

Conclusion

Why no “fellowship hall” or gym? Because it is not authorized by God. We are to walk by faith - which means we walk by the instructions which God gives (Rom. 10:17). Where God has not spoken we do not have the authority to do.

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The Lord is righteous in all His ways,
Gracious in all His works.
The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He also will hear their cry and save them.

- Psalm 145:17-19

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Sunday Evening	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday	7:30 p.m.

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Why No “Fellowship Hall” or Gym?

By Ron Halbrook

One of the questions increasingly asked by those who visit our service is, “Why do you not have a ‘fellowship hall’ or gym where the church can sponsor social meals, parties, and recreational programs?” That is a good question - one that is worthy a biblical answer. It can be answered in just a few words, “We do not have such facilities because God has not authorized the church to sponsor social meals, parties, and recreational programs.” All that one does is to be done “in his name” (or by his authority, Col. 3:17). Since he has not told the church to sponsor such activities, we do not have the right to assume it is alright to serve him by means of the “fellowship hall” or gym.

That answers the question but below is more information to help one understand why we do not use social meals, parties, and recreational programs in the work of the church.

It Is Not Because:

1. We do not like food and fun. Members of churches of Christ like food and fun as well as anyone else. Often social meals, parties, and recreational activities are enjoyed at home or in situations other than the work of the church.

2. We cannot afford them. When we are getting new congregations started by preaching the gospel, often people suggest that we do not have social activities and recreational facilities in our work because we are few in number and the church is getting started. No, we could have afforded them then and could afford them now - that is not the reason.

Editors Note

This article was written nearly 20 years ago, but the truth remains the same. In an age where society wants to be entertained in everything they do, we must be careful not to bring such into the church of Christ.

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3. We do not have anyone to conduct them. Some of the best cooks in the world worship with the church of Christ. Many members play ping pong, soft ball, and other games. Some even make their living as teachers of home economics and as athletic coaches. But, they do not play these roles when they gather to worship God and conduct the work of the church.

4. We just want to be different. Not using a “fellowship hall” or gym makes us different from most religious groups, but that is not the reason we do not use them. We do not mind being different but we do not refrain just to be different or difficult.

There are other religious groups who do not use “fellowship hall” or gyms in their services or work. Several Baptist churches do not use social or recreational activities and it is for the same reason which we do not. They say that they are not authorized in the New Testament. Remember also that these people emphasize being a New Testament church - the church established when the Bible was first written.

In fact most denominational groups did not use recreational activities until less than 100 years ago. Leading authorities in many denominations can be quoted as to why they oppose their denomination using recreational programs.

5. It is just our personal preference. It is not a matter of our choosing the opinion of the church’s mission as gospel preaching, worship and spiritual edification, and caring for our needy over social meals, parties, and recreational activities. It is a matter of faith. That is, it is a matter of what God has authorized. What one does in the worship and work of the church must be according to what God has authorized. God has not left the acts of worship or the church’s work to the opinion of men. It is a matter of faith (legislation from God) not opinion of man.

Why No “Fellowship Hall” or Gym?

Whether or not something is right or wrong, is not determined by opinion. Different people may have different opinions as to what the speed limit ought to be but the laws of the land determine what it will be. When one violates that law his opinion about what the speed limit ought to be will not satisfy the courts of the land.

The same principle is true with regard to one’s relationship to God, even to the worship of God and the work he assigned to the church. There may be a variety of ideas as to what will make God happy, but the only way that one can know what God desires in the work and worship of his people is to read what God has written on the subject.

The New Testament is our authority for what God desires in the work and worship of his people. The New Testament does not authorize “fellowship halls” and gyms in the work any more than instrumental music in the worship. Even though historically both Jews and Gentiles “sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” in the name of religion, they did not when they became Christians.

There are several passages in the New Testament which tell about the work of the church and all of them authorize gospel preaching, spiritual edification and worship of God, and caring for needy saints - none authorize “fellowship halls” or gyms for social meals, parties, and recreational activities.

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything” (1 Thess. 1:8).

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

“If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:16).

See also Philippians 4:15; Acts 2:42-45; 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 14:26; 2 Corinthians 11:8.

Can you find a passage which gives us the right to use “fellowship halls” and gyms? Let us know if you have in mind a passage.