

Joining the Disciples

by John Hines

The title of this article comes from **Acts 9:26**. Saul of Tarsus has obeyed the gospel. He had been with the disciples in Damascus (**v. 19**), but now he has come to Jerusalem – “*And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him.*” It was understandable. Barnabas would vouch for him and the following verse is wonderful. “*So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out*” (**v. 28**).

Consider a few points about issues that sometimes come up.

Membership Is A Scriptural Idea

People will sometimes think, “Oh, where in the Bible does it say I have to place membership?” Saul wanted to “*join*” the disciples. The word means “*to glue*.” It is the same word used to describe a man being joined to his wife. What are a lot of people lacking? Glue. They view membership at best like membership to a grocery store or gym. As long as they pay their dues, it doesn’t matter if they go or not! We hope you don’t view membership that way. Membership matters (**1 Cor. 12:25**).

A Member, Or Group Of Members, Is Not The Church

Saul was not “*them*” in **verse 28**. Saul and Barnabas were not “*them*” either. Saul, Barnabas, and the apostles were not the “*them*” either. No, “*them*” would be those whom he joined. **It’s the church at Jerusalem!** Many will say, “*But where two or three are gathered together*” is a church! No, it is not. **Matthew 18: 15-20** pertains to rebuking sin. The two or three are the witnesses (**v. 16**). The church does not enter the picture until **verse 17**. No member, or group of members from the church, is a replacement for the church (**1 Cor. 12: 14**).

The Local Church

Saul left the disciples in Damascus and joined himself to the disciples in Jerusalem. We must recognize that as elders are told to, “*shepherd the flock of God that is among you*” that the same rule applies for us. As they do not have oversight over another congregation, so we are not members of another congregation. In this day and age of livestreaming, it is easy to think, “Today I’ll worship in Indiana, tonight in Texas, next week from Florida, and maybe some other place after that.” Be careful. Membership is exercised locally (**1 Cor. 12:12-27**). Church hopping is not the Lord’s design.

The Church Gathers Together

What did Saul do with the disciples in Jerusalem? He did the same thing we do today. We sing with and to **one another** (**Col. 3:16**). We pray with **one another** (**1 Cor. 14**). We give unto the Lord, *for the saints*. We edify **one another**, exhort **one another**, are affectionate to **one another**, giving preference to **one another**, and admonish **one another**. All are Scriptural lessons. When we gather **together** we commune **with one another**. How can a person properly remember the Lord’s body *separated* from the Lord’s body? They cannot! That is why the Corinthians were told that when they came “*together in one place*” they were to “*wait for one another*” (**1 Cor. 11: 20, 33**). How can I properly commune outside of the Lord’s community? I cannot.

The times we are living in are difficult, but there will always be trials that want to pull us away from the Lord’s church. Be **joined** to the disciples. Be with us **coming in and going out**. We are here for each other and we help each other, even in matters of sin and rebuke (**Matt. 18:17**). All of these matters clearly show the importance of being a member of the Lord’s church. Don’t forsake it.

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