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Eating and Feeding

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

At the beginning of this year there was a little friendly competition between two fast-food restaurants as to who has the better french fries. Chances are you have an opinion on that subject. When it comes to food we have our favorites and we even build loyalties for brands of cola, pizza toppings and traditional family recipes. Some count on Aunt So-n-so's stuffing being at Thanksgiving dinner or someone's chocolate chip cookies being at the potluck. We reminisce about childhood meals, whether it was Mom's fried chicken, beans and ham hocks or Grandpa's potato dumplings.

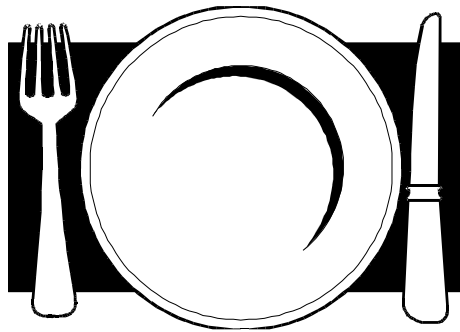
Food is an interest that we all share in common because it is a necessity and it likewise brings us pleasure. It should not be surprising, therefore, that food in one form or another is found at most public events. Even at the most informal ("spur of the moment") gatherings food will often be introduced at some point. There is something significant and intimate about providing nourishment and/or culinary pleasure to others. That this is true and good is seen simply by looking at God's word.

Food is a gift from God and it is right that we enjoy it (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12,13). It is the fruit of labor and a reward. If God saw fit to make sure that working oxen are fed (Deut. 25:4), then it only stands to reason that humans (including elders - 1 Tim. 5:17,18 and preachers - 1 Cor. 9:7-9) enjoy the same benefit. However, if one does not work, then the reward of food should not be expected (2 Thess. 3:10-12).

Feeding others is a service that we can provide. Distributing to the needs of others and being inclined toward hospitality are indicative of the kind of love that we are to have (Rom. 12:9-13; Jas. 2:14-17). The attitude of hospitality even extends to our enemies (Rom. 12:20). Indeed, Jesus

warns that we are going to be judged on our treatment of others in this realm (Matt. 25:34-46).

Likewise, the companionship found in eating with others carries with it some degree of significance. The scribes and Pharisees were critical of Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 5:27-32). Jewish Christians were critical of Peter for eating with Gentiles (Ac. 11:1-3). Why the criticism if there is no significance found in eating together?



Our fellowship with one another as brethren will naturally involve us in eating together. This is implied when we are warned not to keep company with brethren who are practicing sin. We are told "not even to eat with such a person" (1 Cor. 5:9-11). In the story of the prodigal son when the son repents and comes back to the father, they have a feast together (Lk. 15:21-24).

Notice the consistent treatment of the first Christians toward one another: they broke bread from house to house (Ac. 2:46), the Philippian jailer set food before Paul and Silas after being baptized (Ac. 16:34), Lydia responded with similar hospitality (Ac. 16:15), Ananias fed Saul (Ac. 9:19), Cornelius invited Peter and company to stay with him for a few days (Ac. 10:48).

The closeness of early Christians is seen in their sharing meals from time to time. In something as simple as eating together we find an association and closeness that is sadly missing from our culture. We are not the better for it.

As noted before, this eating together was something brethren were to cease doing with those who were walking disorderly or behaving immorally. Of course, the question that this begs is, how can we quit doing something that we haven't been doing? Perhaps the withdrawing of ourselves from those who are walking disorderly is often ineffective because it is more of a formality rather than an actual withdrawing of what should be the benefits of fellowship.

Let some misunderstand, I am not calling for churches to begin funding what is clearly an individual responsibility. The church-sponsored suppers are indicative of a people who have shunned taking individual responsibility. If God wanted individuals to see to the needs of widows first so that the church was not burdened (1 Tim. 5:16), by what stretch of our imaginations would we then burden a church with providing feasting and merriment? We have houses to eat in (1 Cor. 11:21-22). Yes, it would be easier to make the collective church responsible for hospitality rather than having to personally clean our houses, make meals, and invite others into our homes, but it was never God's intention that it be that way.

