

About Full Meal Tickets

In a church service awhile back, a pastor gave this account of an experiment he had run in his youth group. As each person arrived at the church, he or she was given one of three different colored tickets. The colors were of no significance to the youth until they went into the dining hall. In fact, some of the youth had fun trading tickets with each other before they went into the room. When they did enter, they found that with the first color, they could “purchase” a “full meal” with all the trimmings. The second color had enough value to assure them of a meal of soup and water. The third color held no value at all. The people with this color ticket had to sit and watch while the others ate their respective meals.

As the evening progressed, the people with no meals and some “soup meal” people began to beg at the “full meal” tables. The most interesting pattern occurred! In general, the “soup meal” people shared little and sometimes needed more. The “full meal” people shared what they had, but only after they had been satisfied themselves, or because they didn’t like the food item in the first place.

As I thought of this story, I had to marvel at how often I have seen this same pattern unfold in the body of Christ today in both the physical and the spiritual realms. The application of this pattern in the physical realm is obvious and widely accepted as normal in most Christian circles. Generally, it goes something like this:

The “full meal” people – those to whom much has been given by the Lord – generally operate under what could be called the ten percent rule. This most clearly applies to money, but is also applicable to time, wisdom, talent or any “possession” given to us by God. Our lives and actions say, “Yes, Lord, I understand that You own the cattle on a thousand hills, but on my hill, ten percent is yours. The rest is mine for my own needs.” Under the name of stewardship, small percentages of God’s wealth trickle forth to send out the gospel while we consume the majority upon ourselves as if it were truly ours. When we have all that we need first and are “full,” what is left over (and possibly of no value to us) is given away.

The “soup meal” people – those given just enough – function very much like the “full meal” people with one subtle difference. They’re never really in a position of being satisfied and strive to gain more before giving any away.

The “no meal” people – those who for whatever reasons need to look to others for provision – go from table to table looking for and receiving whatever is not needed anymore. The attitude of “second hand” or “used-up” or “stark survival is good enough” becomes the portion of the poor and needy. Sadly, most missionaries and ministries who reach people with the true gospel of Jesus Christ fall into this category because of this selfish attitude is held by the “full and soup meal” people. (It might be wise to note a distinct difference at this point. History has shown that most people expressing the true gospel to the lost, give out of their need. In stark contrast to the other two categories, this group can usually be counted on by the lord and his people to always be available, always find some way to help and always meet needs when they are presented.)

As harsh as this seems in the light of God’s Word, and as unlike this behavior is in relation to the example Jesus set when He walked on this earth, this physical manifestation pales in comparison to the failure of our stewardship in the area of spiritual wealth. Unlike the above, each of us is given a “full meal” ticket when we give our lives to Jesus Christ. The New Testament in its entirety proclaims the astounding wealth each of us has been given in Him. He is everything we need for any area of our lives, now and for eternity. He is the living water that none of us who drinks from it should ever thirst again.

Our Lord must feel such sadness as each of us, capable of being continuously “full” from the Lord’s provision, needs much before we’ll give it away to a world that is starving to death from lack of the truth. In the first century, most of those who gave their lives to Jesus, also spent their lives for Him, just as He did for them (and for us.) Understanding the immeasurable wealth they had been given in Him, they considered it of no consequence to lose their very lives so that others could hear the truth and share in the “living water.” Dead to even the smallest comfort, their focus was on Jesus alone and on His desire to reach the world so that none should perish. Only things that were important to Him were important to them.

How far we have strayed as we run to this service, that event, or the next meeting to hear more, to receive more for ourselves, when our neighbor next door or down the block or at work has heard nothing. We eat until we are full, and only then do we share with the starving world. James 4:8-10 says, “Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery.] [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty.] Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins.] Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will lift you up and make your lives significant]” – Amplified version.

“Lord, forgive us. Help us to provide a “full meal” of Your love, not just crumbs, to those who need to see You. We have sinned and gone far from who You have called us to be. Help us, Lord, to be willing to need only You for our provision and to give all of ourselves for You and as You have given Yourself for us. We understand that our actions prove that we feel we are wealthy and have no need and that You desire that we purchase from You ‘gold refined and tested by fire that we may be truly wealthy’ (Rev. 3:17-18.) Help us to repent, Lord. Open our eyes.”

Needing my Father God to change *my* heart,
Jim Corbett