

## Church and Food Part 1

*“25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” (John 6:25-27 KJV)*

Organizing food festivals is now one of the widespread practices in almost all churches. The church caters more to physical food than spiritual food. Now we can see food being supplied after each worship, after prayer meetings, and after each Bible study. **When food is the main agenda for people to flock to churches, then the spiritual quality of the crowd will be poor and the church resources will soon run dry.**

After the miraculous multiplication of fish, people began to look for Jesus, not for spiritual food but to try and get perishable food from Him to fill their stomach. Jesus realized their cheap mentality and rebuked the people.

*“7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” (1 Corinthians 10:7 KJV)* The verses below are quoted from the Old Testament: *“6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:6 KJV)* It happened this way: *“1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:1-6 KJV)* Moses was the leader and the people feared him. As long as he was with them they worshipped the Lord, but when Moses was late in coming down the mountain, the people became corrupted in their thinking and their hearts led them to sin against the Lord. They asked Aaron to make for them an idol to worship. They did this because their focus shifted from Heavenly to earthly things. And the Bible says that they *“offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings.” (Exodus 32:6 KJV)* So everything was done in the name of the Lord but it was idol worship: *“The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Exodus 32:6 KJV)*

Nowadays, born-again Christians get corrupted and desire for earthly things. They develop a thirst for the gratification of the flesh and their hearts are far away from pleasing God. **“19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who**

***mind earthly things.” (Philippians 3:19 KJV)*** Such Christians indulge in parties and many unnecessary banquets, in the name of the Lord, and they will even pray before they eat to show a false sense of religiosity. Peter admonished the believers not to go back to such practices: *“3 For the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.” (1 Peter 4:3 KJV)*

Another occasion for splurging on food is at birthday celebrations. The Bible does mention a few people who celebrated their birthdays. In the verses of Scripture below, let us see those who celebrated their birthdays:

***I. Pharaoh:*** *“20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.” (Genesis 40:20 KJV)* The feast was given to glorify Pharaoh himself.

***II. Herod:*** *“6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.” (Matthew 14:6 KJV)* Herod threw a birthday party to glorify himself and it ended up with John the Baptist getting beheaded.

The above two examples show clearly the celebration was for the birthday of non-believers.

There are another two less obvious occasions in the Scriptures that speak about people who celebrated their birthdays.

***III. Jeroboam:*** *“5 In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.” (Hosea 7:5 KJV)* ‘In the day of our king,’ Jeroboam was the person who caused the ten tribes to be separated from Judah, and he set himself as king over them. He was the one who introduced the worship of the two calves of gold. It could be that *“In the day of our king”*, refers to the birthday of King Jeroboam, when he glorified himself, and the people around him magnified him and celebrated his birthday with him. **He sought the company of scorners and drunkards who led him deeper into sin.** King Jeroboam represents people who are called by the name of God, but neither honors Him nor His Word.

***IV. The sons of Job:*** *“4 And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.” (Job 1:4 KJV)* When it says, *“every one his day”*, it may be their own birthdays. They would invite others, and spend on them, but God’s presence was not with them. Poor Job, after they were done, interceded for them before God for cleansing them from sin. *“5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” (Job 1:5 KJV)* **So here the sons of Job represent those who do not fear God but they infiltrate the church and they live and enjoy worldly material things, hiding behind prayers and the sacrifices of those who fear God while still being carnal.**

There are no more examples. The Bible does not mention any saint who had celebrated his birthday.

\* Birthdays of the family members and wedding anniversaries for those married have no relation with the church. The family should endeavor to gather together for their daily family worship and not to make parties and waste time and resources for such occasions. \* Daily each family needs to give thanks to God for sustaining them as a family and granting them their needs and abundant life. The Word of God stresses upon family worship; the man as the head of the family ought to lead the family in prayer, reading the Scriptures, singing to the Lord and kneeling down with the family members to give honor and glory to God and send in their petitions. Worship, prayer, and reading of the Bible, should be done daily by the family.

\* Throwing parties to celebrate birthdays and wedding anniversaries will cost a fortune and waste time and resources. If we do this, we will lose our focus on God and His purpose in our lives. If we promote such celebrations inside the body of Christ, then our worship will shift focus to idol worship. The focus of members will be self-centered rather than God-centered. \* Very soon also, the church will run out of resources and when the real need rises up, the church has no money to do what is needful. Suppose every week, one family will celebrate a certain occasion and will invite many people; then how much time and money will be wasted on worthless things? As well as next week, another family will do the same, and the same losses will happen and that will be taken from the resources that God is giving to support the families. \* We need to realize our calling and God's purpose for the church. The church should not be a restaurant or a place to find food and make parties. ***"22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."*** (1 Corinthians 11:22 KJV)

The Bible did not mention in the book of Acts that the church was celebrating birthday parties, otherwise, Peter and the rest of the apostles would be running from table to table to pray for the celebrants as the pastors of the churches are doing nowadays. Acts 6, the dilemma of the church was how to feed the widows, ***"1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."*** (Acts 6:1 KJV) Let us focus on meeting the needs of the people who are in need, and not get involved with activities that the Word of God had not approved, and further put ourselves in troubles that these activities and practices give birth to.

