



Eating In the Building by [John T Polk II](#)

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

Question: Is it scriptural for Christians to eat a fellowship meal in the church building, even if it offends some brethren?

Answer: Yes, and the answers are in Scriptures by way of reply.

Whoever says eating a fellowship meal in the church building is unscriptural must prove that:

- 1) *The Church building itself is sacred and for one purpose only;*
- 2) *Social meals are carnal in nature and cannot be spiritual;*
- 3) *The Bible specifies everything for which church contributions may be used;*
- 4) *The only reason for church buildings and assemblies is for 5 worship sacrifices.*

None of these may be established according to the Word of God. REPLY:

- 1) Most assemblies of Christians involved a "temple" (which was borrowed space) or houses (which certainly had kitchens in them);
- 2) It was "with gladness and simplicity of heart" (spiritual unity) the church of Christ "ate their food" (a carnal meal) according to **Acts 2:46**;
- 3) Where, in Scripture, can a church pay for a baptistry, a water fountain, restrooms, cleaning supplies, electricity, computers, paper, Bible class books? If the prohibition comes from specifics in Scripture, then produce the prohibiting passage! The Jerusalem church had set up "tables" for a "daily distribution" to widows (**Acts 6:1-4**). What, specifically, were they giving away to these widows, and who paid for it?
- 4) Jesus Christ sanctified Himself (**John 17:19**) and is sanctified in our hearts (**1 Peter 3:15**); Christians are sanctified by the second will (**Hebrews 10:10**) in the offering of Christ (**Hebrews 10:14; 13:12**); the church is the sanctified (**Ephesians 5:26; 1 Corinthians 1:2**); and food should be sanctified (**1 Timothy 4:3-5**); but, *WHERE ARE THE COLLECTION PLATE AND THE CHURCH BUILDING SANCTIFIED?*

In the only miracle Jesus did that is recorded in **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**, Matthew described it thusly:

[1] "When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' [2] But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go

away. [3] You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me'" (**Matthew 14:15-18**).

Please observe:

[1] It was the disciples in their ignorance who thought it best for "the multitudes" to have to go home to eat ("into the villages and buy themselves food");

[2] Jesus expressly stated they did not have to leave the place where He had preached to them in order for them to eat a meal;

[3] Jesus challenged His disciples to buy food for the multitude out of their "treasury" (**John 6:5-6**), which they had used for their own food (**John 4:8**), and understood could be spent for "the poor" (**John 13:29**).

The account in **Luke** makes it clear that

- Jesus "spoke to them about the kingdom of God" (**9:11**);
- offered food from the disciples' treasury (**9:13**); and
- fed them in the same place they had heard Him preach (**9:14-17**).

Would this have become sinful if there had been a building in which this occurred?

Following His example, the church of Christ began by the Apostles' preaching Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:13-41**), setting up a treasury (**Acts 2:44-45**), and eating common meals with spiritual growth (**Acts 2:46**). There is a strong parallel of language between the established practice of the church of Christ on Pentecost and the growing church in Jerusalem:

So 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 (**Acts 2:46**);

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (**Acts 5:42**).

The first disciples (later called "Christians," **Acts 11:26**) taught and preached Jesus and then ate in the same facility. If they broke bread from house to house, then they taught and preached Jesus the Christ in every house! They were teaching and preaching Jesus in the same places where they "ate their food!"

But what if a brother or sister is offended by eating in the building? Then they are free to go home at meal-time! According to Paul in **Romans 14:1-15:3**:

1) *The weak brother should not be permitted to:*

- a. "make the rules" (**Romans 14:1**);
- b. create lines of fellowship over such matters (**Romans 14:2**);
- c. but should give God thanks for what his conscience will allow (**Romans 14:6**).

2) *The strong brother should:*

- a. not be intimidated (**Romans 14:3-5**);
- b. be considerate of the weak brother's conscience and not force the eating upon the weaker brother (**Romans 14:12-15**);
- c. bear the weak brother's infirmities as Christ has done (**Romans 15:1-6**).

The usual verse that is thrown into this discussion is:

What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? (**1 Corinthians 11:22**).

The context of this verse is:

- 1) The church was maintaining "divisions among" them and had turned the occasion of The Lord's Supper into a common meal (**1 Corinthians 11:17-21**). Some were eating according to their own provisions and desires with no regard for their needier brethren.
- 2) Paul reminded them that the Lord's Supper must be eaten exactly with the elements and for the expressed purpose set forth by Jesus "on the same night in which He was betrayed" (**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**);
- 3) Paul re-stated that the Lord's Supper is for self-examination and to "judge ourselves" (**1 Corinthians 11:31-32**), and a reminder that Christ died for each Christian with no distinctions to be drawn.

In fact, since eating common meals can be done with spiritual fellowship, Christians were forbidden to eat:

- 1) with willful sinners, **1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 9-13**;
- 2) meat sacrificed to idols if a brother's conscience was weak on this point, **1 Corinthians 8:1-13**;
- 3) meat sacrificed to idols if offered it, but a brother conscientiously raises the point of its origin, **1 Corinthians 10:23-33**;
- 4) divisive church meals if they encouraged divisions, **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**.

Does any of this contradict or condemn the practice of Jesus Christ and the Jerusalem church? No, but it adds further considerations for the practice.

It is not the place, but the purpose under consideration. If the church meal promotes division, encourages willful sin, or goes against the ignorantly misguided conscience of a brother, then our liberty allows to forgo the privilege. Church fellowship meals are not to be forced upon anyone, but remain a right with the proper understanding and for the edification of the church.

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