

# CHURCH SPONSORED SOCIAL MEALS

*An examination of the practice of churches  
providing common meals for social purposes*

# What Is The Issue?

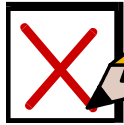
**The Issue  
IS NOT:**

- A benevolent meal for needy saints
- Eating food that is incidental to assembling for authorized worship and work

# What Is The Issue?

**The Issue**

**IS:**



- A church assembling for, or providing for, a “common meal for social purposes”
- A matter of purpose, **not** incidentals

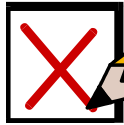
# “Incidental”

- **Webster’s Dictionary:**
  - *“Occurring or liable to occur in connection with something else”*
  - *“Happening in fortuitous or subjective conjunction with something else”*
- Something that ensues by chance
- Not planned or purposed

# What Is The Issue?

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- A matter of purpose, **not** incidentals

# We Agree That...

- It is sinful for the church to act without authority
- (2Jo.1:9) *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God...”*

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# We Agree That...

- **There are five authorized acts of worship for the church**
  - Prayer (Ac.2:42)
  - Singing (Ep.5:19) (Co.3:16) (He.2:12)
  - Lord's Supper (1Co.11:23-26) (Ac.20:7)
  - Lay by in store (contribution) (1Co.16:1-2)
  - Preaching the gospel (Ac.20:7)

# We Agree That...

- **Adding any other act of worship is without authority and thus sinful**
  - (Mt.15:8-9,13) *“...in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men... Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.”*
- Burning incense, counting beads, praying to Mary, instrumental music

# **We Agree That...**

- **There are three authorized areas of work for the church**
  - Evangelism (Ac.11:22-26) (Ph.4:15-16) (1Th.1:8)
  - Edification (Re.3:2) (Ac.9:31) (Ac.20:32) (Co.3:16) (1Co.14:26)
  - Benevolence (Ac.4:32-35) (Ac.11:27-30) (1Co.16:1-2) (2Co.8,9)

# We Agree That...

- Adding any other work or mission is without authority and thus sinful
  - (Pr.30:6) *“Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”*
- Secular business, Hospitals, Tax preparation, Auto repair, etc.

# A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...

- **Evangelism**

- “the gospel” (Mk.16:15)
- “the Word” (1Th.1:8)
- God’s Word is the only thing on the “*menu*”

# **A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...**

- **Edification**

- Elders are to “feed” the flock  
(1Pe.5:2)
- “the Word of His grace”  
(Ac.20:17,28,32)
- “the pure milk of the Word” (1Pe.2:2)

# **A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...**

- **Benevolence**

- “social purposes” are not the same as “benevolent purposes”
- We have no objection to the church providing a meal for needy brethren (Ac.2:44-45) (Ac.4:32-35) (Ac.6:1)
- The issue we are considering is the church providing a “social get-together / meal”

# **A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...**

- **Evangelism**
- **Edification**
- **Benevolence**
- Thus, IT IS an “addition” to the authorized work / mission of the church (Pr.30:6)

# A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...

- **An Expedient**

- An “expedient” must first be “lawful” or “authorized” (1Co.6:12; 10:23)
- The Israelite could not kill and eat a pig as an “expedient” in the Passover Supper
- We cannot offer peanut butter on the unleavened bread as an “expedient” in the Lord’s Supper

# A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...

- **An Expedient**

- Noah could use a saw, ax or hammer as “**expedients**” to the command “*build yourself and ark*” (Ge.6:14)
- He could not use **pine** wood as an “**expedient**”.

# A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS NOT...

- **An Expedient**

- **CANNOT** be an **addition** to the action, work, or object that is authorized
- **IS** anything that is necessary or “helpful” to “carry out” (**expedite**) that which God authorizes
  - Baptism - **Required / Authorized**
  - Baptistery - **expedient**
  - Sprinkling - **ADDITION!**

# A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” DOES NOT...

- “Carry Out” (expedite)...
  - Evangelism
  - Edification
  - Benevolence
- It is another *action, work, or mission*
- Thus, it is an addition to the authorized work / mission of the church (Pr.30:6)

# A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” IS...

- An unauthorized / sinful way of *drawing* or *attracting* people to the church
  - Rebuked for being drawn by a “common meal” (Jo.6:26-27)
  - Drawn by the “Word” (Jo.6:44-45)
  - The “end” does not justify the “means” (1Sa.15)

# Church Cannot Provide A “Common Meal for Social Purposes” “By Faith”

- We must “walk by faith and not by sight” (2Co.5:7)
  - “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Ro.10:17)
  - Church social meals are not authorized in the Bible
- Such a meal is not “by faith” but rather “by sight” or by man’s devising (Je.10:23) (Pr.14:12) (Mt.7:21-23)

# Church “Social Meals”

## Forbidden 1 Cor. 11:22,34

- Overall problem - their assembly (v.17)
- Three problems - three solutions
  - Properly discern the Lord (v.20,23-29)
    - The right attitude manifest through right actions
  - Properly discern the brethren (v.18,21,33)
    - Inconsiderate by being exclusionary
  - Properly discern the church (v.22,34)
    - They “despised” the church by using it to accommodate a “common meal”