I fear, however, that in our efforts not to burden the collective church with such things as eating and feeding, we have neglected personal responsibility as well. When was the last time that you opened your home to feed your brethren? When was the last time you invited brethren home whom you just met that day? Don't wait for others to do it. Lead the way. You do it, and do it

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764
e-mail: adiestel@davesworld.net

It's Not Good for Us to Be Alone

By AL DIESTELKAMP

We live in a cultural setting that stresses self-reliance and independence. In fact, some are inclined to make a “god” of independence. This emphasis on individuality has been adopted by the various “movements” for men’s or women’s rights and has contributed to distrust and dissatisfaction between the sexes.

While a certain amount of independence is good and necessary, it shouldn’t be hard to see that God never intended for men and women to be independent of one another. The very fact that He made us “male and female” (Gen. 1:27), and set up His laws of human reproduction the way He did, ought to give us a clue. To remove all doubt, God revealed through the apostle Paul that “... neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as the woman was from the man, even so the man also is through the woman; but all things are from God” (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

Though God created both male and female on the same day, the male was “formed” first (1 Tim. 2:13). It didn’t take the Lord long to determine that “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Gen. 2:18). The record shows that God brought all the animals before Adam for the purpose of naming them, “But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him” (Gen. 2:20). Then, the Lord caused Adam to take a nap. This had to be God’s easiest act, for surely by this time of the day, without a woman to even

think about, Adam had to be pretty bored! When God was finished, Adam woke up to view the finishing touch on His “very good” creation.

It is, doubtless, no accident that both Moses (as he penned Genesis) and Jesus draw the same conclusion from this event. Because man needed a suitable partner in life, God made woman, and “For that reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24, as quoted in Matt. 19:5).

Jesus was answering a question about divorce when He used this proof-text. His answer to the question was, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:6). According to Jesus, just as God had joined Adam and Eve, He joins a man and woman today. They are no longer two because He has made them one. Therefore, for a man to divorce his wife is as much a violation of God’s sovereignty as if Adam had rejected Eve. The only exception Jesus offered to this rule was in a case where the putting away was brought on by the sin of fornication (Matt. 19:9).

Though it was Adam, a male, about whom God said loneliness was “not good,” that is also true about women. In fact, it is an interesting side note that the word “man” in that verse (Gen. 2:18) is translated from the Hebrew word, *adam*, which is defined as “a human.” Thus had God chosen to make the female first, there still would have been the need for a partner suitable to her. In this study we are focusing on that human need from the male point of view. The conclusion our Creator has reached is that a man needs a woman.

This truth is universal in one sense, for no man can be born into this world without a woman, and even after the birth process he needs his mother to satisfy both his physical and emotional needs. Later in life, as his needs change, it is likely he will seek out another woman to help him lead a fulfilled life. Notice that I say that it is “likely” (the rule) that he will seek a mate in life. There are some exceptions to this rule.

Certainly, even though the vast majority will marry, it is not wrong if a man chooses not to do so. Jesus is the most obvious example of one who did not take a wife, and proves beyond a doubt that celibacy can be a noble choice. On one occasion when His disciples were about to conclude that “it is better not to marry,” Jesus explained that celibacy was not for everyone. He revealed (in Matt. 19:11-12) that there are three types of men who can accept the unconventional lifestyle of celibacy:

1) He speaks of those who are born eu-

nuchs. He is including not only those who are incapable (because of a birth defect) of sexual function, but also those who have no desire for sexual relations;

2) He also refers to those who are “made eunuchs by men.” Man has long been capable of surgically rendering a man unsuitable for marriage;

3) Then there are the ones who “have made themselves eunuchs,” a phrase which lends itself to those who, by will-power, choose a life of celibacy.

The great apostle Paul never married, but indicated that he had a right to do so (1 Cor. 9:5). This would suggest that he fell into the third category mentioned in the preceding paragraph. He was so busy in the work of the kingdom that he didn’t want to be put in the position of caring “how he may please his wife” (1 Cor. 7:33). He was not hesitant to recommend his choice to others, even expressing his wish that “all men” were like him in this respect (1 Cor. 7:7). However, it was he who wrote that it was “because of sexual immorality” that men were to marry (1 Cor. 7:2), and he advised those who did not have his will-power (which is most of the male population) that “it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*” (1 Cor. 7:9).

