever be grateful. I also dedicate this book to my husband, Jay, my daughter, Alyssa, my parents, and my spiritual family who have been greatly supportive throughout my journey in dance ministry. This book is also dedicated to my teacher and dance mentor, Pastor Lynn Hayden, who has been instrumental toward my spiritual growth as a dance minister and leader.

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Introduction

I'm truly grateful that you have chosen to taken the step to dance for Him. My hope is that by reading this book, you will be encouraged to take a step further into the destiny that God has planned for you. I believe that we are at a moment in time when God will begin to release and empower many dancers to release His Will here on the Earth. Those who are willing to respond to His call will experience a new level of intimacy with Him and will be amazed at what God has planned for their lives. I have included a prayer that you can recite after each chapter to help you throughout your journey as a praise dancer. Enjoy and be blessed!

There's Something About "Dance"

Dance is such a beautiful form of expression. It can be creative, captivating, entertaining, and enjoyable for those who take part in it. Before infants are able to walk, they dance and they do it so freely, giggling and smiling without a care in the world. Kids of all ages seem to be drawn to the beat of music and will seek the source of it to express themselves through dance. So, is there more to this art form than meets the eye?

I find it interesting that rhythm in itself can be found not only in the outside world, but also within. Our hearts, cerebral spinal fluid, and lungs, for example, adhere to a certain rhythmic pattern. When this pattern is coordinated, there is an environment of wellness within. Since dance is known to be a form of exercise, it can help strengthen bones and muscles, improve balance, increase flexibility, reduce stress, and build confidence. The body also releases endorphins, which are chemicals that interact with the receptors in your brain to trigger a positive feeling in the body.

These facts build upon what is mentioned in Psalm 139:14 (NIV). It reads, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know them full well." The Lord created our innermost parts in such a way that they dance to His perfectly planned rhythm. Acts 17:28 (NIV) reads "For in Him we live and move and have our being..." We exist and we dance because He designed us that way.

I was invited to teach a set of choreographed dances to a group of children with special needs. At the end of an 8-week period, we invited their parents, friends, and anyone in the community to their dance recital. I was amazed at the transformation I witnessed throughout the time I spent with them. I observed shy, reserved children blossom into confident, interactive ones willing to express themselves through dance. I

saw coordination, rhythm, and memory improve in amazing ways. During one dance, many of the parents became emotional and later expressed that this was the first time they had seen their children really dance for the duration of the recital. I thanked God for giving me the opportunity to see how His gift of dance could bring transformation and healing in such a short amount of time. I realized at that moment that there was more to this art form created by God. I could only imagine the possibilities of what can be accomplished when we choose to dance for His Glory with a true heart of worship and allow ourselves to be led by His Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I thank you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I acknowledge that you are my creator and that you designed my innermost parts to dance to your perfect rhythm. I pray that every part of my body would line up to your Will and your Truth. I pray that you would prepare the way before me to honor you with this gift of dance and that others would be impacted by what you desire to release through it. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

It's Time For a Love Shift

I often hear the phrase “I love to dance”, and understand how someone could really love the level of enjoyment it brings. Some love it so much that they join a dance class, Zumba fitness class, or dance along with a Nintendo Wii Dance Revolution game. The love for dancing is very common in today’s society. There are many opportunities for people to get involved in dance activities, such as school dances, school musicals, and dance programs at high school, college and professional institutions. Since dancing is an art form the Lord created in us to do, we can only conclude that it is in our nature to be drawn to it.

If there is a call in your life to be a praise dancer, you will notice that a shift will begin to take place in your heart. You will go from “loving the dance” to falling in love with the creator of the dance. At this point, you will realize that you are content standing in His presence and that dance is just one way of showing Him how much you love Him. You will realize that the dance that He has birthed in you is special and set apart for His pleasure and to accomplish His Will here on the Earth. Revelation 4:11 (KJV) reads “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

It pleases the Lord when you praise Him through dance. Psalm 150:4 specifically mentions praising Him through dance. David known as a man after God’s own heart “danced before the Lord with all his might” as mentioned in 2 Samuel 6:14. When you get a deeper revelation of how wonderful, merciful, powerful, and faithful the Lord is, you can’t help but dance! Your dance becomes an outward expression and response to who He is versus a response to the beat of your favorite song. When this happens, the

shift has been made. You have shifted from loving the dance to loving the Lord who prompts you to dance.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I am so grateful for all you have done for me. I cherish your goodness, your faithfulness, your patience, and your deep love for me. I thank you that I am free from my sins because of your sacrifice on the cross. I'm grateful that I can now be in right standing with you and can live out my life according to your Will. I dedicate this gift of dance to you and pray that you would refine it and shape it in such a way that it pleases you. I pray that my dance would be as a fragrance suitable for a King accomplishing all that you have planned through it. Thank you so much, Lord. Amen.

