

Fellowship Halls and Entertainment

Introduction

1. We are going to address some problems within the Lord's church that have helped to split the unity that Jesus called for:
John 17:21-22
2. We'll look at the area of Fellowship Halls and Entertainment that have come into the Lord's church in the name of "a good work" but without Bible Authority.
3. Let's first define some words that we must know the meaning of to be able to better understand.
 - A. **LIBERAL**: "not restricted; not restricted to the literal meaning: as, a liberal interpretation of the law; **broad-minded; favoring reform or progress, as in religion; not conservative.**"
 - B. **CONSERVATIVE**: "tending to preserve established institutions and methods and *to resist or oppose any changes in these; prudent, safe.*"
 - C. **INSTITUTIONAL**: "having the nature of an institution; in advertising - intended *primarily to gain prestige rather than to increase immediate sales.*" **Social get togethers by "the church" seem to take precedence over souls.**
 - D. **ANTI**: "a person opposed to some policy, proposal, etc.; opposed; against."
 - E. **FELLOWSHIP**: (Social) "a mutual sharing, as of activity, etc." (Meals, Sports) – (Spiritual) "Walking in the light"
1 John 1:7
 - F. **ENTERTAINMENT**: "interesting, diverting, or amusing thing, as a *show or performance.*"

Liberalism

1. Liberalism is NOT adhering to sound principles, FOR changes, NOT bound by established forms.
 - A. Do you see right now why one who is of a liberal persuasion is dangerous to the Lord's church. We see an attitude reflected within the heart of a person.
2. Liberalism is trying to justify something or anything without an appeal to the Bible.
 - A. Some have a "conservative" attitude toward the Bible but are just wrong on some things. But there are others who don't make an appeal to the scriptures and as long as it seems to be a "good work" in their eyes, there is no need to. These are LIBERAL.
3. One of the main arguments to liberalism is that the end justifies the means. For example:
 - A. It gets people here - therefore it's a good work (Bible?)
 - B. It will help keep the young people off the street (Bible?)
 - C. The community will look up to the church (Bible?)
 - D. The denominations will do it if we don't (Bible?)
4. I was raised in a liberal thinking church.
 - A. Lots of socials (at the building)
 - B. Youth rallies (more emphasis on fun, games, boys, girls)
 - C. More togetherness emphasized, little to no Bible
 - D. Most members did not miss a "supper" but often missed Sunday and Wednesday nights. (Bible not the emphasis of belonging)

Conservative

1. **Bible believing people who understand the scriptures have a different attitude toward divine authority. Notice what God says:**

Revelation 22:18-19

Galatians 1:6-8

1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for **every good work**.

John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

- A. **These verses describe the mind set, the attitude of those who truly desire to only practice what Jesus has authorized for His established church to do!**
 - 1) **Book, chapter, and verse is required for all that we do. We must strive to grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, not in the social needs of man. **A cancer is a growth. Not all growth is healthy!****
 - 2) **It has never been the Lord's desire that men be reached into His church with anything other than truth (Rom 1:16)**
 - 3) **True conversion is NOT finding out what people like and giving it to them to get them to come to "church." TRUE CONVERSION IS **letting people be drawn by the gospel of Christ** so that their lives are totally changed to be like Christ as he lived on earth.**
1 Peter 2:21

Fellowship Halls and Entertainment

1. **Invitations to come hear the gospel are being replaced today with invitations to “come help eat the world’s largest hot dog.”**
 - A. **When we leave the Bible then ALL things are possible!**

2. **In the early 80's a church of Christ in Little Rock Arkansas built a new auditorium and renovated its old auditorium to include the following:**
 - A. **Vegetable preparation table, six-burner stove with a double oven, a grill, two fryers with a vent hood, an ice maker, stainless steel work table, commercialized refrigerator and freezer, two hot-food holders, two dish washers, three sinks, a steam table (hot foods), and a table for coffee and tea.**

3. **Churches of Christ have gone to extremes to accommodate the social needs of their members.**
 - A. **A church in San Antonio has removed its pews and replaced them with folding chairs so they can be removed in order to have the whole auditorium available for suppers, skits, and games.**

