

The Church Building and Bible Authority

- The Right Question:
What Activity Has God Authorized?
- The Church's Revealed Work
Gives the Building Its Proper Use
- Common Meals, Hospitality, & Fellowship
Must Be Kept in Their Bible Place
- Answering Common Arguments
About the Church Building

Two weeks ago, we studied the Authority of God's Word.

In the last lesson, we studied how to understand and apply Bible authority.

- We learned, that authority must come from God ([Matt.21:23-25](#); [Col.3:17](#)),
- that an expedient, can only aid what God has already authorized ([1Cor.6:12](#); [1Cor.10:23](#)),
- and that individual action, is not always church action ([1Tim.5:16](#); [Acts 5:1-4](#)).

Now we apply those principles to one practical question:

- **What is the church building for?**

This lesson is Not against, Christians eating together, showing hospitality, or enjoying one another's company — The Bible teaches those things.

This lesson is also Not saying, the building is holy, like the Old Testament temple — The building is Not the church.

The real issue is authority.

- Has God authorized the local church, as a collective body, to use its building, resources, and organized function, for common meals or social/recreational activities?

Some may reason, that a common meal is not being made "the work of the church," but that the building, may simply be used for such things.

That statement deserves careful Bible study.

If the local church provides, maintains, opens, schedules, or uses its building for an activity, we must ask:

- Has God authorized the church, as a collective body, to use that resource for that purpose?
- The building is a tool or aid — Therefore, it should aid the work, God authorized the church to do.

Before we determine, how the building may be used, we must first ask,

I. **The Right Question: What Activity Has God Authorized?**

A church building, does Not create authority.

- A songbook, may aid singing, but it does Not authorize singing.
- A baptistry, may aid baptism, but it does Not authorize baptism.
- A classroom, may aid teaching, but it does Not authorize teaching.

Likewise, a building may aid authorized work, but it does Not authorize every activity done inside it.

- The activity, must first be authorized by God ([Col.3:17](#); [2Jn.9](#)),
- Then, the building may lawfully aid that activity ([1Cor.6:12](#); [1Cor.10:23](#)).

We should remember that...

A. The Church Is the People, Not the Building

The New Testament teaches,

- “Now ye are **the body of Christ**, and members in particular.” ([1Cor.12:27](#))

Explanation:

- “**The body of Christ**” — refers to Christians who belong to Christ.
- The building is Not the body — The people are.

Peter also describes Christians as God’s spiritual house.

- He said, “Ye also, as **lively stones**, are built up a **spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” ([1Pet.2:5](#))

Explanation:

- “**Lively stones**” means — living stones.
- “**Spiritual house**” — shows that God’s house today, is His people.
- “**Spiritual sacrifices**” — shows the spiritual nature, of service to God.

A family may live in a house, but the house is Not the family.

- If the family moves, the family still exists.
- Likewise, the church may meet in a building, but the building is Not the church.

The church is the people of God — The building is only a tool.

Therefore, the building must Not be treated as the source of authority.

Since the building is a tool, we must ask, what work is it meant to help.

B. A Building May Aid Authorized Spiritual Work

The Bible says,

- “upon the first day of the week, when the disciples **came together to break bread**, **Paul preached** unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were **many lights** in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.” ([Acts 20:7-8](#))

Explanation:

- “**Came together**” — identifies an assembly.
- “**Break bread**” in this context — refers to the Lord’s Supper.
- “**Paul preached**” — shows teaching.
- “**Many lights**” — were physical aids to the gathering.
- The lights did not create a new activity — they helped the saints carry out, authorized spiritual work.

Christians are commanded to assemble and exhort one another.

- Scripture says, “let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the **assembling** of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but **exhorting** one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” ([Heb.10:24-25](#))

Explanation:

- “**Assembling**” means — coming together.
- “**Exhorting**” means — encouraging and urging one another spiritually.
- A place to assemble, may aid this command.
- A church building, may help saints assemble, worship, teach, study, pray, sing, exhort, and edify.

Eyeglasses, may help a person read the Bible — but eyeglasses, do Not decide what the Bible says.
A church building, may help saints assemble — but the building, does Not decide what the church may do.

A building, may aid authorized spiritual work.
But the building itself, does Not authorize a new work, purpose, or activity.
The building may be used, for what it lawfully aids.