Paul said, ***"13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body."*** (1 Corinthians 6:13 KJV) When the focus is on food and not on God and His Word and His will but at lavish parties, then another sin will link itself to food and that is sexual immorality.

Even if we have plenty of money, we don't need to spend it in such a way that displeases God and presents itself as a bad example for the new believers. Someone may say that the early believers were eating together as we can read, ***"46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."*** (Acts 2:46 KJV) They were rejected by society and so

they ate together not because they wanted to indulge in parties for enjoyment, but because they lived together.

When food becomes the focus in the minds and hearts of people, it will hinder the work of God from progressing. In Acts 6:1-2 there was a problem in food distribution as we can read here: ***"1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables."*** (Acts 6:1-2 KJV) The food problem had affected even the efficiency of the apostles to pray and to preach the Word of God. When the members and the families in the church get too involved in food preparation and parties, that finally will affect the efficiency of the church ministries in preaching and teaching the Word of God, and affect negatively the life of prayer and fasting of the church. Furthermore, the financial resources of the church and the families that compose the church will dwindle and be exhausted.

In the Old Testament God in His Word had ordained for His people certain feasts that they need to come together and celebrate; the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the Weeks, and the Feast of the Tabernacles, ***"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty."*** (Deuteronomy 16:16 KJV) In the New Testament if we desire to celebrate and make food and eat together then it is worthy to observe what the Scriptures support; as Christ's Resurrection, ***"5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."*** (Matthew 28:5-6 KJV) The Scriptures does not support what churches are celebrating nowadays; birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day, Halloween, All Saints Day, Friend's Day, etc.

We as church usually eat together when we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, ***"17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."*** (Romans 14:17 KJV) God took the people of God to the wilderness and gave them manna to eat. They wanted to return to Egypt in order to eat other things. That should not be the case with us. Life in Christ is not about food or parties. It is fasting rather than feasting. Our mind should be fixed on Heavenly things to glorify God and to walk faithfully in His ways.

Some say that the father celebrated when the lost son came back home, ***"22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."*** (Luke 15:22-24 KJV) But that does not mean and justify that after every church service there will be a banquet and celebration. We affirm our love to those who repent and come back to the Lord and to His church. I usually teach the leaders of the congregations and the rest of the workers that they may invite those who are coming back to the Lord for a meal and to have fellowship with them and assure them of our love and deep concern for their lives. I also usually direct everyone to evangelize and advice them to invite

the new people to them to their houses and have a meal and fellowship with them around God's Word to strengthen the bonds with them.

***"38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*** (Luke 10:38-42 KJV) Nowadays Christians in churches behave like Martha with their much preparation of food that Jesus did not require. They are careful and troubled about many things that pertain with food and cooking and had put aside the importance of the Word of God; forgetting that people who come to Jesus need God's Word and not delicious plates.

***My dear and beloved:*** Let us come now to God committing ourselves to what we heard from His Word and apply them in our lives. Let us love God's Word more than the physical food and the material things that are in the world. Let us come out from the worldly celebrations that became idols in peoples' lives such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Christmas Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day, Halloween, All Saints Day, Friend's Day, etc. Let us refrain from all such worldly celebrations. Let us also be aware that people comes to Jesus because they need God's Word and not delicious food. Let us consider to be good stewards to what God entrusted to us and to be aware that parties and functions inside the church will promote immoralities and wasting of the finances of the members and the church.

Let us pray ... .

***My prayer:*** Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins, who was buried and rose from the dead on the third day to give me eternal life. Lord, thank you for the teaching about food and how the way to be used in serving you. Lord thank you for all the rebukes, the corrections and the admonishments that I received from your Word that revived me and made me understand your will and ways and encouraged me to continue to stand firm against all the wrong practices about food in the life of the church and ministry.

*Confess your sins now to God. Repent and ask God forgiveness for the worldly celebrations like Halloween, Valentine, Birthdays, Christmas, New Year, Father Day, Mother Day, and the rest that you may get yourself involved with. Repent of your lust and immoralities. Repent of your bad stewardship for money, your wasting of resources and spending much on food and celebrations. Repent of doing your own will and plan and not the will nor the plan of God. Repent of flattering people, fear of man, compromises, and your worldliness. Repent of your non willingness to suffer for Christ and follow Him in the way that He wants you to serve Him. Lord forgive me, I repent of the following sins, \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Lord I commit myself to abide with this Word of yours that I received in this message. Lord I surrender my life and my will fully to you, and commit myself to stand firm to stop all these feasts offered to idols, and against all bad stewardships, wasting resources, and the wrong uses of food in the life of your church.*

*Lord, I pray for my Brothers and Sisters who repented of their sins and accepted your Word and are willing to live their lives and serve you and suffer for your Word. Lord use their lives as good examples to others to follow you. Lord protect them and provide all their needs so they will continue to serve you.*

*Lord bless us and sustain us as a church. Lord help us, and provide for us to go on in serving you and do your work and your will. Lord we commit ourselves to teach and apply all what we learned in this message about the right use of food. Lord give to us more of the Holy Spirit gifts to evangelize and to reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and with the message of the Word of God. Lord, we pray that you will enable us to plant new Bible studies and new congregations for the church and fulfill the vision of the church, 'Multiplication in peace with implementing the whole will of God'. Lord prepare us for your coming, to go with you when you come. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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