**Church Sponsored Social Meals**

*“Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God?”* (1 Corinthians 11:22)

**Introduction**

1. It is common in the denominational world for a church to share a meal together as a part of worship, or as a function of that church.
2. This is also a practice which has been adapted by those who claim to be a church belonging to Christ (erring brethren).
3. We must ask the question, “is this practice authorized by Christ?” “Does this please God?”
4. The scripture makes clear that the practice of church sponsored social meals is not of the Lord’s will.
5. What the issue…
6. **IS NOT:**
   1. Christians sharing a meal together. (**cf. Acts 2:46**)
   2. Eating in the church building. (**cf. Acts 2:41, 47** – church is the people; **Acts 7:48-50** – building is not sacred)
   3. Eating that is incidental to the assembly. (Diabetic, pregnant, baby, toddler, etc.)
   4. Benevolence for needy saints. (**cf. Acts 4:34-35**)
7. **IS:**
   1. The church providing for or assembling for the purpose of sharing a common meal for social purposes.
8. The Need for Authority for All Practices
9. Whatever We Do Must Be Authorized
   1. **Luke 20:1-8** – is it from heaven or men?
      1. **(vv. 5-6)** – their reasoning was sound, but their hearts dishonest.
      2. Heaven – authorized or required.
      3. Men – without authority.
   2. **Colossians 3:17** – must do all in the name of Jesus.
   3. **1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9** – not think beyond what is written, or go beyond the doctrine of Christ.
10. Authority for an Individual is not Authority for the Church
    1. Christians are the church, so what they can do the church can do too?
    2. Individuals are members of the church, but they do not make up the church themselves – **Matthew 18:15-17**
       1. The text makes an apparent distinction between the church and individual Christians, and a plurality of Christians.
       2. **(v. 15)** – individual – not the church.
       3. **(v. 16)** – individuals/small group – not the church.
       4. **(v. 17)** – the church – distinct from before.
    3. Individual (Yes) – Church (No):
       1. Exercise (**1 Timothy 4:8**) – Church Gymnasium
       2. Recreation (**Ecclesiastes 5:18-20**) – Church Entertainment
       3. Develop Skill in Business or Trade (**Acts 18:1-4**) – Church Employment Workshop
       4. Marry (**1 Corinthians 7:2**) – Church Marriage Counseling
       5. Enjoy the Social Activity of Sharing a Meal (**Acts 2:46; Romans 12:13**) – Church Sponsored Social Meals
11. The Authorized Work and Worship of the Church
12. The Mission of the Church is Spiritual
    1. **Luke 19:10; Ephesians 1:22-23** – Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth is carried on through His spiritual body.
    2. **1 Timothy 3:15; John 18:36-37** – the church/kingdom is the spiritual territory of truth reigning in men’s hearts – to uphold truth through faithful practice and defense.
    3. **1 Peter 2:4-5** – spiritual priesthood for spiritual sacrifices. (**cf. Hebrews 13:15-16; Romans 12:2**)
    4. **Romans 14:17** – in contrast to thinking certain meats are defiled and thinking there’s spiritual value or necessity in the eating and drinking of feast days **(v. 6).**
    5. **Hebrews 13:9** – the heart is established with grace, not food.
       1. Argument for spiritual virtue in “table fellowship.”
       2. Throughout God’s word, the food and fellowship we are provided is spiritual – **John 6:27; Acts 2:42**
13. The Work of the Church
    1. Evangelism – **Matthew 28:18-20**
       1. A social meal does not spread the gospel. Why would Jesus not include that in the command?
    2. Edification – **Ephesians 4:11-13**
       1. A social meal does not edify. Edification is through the teaching of the word.
       2. The gifts given for edification **(v. 11)** speak volumes.
    3. Benevolence – **Romans 15:26**
       1. Providing funds to purchase needs such as food to needy saints is not the same as the church providing a social meal.
14. The Worship of the Church
    1. Preaching/teaching – **1 Corinthians 14:26; Acts 20:7**
    2. Singing – **Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**
    3. Praying – **Acts 2:42**
    4. Giving – **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**
    5. Lord’s Supper – **1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7**
    6. Social meals add to the pattern of worship in vain – **Matthew 15:8-9**
15. The Prohibition According to **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**
16. Problem with Assembly – **(v. 17)** – ***“come together…for the worse”***
17. Problem with the Lord’s Supper – **(v. 20)** – ***“not to eat…”***
    1. **Implication** – should be coming together to eat it (**cf. Acts 20:7**), but what you are doing is not eating the Lord’s Supper.
18. Two Perversions Identified
    1. What was it that made their assembly harmful to them **(v. 17)** and their intended Lord’s Supper observance negligible **(v. 20)**?
