

House Churches

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Excerpted from "Additions to the Church" (based on Acts 2:47: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved") preached 5 April 1874

Many of us have apparently become so conditioned by what has become the "norm" that we are suspicious of what seems like a new innovation. Yet house churches are anything but new or innovative. What critics of house churches seem not to have noticed is that houses are the only places mentioned for the meetings of the *ekklēsia* (the Greek word mistranslated as church in most English Bibles) in the New Testament (evangelistic campaigns were completely separate and occurred in public places such as the temple, synagogues, schools, and simply in the open air).

I once knew a pastor who spoke of house churches as if they were a great evil in the land. He is not alone but, happily, Charles Spurgeon would not have been in his company.

Again, these people [the Christians soon after Pentecost—ed.] were in such a condition that their homes were holy places.

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. A great dignitary not long ago informed us that there is great value in daily prayer in the parish church; he even asserted that, however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish church with nobody to join in it except the priest and the usher is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house at home. This was evidently this gentleman's idea, and I suppose the literature which he was best acquainted with was of such an order as, to have led him to draw that inference. Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently, and if some one should make him a present of a New Testament, it might perhaps suggest a few new thoughts to

him. Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth, does he dwell in temples made with hands? What crass 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."

