

The Vincennes Voice

"...The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight..." (Matt. 3:3)

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HOW TO HAVE A "HAPPY NEW YEAR"

Larry R. Ping II

God has seen fit to bless us with a new year, 2021! We are thankful for God's blessings. Even moreso, we are thankful for His long-suffering toward us. Peter wrote, "...account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (II Pet. 3:15). Would you like to have a happy and spiritually prosperous new year? Consider the following!

***H**ear the Words of Jesus the Christ (Matt. 17:5)*

***A**bide in the Doctrine of Christ (II Jn. 9)*

***P**ray Without Ceasing (II Thess. 5:17)*

***P**lease Others & Not Yourself (Rom. 15:2)*

***Y**ield to the Word of God (Rom. 6:16)*

***N**ever Grow Weary in Doing Good (Gal. 6:9)*

***E**xalt God at Every Opportunity (Psa. 34:3)*

***W**ield the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)*

***Y**earn for a Home in Heaven (Heb. 11:10)*

***E**steem Every Word of God (Psa. 119:128)*

***A**lways Speak with Grace and Seasoning (Col. 4:6)*

***R**emain Stedfast and Unmoveable (I Cor. 15:58)*

LOCAL IDENTIFICATION

Larry R. Ping II

Luke wrote “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” (Acts 9:26-27). Other versions render the underlined section as “he tried to join the disciples” (NKJV), “he attempted to join the disciples” (ESV), and “he was trying to associate with the disciples” (NASB).

The new Christians in Jerusalem had banded together to form a local congregation of the Lord’s people. Meanwhile, Paul, having met the Lord (Acts 9) and having obeyed Him (Acts 22:16), came to Jerusalem to attempt to “identify” with the group there.

They, due to Paul’s background of persecution, were very wary of allowing him to identify. They were extremely concerned he would come to drag them to prison or their death. Barnabas came to

Paul’s aid and vouched for him, and Paul was accepted with the brethren there in Jerusalem. These, then, are the same actions we must take when living in a certain, local area.

There are certain sets of Christians who look down upon local identification. They come up with several different excuses as to why it is not necessary, needed or authorized. We need to learn to look at the positives of “local identification” and the good it can bring to those who have locally identified. Consider.

1) It Brings One Into Compliance With God’s Word.

As we have already written, Paul himself took this action. And we must remember that the Bible speaks of the church in two ways, “universally” (Acts 2:47) and “locally” (I Cor. 1:2). When one is baptized, he is added to the universal church by God, but the individual is responsible for finding a local congregation with which to identify. Have you done this yet? A few have claimed to be members-at-large! No such thing existed in God’s Word, nor does it today.

2) It Brings Increased Involvement.

Good elders

monitor closely those who are involved in a local work (leading in the public worship services, teaching classes and other activities). And this is as it should be. Those who wish to identify with a local group will speak to the elders to ensure everyone is on the same page. When it is found to be this way, there then is confidence and trust. Members of God’s family need to be involved, and one can really only do this when they are identified.

3) It Brings

Accountability. Good elders also know their work involves the watching and protecting of souls (Heb. 13:17). They will give answer as to how they undertook these activities. When one identifies with a local group of God’s people, they become accountable to the leadership of that group. Some bristle at this and therefore have no desire to do the right thing by identifying. But the truth is, we all need to be accountable. We all need good, qualified, and faithful men who will help us get to Heaven. Instead of looking at this as a negative thing, look at it as a tool to be used in achieving a home in Heaven. Have you identified locally yet?

FIRST CITY CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEETING AT HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS

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MEETING TIMES (EST)

SUNDAY

Bible Study – 10:00 am

Worship – 11:00 am & 3:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study – 7:00 pm