

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mr. Brown, Mrs. Calvert, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, Mr. Douglas' mother, Mr. and Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Kelly Hall, Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson, Lamar Mathis, Ms. Matchett, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Mr. Sowder, Mr. Vaughn, Mr. Winns, Mrs. LeeAnn Wiser.
Out of Town: Mrs. Nick Law

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website:
www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com.
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

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Should Churches Provide Social Meals?

By Derek Long

Many churches put a great deal of emphasis upon having social meals and interactions with each others. Does the Bible teach a church should provide social meals and other forms of recreation or entertainment? Let's turn to the pages of the Bible to find the answer to this important question.

First, when we examine the types of work engaged in by the first century church, we find it falls into three different categories of action. The church has the work of spreading the gospel to the lost. In 1 Thessalonians 1:8 Paul praises the Thessalonian church for doing this very thing. He says, "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything." The church also has the work of edifying or spiritually building up the saved. Ephesians 4:12 tells us why God gave the church certain people with various functions. They exist, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The church has the work of limited benevolence or taking care of needy saints. Throughout the book of Acts we find examples of the early church taking care of Christians in need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 11:27-30). The early church did not take care of all the needy people in the world as a collective but individual

members would help those in need as they have the ability and opportunity (Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 13:16). Nowhere do we find a command, example, or necessary inference authorizing the church to engage in social or recreational works including the providing of a social meal.

Second, the apostle Paul corrects the Corinthians for having a social meal when they came together as a church. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul addresses some problems the Corinthian church was having when they come together (1 Corinthians 11:17-21). One problem he addresses is their turning the Lord's Supper into a common meal. In addressing this problem, he instructs the Corinthians about where the proper place is for having a common meal. He writes, "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you" (1 Corinthians 11:22). Paul is reminding the Corinthians the home is the proper entity to take care of social meals. In 1 Corinthians 11:34 he goes on to say, "But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come." Feeding our physical hunger is something we need to do at home and not when we come together. To take care of satisfying people's physical hunger when the church comes together is to violate verses such as these. In addition, we can observe a pattern in the early church of them eating social meals separate from the assemblies in people's homes (Acts 2:46-47).

Third, we must be on guard against the danger of drawing people with the wrong things. Jesus fed the 5,000 in order to display His power but notice how the people responded. John 6:26-27 says, "Jesus answered them and said,

'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.'" Jesus certainly does not want people to follow Him just for food and we should not seek to draw people into the church by offers of food and fun. The way in which people are drawn to Christ is by them being taught the gospel, which is the power of God to salvation (John 6:44-45; Romans 1:16).

Fourth, when the church takes on work which it is not authorized to do it burdens the church from focusing on the work God has given it to do. In discussing the care of certain widows, Paul instructs Timothy, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows" (1 Timothy 5:16). For the church to take on the care of widows who could be provided for by their families would result in the church being burdened and making it harder for the church to take care of widows who are really widows. In a similar way, when churches get involved with having social meals, the efforts spent on trying to have such things can take away from the church carrying out the important work of spreading the gospel, etc.

The fact the Bible nowhere authorizes the local church to provide social meals, condemns churches for having social meals, and the dangers present in churches providing social meals show why churches need to cease such an unlawful practice. We need to make sure we have authority for everything we do (Colossians 3:17) and no authority can be found for having social meals provided by the church.