

How would you define the Church?

Written by Ben Winslett

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Were you asked to, how would you define the Lord Jesus' Church? I would venture to say many would define it as "a place we go to worship." I would argue that the church is your identity, rather than a location. Let's consider a few more definitions:

1. *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth.* This definition comes from 1 Timothy 3:15. It is the church which upholds and supports the truth of the Godhead, salvation, righteousness, etc.

2. *The Bride of Christ.* Espoused to Jesus by His Father before the creation of the universe, the church is sometimes called Jesus' bride.

3. *The Body of Christ.* We are members of Christ our head. Together, we function for the advancement of His Glory and cause here in the world.

4. *A place where Christ is glorified.* This comes from Ephesians 3, as the church is to give glory to Christ throughout all ages.

Finally, I want to consider one special definition. Since January, I have been reading and re-reading the book of Acts. In Acts, we find the early history of the Church. It was her life experience, worship, and practice. In it, we find the pattern for our activity and zeal as believers. My definition from Acts: *The church is a place where God's power is experienced.*

Let that one sink in.

When gathered with fellow disciples, we should experience God's power. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. The gospel is the power of God to them that believe. Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power. So my question is this: IS the church you attend a place where God's power is felt? I suppose I should define what I am asking.

God's power can be felt in at least two ways.

1. Personal growth. Disciples should be transformed by the renewing of their minds. This

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means that we should be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. New converts. The early church grew on a daily basis. Baptisms should be as much a part of the New Testament experience as singing, preaching, and prayer. New believers were added the more daily throughout history. This should be the same today, lest we be in the great falling away near the end of time.

To sum it up, we experience God's power through changed lives. Lives. Being. Changed.

1. The Church has left her first love for Christ. We are people of autopilot. Spiritual cruise control is a major problem in our nation. Our churches are to be filled with people who obsessively love Jesus Christ. Ephesus, in Revelation 2, was a strong church of good report. She had good works, patience, and standards. Yet she was at risk of losing her candlestick because she had left her first love. The solution? Repent!

2. Loss of a vision for the ministry of the Church. The church has a ministry. A local assembly is not a place we go to hear a speech, it is a body with a function in the world. When we cease to perform this function, stagnation begins. Ever seen water in a rushing river become stagnant? Neither have I. Our ministry is chiefly to "sound out" the word of the Lord through our communities. Sadly, so often we have been too busy fighting or sidetracked by the world to fulfill this ministry, this course we have to finish.

I end this post with a request. Let's take the time to examine ourselves, painful as it may be. If God's power is not felt among us, I can all but guarantee repentance is in order. Let us seek Christ together.