The right question is Not,

- “Is the building holy?”
- Or “Can Christians eat together somewhere?”

The right question is:

- **What activity, has God authorized the church to do, and does the building, help carry out that authorized activity?**

Now we must ask: What has God revealed, for the church to do?

II. The Church’s Revealed Work Gives the Building Its Proper Use

To know what the church building is for, we must first know what the church is for.
The building serves the work — Therefore, the work of the church must define the proper use of the building.

Let’s begin with the church’s spiritual identity and purpose.

A. The Church Upholds Truth and Glorifies God

Paul wrote, so Timothy would know how one ought to behave, in the house of God.

- He said, “if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the **house of God**, which is the **church of the living God**, the **pillar and ground of the truth**.” ([1Tim.3:15](#))

Explanation:

- “**House of God**” — refers to God’s household, His people.
- “**Church of the living God**” — shows that the church belongs to God.
- “**Pillar and ground of the truth**” means — the church upholds and supports the truth.
- The church is Not described, as the pillar and ground of food, recreation, entertainment, business, politics, or social life — The church, is the pillar and ground of the truth.

Paul taught,

- “**Unto Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus** throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” ([Eph.3:21](#))

Explanation:

- “**Glory**” means — honor, praise, and reverence given to God.
- “**In the church**” — shows that the church has a God-glorifying purpose.
- “**By Christ Jesus**” means — this glory must be according to Christ, Not according to man’s invention.
- The church exists to glorify God IN Christ — Not to become a social organization.

A school building, serves education — A courthouse, serves justice.

- The church building, should serve the church's spiritual purpose.

The church, upholds truth and glorifies God.

Therefore, the church's resources, including the building, should serve truth and spiritual work.

Now let's notice the work, God revealed for the church.

B. God Revealed Spiritual Work for the Church

The Christians of the first century, continued in spiritual activities, revealed through the apostles.

- Scripture says, "they **continued stedfastly** in the **apostles' doctrine and fellowship**, and in **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**." ([Acts 2:42](#))

Explanation:

- "Continued stedfastly" means — they remained devoted.
- "Apostles' doctrine" means — inspired teaching.
- "Fellowship" in this setting is — spiritual sharing and participation.
- "Breaking of bread" in this spiritual context — points to the Lord's Supper.
- "Prayers" — shows dependence upon God.
- These are spiritual activities.

[1 Thessalonians 1:8](#) shows — **evangelism**: the word of the Lord sounded out from the church.

[Ephesians 4:15-16](#) shows — **edification**: the body grows by truth and love.

[1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#) shows — **benevolence** for needy saints.

The building, may help the church assemble, worship, teach, preach, edify, pray, sing, remember the Lord's death, encourage one another, and carry out authorized benevolence.

- But the building, must Not be used to add another purpose to the church's work ([Prov.30:6](#); [2Jn.9](#)).

The work of the church is spiritual.

The building is properly used, when it helps the church carry out, God's revealed work.

The church's work, defines the building's use.

- The church upholds truth.
- The church glorifies God.
- The church worships, teaches, evangelizes, edifies, and may relieve needy saints according to Scripture.
- The building may aid those works — It must Not be used to add another work.

Now we must carefully consider,

III. Common Meals, Hospitality, and Fellowship Must Be Kept in Their Bible Place

This lesson is Not against Christians eating together.

The Bible teaches hospitality, brotherly love, and care for one another.

But it also teaches the difference, between individual action and church action ([1Tim.5:16](#); [Acts 5:1-4](#)), and between common meals, and the church's spiritual function ([1Cor.11:34](#); [Acts 2:46](#)).

Let's affirm, what the Bible authorizes, for individual Christians.

A. Christians May Eat Together and Show Hospitality

This lesson is Not against hospitality.

The Bible teaches Christians to love, receive, help, and care for one another.

- **“Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.”** ([1Pet.4:9](#))

Explanation:

- **“Hospitality”** means — receiving, helping, and caring for others.
- **“Without grudging”** means — without complaining or resentment.
- Christians, should gladly show hospitality.

The Bible says,

- **“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”** ([Rom.12:13](#))

Explanation:

- **“Distributing”** means — sharing with Christians who are in need.
- **“Given to hospitality”** means — pursuing or practicing hospitality toward Christians.
- Christians should gladly open their homes and lives, to encourage, help, and care for others.

