

# Should We Build a Fellowship Hall?

*by Bryan Gibson*

Many of my brethren enjoy getting together socially, and on occasion, eating a meal together. Wouldn't it make sense, then, for the church here to build what some refer to as a "fellowship hall," a place where we could have such gatherings? It could be built right on to the church building, making it convenient for all of us. No one would have to fuss over getting their homes ready, and we wouldn't have to worry about someone's home not being large enough to accommodate everyone. What do you think? It may **sound** like a good idea, but we still have to stop and consider what God has to say on the matter. Would God be pleased with the church here using its funds to build a fellowship hall?

The answer is NO. Read carefully the following verses: "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the **Lord's supper**. For in eating, each one takes his **own supper** ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 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? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you...But if anyone is hungry, let him eat **at home**" (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 34). Notice the distinction between our "own supper" and the "Lord's supper." One is clearly a function of the home, whereas the other is a function of the church. Social functions certainly have their place, but it is not the church's responsibility to provide for such.

It is not hard to see why many churches have built these fellowship halls. By advertising a "fellowship meal" and possibly other social activities, they are able to attract a larger crowd. Before we get too carried away with that idea, let's look at what Jesus said in John 6:26-27: "You seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you..." Food for the soul—that's what Jesus wanted people to put first, not food for the belly.

Consider also the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians. It seems that both the Jews and the Greeks demanded fleshly incentives—the Jews sought signs and the Greeks sought wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22). Paul could have produced both; he could have given the people what they were looking for. But that's not what he did—"but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23). "I...did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Based on these verses, what do you think would be Paul's reaction to the use of "fellowship meals" and other social activities to attract people? The point is clear. Paul refused to offer anything other than the gospel. For us to do differently would clearly be wrong.

In one sense, the church here does have a fellowship hall—the auditorium in which we meet to worship and glorify God. We gather here to have "fellowship" in spiritual matters (studying the Bible, singing, praying, etc.), which is more in keeping with how the word is used throughout the New Testament. And we also eat a fellowship (or communion) meal—the Lord's supper (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17). This is the Lord's plan, and we simply cannot improve upon that.