

EATING IN THE CHURCH BUILDING

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Nearly any subject one mentions some take issue with it. Eating and drinking in the meeting place of Christians is no different. Church splits have resulted because someone suggested having coffee, tea, or hot chocolate during a Bible Study, or a covered dish fellowship meal to introduce new Church members to the rest of the congregation.

The scripture which is the "**proof text**" of those who take a hard stand against eating within the areas of the meeting place of the congregation is found in **I Corinthians 11:17-22**, and especially in V. 22. Let us pray for an open mind as we examine this "proof text" and remember a great motto to stand by is, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak. Where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent".

Verse 17: "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse." Church gatherings should do one good - right? We should get "fueled up", so that we can fight off Satan's attacks as well as to attack him. But the Apostle Paul says the gatherings of the Corinthian congregation were "back-firing". The New International Version (NIV) says, "In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good." Possibly some reading this article have been to church services where there has been much confusion and you wished that you had not attended.

Verse 18: "For first of all, when ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." The expression in the King James Version, "in the Church" has caused many to conclude Paul was speaking about a Church building—but history reveals that there were not any Christian Church buildings until in the 4th Century. The reason for such is that the Roman Emperors had persecuted Christians since the origin of Christianity in A.D.33. The last Emperor to persecute Christians and the most severe was Diocletian (284-305). Christians were hunted in caves and forests; they were burned, thrown to wild beasts, put to death by every torture cruelty could devise. Thus, Christians met secretly in private homes and available buildings. The NIV has this translated more properly, "...when you come together as a church..."

Church buildings are not temples where God lives (Acts 17:24), but are places of convenience for worshippers to assemble in; places to study, worship, and fellowship, which often involves eating and drinking. Please continue reading.

Verse 19: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." The word "heresies" is from a Greek word "haireisis" and has been translated in various ways: differences, dissensions, sects, schisms, parties, divisions, and cliques. The terms have an "air" about them of being superior. This is just the opposite of Jesus' teaching, that being humility and unity. **The NIV is a little plainer:** "No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval."

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