This lesson should Not make Christians less hospitable — It should make us more hospitable in the Bible way. Invite brethren into your home — Encourage one another — Help the needy — Love the brethren.

Individual hospitality, does Not authorize the church, to use its building and collective function, for social meals. Individual action and church action, are not the same ([1Tim.5:16](#); [Acts 5:1-4](#)).

Now let's consider that,

B. Common Eating, Must Not Replace or Confuse, the Church's Spiritual Purpose

The Corinthians had corrupted the Lord's Supper, by mixing it with selfish common eating.

- Paul said, **“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you Not.”** ([1Cor.11:20-22](#))

Explanation:

- **“Come together”** — refers to their assembled action.
- **“This is not to eat the Lord's supper”** — shows the spiritual purpose was being corrupted.
- **“His own supper”** — refers to common eating.
- **“Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?”** — points common eating to the home.
- To **“despise the church of God”** means — they were treating God's church with disregard and shaming poorer brethren.

This passage, is about the church coming together, and the difference, between the Lord's spiritual supper and common eating.

Since the building is an aid, to the church coming together, this passage matters. It shows that common eating, does Not belong to the church's assembled spiritual function.

Twelve verses later, Paul gives a direct answer to physical hunger.

- He said, “**And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come Not together unto condemnation.** And the rest, will I set in order when I come.” ([1Cor.11:34](#))

Explanation:

- “**If any man hunger**” — addresses physical appetite.
- “**Let him eat at home**” — gives Paul’s inspired answer to physical hunger.
- “**Come Not together unto condemnation**” shows that — mishandling of the church assembly, is spiritually serious.

Notice, Paul did Not say,

- “Eat the common meal, more respectfully.”
- “Eat it, after the closing prayer.” OR “Use another room.”

Paul said, “**Let him eat at home.**”

[Acts 2](#) harmonizes with Paul’s instruction, by placing ordinary meals in the home setting.

- The Bible says, “**And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat** with gladness and singleness of heart.” ([Acts 2:46](#))

Explanation:

- “**In the temple**” — identifies a public place, where the disciples were together in spiritual devotion.
- “**Breaking bread from house to house**” — identifies the setting of ordinary meals.
- “**Did eat their meat**” — refers to ordinary food.

[Acts 2:46](#) harmonizes with Paul’s later correction in [1 Corinthians 11](#).

- Acts 2 places ordinary meals “**from house to house,**”
- while Paul says, “**Have ye not houses?**” and “**Let him eat at home.**”

A common meal is not wrong in itself — Eating at home is not wrong — Hospitality is not wrong.

- But [Acts 2:46](#) places ordinary meals in the home setting,
- and [1 Corinthians 11](#) points physical hunger to the home.

Together, these passages teach that common meals, belong in their proper place.

Now let’s define fellowship by Scripture, not by modern religious habit.

C. Biblical Fellowship Is Spiritual Joint Participation

John connects fellowship with God, Christ, apostolic teaching, and walking in the light.

- He said, “**That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have, fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.**” ([1Jn.1:3](#))
- “**But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.**” ([1Jn.1:7](#))

Explanation:

- “**Fellowship**” means — sharing, partnership, or joint participation.
- John connects fellowship with the Father, the Son, apostolic teaching, and walking in the light.
- Biblical fellowship is spiritual.

Paul thanked God for the Philippians,

- For their, “**fellowship in the gospel.**” ([Phil.1:3-5](#))

Explanation:

- “**Fellowship**” in this context, means — shared participation in gospel work.

Brethren may enjoy a meal together and call it “fellowship” in an everyday sense.

- But Bible fellowship, is deeper than sharing food.
- Bible fellowship is sharing in Christ, walking in the light, and participating in the gospel.

A meal, may accompany individual hospitality, but a meal is Not what makes biblical fellowship. Biblical fellowship is spiritual joint participation in God’s truth.

Christians may eat together and show hospitality. But Scripture places common meals in the realm of individual/home responsibility, Not in the church’s gathered spiritual function. Biblical fellowship is spiritual joint participation in God, Christ, and the gospel, Not social entertainment.

Now we’ll proceed with,

IV. Answering Common Arguments About the Church Building

The issue is Not, whether the building is made of holy materials.

The issue is Not, whether eating food is sinful.

The issue is Not, whether brethren enjoy being together.

