

Division

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 13th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

~1st Corinthians 11:20–21 (NASB)

1) Toxic Churches

- A) After discussing issues related to proper order in the church (roles for God, Jesus Christ, men, and women -- 1st Corinthians 11:1-16), Paul continues discussing proper order in the church regarding public gatherings.
- B) Unlike the praise which the church received about following established traditions (cf. 11:2), Paul shifts his attention to some sharp criticism of the Corinthians (11:17).
- C) Like many churches (perhaps you have experienced this kind of a church), the Corinthian church was experiencing shocking divisions between different groups (11:18).

- D) One of the common customs for the earliest Christians was for different house churches to gather together for a meal, usually on Sunday afternoons. These meals (commonly known as “love feasts”), were like modern potlucks.
- E) During these meals, the “approved” (11:19) were eating first, at the expense of those who were not among the elite group of the “approved.” This was a gross abuse of “the Lord’s Supper,” or “communion” (11:20).
- F) Communion with Jesus represents a unity with Him and with other disciples of Jesus (John 15:1-11). Having divisions between followers of Christ is an abuse of Communion and invalidates the message of Jesus (John 13:35).

2) Being A Church Means Providing For Everyone

- A) Paul’s sharpest rebuke was against those who used their “approved” position to their own advantage, getting “drunk” on their own power and position (and wine) at the expense of the “hungry” (1st Corinthians 11:21).
- B) Once again, the issue is not so much about food and drink (although getting loaded at the church potluck was not consistent with being “approved”). The issue was a tolerance for divisions, at the expense of others (11:22).
- C) Holding grudges, harboring anger or frustrations, allowing conflict between a Christian brother or sister to go unresolved, lacking concern for another person (especially the weak) is the opposite of a “communion heart.”
- D) If Christ died for all, then prejudice (divisions) between followers of Jesus must be rejected. Caring for those with nothing (11:22) means rejecting divisions in Christ’s name!