

Church Suppers

Wednesday nights are the time of church gatherings in many congregations. In our church, the Wednesday evening schedule begins with communion service, followed by dinner in the fellowship hall, then choir for the children and classes for adults.

Depending on the season and the current schedule of extracurricular activities, it's sometimes easier for our family to stop at a fast-food restaurant and get to church just in time for choir and classes. When I come into the fellowship hall, where clusters of people are still lingering over their plates and a final cup of coffee, I feel a bit left out. Maybe we've been efficient, but maybe we've missed out on something important.

Jesus seemed to put a lot of stock in shared mealtimes. In the story of the five loaves and two fish, the disciples first suggest letting the crowd disperse to "go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus had spoken, he had healed, the hour was late—about time to break up the gathering, they thought. People can fend for themselves in town—fast-food, first-century style.

Jesus disagreed! "They need not go away," he says. Having the whole group share a meal was so important that Jesus performed a miracle—providing plenty of food for everyone from a meager portion.

These days, people may poke fun at church suppers, but something very real and valuable is going on when Christians break bread together. While our bodies are nourished in one another's presence, our hearts and souls are being fed also. As we feed one another in body and spirit, the Body of Christ is being formed and strengthened. It's a practice Jesus clearly blessed and one to be cherished.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up into heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples.