The issue is, whether the church has Bible authority, to use its building for common meals or social/recreational activities.

Let’s begin with the concern:

A. We Are Not Making Common Meals Church Work

Some may say,

- “We are Not claiming common meals, are the work of the church. We simply believe it is acceptable to use the church building, for a common meal.”

That statement helps clarify the issue, but it does not answer or settle it.

If the church owns, rents, maintains, schedules, opens, or controls the building, then the building, is a congregational resource.

The building, is Not merely an empty space for any harmless activity ([Col.3:17](#)).

It is an aid or expedient, used by the local church, to carry out its authorized spiritual work.

Therefore, the use of the building should be limited to activities, that aid the church’s authorized work, worship, fellowship, edification, evangelism, and spiritual service.

So, the question remains:

- **What authority allows the church to use its resource, for the purpose of hosting a social meal?**

A classroom, helps teaching — A baptistry, helps baptism.

A microphone, helps preaching — Lights, help assembling.

In contrast,

- A common meal, does Not help the church, eat the Lord’s Supper.
- A birthday party, does Not help the church, preach the gospel.
- Recreation, does Not help the church, worship in spirit and truth.

Those are different activities.

The building may be used, for what it lawfully aids ([1Cor.6:12](#); [1Cor.10:23](#)).

Since the building, is an aid to the church's authorized spiritual work, it should Not be used for activities, that do Not aid that work.

If the activity is Not authorized as church work, worship, fellowship, edification, evangelism, benevolence, or spiritual service, using the building for it, is Not authorized.

Now let's consider the argument:

B. The Church Building Is Not Holy

Some may say,

- "The church building is not holy.
Therefore, it may be used for common meals or social/recreational activities."

It is true that the physical building is Not holy, like the Old Testament temple. The carpet, pews, walls, roof, pulpit, and baptistry water, are Not holy in themselves. But that does Not prove, the building may be used for any purpose.

The question is Not: "Is the building holy?"

The question is: "**Has the church been authorized to use the building for a social activity?**"

- Communion trays, are Not holy in themselves — but they should Not be used as a lap tray.
- Songbooks are Not holy in themselves — but they should Not be used as coloring books.
- The baptistry, is Not holy in itself — but it should Not be used as a swimming pool.

Why?

Not because the objects are holy, but because they are assigned to aid, spiritual work.

The building is Not holy ground.

But it is still a church resource, and its use must be governed by Bible authority.

Another argument says,

C. It Is Outside Formal Worship, So It Is Acceptable

Some may say,

- "We are not planning the social activity during worship — It is after services, or on another day."

Time does Not create authority ([Col.3:17](#)).

- A Bible class, may be authorized outside the worship hour, because teaching is authorized.
- A gospel meeting, may be authorized, because preaching is authorized.
- A singing or prayer meeting, may be authorized, because singing, prayer, and edification are authorized.

But common meals or social/recreational activities, such as birthday parties, game nights, or entertainment events, are Not authorized, merely because they happen outside the worship hour.

The issue is Not only the time — The issue is the purpose and activity.

The church remains responsible, to act within the authority of Christ, with its authorized resources.

The question is Not, "Is it during formal worship?"

The question is, "**Is it an authorized spiritual activity for the church building?**"

Now consider the argument that,

D. Meals Help Fellowship and Bring Brethren Closer

Some may say,

- “Eating together helps brethren grow closer — It encourages love — It helps fellowship.”

Brethren may indeed, enjoy being together in a meal — That is why individual hospitality is good.
But Bible fellowship is spiritual.

A meal may build social closeness.

- But the gospel, builds spiritual fellowship.
- The Word, builds faith.
- Prayer, joins hearts before God.
- Singing, teaches and admonishes.
- The Lord’s Supper, remembers the death of Christ.
- And Preaching, saves and edifies souls.

If a meal helps individual relationships,
Christians can practice hospitality in homes — The Bible authorizes that.

Social closeness is Not the same as biblical fellowship.
Biblical fellowship is spiritual joint participation in God, Christ, and the gospel.

Another argument says,

E. Food Helps Draw People

After Jesus fed the multitude,
some followed Him, because they wanted more physical food — but Jesus corrected their motive.

- He 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.**” ([Jn.6:26-27](#))

Explanation:

- “**Meat which perisheth**” — is physical food.
- “**Meat which endureth**” — points to spiritual life.
- Jesus corrected those, who followed for food, rather than truth.

