

General Topics :: C.H. Spurgeon on House Churches?

C.H. Spurgeon on House Churches? - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/2 20:50

I was intrigued when I came across the following excerpt from C.H. Spurgeon's sermon titled "Additions to the Church". You can read the whole sermon here: <http://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1167.htm>

"I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's Supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they stopped eating their common meals, and when they began eating the Supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship: they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness to the Lord. I wish our houses were, in this way, dedicated to the Lord, so that we worshipped God all day long, and made our homes temples for the living God...

Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth, does he dwell in temples made with hands? What a mass ignorance this is! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and praises the Lord in all that he does, and there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families, devoted to the fear of the Lord.

To sacrifice home worship to public worship is a most evil course of action. Morning and evening devotion in a little home is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear. Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of divine worship, whatever it may be. Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a performance? Let every man be a priest in his own house. Are you not all kings if you love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness. One reason why the early church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like them we will have "added to the church those who were being saved." --C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Re: C.H. Spurgeon on House Churches? - posted by StarofG0D (), on: 2011/6/2 21:09

This is interesting brother. Though house churches can be good in some ways, I have always wondered if God would want a church to stay in that way. Is it possible for a church to function fully as a house church is my question? I am not sure. I would be interested in studying and knowing more about it. Thanks!

Glad for this post!

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/6/2 21:19

The Scriptures seem to paint the picture that the church met primarily in the homes of its members in any locality. But, the evidence suggests that they also had larger public assemblies. Instead of an "either-or" I think the answer is "both-and." There is definitely a time for smaller gatherings. But there is also a time for larger gatherings, especially so that the local elders & fathers of faith may address the local body of Christ. A church that only has one of these formats will probably not thrive as it ought.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2011/6/2 21:30

Thank you brother for posting this message on house worship. I hope to use it in one of my upcoming messages. We are to be the church 7 days a week and not just go to a church building 2 or 3 times a week. I believe the very reason many are not spiritual and on fire for God witnessing Jesus Christ to others continually is because they are not continually worshipping God in their homes everyday. Church is to be everyday.

I do believe as did Spurgeon that there is a need for public worship with others in the body of Christ but this is not to take the place of worshipping in our homes. When we separate our homes from our church life then this becomes the very reason many are not living the victorious Christian life.

Blessings to you!

Re: C.H. Spurgeon on House Churches?, on: 2011/6/2 21:30

Quote:
-----"I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God,

Thank you for this posting. I agree with this line of thinking from Spurgeon. And still the "Christian" church today in America is far from it. Their Christianity does not even make it past the front door. How many couples invite in the homeless? I know only of the late Keith Green who did such a "novel" thing. How many invite in single Christians from the congregation who don't have family to eat with on holidays or any other day? How many even invite them over for supper after a Sunday service? How many go down to the mall after Church to spread the Gospel, instead of going home to watch the Superbowl?

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2011/6/2 21:31

Amen brother. I think the 'both-and' is the best model and fitting with Apostolic Christianity. But as Spurgeon pointed out, it is to our detriment if we just add a large cathedral and consider that only the house of God. And to apply it more spiritual each of us are not just priests but temples of God where He dwells by the Spirit. May God revive His Church and add to it daily in homes or larger temples!

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/3 1:48

KingJimmy wrote:

Quote:
-----The Scriptures seem to paint the picture that the church met primarily in the homes of its members in any locality. But, the evidence suggests that they also had larger public assemblies. Instead of an "either-or" I think the answer is "both-and." There is definitely a time for smaller gatherings. But there is also a time for larger gatherings, especially so that the local elders & fathers of faith may address the local body of Christ. A church that only has one of these formats will probably not thrive as it ought.

Brother/s, over the past few months I've been coming to lean toward or agree with that same view more and more regarding this issue.

One of the main points I got from that Spurgeon quote was that we need to get away from the idea of viewing a church building as a "House of God"; for we are the house of God individually and corporately. A church building should be viewed as a place where we may gather for public worship and edification, not as a church. The day to day spiritual life of the church should be experienced and seen primarily outside of the building. It seems to me that that was a vital and key element in the first century book of Acts church.

StarofGod, you brought up a good question. I wish I had time to post a well enough thought out answer but I will have to wait for a later time.

Re: , on: 2011/6/3 8:29

There is nothing wrong with a church meeting in a house, or not having a "church building". The building is made of wood, concrete and steel... and thats it. We worship God in spirit and in truth.

What IS wrong with house churching is when it is permeated with an "us against them" mentality, and a "rage against the institutional church". Sadly, my experience has been that that permeates most house churches. I was involved in that and I know of what I am speaking about. I have had to do a lot of repenting for that.

