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## Joshua Nations

# Definition and Purpose of a Church

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

# Definition and Purpose of a Church

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**A. A church is a gathering of believers for the purpose of biblical worship, prayer, learning and mission. The word church comes from *ekklesia*, which is defined as an assembly or called out ones. (Matthew 21:13, Psalm 150:1-6)**

Jesus made it very clear that the church should be a dwelling place of prayer. Although churches have many programs and activities, the primary purpose of the gathering of believers should be for prayer, worship, and an intimate relationship with God.

The passage in Psalm 150:1-6 gives another description that gives an indication of our conduct and activity. Praise, glory, and exaltation of God are critically important. As believers can become discouraged, a posture and attitude of praise to God quickly minimizes the troubles of the world and refocuses attention upon the Almighty.

**B. Jesus is the head of the church, which is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23)**

The purpose of the Church must be defined and directed by Jesus who is the head over all things. Although He has chosen you for the great task of planting a church, it is He who is the author and finisher of all things. It is He who directs, guides, provides, and draws people unto the Father. Do not allow pride to enter your heart as the task He has called you to endeavor is a great and admirable one.

Reminding yourself that Christ is the head will give you confidence and reassurance that you are a steward of His plan. It is a great responsibility to steward something for the Lord, but we also have the support and assistance from the head of the church as we need.

**C. The body of Christ is made up of all believers in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) until Christ's return. The body of Christ is comprised of two aspects:**

1. The universal church consists of all those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The world might have a class or caste system, but no such thing exists in the

universal church. All people who have a personal relationship with Jesus are members of the body. No matter how rich, poor, young, old, educated, or uneducated – God is not a respecter of persons in such regard. His desire is for relationship and surrender to Him.

2. The local church is described in Galatians 1:1-2: “Paul, an apostle ... and all the brothers with me, to the churches in Galatia.” Here we see that in the province of Galatia, there were many churches—what we call local churches.

As a church planter, God has selected you to be one of His representatives in a local setting, yet still part of the universal church. Your church plant is an integral part of the body of Christ universally, as well as locally. Additionally, each person within the local church subsequently has a critical role of the body within the local church. All churches and all people within the church are important.

#### **D. What a church is not**

1. A building.
2. A denomination.
3. A piece of land.
4. A business.
5. A place of entertainment.
6. A social club.

Although there is value in buildings, land, resources, and socialization, the church is not and should not be defined by any of these things. A church should only be defined and regarded as a group of people meeting for worship, prayer, study, and mission.

As a visionary leader, it will be your responsibility to ascribe the appropriate value to the church and disassociate these other items from the purpose of your local church. People are now the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; no longer does the Lord reside in a temple on earth.

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*This article was provided by Joshua Nations ([JoshuaNations.org](http://JoshuaNations.org)).*