

Church Membership: May I Be A Member Of Multiple Congregations?

by Sean Cavender

The importance of placing membership with a local congregation which is faithful to the teachings of Scripture and following the pattern set forth in the New Testament is a subject that is often neglected. Christians ought to desire to be recognized and counted as part of the local fellowship of a sound congregation. Onesimus, after being converted in Rome by Paul, came back to the saints in Colosse to be counted as “*one of your number*,” (Colossians 4:9, NASB).

The apostle Paul, soon after his own conversion, came to Jerusalem and wanted to join himself to the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-27). Barnabas came to his defense and served as a witness to testify to the disciples that Paul was indeed a faithful Christian. Barnabas did not make a unilateral decision of accepting Paul and the rest of the congregation had to go along with his decision. Membership in a congregation involves fellowship and mutual agreement between the disciples, even in who is brought into our number.

Paul had left Damascus and had come to Jerusalem and wanted to be associated with the saints in Jerusalem. He was not trying to keep a dual-status membership with the brethren in Damascus and the brethren in Jerusalem. He sought to be given the “right hand of fellowship” from the brethren in Jerusalem.

When a person moves across the state, across the country, moves to a different country, or simply desires to worship with another congregation in a neighboring town, they leave one fellowship of the local church and become a part of a different fellowship.

This principle is evident when considering the oversight of elders in a local congregation. The apostle Peter gave instruction to elders (1 Peter 5:1-3) to take oversight and shepherd the church “*among you*.” If the oversight of the elders and local congregation is limited to the number that is among them, then how is it conceivable that

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