

Let Him Eat At Home

Introduction:

1. L. A. Stauffer tells a story about his father and mother that will introduce our lesson this morning.

Several years ago, he says, his father and mother had a rather shocking experience while visiting relatives in Houston, Texas. His Dad and Mom, like some of our Dads and Moms, are country folks who have seldom ever traveled more than a few miles from their home in Griggsville, a rural community in West-central Illinois. L. A.'s Uncle Jack and Aunt Jo took them to the nearest "church of Christ" for worship Sunday morning and - what to their surprising and "wandering" eyes did appear but two basketball goals the brethren held dear. They learned later that the seats were moveable and the auditorium could be converted into a gymnasium.

2. After relating this story, L. A. went on to say that he felt the same kind of shock when he first read the score of a softball game between the "Church of Christ" and "Baptist" in the *Pike Press* county paper from his home town. This happened to be the church where he worshiped in his school days. Those "days," he said, were in the late '40's and early '50's when the church was the spiritual body of Christ — devoted to the God-ordained task of saving souls and not to satisfying the social needs of the brethren.
3. We have come a long way since the mid-twentieth century, to say nothing of the first century. Paul could say nearly 2000 years ago that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking," but would have to change his terminology to describe many churches of Christ today (See Rom. 14:17). Food, fun, and frolic are integral, essential, vital elements of many modern "Churches of Christ" and their work. Why is this so, brethren?

I. AUTHORITY.

- A. Many brethren no longer see the need for authority — book, chapter and verse — for all the church does.
- B. And where they really miss it is: If the church needs no authority for one thing, it needs no authority for anything. And yet brethren are heard to say, "We don't have to have authority for everything. Where is the authority for a church building? If we can have a church building, we can have a kitchen, recreation room, fellowship hall, and a ball team."
- C. The answer to this is rather simple.
 1. The authority for a church building inheres in the command for the church to assemble for worship (See Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor.11:17-34; 1 Cor. 14).
 2. God's command to assemble requires a place of assembly.
 3. But what command of God demands a kitchen, recreation room, fellowship hall, or ball team?

II. EXPEDIENT.

- A. Other brethren view the building as an expedient for use in "any honorable and proper activity" of Christians.
 - 1. So, if it's honorable for Christians to go to a country music show, brethren can bring entertainers and their bands to the church building for a performance.
 - 2. Likewise, if it is proper to have a pizza party and a ping-pony tournament for the young Christians, the brethren can conduct it in the church building. All this, we are told, can be done as "expedients."
- B. "Expedients," however, are means or ways of "expediting" commands and are only authorized by the commands themselves.
 - 1. The church building, for example, is an "expedient" or means to fulfill the command to assemble for worship. Before it can be used as an "expedient" or means to "party down" there must first be a command to "party."
 - 2. Where is the church authorized to engage in "partying" and all other things that are "honorable and proper activity" for Christians?
 - 3. The body of Christ is not authorized to do everything that individual Christians may do (See Acts 5:1-4; 1 Cor.12:12-14; 1 Tim. 5:16).

III. BRICK / TIMBER.

- A. Some brethren like to remind us that the church is not the building; that the church is sanctified people—the holy temple of God (See 1 Cor.3:16); that the building is merely brick and mortar and timber.
 - 1. The building, they tell us, is not a sanctuary, not a sacred dwelling as the Jewish tabernacle or temple was.
 - 2. Since, they conclude, the church building is a mere earthly substance, it need not be reserved for sacred purposes only.
- B. Can you imagine the apostles reasoning this way about the money laid at their feet? (See Acts 4:32-35).
 - 1. "The brethren that gave it are holy and sacred, but the money is merely gold and silver and copper; it's not sacred and need not be used for sacred purposes only. Let's set aside some of it to hire a Greek band, purchase some leg of lamb, and sponsor chariot races among the youngsters."
 - 2. When will brethren realize that the authority for erecting a building is the command to assemble for worship—a sacred purpose?
 - 3. To use the building for unauthorized purposes is as much a misappropriation as misusing the funds that purchased the building.

IV. FELLOWSHIP.

- A. Finally, brethren often affirm that the word "fellowship" authorizes social activities among brethren and that the church may therefore build a church building for this purpose.
 - 1. We grant that the Greek word for fellowship (*koinonia*) means "joint participation" or "mutual sharing" and that folks often use the English word to refer to social activities.
 - 2. But may brethren thereby conclude that sharing together in baseball, pizza parties, skating, etc, is fellowship in the New Testament sense?
- B. These brethren forget that Bible words are often misused in English.

1. The word "baptism" is defined in English as "sprinkling, pouring, or immersion."
2. The fact, then, that "fellowship" in English means "social activities" is not evidence it has this use in the New Testament.
3. In the Bible, "baptism" (immersion) never means "sprinkling" or "pouring," and "fellowship" never means fun or entertainment; fellowship describes the spiritual relationship Christians share with God, with one another, and in things of the gospel. It never denotes having a "good ole time" together.

V. THE HOME.

- A. What this whole problem boils down to, brethren, is that the functions of the home have been incorporated into activities of the church.
 1. That happened in the church at Corinth. When Christians assembled for worship, the brethren brought food and drink and turned the Lord's Supper into a feast.
 2. The apostle Paul's question to them needs to be asked today: "What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" Later in the same chapter he said, "If any man is hungry, let him eat at home." (I Cor.11:22,34).
- B. We admit, as brethren have noted, that Paul is condemning a practice in the assembly.
 1. But what of the further contention that eating and drinking would not have been condemned had it been going on at a time other than worship? That fact would not alter Paul's point that "houses" and "at home" are places for eating and drinking.
 2. Feasting and partying have nothing to do with the holy objectives assigned the church, a spiritual kingdom that consists not of "eating and drinking." (See John 18:36; Rom. 14:17).
 3. The building or funds authorized to fulfill those sacred goals must not be diverted to secular purposes dreamed up by many well-meaning but misguided brethren.

— An outline built by
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title by L. A. Stauffer