

**~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:**

**What about church buildings? They are another modern "essential" that the early church did quite well without. Do they help in the process of disciple-making?**

**When I was a pastor, I often felt more like a realtor, banker, general contractor, and a professional fundraiser. I've dreamed of buildings, searched for buildings, remodeled old buildings, rented buildings, built new buildings and repaired them when God sent rain through their cracks. Buildings consume lots of time and energy. The reason I did so much that revolved around buildings is because I was certain, like most pastors, that there was no way to succeed without a building, a place for the church to gather.**

**Buildings also consume money, lots of it. (In the United States, some congregations spend tens of millions of dollars on their church buildings.) After my dreams of having buildings were fulfilled, I often dreamed of the day when the mortgages on my buildings would be paid off, so we could use all that money for ministry. It once occurred to me, as I was teaching my congregation about good stewardship and getting out of debt, that I had put the whole of us in debt together! (I was certainly teaching by example.)**

**Most church buildings are used for a couple of hours once or twice a week. What other organization in the entire world builds buildings that will be used so little? (Answer: only cults and false religions.)**

**That money-sucking hole causes a lot of problems. A pastor with a building always needs a flow of money, and that affects what he does. He is tempted to cater to the wealthy (who often give without any sacrifice), compromise any teaching that might offend some, and twist Scripture to make it serve his end. His sermons gravitate to subjects that don't hinder the money flow and encourage its increase. Because of that, Christians sometimes begin to think that the most important aspects of being believers are (1) paying tithes (which, incidentally, Jesus said is a minor commandment) and (2) attending church (where the tithes are collected each Sunday). This is hardly the picture of disciple making. Yet many pastors dream of having congregations where everyone would just do those two things. If a pastor had a congregation where just half of the people would do those two things, he could write books and sell his secrets to millions of other pastors!**

**The facts reveal this: There is no record of any congregation buying or constructing a building in the book of Acts. For the most part, believers met regularly in homes.[1] There were never any collections for building funds. There are no instructions in the epistles for church building construction. Additionally, no one thought of building a church building until Christianity was 300 years old, when the church married the world under Constantine's edict. Three-hundred years! Think of how long that is! And the church flourished and multiplied exponentially, even during times of intense persecution, all without buildings. Such phenomena have been repeated many times in the centuries that followed. It has happened in China rather recently. There are probably more than a million house churches in China.**

**[1] See Acts 2:2, 46; 5:42; 8:3; 12:12; 16:40; 20:20; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1:2; 2 John 1:10.**