

The Christian's Responsibility to the Local Church (7)

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The Christian has a responsibility to the local church of which he is a member that he does not have toward other congregations. First, he is not under the oversight of any other eldership. Secondly, he is not obligated to support the work of another church financially. Thirdly, his attendance is not required at another church's assemblies.

This does not mean, however, that a Christian cannot participate in the activities of other churches. It is entirely good and proper to worship and study with other brethren, assist them in spreading the gospel, and even contribute to them financially *so long as* one's primary responsibility to his or her own local church is not neglected.

This brings up the practical situation which many of us find ourselves in these days: What is my responsibility when traveling?

First, we must be careful of an attitude that seeks to do as little as possible just so one's obligations are satisfied.

"Do I have to go to services on Wednesday night?"

"Do I have to go to their gospel meeting if I am on vacation?"

"Do I have to put money in the basket when it goes by?"

I would answer the above questions with a "no." The fact that a local church decides to meet on a Wednesday or some other day of the week for its own edification creates no obligation upon a visitor who happens to be in the vicinity.

If I have made provisions to contribute at my "home" congregation in my absence, there is no obligation to contribute again at the church being visited. Supporting the work of the local church is different from observing the Lord's supper in that the one can be done through an agency and the other cannot. In fact, the very verse we cite concerning the time of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7) involves Paul *visiting* the brethren in Troas.

But there's another aspect to this issue. Some of the richest experiences of my life have taken place while visiting with other brethren. Personally, I would not want to forego an opportunity to encourage my brethren wherever I might be traveling.

The "have to" attitude falls short of many of the joys of being a Christian. We should *want* to do as much as we possibly can for the cause of Christ, whether at home or elsewhere.