

What Should We Feed Them?

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew 5:3*)

Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (*Matthew 5:6*)

It is common fashion to see food ministries such as soup kitchens, food pantries, hot meals, etc. run by churches to feed those who are poor or have difficulty getting by. Those who operate and participate in such ministries generally believe that they are presenting Christ and are doing the will of God in their work. After all, in the Scripture it is plain that the New Testament church should care for the poor, the infirmed and widows.

Now, I am not questioning the sincerity of the folks who perform such ministries. I believe that they are quite sincere in what they are doing. Moreover, I am certain that they believe that they are fulfilling the will of God. However, I do question exactly what those ministries are actually feeding the people they minister to. In this regard I am not speaking to the physical food that they give them. Rather, my focus is on what spiritual food, if any, they are dispensing in the name of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ made a quite distinct and plain reference to this to His disciples at Jacob's well at Sychar:

Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. (*John 4:30-32*)

And again, the Lord made it plain to the Devil that man's existence was tied directly to the word of God and not the substance we fill stomachs with:

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:2-4)

Now, I know that there are many who question the veracity of the above verses from Scripture and their application. However, the reason they question them is due to a lack of understanding about life itself and the source of it. Without doubt, we can eat everything that is right for us, eat it every time we are supposed to, and in the proper quantities – **and still die**. In fact, we can do everything right in our life – and we will still die. The only question that remains to be answered is exactly when we will die.

This being the case, which is more important:

1. the availability of food for our bellies?
2. the food that gives us life even after we depart this earth?

The word of God, which is food for the soul, is what we need the most. If we take it in, consume it, let it become part of us, then we are fed. If on the other hand, we only hear it and let it roll off us like water off a duck's back, we are not nourished by it at all, and it is of no profit to us. Worse yet, if what is purported to be the word of God, is actually not, then the food we take in is actually poison.

Moreover, getting back to the point, what about those persons who benefit from such ministries? What about their motivation? After all, I don't think people have changed all that much over the last 2000 years since the Lord Jesus Christ made the following point:

When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to

Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 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. 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 6:24-27)*

Sadly, just like many of those folk who followed the Lord Jesus, many partake of social ministries because they fill the belly. Even more sad is the fact that most social ministries do not actually preach the Gospel either. Rather, they are content to let their “witness” testify of Christ. The problem here is that this witness does not convey to someone that they are a sinner and condemned of God without the salvation that is in Christ. It does not convey that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only means of reconciliation we have with God the Father. And finally, it pulls the focus away from the spiritual, and places it on the physical – thus negating what little witness is there.

Hence, am I saying that feeding the poor and those in need is a bad idea?

No, I am not.

Rather, what I am saying is that the first and foremost food that needs to be dispensed is the word of God, specifically the Gospel; as the Lord Jesus Christ made clear:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than

they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (*Matthew 6:25-33*)

Then they can be fed with physical food.

However, to feed them real spiritual food, one must actually have the Gospel to give.