

Unity In The Church

Eating In The Building

(I Co 11:20-22)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on the “Unity In The Church.”
 - a. Two weeks ago we looked at the “No Bible Class & Upper Room Only” false doctrine.
 - i. **Ac 20:8** “There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered”¹
 - b. This week we are going to discuss that which, at least in name, people are more familiar with.
 - i. **I Co 11:20-22** “When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.”
3. This particular argument has changed over the years it appears.
 - a. The argument used to be “Christians are not allowed to eat anything in the church building.”
 - b. The argument more common today is “Christians are not allowed to use the Lord’s money to build a kitchen and place to sit and eat together.”
4. Do to the change in tactics and since some still hold to the first we will look over and examine both today.
 - a. With that in mind let us examine our topic for this day.

I. Eating In The Building Is Wrong

- A. As stated some of our brethren hold to the idea that eating in the building is wrong
 1. The Rivermont church of Christ website, out of Chester, Virginia, had this in their “Frequently Asked Questions” section.
 - i. “Is it ok to eat in the Church building, fellowship hall, multi-purpose room or any room purchased with offering money? The most obvious answer to this question is found in 1 Corinthians 11:22 & 34.” (<http://goo.gl/YSrCF5>)
 - ii. “Unless we have a necessity such as a diabetic, baby, or small child, eating a common meal in a building purchased with the money collected on the first day of the week is considered recreational... Can we have a bingo, dance, or have a common meal? - No.” (Ibid)

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

Unity In The Church

- B. The argument
 - 1. Eating is recreational and the place purchased with the offering money is only to be used for worshipping God.
 - i. In other words the only thing you can do there is “Preach, teach, sing, pray, give and take the Lord’s Supper” (Ibid)
- C. Thus...
 - 1. If one wants to do something recreational they must do it in a place that has not been purchased with the offering money.
 - i. “to use the building for just anything we want is an abuse of God's authority, and a misuse of the offering.” (Ibid)

II. Eating In The Building Examined

- A. First we must define fellowship
 - 1. It comes from the Greek word “κοινωνία” or “koin-o-nia.” which is found 19 times in the N.T.
 - i. “an association involving close mutual relations and involvement— ‘close association, fellowship.’” (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (445). New York: United Bible societies.)
 - ii. “the share which one has in anything, participation; w. gen. of the thing in which he shares... intercourse, fellowship, intimacy... a benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship” (Thayer, J. H. (1889). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti (352). New York: Harper & Brothers.)
 - iii. “is used in two senses, (a) “to have a share in,” Rom. 15:27; 1 Tim. 5:22; Heb. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 John 11; (b) “to give a share to, go shares with,” Rom. 12:13, RV, “communicating,” for KJV, “distributing”; Gal. 6:6, “communicate”; Phil. 4:15, KJV, “did communicate,” RV, “had fellowship with.” See DISTRIBUTE, FELLOWSHIP, PARTAKE.” (Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). Vol. 2: Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (114). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.)
 - iv. Louw & Nida broke this word into three parts.
 - a. Fellowship
 - b. Sharing
 - c. Willing Contribution
 - 2. Notice how it is translated.
 - i. In the ESV.
 - a. 9 times as “fellowship”
 - b. 3 times as “participation”
 - c. 3 times as “share”
 - d. 2 times as “contribution”
 - e. 1 time as “part”
 - f. 1 time as “partnership”

Unity In The Church

- ii. In the KJV.
 - a. 12 times as “fellowship”
 - b. 4 times as “communion”
 - c. 2 times as “communicate”
 - d. 1 time as “contribution”
 - e. 1 time as “distribution”
 3. The Bible defines it as working toward the same goal in like-mindedness.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7** “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”
 - ii. **I Co 1:10** “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (NKJV)
 4. Thus what we find is that fellowship, biblically speaking, is contributing and sharing with one another of like-mindedness concerning God’s Word.
- B. Examining the argument
 1. Is eating a common meal, not the Lord’s Supper, fellowship?
 - i. The answer is emphatically no!!!
 - a. This is the reason why I don’t say “fellowship meal.”
 - ii. There have been plenty of times people that I am not in fellowship have eating in our multipurpose building.
 - a. Thus the term fellowship meal is not biblical.
 2. Can I have fellowship with my brethren while I’m eating a common meal?
 - i. The answer is emphatically yes if my brethren and I are in fellowship.
 - a. We know that a sign of disfellowship is to not “eat” with a brother or sister that has refused to repent.
 1. **I Co 5:11** “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”
 - b. Thus a sign of being in fellowship with brethren is eating with them.
 1. This is because, while eating, I can edify, encourage, study, or do any number of spiritual things with my brother or sister.