 - B. **Pulpits have been removed so that goal posts could be set in place. A church in Tennessee listed among its evangelistic activities as softball, volleyball, ping pong, ladies slimnastics, bowling, a CPR class, jogging (with a joggers prayer), golf, events for the “Golden agers”, Halloween party, Christmas crafts, and a Valentine party.**
 - 1) **If you think that these are activities belonging to the work of the church of Christ bought with his blood, you and I have been reading two different books!**

C. Churches of Christ have tried desperately to “keep up with the Jones” or denominations of the world!

1) I want to read to you an article that appeared in the Time Daily, August 27, 1996, in Woodburn, Mass:

“In what could be one of the year’s more dubious recruitment tactics, irate parents in Massachusetts are charging that a Baptist church lured hundreds of children with promises of pizza and basketball games only to baptize them instead. It’s not yet clear how many children were baptized, and whether some parents had signed permission slips, police said. The Middlesex District Attorney is currently reviewing allegations to determine whether any laws were broken. If nothing else, at least truth in advertising was violated. “They did not tell us about Mass or anything,” said Rosa Vazquez, a Catholic who attended with a friend but wouldn’t go through the baptism. **“They just told us about the good stuff.”**”

NOTE: A new family in town once asked a local preacher “what does this church offer the young people?” I would ask **“what does the young person offer the church?”**

D. Once the demand for Bible Authority is set aside, or compromised, the only limit placed upon the church is the desire of the people and the imagination of their leaders!

4. Where is the Bible authority to build, and or maintain a fellowship hall? Where is the **Bible command, example, or necessary inference for the church to furnish entertainment?**

A. The biggest argument is that it is a “good work.” The old stand by is to justify it as being expedient.

1) But in order for something to be expedient, **it must first be shown to be lawful, something that has previously been approved of by scripture.**

- B. Our “good works” must be something we do based on Bible Authority. The work of the church is to “seek and save the lost.”**
- 1) How is that done? Through the Gospel of Christ.
Romans 1:16-17**
 - a. American Heart Association**
 - b. American Cancer Society**
- 5. The Bible authorizes the church to meet for worship, to preach the gospel to the lost, to edify the saints and to relieve the needy within certain limitations (*we’ll talk about this tomorrow*).**
- A. Any houses or facilities that are necessary to the church doing these four things, comes within the authority of the command to do them.**
- 1) But nowhere can you find in God’s Book authority for the church to have parties and banquets! Remember, we can’t exercise an expedient if we don’t have a command or example in the first place!**
- 6. As a banker teaches the teller to tell the difference between a real dollar bill and a counterfeit dollar bill by studying the real one, we must know the truth of God’s Word.**
- A. Once we know the truth, anything else supposedly done in the name of religion is counterfeit. Church Fellowship Halls and church sponsored entertainment is counterfeit to God’s truth.**

7. **Here are some key points to consider:**
- A. Entertainment focuses upon what is agreeable to the person, while worship channels one's attention to what is deserving of God.
 - B. In entertainment man is absorbed with his "likes." In true worship, man is absorbed with his "God."
 - C. Creating dramatic effects through skits, instead of the actual Word of God, might make a skit intriguing, but to whom?
 - 1) Is God really being exalted when these skits are performed, or is it just a "worship experience" for observers?
 - D. True conversion is when man is drawn to Christ by the Father, not drawn by food or games
John 6:44-45

Conclusion

1. Again, we plead for peace and unity, but not at the cost of prostituting the church for which our Lord shed His blood.
 - A. Jesus' blood was shed to purchase the church, a spiritual house with a spiritual mission.
Ephesians 5:25-27

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, **which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.

2. **Wholesome, social activities are important in the life of each Christian; but God made a distinction between the responsibility of the home and the responsibility of the church.**

1 Corinthians 11:22 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.

Romans 14:17 for **the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking,** but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

3. **Churches need to specialize in being churches and encourage parents to specialize in building good homes.**

A. **The church was not established to promote aerobic classes and softball teams and “bodily exercise” which profits little, but rather “godliness” which “is profitable for all things; having a promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come.” (2 Timothy 4:8).**

B. **May we all strive to keep the church exactly as what the Lord planned for it to be and not what man is changing it to be.**

A “soul center” rather than a “social center.”