

Should Christians Join a Local Congregation?

Yes!

But why?

As Christians, in obedience to the New Testament, we try to imitate the apostles and hold to the traditions they established in the church. In 1st Corinthians 4:16-17, Paul says “Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” He reinforces this teaching in 1st Corinthians 4:16 and in 2nd Thessalonians 3:7.

So what does the Bible teach? What example did the apostles demonstrate in regard to joining a local congregation?



Should Christians Join a
Local Congregation?

Presented for your use by:

Taylors church of Christ
400 E. Main Street
Taylors, SC 29687

www.taylorschurch.com
864-268-5224

Copies of this tract *in its entirety* may be
made and distributed without permission.
Written by Matt Carter 2012



Should Christians Join a Local Congregation?



The Word teaches that when we respond to the call we are added to the church, the body of Christ, by the Lord. This is clear in Acts 2:47 where it says that “The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. And, we know from I Corinthians 12:13 that “...we were all baptized into ONE body... and have all been made to drink into ONE Spirit”.

There are many names for this church in Scripture – church of Christ, church of God, church of the living God, the Lord’s church, God’s household, Christ’s body, etc. Some refer to this sense of His church, all Christians on Earth and those who came before, as the universal church (Ephesians 1:18-23). So, if we’re added by the Lord to the church, why join or associate with a local congregation?

In many parts of the Bible, the word “church” is used in another sense, and denotes a congregation in a specific location (Matt 18:17; Acts 5:11; Acts 14:23; Acts 14:27; I Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2). These local churches are independent and yet part of the whole – individually operating units, organized by God (Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17&28). In God’s wisdom, He did not organize His universal church into one massive functioning single unit.

His organization of the local church is one way we know local membership is necessary. Elders have responsibilities over the local flock (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:17). Would they be responsible to look after the affairs of non-Christians? No. So, it’s Christians who are to submit to a local body shepherded by the overseers.

In Acts 9:26-29 we are told that after Saul left Damascus, he immediately “tried to join” (NKJV) or “assayed to join himself to” (KJV) or was “trying to associate with” (NASV) the disciples in Jerusalem.

In addition to demonstrating that it was Paul’s responsibility to make an effort to identify himself with this church, the text also provides an excellent example of a Christian, Barnabas, vouching for Paul that he might be accepted by them since they did not believe Paul was a disciple of Christ. Paul wasn’t fazed by their need to know about his life, and they were not obligated to receive him into their fellowship until they were convinced of his proper standing before God.

Later, when a local congregation was established in Antioch, Barnabas and Paul are joined to them as demonstrated by Acts 13:1-3 and in Acts 14:26-28.

While they were “in the church” there in Antioch, the Holy Spirit directed the church to “set apart for Me” or “separate Me” Barnabas and Paul “for the work to which I have called them”. After laying hands on them, they, the local congregation, “sent them away” for what we usually call Paul’s First Journey. At the end of their work, that they returned to Antioch, “from which they had been commended” (NASV) for the work they had accomplished. They gathered the church together, and reported all that had happened. Then, it says, they spent “a long time” with the disciples. It was probably about 2 years.

There are many desirable spiritual and physical benefits made possible by becoming a member of a sound local church (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and the instruction and examples of doing so are clear.

The effort made to join to and to assemble with a local church is minor compared to the benefit.

The Christians who have joined to and assemble with our local congregation here in Taylors would be happy to discuss this topic with you further if you are interested.