

The Significance of a Church Home

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The wonderful thing about being a member of the church of Christ – in addition to salvation (Acts 4:12) is the confidence of belonging. Members of the body of Christ really do “belong” to the greatest family on earth! As children of God in the local community the value of this sense of belonging is realized when Christians readily identify with the local congregation. There is great significance in having a church home (congregation) in the local community. This writer has often heard stories of Christians arriving in a new community and because they were members in a distant state or country, they did not consider the matter of placing membership to be important. How sad it is when members of the body of Christ fail to realize the significance of local membership.

After converting from Judaism to the Lord Saul of Tarsus immediately sought a church home. Note (Acts 9:26-28) *“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.”*

Let us note some lessons from the text:

- 1. Upon Saul’s departure from Damascus as a Christian he sought to join with the disciples.** He was not seeking the head (Jesus) without the body (disciples/Christians). (Rom 12:4-5) *“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”* When Christians depart one locality for another they should always seek a church home.
- 2. Saul sought a church home in the face of opposition from brethren.** Sometimes people are surprised to learn of opposition within a congregation. This opposition is almost always universally based on ignorance. The Jerusalem church was sincere in their opposition of Saul because they knew of his record of persecution only. These good brethren did not learn of Saul’s conversion until Barnabas intervened (Acts 9:26-27). Sometimes in the absence of a person to vouch for our fidelity, a faithful brother might present a letter of faithfulness

from his previous congregation to introduce him to the new congregation. Let us be very careful about our judgments concerning newcomers until we have accomplished all in our power to abate ignorance on our part by simply being hospitable. Instead of fear let us be friendly.

- 3. Saul consented to go with Barnabas to the leaders of the church.** This action served to support the work of the apostles and minimized any further mistrust on the part of the congregation concerning Saul. Although he considered himself “*chief of sinners*” (I Tim. 1:15) Saul cooperated with the local brethren to effect a smooth transition from Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle. What a great lesson for us today! Our baggage of the past need not haunt us because of membership in the body of Christ!

The example of Saul should encourage every Christian to strive to identify with a local congregation. To place membership even if some might oppose you through ignorance and petty agendas (3 John 9-10). Remember, brethren will oppose you if they don't know you and if you resist trying to know your brethren answer this one question: How will you be able to enjoy fellowship (I John 1:7-9)? The leaders of every congregation of the Lord's people ought to be involved in the process of integrating new members in the church.

The significance of a church home is vital to every child of God. Do not take it for granted that you were baptized and nothing further is required of you to please God. Find your rightful place in the body of Christ today and make the effort to learn of your church family and grow through fellowship opportunities.