
Words of Truth

Should We Meet In A Building Or In A Home?

By: Brian A. Yeager

The question posed in this article is not as simple for some as it should be. There are some that think the local church absolutely must meet in a “church building”. There are others who think that the local church must meet in homes. Then, there are those who make this a matter of personal conscience. Unlike the three positions just mentioned, which are all false doctrines, we realize that we can and must find clear answers in the Scriptures. We understand that we have to be able to prove what pleases God (Ephesians 5:10 and I Thessalonians 5:21).

Here in El Paso there are some who hold to parts of the false doctrine known as the “House Church Movement”. Frank Shipp (a member of “a church of Christ” meeting on Pendleton Road) believes that Christians in the 1st Century met in small groups, but were still one congregation (Email; Thursday, April 27, 2006; 11:48 AM). Frank, like others who hold this false doctrine, believe there was a single eldership in every city. Those holding this view cite Titus 1:5 as their evidence, while they ignore other Scriptures regarding elderships (i.e. Acts 14:23). The human argument that churches met in homes, the homes were small, and therefore one congregation assembled in several places is false reasoning.

Sadly, a misunderstanding of the Scriptures is often what leads folks to err (II Peter 3:15-18). This is why we must be sure we’re always “rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:14-18). You cannot approach this subject by looking at what “we” do now being the standard. Our goal, in any study, must always be to find what the truth is regardless of what that would mean of our current views. We’re going to launch our study on this matter by finding out that the church, based on God’s word (Matthew 4:4, Luke 11:28, Colossians 3:17, and II Timothy 3:15-17), may assemble in homes.

The Bible Shows We Can Assemble In Homes

The Scriptures clearly show us that local churches may assemble in homes. Please notice the following Scriptures: *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet **the church that is in their house**. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ... The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with **the church that is in their house**... Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and **the church which is in his house**... Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to **the church in thy house**”* (Romans 16:3-5, I Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 1-2).

If this study we're doing were to conclude right now, we know it is right for the local church to assemble in a home of one of the members. If this were all that we could prove, then we'd be bound to only assemble in the home of a Christian (Romans 14:23). We'd know the congregation could not be divided up into multiple homes and still be one local church. We know this because the brethren have to assemble together to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). We also know that an eldership can only oversee the saints whom they assemble with (I Peter 5:1-3). Having the ability to see these things, we have to now find out if the local church can meet in places other than homes.

Can The Local Church Assemble In Places Other Than Homes?

In our first example, we'll find that Christians came house to house for social meals while they assembled in a public place for worship: *"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 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 2:44-46).

In our second example, we find that the local church in Corinth is meeting somewhere other than a home. We can know this because they're told to meet in homes for their common meals, rather than during the assembling of the local church for worship. Notice: *"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it... 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... 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"* (I Corinthians 11:18; 22; 34). If the church in Corinth were meeting in a home, how confusing would the instructions above be? Therefore, we must necessarily conclude that the church in Corinth was meeting regularly in a public facility rather than in the home of one of the brethren. The meeting location does not change what the church is.

The Local Church Is The Local Church Regardless Of The Assembling Location

The church is not a building. The church is people (Romans 12:4-5 and I Corinthians 12:27). The church consists of saved individuals (Acts 2:47). When the church assembles locally, all of the members are expected to be together in that assembly (Ephesians 4:16 and Hebrews 10:23-25). You cannot assemble buildings together to make up the church. You find that when Christians come together the church is assembled (Acts 14:27).

Conclusion

There are plenty of people that turn "church buildings" into idols. Whether or not the church assembles in a home or some other meeting place is determined by what is lawful and expedient for that local church. A small congregation may serve the Lord better when assembling in a home. Just because something is lawful, that does not mean it's expedient (I Corinthians 6:12 and I Corinthians 10:23). It would be really sad for a group of people to lose their souls because they had to have a building to meet in (cf. II Samuel 7:1-7). We should meet together in a place that is both lawful and expedient for us as a congregation!