Recognizing the truth that marriage is God’s prescription to help men and women avoid fornication is important. As a man, it should cause you to have a greater appreciation for your wife. You should look at her as a highly-prized, valuable (and nicely packaged) gift from your Creator. He knew just what you needed to help you go to Heaven.

Study and Apply

Matt. 20:25-28

Who did Jesus say was “greatest” in His kingdom? Who, in your home, is the one who best fits this description?

Eph. 5:25-33

The Bible teaches that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. If Christ showed His love for the church in a manner like you show your love for your wife, would you want to be in the church?

Practical Suggestions

- 3 Make it a practice to thank God for your wife and for the marriage relationship.
- 3 Avoid jokes and remarks which insult wives. When others belittle the marriage relationship, respond by praising your wife.
- 3 Praise and thank your wife for being your lover and friend.
- 3 Avoid situations and comments which might create jealousy. Make it clear to her and others that you belong to her.

'MUST BE 21 TO ATTEND'

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

It was October 31, 1998. My family and I had just enjoyed some good food, fun and conversation with those of like faith in their home. After leaving their home we travelled through the suburban sprawl of Chicagoland, making our way on unfamiliar roads toward our next destination. Even in areas without newly planted subdivisions the roads connecting such communities can become quite congested, so it was no surprise to suddenly be confronted with bumper to bumper traffic. Was it an accident? No, apparently the slow-down was caused by people turning left off of our two-lane into the parking lot of a church building. How refreshing! The lot was packed and more were trying to squeeze in. As we passed by the entrance, we saw a sign that indicated that it was a Lutheran church building. There was another sign that said "Haunted House." There was a zealous parking attendant waving a flashlight and wearing an ugly mask. How disgusting!

Did no one see the flagrant incongruity of a church using horrific scenes of evil and darkness to entertain people? "Something is wrong with this picture," is all I could think at the moment. Upon reflection, however, perhaps it was not that great a contradiction. Paul did warn Timothy "that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving

heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Perhaps they were just celebrating the source of their doctrines. More likely, they were just "speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2). I wonder if that large crowd returned the next morning (Sunday) to celebrate Christ.

After that frightening scene we arrived safely at the home of some saints where we spent the night and arose the next morning to go worship with others. A few blocks from their home we passed a Roman Catholic church building. I think the sign said, "St. Paul's." There was another sign next to it. It was one of those yellow rental signs with the black moveable letters. It told of an upcoming event, but I can't tell you what it said exactly because my eyes were immediately drawn to the red letters which said, (I am not making this up) "MUST BE 21 TO ATTEND." Now, I know those weren't the words of Jesus! Maybe they marked the boundary of the "red light district." They were advertising their "Casino Night."

What was going on in the Roman Catholic Church that now one must be 21 to attend? Did no one see the flagrant incongruity of a church using alcohol, gambling and who knows what all to entertain people? "Something is wrong with this picture," is all I could think at the moment. Upon reflection, however, perhaps it was not that great

a contradiction. Paul did warn Timothy that "perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers . . . unholy . . . without self-control . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Let's do that. Let's turn away; but we must turn away from not only the people who promote such nonsense, but from the carnal disposition that concocts such foolishness. Only the gullible who are "loaded down with sins" and "led away by various lusts" would fall for such swill. "Men of corrupt minds" devise these schemes, "but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all" (2 Tim. 3:6-9).

Most in the world, including many in the religious world, mock those "who carefully follow" the "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, [and] perseverance" of Christ's apostles (2 Tim. 3:10). Let's not let that deter us knowing that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Sure "evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, but as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of" (2 Tim. 3:12-14).

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764
e-mail: adiestel@davesworld.net



Articles From the Days Gone By

In the last issue of *Think*, I quoted from a 1956 article authored by my father. It has since been suggested that we print articles from his early writings. Many of his articles which appeared in *Truth Magazine* are too long for this paper. However, we will occasionally print short articles which he wrote, some of which were printed in other publications. The article in this issue is one which was printed in the *Berwyn Bulletin* (September 2, 1956). Those who knew my father will recognize that his appeal to consider the good of the church in every action was not based merely on a subjective feeling, but on an application of scriptural principles.

