

The Church Building

John 2:13-17

Introduction: It is common to find church buildings used for many worldly (non-spiritual) activities. In our area, church buildings have basketball courts, kitchens, dining rooms, multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums, playgrounds, and concert halls. I have even heard of church buildings with athletic centers complete with racket ball courts and swimming pools. A Baptist church in Huston had a McDonalds inside. The Pleasant Valley Baptist church in Liberty, Missouri, had a complete orchestra. I wonder how far these endeavors to “reach the lost” will go?

Is it scriptural for churches to spend the Lord’s money on such amenities? Would the Lord approve of such things?

I. Making the church a house of merchandise.

A. Jesus threw people out of the temple who had turned it into a marketplace (John 2:13-17).

1. Didn’t Jesus understand they were selling animals for sacrifices per the Old law? Did God understand King Saul bringing animals back for the purpose of animal sacrifices though Saul disobeyed His command (1 Sam. 15:21-22)? The end does not justify the means.

2. Doesn’t Jesus understand that people have to make a living (1 Tim. 5:8)? There is a proper place for business and there is a proper place for worship.

B. Many churches conduct business as part of their normal activities. “Fund raisers” prove which churches are houses of merchandise.

II. Providing meals in the church building.

A. Paul condemned those members of the church who use the church building as a convenient place to eat. (1 Cor. 11:22, 34).

1. It is true this passage deals with turning the Lord’s Supper into a common meal. However, that fact does not negate the instructions given.

2. Some people argue that the condemnation was because the Corinthians failed to share their meals. As long as we share our meals it is permissible. Yet, if that were true, why did Paul instruct them to eat at home?

B. It is true that a church can provide food to needy saints (Acts 6:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:16). However, that is not purpose of those who eat in the church building.

C. Do we dare put a kitchen in our church buildings to facilitate what Paul clearly condemns? It defeats the purpose of the church (Rom. 14:17).

D. Some denominations are only beginning to understand that providing meals does not make people spiritually stronger. Here’s a quote from a Baptist

publication: “Not in sixteen years has the number of baptisms in Texas sunk to such a low... Maybe it would not be out of order for Texas Baptist along with all Southern Baptist to stop cooking in our church kitchens, stop playing in our athletic buildings; and call for an old-fashioned prayer meeting... get back to God; back to the Bible... on fire with real love in our hearts for lost souls.” If they had only read what Jesus said they would never have started such activities (John 6:26-27, 66).

III. Using the church building to serve our bellies.

A. Denominational churches are using “Growth Consultants” to develop plans that result in more members.

1. One such consulting firm provided a list of items to consider when selecting a church. On the list were flower beds; trim on the building; restrooms; choral presentations; social ministries; Christmas, Lent and Easter services; paved parking lots and nice entryways. What was missing from the list was the Truth (Prov. 23:23).

2. One consultant commented, “If everything’s printed, the worship is quiet and reverent, there’s no clapping and everyone wears suits and ties, it’s irrelevant to the average 20-year-old.” Paul referred to these kinds of people (Rom. 16:18).

B. Those who think only of themselves are carnally minded (Rom. 8:5-8). When a church provides kitchens, gyms, playgrounds, etc. it is catering to their carnal members. Carnal members hate God and will not subject themselves to His will. Why would any church want members that are opposed to God? Carnal members cannot please God!

C. The church is not about entertainment. If we make entertainment the focus of our activities, we are really making our own interest our god (Phil. 3:18-19).

Conclusion: If we want to please God we must worship Him correctly (John 4:23-24). We can not allow carnal members to misuse the building for their own selfish interests. The building that was purchased with the Lord’s money, is to provide a place for Christians to fulfill their obligation to assemble (Heb. 10:25).