

CAN A CHURCH BUILDING BE A HINDRANCE TO CHURCH GROWTH?

Church buildings did not come into existence until around the 3rd century. We read in the Bible that churches in the 1st century met in homes (Romans 16:3-5), in the temple (Acts 2:46), and early church history shows us that they met in unusual places such as catacombs (underground tombs). When the church met in homes they also came together for meals, and I believe that many of the rooms in their homes were multi-purposed. In other words a room could be where they slept, where they ate, where they worked and also be where they worshiped with other believers.

The church is the individual believer whose body has become the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). The church building is where many individual churches (Christians) come to meet for collective worship. The church building has often been referred to as "the house of God" as though it is the residence of God. I believe God is in our presence when we come together, but I also believe He is in our presence when we meet in a field, or at the park. Worship is not something we do just when we come to the church building. It is something the individual Christian does during every hour they are awake. It is a way of life.

When the church met in the catacombs did they have a communion table? Did particular men stand to serve the emblems or was it just passed among the believers in the crowded conditions? Was there a designated song leader? Did they use hymnals? Since they were likely there for a long period of time, did they possibly bring refreshment? I am not questioning the way we serve communion or other parts of our worship time, but have we made the way we do things into doctrine instead of opinion? And have we made the rooms we meet in to be sacred?

Yes, the church building and what we do in it can hinder spiritual growth when we make the building to be more than it should be. I definitely believe in reverencing God in our worship time, but I do not believe in making the room we meet in to be a "sanctuary." As I said to begin with, I am not trying to cause an argument. I just believe that a church building is meant to be just that, a building. If you are a believer the church exists wherever you are, and worship exists wherever you are.

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