

ALA1: The Church is...

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Not everybody really understands what a church is—even Christians may not fully understand. There are two important distinctions that are necessary to know about the church, as well as an important definition of the church and some basic duties that the church should accomplish. I would also like to point out an important definition of Christianity.

First, there is the universal church. This is the whole group of true believers, all around the world, from the time of the first Pentecost (*Spiritual*, Eph 1.22; Kraft). Each person may be from different denominations, but they are all true followers of Christ, in that they have repented of their sins and have invited Jesus to be a part of their life.

The local church is what most people are familiar with: it is the building, the group that gathers a few times a week that does not necessarily only contain believers (Kraft). There are many non-believers and fake Christians that attend churches. They can not be a part of the universal church because they have not repented and do not believe, but they are a part of the local church (Kraft).

The word “church” that we use comes from the Greek word “ekklesia”, which essentially means “called out” (Kraft). It means the universal church has been singled out for a purpose, and that purpose is to add to the universal church by spreading the Word of God and ministering to others (*Spiritual*, Mk 16.15; Kraft). There are many ways to do this; not everyone needs to become a pastor. We can all do something. Many of us can do

something every single day. It can be as simple as a text message or as all-out as providing food, clothing, shelter, and a job for a homeless person. Even a smile or the light of your attitude can minister to others! But the point is that the universal church should always strive to do more, to reach further, and to shine brighter. Our life's mission did not end when we accepted Christ; our goal in life isn't to get into heaven. In fact, the day we repented is the day our life began. It is the day we essentially accepted the calling, whether we understood it or not. It is not just a promise for the future, but a necessary task that we will have to answer to when we stand before God.

Therefore, the church [and I am speaking universally] must love others (*Spiritual*, 1 Cor 13.4-7), care for others, strive for peace, minister to others, and grow in their own walk with God. Many Christians do not do this. Many believers just go to church to fill their "Jesus quota" so they feel spiritual enough for another week. A lot of people are too scared, shy, or proud to answer the calling that Jesus has given to every single believer. There is much to do as a Christian, and not much time to do it in. Have you ever heard the term "gray Christian"? This refers to a Christian that is lukewarm, not on fire for God and yet not an un-believer. They may have repented once, occasionally have a touching moment with the Lord, and they may even swear that they will turn their life around, but they never really grow. The Bible says that God will reject these people in heaven (*Spiritual*, Rev 3.16). It makes perfect sense; if God isn't really important to us, if we do not do the work that is required of us, then why should we be rewarded? No, being a

Christian means we are out there, we are going into the world and changing it, and we are growing our household for Christ (*Spiritual*, Mk 16.15).

I will leave you with one last definition: that of Christianity. “Christian” means “Christ follower” (*Spiritual*, Matt 16.24). Do you remember what the disciples did? They laid down their possessions—and many of them eventually their lives—and devoted themselves entirely to the work of the Lord. They literally followed him while he walked on this earth, and they continued to be examples and to grow once he had ascended into heaven. Like any good student, we should follow our Teacher’s example and strive to be more like him in every way possible, for if we are not doing so, why are we called “Christians?” Why should we be labeled as “Christ-like?” Why should we be the “called out” if we are not going out?

#### Works Cited

Kraft, Vickie. “Lesson 7: the Church.” *Bible.org*, 2017 Bible.org, 10 June 2008, 14 Jan 2017.

*Spiritual Warfare Bible*. Charisma House, 2012.