

FAMILY ALL OVER

Aaron Beard, adapted

Sunday morning my family was on vacation in Florida. We visited the church of Christ with some of our family who lives there. On the way back to church that evening, my 8-year-old said, "Dad, I've been to like 5 different churches!" He was excited, but wrong... he's been to many more. What I loved was the fact that he was so excited about getting to visit a different church than normal. For the moment, he wasn't thinking about how that time could have been spent doing something more "fun," but that he was getting to visit a new church. We added up the churches he has visited for him and I am sure there are some we forgot. That evening, the church provided us opportunity to worship God in song for an hour. I was encouraged. I noticed the smiling faces of some older brethren as they listened to our smallest children singing their hearts out. It was good to be there.

God has promised us an amazing spiritual family. These brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, extend well beyond the walls of the local church to which we belong. We have brethren all over the country and all over the world. Jesus said, *"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life"* (Mark 19:29-30).

If we don't put forth the effort to get to know this family, we are robbing ourselves of one of the greatest joys Jesus provides for us in Him. Notice that Jesus reminds us that sufferings will come. At some point, life will get hard for you and that family will be there for you like none other. If the only blessings of fellowship with Jesus we cherish is the eternal life in the age to come, we are greatly missing out.

So when you go out of town, consider making worship with a local church a real priority. It may be inconvenient and it may cause you to miss out on something else, but that sacrifice is well worth it. Not only will you benefit from being with a new spiritual family, they will benefit from your presence.

Sadly, we often look at the brethren we have outside of our local church as "extended family." I am not so sure that in the family of God there is any such thing as extended family. Yes, our fellowship may be limited, but they are brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers. How will you know them if you don't get out and meet them?

THE ORIGINAL CHURCH

Doy Moyer

We sometimes hear talk about finding the original church. In the search for the original church, we may then make the mistake of thinking that we can find a line of churches that go all the way back to the first century to prove which one is the right church. Besides conflating the universal and the local senses of "church," the mistake is in thinking horizontally instead of vertically. No one can trace some pristine, unbroken line of churches in a linear fashion back to the apostles. That's not how this works. Further, churches and movements through time often moved away from the teachings of Christ. Even if we could prove an unbroken line of churches, that would not prove that we are the correct church (universally) because we could be part of an historical line that moved away from the truth over time. However, it's not an unbroken line of churches that we are to be looking for, and this complicates matters far too much.

What is vital is fellowship with God, and we can learn the teachings of Jesus through the apostles and seek to follow those now. This is not some search for an original line of churches; this is a search for God, the purpose for which we are made (Acts 17:27). We are attempting to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). This is something every generation can do regardless of the state of churches up to this point. Being part of the original church (universal), then, is not about membership in an unbroken line of congregations, but rather being one of Christ's disciples in whatever time we live. If every linear path of churches failed through time, we can still open God's word to follow it now. The call of the gospel is reconciliation with God. As Paul said of their work in the first century, *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God"* (2nd Corinthians 5:20). We do well in seeking to mirror this today. Reconciliation with God is true restoration.

"If you're looking for denominations in the Bible, you're like a blind man in a dark cellar on a moonless night looking for a black cat that was never there to begin with."

– Garland Elkins

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

PROVERBS 25:11

"I would rather have my heart
broken by the truth than crushed
by lies."

– Holly Kellums

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 28

JULY 16TH, 2023

ADDED AND JOINED

Bryan Matthew Dockens

Contrary to the denominational practice of choosing a church based on preference and convenience, Scripture reveals that church membership is a twofold process of being added to the only church there is by the Lord Himself, followed by joining a local congregation.

Salvation in Christ automatically *"adds"* a new Christian to His church. The church is Christ's *"body,"* over which He is the *"Head"* (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 24). As there can only be a one-to-one relationship of a head and its body, so Christ has only *"one body"* (1st Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:4). *"He is the Savior of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23). Enrollment in the body is by baptism (1st Corinthians 12:13), the same means whereby a sinner is saved (Mark 16:16) and enters into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). Thus, when a sinner is saved through baptism, the same is *"added"* by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Relocation obligates a Christian to *"join"* the church in a specific place. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, *"Paul tried to join the disciples"* (Acts 9:26), and, after Barnabas vouched for him (27), *"he was with them at Jerusalem"* (28). Likewise, when Apollos *"desired to cross over to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him"* (18:27). Because not everyone is worthy to be received (2nd John 9), a process must be in place whereby those already added by Christ to His church, universally, are received into fellowship of the church, locally.

RIO GRANDE VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

505-864-0282

rgvcoc@gmail.com

Box 989, Belén, NM 87002

www.RGVChurchOfChrist.org

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Facebook.com/RGVChurchOfChrist