Unity In The Church

3. Can one eat in an establishment used to worship God?
 - i. The answer is yes.
 - a. We see this clearly stated in the book of Acts.
 1. Paul waited 7 days in Troas to “break bread” with the brethren on the first day of the week. There is no way this is a common meal as Paul was having meals with them for seven days. It had to be the Lord’s Supper.
 - i. [Ac 20:6-7](#)
 2. Paul also ate a common meal in the same place they were worshipping on the first day of the week together.
 - i. [Ac 20:11](#)
 - a. Notice Paul went back up where they had been before Eutychus fell out the window.
 - b. Notice “eaten” is used. This word is never associated with the Lord’s Supper only common meals.
 4. Can one have a drinking fountain in the building?
 - i. I ask this because most who hold to this idea have drinking fountains in the buildings.
 - a. Notice what [I Co 11:22](#) actually says.
 1. “What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in..”
 - ii. Illustration
 - a. A congregation in El Reno, OK had this pointed out to them one time and they eventually moved the fountain outside of the building.
 1. Though they are to be commended on following through with their logic it is obvious their logic is starting out flawed.
- C. Thus...
1. We clearly can see that there is nothing wrong with eating in a building.

III. Using The Lord’s Money To Build A Multipurpose Building

- A. It appears that at some point there was a shift from “it is wrong to eat in the building” to “it is wrong to build a building where you eat with the Lord’s money”
 1. On the Lavista church of Christ website there is a questions and answers section. Someone asked the “eating in the building question” and the preacher, Brother Darrell Hamilton, answered it. Here is some of his answer.
 - i. First: This is a treasury problem not an eating problem.
 - a. ““Eating in the building” is actually a misnomer. The issue is over having large social gatherings in a church owned building where the facilities (e.g., a fellowship hall) and expendable goods (e.g., paper products, coffee, cups, cleaning material) are funded by the Lord's treasury.” (<http://goo.gl/AYPtdK>)

Unity In The Church

- ii. Second: God distinguishes between spiritual and physical.
 - a. After going to [Ac 2:46](#) he writes, “I think it is curious that Luke specifically mentions a distinction of where the early Christians met to discuss the Lord and where they met to eat meals... I think Luke wanted to make sure that the pagans understood that this new religion that was coming was not one based on food and drink, but on the spirit filled life.” (Ibid)
 - b. After going to [Ro 14:17-21](#) he writes, “...the kingdom of God is not about food. He does not want people to start associating discussions on food as if they are somehow tied to spirituality. Tying food to religion is a practice of the pagans.” (Ibid)
 - iii. Third: When we give in the contribution it then belongs to God.
 - a. After looking at [Ac 5:1-5](#) he writes, “If he was just giving the money to the church, then he would have been lying to men. Since he was actually lying to God, then it must mean that the money became God's as soon as he laid it at the apostle's feet. This is important when looking at how we spend the money that is collected.” (Ibid)
 - iv. Fourth: Building a place to worship is authorized, building a place to eat is not.
 - a. “...we are told to assemble together. (I Corinthians 5:4, 11:18, 20, 33). The fact that we are told to assemble by necessity means that there must be a place... There is no indication that I can find that they ever built and financed their own buildings, but seeing how they freely used the Jewish buildings for the same purpose (the synagogues), they obviously displayed no moral objections over the use of buildings that were dedicated to the study of God.”
 - b. “We build our buildings using tacit approval from the synagogues, but then we want to go well beyond what the synagogues represented... I don't see a case for the church building fellowship halls.” (Ibid)
- B. Thus...
- 1. The spending of money from the contribution for a multipurpose building is wrong.