Jesus said in [Jn.6:63](#),

- “**the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.**”

Paul said in [Rom.1:16](#),

- That the gospel of Christ is “**the power of God unto salvation.**”

Bait, may attract fish, but the gospel is Not bait — The gospel is God’s power to save.
The church must Not use food as its drawing power — Christ’s words give life — The gospel saves.

Let's also consider that,

F. Incidental Physical Needs, Are Not the Same as Church Hosted Social Meals

- A water fountain, may aid the assembly.
- Restrooms, may aid the assembly.
- A nursing mother, may need to care for a child.
- Someone with a medical need, may need to eat something.
- A wheelchair ramp, heat, air conditioning, lights, and seats, may help people assemble.

These are Not the same, as the church arranging, hosting, providing, or promoting a common social meal.

- Physical accommodations, may aid the authorized gathering.
- Planned common meals or social/recreational activities, are different from authorized spiritual activities.

The building, may aid authorized spiritual work, but it must Not add another purpose.

It may aid worship, teaching, preaching, singing, prayer, edification, and authorized benevolence.

It does Not authorize common meals or social/recreational activities.

Incidental needs — such as water, restrooms, lights, seats, medical needs, nursing care, or accessibility, may aid the assembly — They are Not the same, as a planned social meal.

There are many arguments used to affirm, that having a social event in the church building, is supposedly okay. Those covered in this lesson, are just a few of them.

The question is: **What authorized spiritual work, does this use of the church building, aid?**

Common arguments, must be tested by Scripture.

- “We are not calling it church work” — does Not answer the authority question.
- “The building is not holy” — does Not prove the building may be used for anything.
- “Outside formal worship” — does Not create authority.
- “Meals help fellowship” — confuses social closeness with biblical fellowship.
- “Food draws people” — forgets that the gospel is God's power to save.
- The argument that, “1 Corinthians 11 is only about abusing the Lord's Supper” must still face Paul's remedy: “**Have ye not houses?**” and “**Let him eat at home,**” which harmonizes, with the home-setting example, in [Acts 2:46](#).

The issue is Not merely the building.

The issue is, the authority for the use of the church building, and authority for church hosted social events.

We have considered the right question, the church's revealed work, common meals & hospitality, biblical fellowship, and common arguments.

Let's now draw these thoughts into a,

V. Closing Summary

The church building is Not the church — Christians are the body of Christ — Christians are God's spiritual house. The building is Not holy ground, like the Old Testament temple, But it is still a lawful aid, used by the church, for authorized spiritual activities.

A tool must serve the work, it is meant to aid.

The building may be used, for what it lawfully aids ([1Cor.6:12](#); [1Cor.10:23](#)).

The building, may aid authorized spiritual work:

Such as, worship, teaching, gospel meetings, edification, prayer, singing, the Lord's Supper, evangelism, spiritual encouragement, and authorized benevolence.

- But the church building, must Not be used to add another purpose.

Christians may eat together — Christians may show hospitality.

Christians may invite one another into their homes — Christians may enjoy one another's company.

- But individual action and church action, are Not the same ([1Tim.5:16](#); [Acts 5:1-4](#)).

The question is Not:

- "Can Christians eat?" — "Is the building holy?" — "Is it outside worship?"
- "Does it seem harmless?" — "Do other churches do it?" — "Are we calling it, a work of the church?"

The question is:

- **Has God authorized the local church, to use its building and collective function, for common meals or social/recreational activities?**

The church building exists, to help the church carry out its spiritual work, according to the authority of Christ.

- It is Not the church — It is Not holy ground.
- **But it should be used in harmony, with the holy God we serve, and the spiritual work He gave.**

The Lesson is yours!

If you have a spiritual need, It is the Lord, Who invites, and we await to assist.

Won't you come without delay...

- **Hearing** the gospel ([Rom.10:17](#)), **Believing** in Christ ([Heb.11:6](#); [Jn.8:24](#)),
- **Repenting** of sins ([Lk.13:3](#); [Acts 17:30](#)), **Confessing** your belief ([Acts 8:37](#); [Rom.10:9-10](#)),
- And being **baptized** for the forgiveness of sins ([Acts 22:16](#); [Mk.16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [1Pet.3:21](#); [Gal.3:26-27](#)).

...While we stand and while we sing.