

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

by Sean Cavender

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brethren could be members at more than one local congregation? Elders are limited in their oversight by their location. Members, therefore, are limited to being part of one flock at a time. Members cannot be under the oversight of multiple elderships, either, or else it would violate the principle that elders have jurisdiction of the saints only among them.

Furthermore, in fulfilling duties as members of the local church, there is no way that a person could fulfill their weekly duties by being a member at multiple congregations. If someone attempted being a member in two different local churches, then they would constantly neglect one congregation. There would be no way to edify and stir up love and good works among the brethren that you were not with (Hebrews 10:24-25). They would constantly forsake and neglect one assembly of the saints where they supposed themselves to be members by worshiping with the other congregation (Hebrews 10:25). Neither would a person be able to contribute their money to both congregations faithfully (1 Corinthians 16:2).

In the New Testament we read about a married couple named Aquila and Priscilla who were devoted followers of Jesus Christ. They worked closely with the apostle Paul and were knowledgeable in the Scriptures. This couple had lived in Rome, but were expelled from the city, along with other Jews (Acts 18:2). They came to Corinth and lived and worked with Paul. Then they traveled with Paul to Ephesus and worked with the saints there (Acts 18:18, 26). They eventually came back to Rome and housed the church in their own home (Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19). When Priscilla and Aquila left each place, they did not retain their membership in the former congregations they had been working with. Priscilla and Aquila were not members of the church at Corinth at the same time the saints in Rome were assembling in their house. There is no such thing as being a member in multiple congregations at the same time.

There is nothing wrong with visiting other sound congregations. The apostle Paul traveled to many different churches and worshiped with them and taught them. It is good to know of other faithful brethren. It is good to pray for them in their work and labor for the Lord, fostering relationships with them (1 Thessalonians 1:2-4). However, when we visit other local churches we are not members at those churches when we are already members at another local congregation.

While we can read about becoming a member of a local congregation (Acts 9:26-27) and being part of the number of the saints in a particular location (Colossians 4:9), one will fail to find any biblical example of a person who was a member at more than one congregation at a time.

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