I used to promote the house church movement, but to be honest with you... anymore I highly recommend most Christians today not get involved because most Christians today are not spiritually mature enough to do it for the right reasons.

Yes, house churches thrive in different areas of the world... but they meet in houses out of necessity. In China the Christians are much more mature spiritually. I would dare not compare 99% of American Christians to Christians in China.

A house church MUST meet the Bible criteria of church leadership. If it does not, and it's just a group of rebels meeting to complain about the institutional church then it is out of order and God will not bless it.

I agree 100% with what Greg wrote.

Krispy

Re: C.H. Spurgeon on House Churches? - posted by ThyKingCome (), on: 2011/6/3 10:54

Amen!! I could not agree more with Mr. Spurgeon. The idea behind his heart and teaching isn't to draw Christians away from public worship and corporate gatherings, for they are truly essential and necessary for the edifying of the Body. What I believe he is getting at is from the very heart of God to see the homes of these dear believers who are meeting corporately to be transformed into sanctuary's of the Lord.

In the Old Testament, the tents of the families were to be positioned in such a way where the door of the tent was facing the Tabernacle. This speaks of the presence and shekinah glory of God beaming into each tent and each individual dwelling! Would to God the homes of each Christian family would see the heavenly vision and call for this model. As brother Ravenhill used to say, "Forget getting Christ back into the schools, get Him back into the Home!". This plea could not be prayed and trumpet-blasted loud enough in today's Christian culture.

I personally believe, that the truest expression of revival is not when the "Big-Tent Revival" is filled and the roof is blowing off with God's glory, but when the glow remains on the faces of His people so much so that it goes into the homes. That we would have the testimony, "we looked to Him, and our faces were radiant" not just in public worship, but in home worship. What if every Christian man or woman was able to say as David said, "I will walk WITHIN MY HOUSE with a perfect heart"? Tragically, I don't think many can boldly say that. We walk within our churches with a divided heart because our homes are not in order, and then we walk within our houses with a hypocritical heart because we treat our families differently at home than we do in public. Would to God that He would raise up Priests and Kings in the home--that our houses of wood, hay and stubble would be transformed into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Oh, that prayers and praises would not cease to go up to heaven from our homes, and that the God-commissioned priests of their homes would rise early as Job did and trim the wicks to ensure the oil is flowing and the family is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. When a man is set on fire by God the first beneficiary of that fire should be those whom he lives with, in his home. That is true revival, and that is true home worship.

--Kevin

Re: - posted by lylewise, on: 2011/6/3 11:22

I agree so much with what is being said. I am not a part of the house church movement and I can see that there are pitfalls that are possible for both the I.C. and the H.C. I would ask where the practice of tradition is most likely to be found? Many in the I.C. have been awakened and see the tradition that is no better than what Catholicism has promoted for over the millennia. It is most grievous to one who gains sight within this setting. Wasn't Christ also grieved by what religion had become. Who was Christ often at odds with? So is it any wonder why there is such fallout and division? I do know firsthand the us against them mentality and I do repent of it but I believe it to be a natural reaction. How one deals with it is a good topic for discussion. Maturity and conviction will overcome it and even allow Christians who have experienced it

his to counsel others reacting to this like dilemma. The gatherings and fellowships should be beyond this hurt and rebellion. We as Christians are to forgive and move on to better things and that should be a necessary promotion so our worship of Christ can continue unimpeded.

As for leadership, I think it a bit much that a start up church would have it altogether since the start ups in the N.T. were often without such leadership. Men were sent to help raise up such missing elements and I am sure it was not done within a time restriction. It takes a lot more faith to ask God to raise up leadership (and we must be very cautious of how we dispense this terminology) than feel the need to meet a model quickly. We should recognize these deficiencies and ask God to provide regardless of either model. Even though a church consist of 500 it would be very possible that none are qualified. How quickly men will dismiss this possibility for it is the common belief that there is strength in number. There is strength in number as long as that number is of God's strength.

I too agree with what Greg wrote. I do want to be be unaware of what has happened that has caused this movement such growth around us to get such footing.

If we dare not compare 99% of American Christians to Chinese Christians (and such a comparison is never to be made as we do not hold to man as our standard) then may God do a mighty work in the church in America.

Wait.....maybe He already is.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2011/6/3 14:49

House churches need mature apostolic leadership in order not to be caught up in excesses. I found many institutional churches here in the UK sound in doctrine but void of the expression of the Holy Spirit in the body of believers. How sad.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/3 16:10

StarofGOD wrote:

Quote:
-----This is interesting brother. Though house churches can be good in some ways, I have always wondered if God would want a church to stay in that way. Is it possible for a church to function fully as a house church is my question? I am not sure. I would be interested in studying and knowing more about it. Thanks!

