



EXCERPT



Becoming the Church
God's People in Purpose and Power

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Though many have given up on the church, God has not. Bishop Claude Alexander shows how early Christians did not always understand what the church was supposed to be, but God worked in them anyway. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we, too, can be transformed by Jesus and model to the world what it means to know him—as the church.

Don't Give Up on the Church

I love the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I realize that we live in an age where fewer are making that statement. However, I love the church.

I am painfully aware that those who don't love the church, who wish the church would disappear forever, feel that way in part due to an experience with some people who make up the church. To you, I offer my sincerest apologies. As those who are in the process of being made into the image of Christ, at times we miss the mark and fall tragically short, to God's dishonor, to our disappointment, and to a watching world's disdain. Yet God has not and does not give up on the church; neither do I. My hope is that in reading this, neither will you.

The church is God's idea. It is what Christ is building upon himself. It is that into which God calls every person who accepts his Son by faith.

I contend that the reason why many who've been added to the church don't move to being the church that God intends is that they never understood what God intends for the church to be. You can't be or become what you don't understand.

This is not new. Those who made up the original members of the church didn't even get it all the time. In fact, the Introduction Gospels, the book of Acts, and the New Testament Epistles are all God's way of helping them and us understand what God intends for the church to be and to do. The three years that they were with Jesus and the time after his ascension into heaven were all about becoming God's people in purpose and power.

As I write to you, I have been a part of the church for fifty of my fifty-seven years of life. I have learned that we who make up the church are both being and becoming. We both are the church and are still in the process of becoming the church. John, an apostle of Jesus, speaks to this: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2 NKJV).

In the following pages, we will look at the disciples during the period immediately after Jesus' resurrection, through the Gospels as well as the first six chapters of the book of Acts. We will hear from some of them in their own voices and from their own perspectives in terms of their continual discovery and development into God's people in purpose and power.

Like the original members of the church, I am continuing to be led into becoming what God has in mind; a person of purpose and power. My hope is that I can better be who and what God has in mind. I invite you to do the same.

—Adapted from the introduction, "Being and Becoming"



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Second Book from Author of *Necessary Christianity*

"Bishop Alexander's love for the church inspires us and challenges us. With thoughtful imagination and examination of the early church, he masterfully weaves together a tapestry of biblical voices that speaks to a beautiful vision of the church. This book is an essential guide for anyone wanting to help churches become what God intended, beginning with ourselves."

—Tom Lin, president and CEO of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA

Bishop Claude R. Alexander Jr. is senior pastor of The Park Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He serves on the board of Christianity Today, Mission America Coalition, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Movement.org. He is the chair of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's board of trustees and a past president of the Hampton University Ministers Conference. He and his wife, Kimberly, have two daughters. He is also the author of *Necessary Christianity*.



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