



That sense of not belonging is so difficult to live with. Perhaps you lived it early on, that not belonging part. Perhaps you were the last one chosen for the softball team, the teenager who preferred classical music to rock and roll, the one who just didn't fit with the "in" crowd, the one who was nice enough but not at all cool. Perhaps you know what it is not to belong. But oh, how we longed to belong! To be "cool," to be sought after, to be wanted! Some of us have been there and vowed never to find ourselves in that place again.

We long to belong and so we work hard, meet the right people, wear the right clothes, and join the right organizations. It is so tempting to try to belong in this world, so much easier, in many ways, to try to make peace with what the world expects of us. We do, after all, live in this world for now, so we may as well make the most of it.

Many people today are not sure where they fit into the scheme of things. They are searching for meaning and direction as they go through life. Michael W. Smith wrote a song several years ago, "Searching for a reason, roaming through the night to find my place in this world. Not a lot to lean on, I need Your light to help me find my place in this world."

People are confused and like Jesus said, "They are like sheep w/o a shepherd." They are wandering around trying to find where they belong. People are asking these questions: Why am I here? Where do I fit in? What is life all about? Who cares about me? Ultimately, we find these answers in the one who created us.

It is our privilege and responsibility to show and tell others how they can know Jesus and become a citizen of heaven too. Let's commit ourselves to this task. If you never speak with people who do not know Jesus, maybe this week would be a good week to do that. If you ask Him, God will bring someone across your path who needs hope. Will you be the light God has called you to be so that others do not have to walk in darkness?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm but how can one keep warm alone? A cord of strands is not quickly broken.

#### Benefits of belonging:

1. Belonging to a church family provides strength. Two are better than one because they get more done by working together
2. When you belong to a church family, you can be assured of being provided support. Gal. 6:2 says: help carry each other's burdens. In this way, you will follow God's teachings.
3. Belonging to a church family provides Spiritual Warmth. Heb.24-25 " and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and do good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another."

### Benefits of being in a fellowship:

A. People experience authenticity. Authentic fellowship is not superficial. It is genuine, heart to heart, and sometimes gut-level sharing.

B. People experience mutuality. It is depending on each other. In Romans 1:12 Paul said "I want us to help each other with the faith we have. Your faith will help me, and my faith will help you."

C. People experience sympathy. It is not only understanding each other's feelings but it is also validating each other's feelings.

D. People experience Mercy. Fellowship is a pace of grace. Mistakes are not rubbed-in, instead they are rubbed-out. 2Cor. 2:7: when people sin, you should forgive and comfort them, so they won't give up in despair.

The reality is that we are caught, living in this world but made for something more. That is also the truth of our salvation. Because we follow a savior who knew what it was not to belong. We follow a savior who got kicked out of his synagogue, whose best friends were uneducated fishermen, who went to dinner with all the wrong people, whose own parents thought him crazy, who died a criminal's death. We follow a savior who belonged to the world of the sick, the lonely, the least and the lost. We follow a savior who didn't belong to this world and yet who loved this world and the people in it in all its awful messiness. And from him we learn that it's only by living fully in this world that we know what it is to belong to God.

It is by living in the midst of life's problems, griefs, and general recurring chaos, day in and day out, that we learn who we really are. In the reality that is being human we learn, yet again, that no matter what happens, no matter who rejects us, no matter how many times we fall short, we do belong --- to God.

We are claimed by the arms of a love that will have us, no matter how many ways we seek to wander away, no matter how many times we seek to find our security, our sense of belonging, in some other place or person. We are claimed by the arms of an everlasting love that, of all things, finds its joy complete in us! Jesus is right. We do not belong to the world. We belong to God and His Church.



- 1.) How does it feel when you do not belong?***
- 2.) How does it feel when you belong?***
- 3.) How does belongingness in a Church changed you as a person, share?***