As far as God wanting a house church to stay small, there are different models being debated among Christians and I am still not too sure which is the best. The vast majority within the house church movement would argue that new house churches should be started when one gets too big, and acquiring bigger church buildings should be completely avoided. Of course those who favor traditional churches would argue for moving into a bigger location as the local body grows. Then there is what is known as the "cell" church model which meets in a big facility on Sundays and breaks up into home meetings during the week. In the "cell" home groups, the difference between them and the house churches is that they are not viewed as independent churches whereas the house churches are. The "cell" groups are typically under the authority of the leaders who lead the bigger Sunday meetings. As I stated before, I am leaning toward the idea of favoring both big and small gatherings like most have posted here so far.

As to whether or not a house church can function fully as a house church, I would say definitely yes. I say yes because that is what we see in the book of Acts and in the epistles.

For the first two hundred plus years there were no Christian church buildings so most of the basic church practices (such as partaking of the Lord's Supper, administering church discipline, etc.), took place in believers' homes. That is one of the points that Spurgeon seems to be arguing in the OP. He seems to be exhorting "common" believers to step up and live up to their God-given authority as kings and priests of God in their own homes, like the first century church did.

KripyKritter wrote:

Quote:
-----What IS wrong with house churching is when it is permeated with an "us against them" mentality, and a "rage against the institutional church". Sadly, my experience has been that that permeates most house churches. I was involved in that and I know of what I am speaking about. I

have had to do a lot of repenting for that.

I agree. I've had the same experience. It seems to me that there may be a healthy middle ground between the current prevalent mindset of those in the "house church movement" in the west, and the mainline western "traditional" churches. In the former it seems that there is not enough respect for the preaching of God's Word, order in meetings, and leadership, and in the latter it seems that many times there is too much strictness and abuse of leadership which ends up quenching the Spirit. In other words, one seems to be too loose and the other too strict.

In the traditional western churches the main event is the Sunday church service which is pre-programmed and very orderly and the main focus there is the preaching of the Word. In the house church movement they tend to have no such big orderly services or meetings. They focus more on encouraging everyone to get involved in developing their gifts within gatherings as described in 1Cor.14. So I've been thinking, why can't we have both?

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/6/3 22:00

I think the emphasis of the Scriptures has always been about Whom you gather with than the style and size of the box you are meeting in. The emphasis has been upon the edification that happens when you gather together as a community with the risen Lord.

Everything else is cosmetic detail, that while good to talk about from time to time, is frankly, just a little bit on the boring side for me. Is God there? Is the Gospel being preached? Are the saints loving one another? Are people growing in their faith?

That stuff is much more important to talk about... which is why Paul never expounded on meeting in homes vs. meeting in rented quarters vs. meeting in public spaces. Surely, it was talked about. Practical things have to be done in the work of the kingdom. But, he surely didn't waste any valuable paper and ink to do such.

:~)

edited

Re: House churches, on: 2011/6/4 0:56

Has anybody been following God's work in Iran? Voice of the Martyrs estimates that 500 to 600 people a day are coming to Christ. Since these new converts are from a Muslim background and there are no Farsi evangelical churches allowed by the Iranian government, these precious believers meet in home fellowships for study and worship.

Re: - posted by StarofGOD (), on: 2011/6/4 6:53

Thank you for the reply Oracio. I am agreeing with the majority consensus here concerning both/and. However just a couple thoughts. Acts 2:46 they continued daily with one accord in the temple. And also the churches in Revelation certainly do not appear to be house churches. Though I wonder if houses churches were considered to be part of each church.

I agree with Krispy.

Re - posted by allaboard, on: 2011/6/4 9:07

What Does a Normal Church Look Like?

Re: Re, on: 2011/6/4 13:12

Goof question. Actually what is normal in a church?

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/6/4 13:32

That's a loaded question with no easy answer. I know this, if the church is iron sharpening iron, it will often be a loud and abrasive place, where friction and heat exist, and where sparks often fly.

Re: Some observations, on: 2011/6/4 13:49

As I thought some more on this issue of house churches some observations came to mind. In those parts of the world where the Spirit is moving the believers meet predominately in house fellowships. We see this most notably in China, Iran, Vietnam, and other persecuted countries. We read in Acts that the early believers met in house fellowships. One might even say the upper room where the 120 prayed was a house fellowship. All this being said this question comes to mind. Can we expect the next movement of God to come in the organized church as it currently exist in America? If we are really honest it is the organized church that kills any movement of God's Spirit. When one looks at Jesus where did his greatest opposition come from? Was it not from the religious right of his day. I would suggest that any revival in America may take place in something akin to house churches as new wine skins. Let's say that the next movement of God could be in the homeless camps, biker bars, gang hang outs, etc. It is quite possible the Spirit may completely avoid our nice air conditioned power point mega complexes. I remember Kevin Turner sharing at the SI conference in Dallas that revival was taking place in the shipping containers in Eritrea. Is it possible the Spirit may be more at home in a stinky homeless shelter or N. Korean death camp than a nice respectable church??? Just some food for thought. I apologize if I have offended any. My only desire is to have us think about what God may be doing and not miss it.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/4 17:57

StarofGOD wrote:

Quote:
-----Thank you for the reply Oracio. I am agreeing with the majority consensus here concerning both/and. However just a couple thoughts. Acts 2:46 they continued daily with one accord in the temple. And also the churches in Revelation certainly do not appear to be house churches. Though I wonder if houses churches were considered to be part of each church.

