

Pros and Cons of the Recreational Gospel

A Working Definition: For the purposes of this discussion, the term “recreational gospel” refers to any **church-sponsored** activities intended to further the work of the church through recreational or social means (for example, ball games, camps, meals, snacks at VBS, prizes for riding the church bus, etc.). I’m assuming that we understand “the work of the church” to be the spreading of the gospel, the edification of the saints, and benevolence to needy saints. (*1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 14:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; etc.*)

To The Reader: Please provide input on this document, so that it can be modified to reflect the best arguments on each side. InkMan@MyPreachingPen.com

Pros	Cons
These are all wholesome, appropriate practices.	“Wholesome,” yes, but they are appropriate only as the work of the church, if authorized by Scripture.
The Scriptures do not forbid the practices.	Rather than ask, “Where does it say NOT to?” or argue, “God doesn’t condemn it,” we should ask, “Where is the authority for it?” and “How do we know it’s pleasing to God?” (<i>Leviticus 10:1-3</i>) There is simply no scriptural authority for the practices. (Beware the silence of Scripture! <i>Hebrews 7:14</i>)
These activities allow the church family to have fellowship, which is a vital church function.	The church must surely spend time together and know one another in order to effectively edify one another. The way this is to be accomplished is described in the New Testament – collective worship plus home gatherings. (<i>Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 11</i>) While we’re at it, let’s get back to the Bible in our use of words. “Fellowship” does not refer to eating together, so “fellowship halls” and “fellowship meals” are poorly named, from a scriptural perspective. Eating together is a practice comprehended by “keeping company.” (<i>1 Corinthians 5</i> and <i>2 Thessalonians 3</i> , etc.) See the article on “fellowship.”
Recreational activities provide opportunities to preach to people who might not otherwise hear the gospel.	The end does not justify the means. (<i>2 Samuel 6:6-7; Romans 3:8</i>) Enticing people to worship/study through carnal means seems to violate the principle of <i>John 6:26-27</i> , where Jesus specifically discourages this motivation.
The church feeding people a meal keeps them at the church building for the evening services.	See above regarding the ends and the means and carnal enticements. Compare the practice of disciples in <i>Acts 2:46</i> : “Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...”
Anything the individual may do, the church may do.	Simply not true. As a striking example, the support of certain widows is prohibited to the church, but is required of individual Christians. (<i>1 Timothy 5:16</i> – If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened....) Note that <i>James 1:26-27</i> and <i>Galatians 6:6-10</i> (and similar passages) highlight individual , not collective , responsibilities. We make this same very important distinction regarding the “branches” in <i>John 15:1-10</i> – they are individuals , not churches, made obvious by Jesus’ use of pronouns. Regarding the use of money for physical needs, a church is only authorized to spend money for “needs of the saints” or to support “the poor among the saints” (<i>Romans 15:25-33; Acts 11:27-30; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9; Acts 4:34-35</i>), or send to preachers. (<i>Philippians 4:10-18</i>)
<i>Acts 6</i> shows a church-sponsored fellowship meal.	No, <i>Acts 6</i> shows a church-sponsored benevolent work directed only to widows among the disciples.