Unity In The Church

IV. Using The Lord's Money To Build A Multipurpose Building Examined

- A. I will look at each point made
 - 1. I will examine the second through the fourth statements and then look back at the first statement.
- B. Examining the argument
 - 1. God distinguishes between the spiritual and physical and because food is considered physical it should not be intertwined with the spiritual.
 - i. It is true God distinguishes between the physical and the spiritual.
 - a. We are to rely not on anything physical only the spiritual.
 - 1. **Mt 10:28** “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - 2. **Jn 4:24** “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
 - 3. **II Co 10:4** “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”
 - ii. It is not true that God expects complete separation between the physical and spiritual.
 - a. God said He would take care of our physical needs when we meet His spiritual expectations.
 - 1. **Mt 6:25-33** “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing...33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
 - b. God considered eating with brethren a spiritual/fellowship matter in “some” cases.
 - 1. **I Co 5:11** “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”
 - iii. Thus God distinguishes between the two but does not always separate the two.

Unity In The Church

2. God considers what we have ours and what we give in the contribution His and as such what we give must be used for His benefit.
 - i. This is really the crux of the matter for anti-brethren who hold to this doctrine.
 - a. As seen **Ac 5:1-5** is used as a proof text.
 - ii. The truth is everything is God's whether we have it or we give it in the contribution.
 - a. David understood this clearly.
 1. **I Ch 29:11, 14** "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all... 14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you."
 - b. Just because Peter said Ananias & Sapphira lied to God not man is not suggesting it "changed hands" from man's to God's. It was always God's money it just changed who was steward over it.
 1. Man is steward over what God gives him.
 - i. Therefore he is expected to use it in a manner that is not sinful.
 2. A congregation is steward over what God gives it.
 - i. Therefore it is expected to use it in a manner that is not sinful.
 - iii. Thus everything belongs to God and as such whether it is in man's hand or the congregations hand they are both required to spend it under the same guide which is "to glorify God."
 - a. Both are authorized to by expedience in such matters.
3. God has authorized using the treasury funds for building a building to assembly and worship but not for eating and gathering outside of the "worship assembly."
 - i. There is no doubt that God has authorized congregations to build buildings to worship.
 - a. Robert Turner in the September, 1971 edition of Plain talk wrote the church building is "an expedient, subordinate to the command to assemble." (<http://goo.gl/pke3HN>)
 - b. Ian Coker wrote, "Most congregations which have a church building use them no more than three or four times a week. On what basis is this expense justified? Purely on the grounds of expediency, there being no direct command to purchase or build one." (Ibid)

Unity In The Church

- ii. There should be no doubt that God has authorized congregations to have multipurpose buildings as well.
 - a. If it is ok to spend thousands and sometimes millions of dollars on a building that is only worshiped it typically four house a week does it not make since one can build a place where fellowship can take place as well?
 - b. To answer this all we have to know is if we are to fellowship with one another.
 - 1. As we notice earlier we are to have fellowship with one another (**I Jn 1:7**).
 - 2. As notice earlier fellowship can be attached to physical activities like eating (**I Co 5:11**).
 - iii. Thus we are authorized to use God's money to build places where fellowship can take place.
 - 4. The change from "it is sinful to eat in the building" to "it is ok to eat in the build but not build a place to eat in or next to the build" tells us something.
 - i. It first tells us that the "eating in the build" argument was not valid to begin with and they realized it.
 - ii. It secondly tells us that they are trying to hold onto something that clearly is not there by simply changing their argument from one aspect to the other.
- C. Thus...
- 1. What we find brethren is that it is not wrong to purchase a place to meet for the purpose of combining recreation and fellowship.
 - i. Is it wrong to purchase/build a place solely for recreation...you better believe it.
 - ii. Is it wrong to purchase/build a place with the purpose of fellowship and furthering the gospel call where recreation will happen from time to time in the process...not at all.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Brethren let us unite in God's Word.
 - a. Let us not bind where God has not bound.
- 2. Question: Could you help a brother or sister who believes wrongly on this issue?
 - a. If so continue therein and grow thereby.
 - b. If not why not?
- 3. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Unity In The Church

- b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
- i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Have Faith In Jesus **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**