Good questions. They caused me to do a little digging this morning. I will be doing further research and maybe posting some findings later. So far it seems clear that the first Christians met in the Jerusalem temple not only for evangelism but also for fellowship and public worship. For quite some time I bought into the view that they met there only for evangelistic purposes and not for fellowship, and that they only met in houses for fellowship. But it seems to me now that verses like Luke 24:53 clearly refute that view. Also from Acts 9:1-2 it seems that they also met in the Jewish synagogues for public worship. I may post more Scripture references at a later time. What does seem to be clear is that there were no special buildings dedicated as "Christian" only. Those in the house church movement argue that the first century Christians could have built church buildings of their own but chose not to purposely, that it was not just due to persecution. But I'm not too quick to agree with that view anymore.

As to the churches in Revelation, Christ is addressing the whole church in each city. In each city there was only one main church and they often, if not always, broke up into multiple house churches. So for example the whole church at Ephesus was very likely broken up into multiple house churches in the city (see Acts 20:20). A clearer example of this is in Romans 16:3-4 where Paul is addressing the whole church of Rome but specifically greets the particular house church that met in Aquila and Priscilla's home. Each house church was independent from other house churches (they could function fully as a church).

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/5 0:06

KingJimmy wrote:

Quote:
-----Practical things have to be done in the work of the kingdom. But, he surely didn't waste any valuable paper and ink to do such.

I respect your sentiments brother though I would disagree regarding the importance of discussing this issue. I'm sure you would agree that there has been much discord between many in house churches and many in traditional churches. One of the main contentions has to do with whether or not it is Scriptural to invest funds in expensive church buildings, or whether or not it is Scriptural to focus on meeting in buildings as opposed to homes and vice versa.

For me, I think prayerful consideration of the Scriptures regarding these things may help bring some unity between both sides. I want to be able to reason from Scripture with both sides, with gentleness and respect. But I understand that the Lord does not lead all of us in the same way as far as the topics we study :)

Re: , on: 2011/6/5 14:42

Please forgive me for my 2 cents worth but is the issue really church buildings vs private homes? Is not the issue that Christ is dwelling in one's heart (Eph.3:17)? Are the people of faith not the church (Eph.2:21-22, Mat.18:20)? Did not the Lord say he did not dwell in buildings made by human hands (Acts 7:49-50)? I would simply offer that Jesus is dwelling in our hearts and we are the church irregardless of the external venue we meet in.

Re: - posted by Joyful_Heart, on: 2011/6/5 16:28

Personally I like a small Church. Would love the church that was mentioned here. But the bottom line is we just need to stay close to the Lord in Word and in prayer. As we ask He will lead us.

In America & Canada we have mostly Church buildings with lots of activities. Now if we look to other nations they have home Church due to persecutions etc. In some of the farm lands of China they are having revival and with no buildings a lot of times - just a sheet over head for protection.

It is important to not have pride. Pride when in a large Church with lots of activities or pride because we worship with a guitar, pray & in the Word in home Church.

We need to go with the flow of the Spirit and be open to wherever the Lord would have us. He knows our needs, our desires and He knows the future.

Personally I would love a home Church. Had a taste of a home group from a large Church. Really, really nice. We got to know each other. We were being the Church in that little home group.

But I look back and even right now - I just long for fellowship with believers who are surrendered, eyes upon Him and not in legalism, and not desiring to be someone, be in the world but not of the world, heart for the lost a passion for Jesus ready to give up anything and everything when He calls for it.

It is being done all over the world today. In fact, people are losing everything including family members and their own lives for Jesus.

Praise God when He brings believers together no matter the roof type or walls or lack of and we can flow in unity in the Holy Spirit for His Name sake giving Him all the glory.

Re: Joyul Heart, on: 2011/6/5 17:29

Amen, my sister, amen.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/5 20:40

Amen Joyful and martyr. Both sides need to get to the point where they do not make a huge issue of external settings but focus more on the heart and passion for the Lord, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. Both sides are guilty of majoring on structure more than on what matters most; loving Jesus, loving the brethren, and loving the lost.