

Bailey stevens

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



Bailey Stevens 4/30/12 World Literature Reflective Essay Stranger in a Village " Church" is an ambiguous word. What is a church? Is a church a body of believers, a building or both? Does a church have to be in a building? Can a person be a church by themselves, or does it have to be with a congregation? The interminable questions make it ever more difficult to define, but for the sake of having a definition I will settle with; a body (a group of people or congregation) of Christian believers coming together to worship Christ. As an American Christian, I worship the triune God in a church in a small town in the Cascade Mountains called Manson. The worship typically consists of Sunday morning services comprised of singing praise followed by a message and teaching, along with fellowship. Within my church, there are multiple opportunities to help less fortunate people, not only locally, but also in other parts of the world. Their blessed moments offered in missions when one is called upon to spread the word of God. One such opportunity aroused two years ago when I was called to with my church down to Ensenada, Mexico. Our mission was to work with orphaned children and specifically with the Gabriel House; which is an orphanage that has kids with severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy, HIV, and Down syndrome. Working with these disabled kids was especially meaningful to me because I have a brother with Down's syndrome. One of the things we did with these kids load them up and take them to church; but this was not exactly what I was expecting when I learned we were going to church. After driving for quite some time out into the middle of nowhere, we finally saw a couple of shacks. After a little while longer we drove right in-between the shacks and stopped, they said, " we're here, let's unload the kids and go inside. " As all

this was happening I was trying to comprehend what was going on. Why were we in the middle of nowhere? What are all these shacks for, and is that really the church? Come to find out that some of these little buildings were a part of a rehab center for men who had some issues in the past. Now they are on the uphill climb and making some drastic changes in their lives. Though there was still that thought in the back of my mind as I was looking at them with their tattoos and wondering if I could trust them even though they were in a church worshiping God. As time went on I realized they were harmless and there to sincerely worship; and I needed to follow that old saying, " don't judge a book by its cover. " As I walked through the door I was greeted, even though I didn't understand what they were saying, because they were speaking in Spanish. After we all found a seat in this small church they began to play and sing music. This was a very different experience although I could hear some of the similarities in the songs to some of the songs we sing in our church. However, what really caught me off guard was their body language, and the different ways they expressed themselves. Some were clapping on random beats and others moved in all directions with their bodies, then out of nowhere I hear a horn blast and then another one. To me, all of these things were so distracting and making it hard for me to focus on worshiping; but I have come to realize that this is just another way that they express their love for God. It was when singing came to an end that the pastor took the stage and began to preach his message, which was about family and fathers. The only reason I knew that this was the message was because it was Father's Day, but I felt as though he was speaking to people who were regulars and not us. Then he did

something that I had never seen or experienced before; he called all of the fathers in the room to come to the front. When they arrived he had them pray for the father that was right beside them, and they then started praying for each other out loud and all at the same time. Then everyone in the congregation started praying out loud for the fathers. This was completely unlike anything I had experienced before, there were people praying in Spanish and English, but yet everyone was working as one to speak to God. This was truly a significant moment as we all came together in one body of Christ. Looking back on this experience it was completely worth all the awkwardness I went through to eventually have a genuinely moving experience. I learned a great deal during this time from cultural understandings to spiritual growth. It is often times like these where we get out of our comfort zones that we learn, and take away the most. I often wonder what kind of person I would be today had I not listened to God and never gone on this amazing mission, and had my life changed forever in more ways than I know. I would not trade this experience for anything!