Dancer Redefined

What I've come to discover is that many aspiring or even current praise dancers become discouraged by society's view of what a dancer should look like, how a dancer should dance and act, or how a dancer should dress. If you pick up a regular dance magazine, you will more than likely find young, fit and lean 16-20 year olds on every advertisement in a dance pose many could only dream of executing. The outfits are tiny and fitted, makeup is perfect, hair is flawless, and everyone is beautiful and has accomplished so much already. The training conferences offered are often for youth or high school aged youth with prior dance experiences in studios or for dance teachers who are highly skilled. Dance movies or shows often depict dancers with a similar description. It would be easy for someone to feel discouraged and inadequate.

I remember walking into a dance store before Zumba became popular. I wanted to purchase dance shoes and a leotard. One of the sales clerks approached me and assumed that the items I wanted were for my child and asked what size my daughter needed. I told her the shoes and leotards were for me. I'll never forget the puzzled look on her face. I felt strange, but then proceeded to tell her that I dance at a church. Yes, you guessed it. The puzzled look increased. I realized at that point that I would have to be confident in the Lord and push past the perceived discrimination. I wasn't going to let this experience discourage me from doing what the Lord had called me to do.

The key here is that God has called you to dance. You are His dancer and He will lead you to the training necessary and lead you to people who will help guide you toward this goal. You are not too old, too thin, too large, too inexperienced, too late, or too ill. The dancer defined by society is beautiful indeed, but so are you. The Lord can call and

use whom He pleases to dance for His purposes and is not limited by anything or anyone.
So go for it! You are a dancer redefined.

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for your craftsmanship in making me who you destined me to be. I repent for letting society's view of a dancer discourage me from believing in the call you have for my life to dance for you. I ask that you would help me to walk out this calling in confidence knowing that I can accomplish much because you are on my side. I ask for your wisdom and guidance as I proceed to walk through the open doors you will be opening for me along the way. I pray that you would help me to excel in this gift so that I present my best to you. I am your dancer Lord and believe that you will finish the great work you have begun in me. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Performance Vs. Ministry *Making the Shift*

So many details go into making a ministry dance piece presentable. Since we want to represent the Lord well and make a great impression, we desire to select the right garment, suitable props, proper time to determine spacing and positions on the stage, the right choreography, and the right song selection to name a few. We want to make sure that hair is moved away from the face, jewelry is taken off, nail color is removed, and that everyone is wearing the proper leotard and shoes. All these details are very important and should be given attention, but what we need to realize is that we are ultimately performing for an audience of one. Now that doesn't mean we should ignore the details, but when our mind drifts and we begin to fret over them, it is time to redirect ourselves to the purpose of why we are dancing in the first place.

There have been times in the past where I have caught myself becoming so absorbed in the details that I would begin to feel stressed. For example, there have been many occasions when I have wanted our team to wear our hair a certain way for a presentation and it just never seemed to work out due to different factors, such as someone's hair length or type of hair. I would start to feel bothered by these details and then I would catch myself and think, "Why am I allowing this details to get to me? This presentation is not about our hair in the end." Sometimes I've been bothered by other random factors like missed practices, complaints about the garments, or lack of an ideal practice venue. I've come to realize that His purpose behind our dance presentation is of the utmost importance and by keeping the focus on Him, we will remain joyful with a heart ready to worship and honor the King.

Another transition that must take place in our heart is that it is ALL about Him. We should be in dance ministry for the purpose of bringing Glory to Him and not ourselves. After we perform a dance ministry piece we should be thanking God for the opportunity to bless Him in this way, and we should feel hopeful that others have been changed, delivered, healed, or saved through the messages released from the dance. One indicator of a shift taking place is that you are an active worshipper during praise and worship at church and home and not only when asked to perform with the dance team. If you catch yourself only wanting to worship when presenting a dance, then it's time to make that shift. He has called you to be a dancer after His own heart. After all, John 4:23 (NIV) reads that "...a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to dance for you. I repent for times that I have put more emphasis on details than on your purpose when preparing to present a dance for church or other events. I pray that you would mold me into the worshipper you desire to seek. Purify my heart, Lord, and renew a right Spirit within me so that when I present a dance for you, it is an overflow from what I am feeling in my heart. I pray that my primary focus would be on pleasing you. I ask that you would help me with the details and pave the way before me so that things would fall into place according to your Will. I pray that you would be my strength in my areas where I feel weak and that your Will would always prevail as I move forward in this calling. Amen.

