

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:105

May 15, 2005

Please Don't Feed the Ants!

Joe R. Price

The following announcement appeared in a bulletin of the Salt Lake Valley Church of Christ:

"PLEASE DON'T FEED THE ANTS: Anyone who brings food into the building is asked to be mindful of the fact that we have a severe ant problem. Please be sure to clean up the area in which food is served and make sure any to be left is sealed in air-tight containers." (THE SALT LAKE MESSENGER, from the Salt Lake Valley Church of Christ; May 30, 1993).

I am sorry to hear about the ant problem. Ants are pesky things, and diligent. *"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest"* (**Prov. 6:6-8**). It seems the ants have been harvesting their "bread" at the Salt Lake Valley Church of Christ with a good deal of success.

The suggested remedy for this ant problem is to clean up the food-serving areas and make sure the food left behind is tightly sealed. We all know this helps reduce the chances of ants getting to their next meal; but someone is sure to forget, and as soon as they do those tireless creatures will once again make their presence known. Therefore, I would like to propose to these brethren a remedy which, if observed, will greatly reduce their ant problem. In fact, if this precaution is taken, in all likelihood the ants will soon go looking for their "bread" somewhere else. The solution is found in **1 Corinthians 11:22, 34**. *"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.... But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment."*

You see, there is a greater problem here than not feeding the ants. It is that of feeding the people! It is a foregone conclusion in the denominations around us that a part of the work of a church is to provide social gatherings for its members and the community. Indeed, to suggest that it is not the work of the local church to plan, promote, and provide social and recreational activities is viewed as narrow-minded by some and blasphemous by others. However, we are content to let the Bible answer the issue for us; and we plead with brethren in Salt Lake and elsewhere to respect what the Bible teaches on this important subject.

The local church has God-given work it is to do. Briefly stated, its work is evangelism to the lost (**1 Thes. 1:8; Phil. 1:5**), edification of its members (**Acts 2:42; 20:28; Eph. 4:11-16**) and benevolence to needy saints (**Acts 4:34-35; 6:1-6; 11:27-30; 1 Tim. 5:16**). This is the sum of the work authorized in the New Testament by Jesus for the local church. Since we are to function under His authority, we are content to do only the work He has charged us with in our congregational capacity (**Eph. 1:22-23; 5:24; Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:17**).

But, for a variety of reasons, brethren have had trouble being content with the simplicity of the gospel as it relates to the work of the church. Whether it is to "be like the nations around them" or to draw people together in the hope of teaching them the gospel and/or fostering improved relationships (**1 Sam. 8:5, 20; John 6:26-27, 44-45**), the result is the same. Additions to the work of the church are being made and

accepted. Disobedience of **1 Corinthians 11:22, 34** occurs. Good motives for church-sponsored and promoted dinners, get-togethers and “fellowship meals” do not change these facts. The end does not justify the means (**Rom. 3:8**). We must do God’s work in the God-revealed way, not our own (**Eph. 2:10**).

One common response to the foregoing position of no church-sponsored social functions is thus stated: “You are misapplying **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**. The Corinthians’ problem was that they were abusing the Lord’s Supper by introducing their common meals into the assembly. The church can promote ‘fellowship meals’ and such as long as these activities are kept separate from the assembly.” It is true that the Corinthians were abusing the Lord’s Supper (**v. 20-21**). Nobody denies that. But please look carefully at the remedy the apostle prescribes. He did NOT say “separate your church-sponsored meals from the assembly.” He DID say you have houses to eat and drink in (**v. 22**). He DID say let the hungry man eat at home (not at the “fellowship meal” in the “fellowship hall” after services). The remedy was to remove all common meals from their “coming together” (**v. 33-34**). The work of the local church is to feed the soul, not the flesh. Let the home supervise common meals. Let the church “come together” to worthily partake of the Lord’s supper (**v. 20, 33-34**).

Another oft stated defense intended to legitimize church-endorsed social gatherings is this: “Only individuals are providing the food. The local church is not involved since none of its money is being used to provide the event.” Honestly now, were not individuals the ones who were providing the food in **1 Corinthians 11**? “...for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper...” (**v. 21**). Furthermore, the church is using its money when its building and facilities are used for the separate activity of pot-luck dinners, etc. Since the building is an expedient, its use must first be an authorized (lawful) activity for the local church to conduct (**1 Cor. 6:12**). The building expedites (aids) the church in evangelism, edification and benevolence (the authorized works of the local church). Authority for church-promoted social activities lacks scriptural support (**Col. 3:17**). Therefore, to use the building for such activities is to use it to aid an unauthorized work.

Other defenses are offered, but when all are heard, the simple truth of **1 Corinthians 11:22, 34** remains. It is clear, decisive, and compelling. Let the local church be about the spiritual business of honoring the Lord’s death and promoting gospel preaching and teaching (**1 Cor. 14:26**). Let the home be about the business of feeding the stomach and arranging social gatherings. God’s way works. We need not tamper with it. We ask our brethren in Salt Lake and elsewhere to come back to the Bible way and stop adding to God’s word and work (**Jer. 6:16**). When we follow God’s way we will not have to worry about feeding the ants. The church’s full attention can be given to feeding the word of God to the souls of men and women (**Acts 20:28; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2**).

Family News

Helen Brewer, Sandra Boyd's aunt, has cancer. Treatment started on Thursd.

Mary Burnett has good and bad days. Yesterday was good.

George Bynum, Karen Moore's uncle, had surgery on Thursday. They put in a defibrillator/pacemaker. He is now at home and recovering.

Nell Ferrell remains in room # 110 at NHC. She continues to eat and improve. She is awake and talking more and more. She is receiving some light therapy.

Nancy Webb Fields, Sandra Boyd's cousin, has cancer and had surgery on Monday. She remains in St. Thomas hospital. She may go home this week.

Brenda Fuqua's change in medicine continues to help her be able to eat and with her pain level. She still has bad days and good days.

Sandra Hunt's blood pressure is still very high. She goes to the doctor on Thursday for this (the doctor this past week was for other things).

Alvin "John" Jenkins, the 80-year-old father of Robert, is currently battling lung cancer. He is taking chemotherapy. Recent test results can be described as neutral: the cancer has stopped growing for now.

This Tuesday **Allen Malone** leaves to return to Vietnam.

There is a new report from **Fred Newman** in the back of the auditorium.

Fran Pickens continues to do very well.

John "Jack" Reiger continues to have a graft verses host reaction. Thursday night he was released from Skyline and returned home. His blood sugar is high and he has pneumonia. He will have a CT scan on Wednesday to see about the pneumonia. Among other things, he is receiving an IV twice a day.

Remember **Dustin Simpson** who continues to serve in the Navy. You can contact him at: 91 Quevic Drive
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Colin Springer, the 8-year-old niece of the Boyd's son-in-law, is scheduled to have heart surgery this Wednesday at Vanderbilt.

Remember Sammy Stafford's sister **Wanetta Procter** who has cancer.

Ame White is trying different combinations of pain medicine (per doctor instructions) in an effort to control her pain: so far no real success.

Robert Wray has some type of injury to his side that is creating pain.

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: **Bansemers** (AM only); **Lentzs**; **Nicholsons** (except Troy)

Lakeview church of Christ

132 New Shackle Island Road

P.O. Box 514

Hendersonville TN 37077

Building: 615-824-1376

www.BibleSaints.com

Bible Call: 615-824-1310

Troy Nicholson

trojenn@intergate.com

"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).