

Jeff Johnson: Dancing 'essentials' apply to Texas Baptists

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I have a confession to make before I sign off as Baptist General Convention of Texas president.

I am not the preacher from the movie *Footloose*. My wife and I watch *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dancing with the Stars*. We have been watching those shows for a long time now. What's surprising is that, given our couch-potato tendencies, we decided a few years ago to hit the dance floor ourselves. Yes, at ballroom dancing class at the local high school.



Jeff Johnson That's right; we thought we could learn to dance.

Now, I had NO desire to dance in worship. My wife (and 99 percent of my congregation) would wig out worse than Michal, King David's wife, if I danced. The dancing I do in church is not a dance at all. I just stand or sit still, hardly moving a muscle. My worship of God involves my mind, my heart and my tongue, but rarely my muscles. (And, yes, I do know the heart and tongue are muscles. And some say my brain, too). Michal would certainly approve.

There's a serious problem with this, and it has nothing to do with whether I actually dance in worship or not. My main problem is a lack of enthusiasm. I have become so concerned with feeling awkward, embarrassed and inappropriate that I have choked much of the enthusiasm out of my service to God.

Ms. Cockle, our dance instructor, included teamwork, breathing, practicing and being willing to have fun in her list of essentials for making an "enthusiastic and confident"—for me, not embarrassed—dancer. Notice she did not say "good" dancer. I think those are good ideas for us as Texas Baptists as we embrace the future.

- **Teamwork.** When we are working as a team, there is less chance of awkwardness or embarrassment.

- **Breathing.** She told us breathing was an essential part of dance, and we would never make it through a performance unless we learned how to breathe. As Texas Baptists, we need the breath of God to fill us if we're going to do the work God wants us to do. I do not dance to breathe but breathe to dance—and so with life.

- **Practicing.** Molly and I found out quickly there are good dances and bad ones. But to discover the difference, we had to work at it. "Shall we dance?" could not be answered with an easy yes or no. So, as we move forward together as Texas Baptists, let's practice our faith and live the difference God has made. Note: We discovered dance could be dangerous if it became a self-centered form of entertainment.

- **Have fun.** Molly and I could not dance well unless we were willing to cut loose and have some fun, and the same is true in Texas Baptist life. As people who are secure in the love of Christ, we can step out in faith



and have some fun. Jesus wants our joy to be complete.

Shall we dance? Share the love? Feel the joy? Cut loose? Maybe even cut foot loose? Live the difference?

It has been an honor to serve, thank you for the opportunity.

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