—Al Diestelkamp

Will It Hurt The Church?

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP**

Once I heard a Christian tell of an elder with whom he had worked. He said, "Brother Willis (the elder) was always concerned with what would be good for the church. He would always ask, "Will it hurt the church?"

How wonderful it would be if all Christians would ask that about everything they are about to do.

In our daily lives as Christians we may do many things that hurt the church. We do and say things that discourage weaker and younger Christians. We do and say things that disillusion non-members. The cause of Christ suffers because we are often unwise, unkind and unconcerned.

Sometimes it may seem hard to decide if something should be done or not. One way to decide this is to ask, "Will it be good for the church?" If it is not really and truly good, then it will hurt the church. Instead of determining the quality of a work or deed by asking, "Is it bad?" why not ask, "Is it good?" Instead of doing and saying those things that seem not to be bad, why not say and do only that which is definitely good? [see 1 Cor. 14:26].

Following this course will lead to the most satisfactory living possible. There will be fewer regrets at the end of each day and each lifetime. More happiness will be ours and more fruitfulness will abound in our lives. In business, at work or play, in our homes or away, if we will say and do altogether that which is good for the church, we will see the body of Christ grow and prosper as never before in our lives.

Think about it, brother, sister.

It's the Stupid Economy!

By AL DIESTELKAMP

During the 1992 Presidential Election, a campaign strategist posted a sign in his office to remind him and others of the one issue on which he believed the election would turn. It read: "It's the economy, stupid!"

Whether we like it or not, the American public has proven him right. No matter how immoral, unethical or illegal a political leader becomes, if it doesn't affect the full pockets of the citizenry, there is little demand for accountability.

If we're wondering why there is no outrage, the answer is in the scrambled words of the above motto: "It's the stupid economy!" Indeed, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

Similar attitudes are sometimes seen in the church. When things are going well in a congregation (i.e., membership and contributions), members get nervous about any discussion of controversial issues. There is little interest in examining long-standing practices in light of the scriptures.

Too often, this results in preachers steering clear of controversy. If one of "our" practices is challenged, the one asking for authority is branded as a "troublemaker" and therefore undeserving of an answer "for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Just as surely as our political leaders will be brought into account by a higher authority than the electorate, teachers of God's word will also answer to God if they preach and teach in such a way as to please the people (see Gal. 1:10).

What Would It Take?

By DON BLACKWELL

In this fast-paced world we live in, people, including Christians, may forget about God, the plan of salvation, and the hope of eternal life. There is nothing as important as the eternal salvation of our souls! Today man wants to ignore the idea of the church, baptism, partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week, repentance, and other things which God has commanded. What will it take for man to realize that the saving of one's soul is the only thing that matters in this life? Christians must wake up and do exactly what God has commanded.

What would it take for Christians to rise up out of their easy chairs and read their Bibles, conduct Bible studies, and even meet with saints on Wednesday nights? What it would take would be a love of the truth!

What would it take for Christians to serve God the way He has commanded? Christians may read the scriptures three times a week, but if that is all, how much good will it do? We must read the Bible every day (2 Tim. 2:15; Ac. 17:10-11).

What would it take for Christians to awake and arise to the forefront of God's army? God is looking for "doers of the word and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22). Does the description of everlasting punishment shake us up enough to do the commandments of God? Christ has promised everlasting punishment to the wicked and eternal life to the righteous (Matt. 25:46). We cannot even start to imagine the duration of eternal life. If we imagine eternity as billions of years we have not even started to comprehend eternity. What will it take for us to realize how important it is to live a spiritual life?

God is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should

come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). I will ask again: What will it take for us to obey God? Two things: Love of the truth, and a pure heart.

401 Mereme, St. James, MO 65559

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Editor AL DIESTELKAMP
P.O. Box 891
Cortland, IL 60112-0891
(815) 756-9840

E-mail AIDiestel@aol.com

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P.O. Box 891
Cortland, IL 60112-0891

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