       1. **NOTE: These two problems are intertwined in the context but are made distinct by Paul’s words.**
    2. Division
       1. **(vv. 18-19)** – the assembly, which by nature was to be united, was divided.
       2. **(vv. 21-22)** – division manifested in the observance of what was NOT the Lord’s Supper **(v. 20).**
          1. **1 Corinthians 10:16-17** – to be as one.
    3. Despising the Church by Observing a Common Meal
       1. **(v. 22)** – Despise the church of God by bringing in something common – eating to satiate hunger.
          1. **(v. 21)** – ***“drunk”*** does not mean intoxicated but sated (contrasted with ***“hungry”***). (Speaks to amount, not substance.)
       2. **(vv. 23-26)** – the Lord’s Supper is not a feast for the common purpose of satisfying hunger and thirst, but for remembering the body and blood of Christ.
          1. **(v. 29)** – they were not eating to discern the Lord’s body.
          2. **(v. 34)** – they were eating because they were hungry.
    4. Solution
       1. **(v. 33)** – wait for one another – not division.
          1. ***“when you come together to eat…”*** – not common meal **(vv. 22, 34)**
          2. **Ellipsis** – **(v. 20)** – ***“to eat the Lord’s Supper.”***
       2. **(v. 34)** – do not use the assembly (***“come together”***) for a common meal to satisfy hunger.
          1. ***“lest you come together for judgment”*** – **(vv. 22, 27-29)** – despising the church, not discerning the Lord’s body.
19. What did Paul NOT say?
    1. **When you come together to observe a common meal to satisfy hunger make sure you wait for each other and share.**
       1. He said – **(vv. 22, 34)** – eat at home!
    2. **When you come together to observe the Lord’s Supper make sure you separate it from your “fellowship meal.” (By eating in the fellowship hall?)**
       1. He said – **(vv. 20, 23-26)** – it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, because such is a spiritual memorial, not a common meal.
       2. He said – **(vv. 17, 22)** – you come together for the worse because you come together to eat and drink (a common meal).
       3. He said – **(vv. 22, 34)** – eat the common meal at home! (I.e. not simply separate it in the assembly from the Lord’s Supper.)
20. What about…
21. **Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6** – Jesus feeding the 5,000
    1. **John 6:26-27** – Jesus rebukes them for being drawn to Him for the purpose of having a common meal.
       1. The purpose of the miracle was not to satisfy their hunger, but to signify He was the Messiah with the offering of spiritual food.
    2. **(v. 66)** – when they realized He was not offering physical food they left Him.
22. **Acts 2:42, 46** – breaking bread from house to house.
    1. **(v. 42)** – the ***“breaking of bread”*** is in context of spiritual fellowship. (Lord’s Supper – **1 Corinthians 10:16**)
       1. **1 Corinthians 11:20, 22, 34** – not to eat the Lord’s Supper because you eat a common meal.
    2. **(v. 46)** – assembly as a church in the temple **(v. 41** – 3,000 at this time) is distinct from their eating a common meal from house to house.
       1. **1 Corinthians 11:22, 34** – you have houses to eat in and drink in.
       2. That’s what they were doing – not an act/work of the church, not the Lord’s Supper.
23. **Acts 20:7, 11** – disciples coming together to break bread, then Paul breaking bread.
    1. **(v. 7)** – this is an assembly of the church for the purpose of worship. The breaking of bread here is the Lord’s Supper.
    2. Is **verse 11** talking about the assembly of the church (collective), or Paul as an individual?
       1. ***“Now when HE had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, HE departed.”***
       2. ***“ready to depart the next day” (v. 7)***, ***“departed”*** (the next day) **(v. 11)** – taking strength in a common meal as an individual in order to travel. (The day after the purposeful assembly of the church for worship.)
24. **Jude 12** – love feasts
    1. The views on this are so wide and varied it is impossible to tell exactly what the Holy Spirit was referring to here.
    2. Possibilities:
       1. Metaphor for our spiritual lives in service to God – **1 Corinthians 5:8**
       2. Meals shared out of love and benevolence among saints from house to house – **Acts 2:46**
       3. The Lord’s Supper – **1 Corinthians 11:20, 26**
          1. But Paul makes certain that does not involve a common meal, or “fellowship meal” – **1 Corinthians 11:34**
    3. **Thus, while we might not know exactly what it refers to, we certainly can know it does not refer to a church sponsored social “fellowship meal.”**

**Conclusion**

1. We cannot glorify God by doing what we want to do.
2. If Jesus wanted His church to assemble for the purpose of sharing a common social meal, He would have clearly revealed such through command/statement, approved example, or necessary inference.
3. The only thing we see that would fit the concept of a church sponsored social meal in scripture is an UNapproved example.