# Spiritual VS. Social

- The church of Christ...
  - Is a SPIRITUAL BODY (1Pe.2:5)
  - With a SPIRITUAL WORSHIP (Jo.4:24)
  - And a SPIRITUAL WORK (1Ti.3:15)
- A “common meal for social purposes”...
  - Is not SPIRITUAL or BENEVOLENT
  - But rather “COMMON” and “SOCIAL”  
(Le.10:1-3,10)

# 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

- Notice what Paul **DID NOT** say
  - “What! Do you not have fellowship halls to eat and drink in?” (v.22)
  - “If anyone is hungry, let him eat in the fellowship hall” (v.34)
  - “Discern the Lord’s body in the Lord’s Supper and start sharing your food with your brethren at the fellowship potluck”

# 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

- Notice what Paul DID say
  - Have the right reason for assembling as a church (v.17-18)
  - Discern the Lord's body in the L.S.
  - Show proper consideration to brethren
  - Keep the Lord's church and the assemblies spiritual by leaving their common meals in the realm of the home!

# Adding To The Worship Is Sinful

- Instruments added to singing
- Peanut butter on the Lord's Supper
- Rummage sale added to giving
- Sports report or weekly lotto numbers added to preaching

Adding “social meals” to the works of evangelism or edification is just as sinful

## - Arguments and Answers

# It's A Good Work

- A “good work” is an “authorized work”
  - (Ep.2:10) “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”
- Was Uzzah doing a “good work”?  
(1Ch.13:9-10)

## - *Arguments and Answers*

# **You Believe The Building Is Holy**

- Holy - separated or devoted to God
- Building is an expedient - expedites...
  - Evangelism, Edification and Benevolence
  - We are authorized to use the Lord's money (holy) to purchase a building to expedite the work of the church "only".
  - Thus the building is "separated" for this use
- Is the baptistery "holy"?

- *Arguments and Answers*

# Water Fountain and Restroom

- These are “incidental” to our assembly
  - We do not assemble to drink water
  - We do not assemble to use the restroom
- The church sponsored social meal is **NOT** incidental
  - Purposed, planned, announced and brethren assemble for its specific “purpose”

## - *Arguments and Answers*

# Incidental VS. Purpose

- Kids play ball on the parking lot
- Teens discuss popular movie
- Men talk fishing in the foyer
- Women discuss recipes
- Baby eats a cracker
- Have church ball team?
- Have church movie to entertain?
- Have church fishing trip?
- Have church cooking school?
- Have church social meals?

## - *Arguments and Answers*

# **Brethren Met In Their Houses**

- Doesn't authorize everything in house
  - Bedroom - Church hotel?
  - Garage - Church mechanic shop?
  - Barn - Church farm or petting zoo?
- Church may meet many places
  - School, Gymnasium, Hotel, Barn, Orchard, Bank, Prison, Accounting Office, etc.
  - Can the church provide all of these things?

- *Arguments and Answers*

# Christians Are The Church

- The church is composed of Christians, but a few Christians do not necessarily compose a church
  - (Mt.18:15-17) “take with you one or two more... and if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church”
  - (1Ti.5:16) “If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them and do not let the church be burdened...”

- *Arguments and Answers*

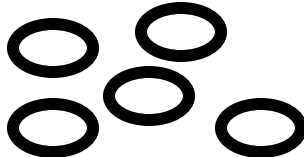
# Christians Are The Church

- The church is composed of Christians, but a few Christians do not necessarily compose a church
- Principle of “Collectivity”

Singular  
Link



Plural  
Links



Collective  
Chain



## - *Arguments and Answers*

# **Brethren Eating In A Restaurant**

- This is not the “church”, but individuals spending social time together
  - Brethren going to ball game together?
  - Brethren invest in business together?
  - Brethren go to amusement park together?
  - Brethren playing in bluegrass band?

## - *Arguments and Answers*

# Love Feast

- Possible Meanings From Scholars
  - Lord's Supper
  - Social meal as function of the home
  - Benevolent meal as function of the church
  - Social meal as function of the church
    - But (1Co.11:22,34)
- Can we prove a practice from this confusion?

## - Arguments and Answers

# Common Meal In Acts 20

- Church ate the “Lord’s Supper” (v.7)
- Who ate a common meal?
  - “Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.”
- Not a social meal of the church
  - Preacher ate needed meal before long trip
  - Incidental or if anything, benevolence

# When Is A Thing Sinful?

- When it is disobedience to positive law  
(1Jo.3:4) (Ge.3:1-6)
- When it is an omission of what is  
commanded (Js.4:17) (He.2:2)
- When it cannot be shown to be  
authorized (Mt.7:21-23) (1Jo.1:9)

# Conclusion

- A church assembling for or providing for, a “common meal for social purposes” ...
  - Cannot be shown to be authorized
  - Is disobedience to positive divine law (1Co.11:22,34)
  - Is Sinful
- Is This Your Practice?