

Eating in the Church Building

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Introduction: There are things that the world sees as trivial that are in fact connected to eternal matters

- A. On the surface this question seems to be a trivial one.
 - 1. Satan likes to frame an issue in as harmless a way as possible. To Eve he simply wanted her to have "greater knowledge." (**Gen 3:5**)
 - a. Is there anyone here who wants to be labeled "anti-knowledge?"
 - b. This was a matter of authority! They choose not to submit to God.
 - 2. What if we asked this question: "Should the church be submissive to the authority of Christ?" There is no problem in answering this one.
- B. We must always base our answers on God's word.
 - 1. When we decide to give book chapter and verse for all answers then we will always be under the authority of Christ. (**Col 3:17**)
 - 2. Once we have concluded the scriptures will furnish to "every good work" then there will be no problem in submitting to God's choices. (**2 Tim 3:16-17**)

I. What is the local church?

- A. It consists of individual Christians who are under Christ as their head. (**Eph 5:23**)
 - 1. Every Christian is in this universal body. In this sense there is but one church. (**Eph 4:4-6; 1:22-23**)
 - 2. This one body is not speaking of a local church. There is but one church that consists of every faithful Christian. There are many local churches. (**Rom 16:16**)
 - 3. You cannot be in this one church without Jesus being your head. (**Lk 6:46**)
 - 4. Since local churches ought to be made up only of Christians, then they will look to their head, Jesus Christ, to instruct them about this arrangement.
- B. There are three things necessary to have a local church.
 - 1. There is an agreement to work and worship together as a church. (**Heb 13:17**)
 - 2. There is a common oversight. (**1 Pt 5:1-2**)
 - 3. There is a pooling of resources. (**1 Cor 16:1-2**)
 - 4. Some say any coming together of Christians constitutes a local church. For example some Christians may get together and pool their money to buy pizza. This is not a local church at work!
- C. God has given local churches unique responsibilities.
 - 1. In discipline there is a time and place for the church to act. (**Mt 18:15-17**)
 - 2. In benevolence there are differing responsibilities concerning the local church and the individual Christian. (**1 Tim 5:16**)
 - 3. Because of this we need to find the local church addressed in the context of a passage before *assuming* church responsibility.
 - 4. If a scripture addresses only the individual Christian this would not be enough to authorize church action. If not, then whatever the individual Christian may do, the church may do!
 - a. This would involve secular business. (**Eph 4:28**)
 - b. This would involve politics. (**Rom 13:1-4**)

c. This would involve recreation and many other things. Are you ready?

II. What is the work of the local church?

- A. When we take all the passages that show church action then we have all God has authorized a local church to do!
 - 1. God may specify a certain thing. In this we must not substitute! **(1 Cor 16:1-2)**
 - 2. In the authority to act there may be things authorized that are necessary to fulfilling the things to be done. This is sometimes called "general authority."
- B. The church may use its **resources** for that which it is authorized to do.
 - 1. God has authorized a collection for the work of the local church.
 - 2. The resources of the local church constitute the treasury and those things purchased from the treasury that are overseen by the church.
 - 3. This would include the building or other things purchased from the treasury.
- C. The church may do only that which is **wholly** its work.
 - 1. Only that which is authorized may be done with God's approval. To mix that which is authorized in with things that are not authorized is in effect is a substitution for what God has said.
 - 2. For example, playing baseball is not authorized wider passages that instruct us to preach the gospel. Someone may preach while the game is being played, but playing baseball and preaching the gospel are *two separate activities!*
- D. The work of the local church can be described in three areas.
 - 1. God has authorized local churches to be involved in the preaching of God's word. **(Phil 4:15-16; 2 Cor 11:8)**
 - 2. God has authorized local churches to be involved in the edifying of its members. **(Acts 9:31; 1 Cor 14:26)**
 - 3. God has authorized local churches to be involved in the relief of its members. **(Acts 2:44-45;4:32-35;6:1-6;11:27-30; Rom 15:26;1 Cor 6:1-4;2 Cor 9:12-14)**
 - 4. Where does a social meal fit into any of these works?

III. What does the Bible say about Christians eating together?

- A. There is only one example of Christians bringing a social meal into the work of the church. In this case it is not an approved example! **(1 Cor 11:17-34)**
 - 1. They should have come together for the Lord's supper. **(1 Cor 11:17, 20)**
 - 2. By bring in an unauthorized action into the assemblies they in fact defeated the purposes of God! **(1 Cor 11:20-22)**
 - 3. Did Paul give instructions for the Lord's supper or a common meal?**(1 Cor 11:33)**
 - 4. Where was the common meal to be eaten? **(1 Cor 11:34)**
- B. Does this authorize church fellowship halls? **(Jude 12)**
 - 1. What is being done here?
 - 2. Is this church action or individual?
- C. Is this passage dealing with church action? **(Gal 2:11-13)**

IV. Let us not fail the "test case."

- A. Often major changes are brought in by a small test case.
- B. We must always stand on principle and never yield. **(Gal 2:5)**

Conclusion: Will you give book, chapter and verse for your practices?