Embracing His Vision

There comes a time in a praise dancer's life when you'll feel as if you are at a crossroads. You can either decide to be the type of dancer that would be content being a faithful member of a dance team on Sundays or the type of dancer willing to expand beyond the box to not only be a faithful dance team member, but to become a vessel for breakthrough, healing, deliverance, and salvation.

I believe that God is awakening a new army of dancers whom he will use to release signs, wonders, and miracles for the purpose of bringing people to salvation. Jesus was sent to the Earth to seek and save what had been lost and to destroy the works of the enemy. His main purpose for the dance therefore, is to advance His kingdom.

You have to decide in your heart that you are not going to allow circumstances, the opinions of others, your own emotions, or logical reasoning to impede your call to be the dancer He has destined you to become. The enemy has brought pollution to this art form and many have embraced it as a form of entertainment or harmless fun. The truth is that the message being sent through this form of dance is that sensuality is acceptable. If you've got it, flaunt it. You will attract the opposite sex, and your body is your own and you can do with it what you please. Instead of dance being an avenue meant for drawing people to God, this type of dance becomes an avenue for leading people to the one who is dancing.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) reads "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." This scripture validates that our bodies were meant for honoring the Lord so we should

be cautious not to send out the wrong signals not only by the way we dance, but also by the way we dress, speak, and conduct our daily lives. If you are the leader of a dance team, choose the garments for your team carefully. Make sure that they not too fitted or revealing in any way. An overlay or similar cover up should always be worn on top of a leotard for a performance and tight leggings should not be worn alone without pants or a skirt over them. I know that it is typical for dancers to wear such attire for performances, but we represent the King of Kings and we do not want to be a distraction for others wanting to overcome ungodly thoughts.

I believe that it is time to reclaim the dance for God. He is the creator of the dance and deserves to be glorified through it. It is time to embrace the call to teach others how to praise Him in the dance. It is time to encourage and empower those who have had that desire to dance for Him but have felt unqualified, unworthy, or fearful. It is time to ask God to enlarge your tent of influence and allow Him to lead you to opportunities to dance outside the church setting and out into the community. It is time to be willing to hear and obey His voice for releasing an intercessory dance for your city, your nation, and the world. It is time to break forth, to be released, to be bold, and to expect the Will of God to be expressed through your dancing. Rise up! Take a stand! This IS a time to dance!

Prayer:

Jesus, I accept your call to dance for you. I ask that you would empower me to be a vessel for the release of your signs, wonders, and miracles. I acknowledge that this gift is for the purpose of advancing your kingdom. I ask that you would enlarge my tent of influence and lead me to the dance opportunities that would bring you much Glory. I pray

that you would align my heart to your heart so that I dance with understanding and have a true and genuine love for the people you are ministering to. I pray that you would release your anointing upon me to create change in society for reclaiming the dance. Please be my strength, Lord, and my anchor. Don't let me be swayed by my circumstances. Help me to be a dancer after your own heart and to hold steadfast to all your promises. I pray that you would give me the wisdom to walk forward in this calling and that many would be saved, healed, delivered, and restored by the dance your have birthed in me. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Conclusion

I hope that this book has inspired you to take your praise dance to new levels. It is such a blessing to be a part of what God is doing today and what He has planned to do in the future. It is not a coincidence that you happened to pick up this book. I believe God is calling you to take a step of faith and to launch forward into what he has planned for you in the area of dance ministry. Be encouraged that He will pave the way and lead you through the open doors he specifically meant for you to walk through. Ecclesiastes 3:4 (NIV) reads that there is “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,” I entitled this book *A Time To Dance* because I sense from the Lord that we are in a new season. In this season He will reveal himself in great and magnificent ways to set the captives free and destroy the works of the enemy. So, don't hold back. Take your position and embrace your call to dance for Him. This IS your time to dance!

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About the Author



Tanya Lisa Perez has been ministering through dance for 12 years. She was an assistant dance leader at her local church from 2001-2005 in Mission, TX. She has taught at a variety of local workshops and has helped with the training of local church members in the art of worship dance. She has choreographed for several dance groups as well as church sponsored plays. She is currently the leader of the dance team at [Legacy Church](#) in San Antonio, TX and has choreographed dances for church and community events. She also serves as a seasonal dance teacher and choreographer for a non-profit organization, which encourages children with disabilities to participate in recreational activities. Her ministry is called Empowered to Praise, providing training to empower those who have a heart to worship the Lord through dance. She has completed a Worship Dance Teacher's Training course and Dance Ministry Leadership Course and holds a certificate of license and ordination through [Dancing For Him Ministries](#). Tanya currently works as a full time pediatric Occupational therapist at a local home health agency.