

BELONGINGNESS

INTRODUCTION

Who has ever heard the word "belongingness"? I didn't know it existed until I started preparing this message. A quick search on Wikipedia gives this definition: *"Belongingness is the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group. Whether it is family, friends, co-workers, a religion, or something else, people tend to have an 'inherent' desire to belong and be an important part of something greater than themselves."*

Baumeister and Leary from work done on belongingness in 1995 state: *"the lack of belongingness causes various undesirable effects, including a decrease in the levels of health, happiness, and adjustment. They further assert that people who lack belongingness suffer higher levels of mental and physical illness and are more prone to a broad range of behavioral problems, ranging from traffic accidents to criminality to suicide."*

This inherent desire to belong was planted in us when God created us. In fact, it is one of the reasons God created Eve. **Genesis 2:18** Then the Lord God said, **"It is not good that the man should be alone;** I will make him a helper fit for him."

It is not good to be alone, God didn't make us that way. This need to belong impacts every aspect of our lives. It drives our behaviour. We will do things or act in a certain way based on our need to be accepted. This behaviour can be either good or bad, but it comes from our need to be accepted and belong.

There is something we need to realise, if God planted in us the desire to belong, He also made sure that no matter how people may treat us, we should always have a place belong to. **Song of Songs 2:16 says,** "My beloved is mine, and I am his". God wants us to belong to His own family.

The devil, of course, who hates us, will do everything to direct that belongingness in a direction that serves his evil purposes. Therefore, today, we will have a look at where we belong, and what the Bible says about how we are to go about making sure we are where we belong.

MESSAGE

GOD WANTS US TO BELONG TO A FAMILY

When Adam was alone in the garden, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone". I heard T.D. Jakes take that word and break it into two words. ALL and ONE – it is not good to be ALL ONE. In terms of marriage, Genesis two goes on to say the TWO shall be ONE FLESH. **Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. In Ephesians 5 Paul compares the husband and wife relationship to the relationship between Christ and the church.

Through marriage, God instituted family – family perpetuates, a man leaves his parents to be joined with his wife and together they become ONE. No longer is the individual ALL ONE, now the TWO shall BECOME ONE.

Family is important, it's the place where we are loved and accepted. **It's the base level where we have that God-given need to belong fulfilled.**

Family is a foundation from where God works – this is displayed in His covenant with Abram: **Genesis 17:4-7** "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly **fruitful**; and I will make **nations of you**, and **kings shall come from you**. 7 And I will **establish My covenant between Me and you** and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you".

Families become nations. Kings come from families. **God is able to bless generations upon generations because the BELONG to a family.** And we know that Jesus Himself was a descendant of Abraham. In Abraham, all of the nations of the earth are blessed, why, because Jesus came from his lineage.

ISRAEL BELONGED TO GOD'S FAMILY

Exodus 19:4-6a (NKJV) 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

- God separated the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them to Himself.
- He encouraged them to obey His voice and keep His covenant.
- If they would do these two things, they would be a special treasure to Him above all people.
- They would be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

When a nation belongs to God, they are different.

- They become His priests – Priests teach people about God and they minister before Him.
- They are holy – separated and different – living according to God's ways and not the ways of the heathen idol-worshipping nations around them.
- God treasures them.

CHRISTIANS BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once

were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

- God separated us out of darkness and brought us into His marvelous light – He has brought us to Himself in Christ Jesus.
- We obey that covenant by believing and being saved through faith.
- We are now God’s people – part of His family. Romans 8:15 tells us that if we are led by the Spirit of God, we are sons of God - verse 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.
- We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (kings children), a holy nation.
- As God’s priests as we proclaim the praises of Him who can bring us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.
- A holy nation – separated and different – living according to God’s ways and not the ways of the darkness of the world from which we have been freed!.
- God’s own special people – He treasures us!

Do you realise that you are part of God’s special treasure?

Do you realise that you belong to something great beyond measure and that you are a royal child of the King of Kings?

Do you realise that you have a priestly role to play?

EVERY FAMILY HAS SOME BASIC RULES

Who has ever heard a parent say, “you can do as you please when you are out of this home, but while you live under my roof, you will do as I say!”?

There are some keys to belonging. For the Israelites, they had to keep the Old Testament Law. For Christians we are no longer under law, but under grace. We are free to live as children of grace, but we are still encouraged to live in a specific manner:

Philippians 3:20a states “For our citizenship is in heaven...” we need to obey heaven’s rules.

1 Peter 2:11 (NLT) Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.

We are different – we do belong, but not here! This world is just a temporary place for us.

- The warning here is that the enemy is at war against our souls, and being the god of this age, he will employ every worldly thing to drag you out of belonging to God’s kingdom.

- Peter goes on to encourage the Christians not to live like the people of this world:

1 Peter 2:12 (NLT) Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

We must live in a manner that tells people who we are – there's the priesthood coming to the fore – and what we do must bring glory to God.

Do you realise that when we conform to the ways of this world, we are not behaving as citizens of heaven?

WE BELONG TO A HIGH STANDARD OF HOLINESS!

Even though we are not under the law, the Christian family to which we belong has a high standard of holiness.

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NLT) So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. 14 So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. 15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

- We are called to live as God's children.
- We must not slip back into the ways of living of the worldly family out of which we have been adopted.
- We need to be holy because our Heavenly Father is Holy, our Savior is Holy and His Spirit is the Holy Spirit!

My questions this morning are these:

- ***Does our life look like the life of a child of holiness?***
- ***Have we possibly slipped back into our old way of living?***
- ***Are we chasing our old desires?***
- ***Is it possible that our hearts have become so hardened to sin that we are compromising and yet still under the impression that we are living as children of light?***

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO SUCCEED!

Exodus 19:4 (NKJV) "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself..."

Do you notice how the Israelites escaped Egypt? God said, "I did it, I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself".

In Isaiah we also read about eagles wings: **Isaiah 40:31a** (NKJV) But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles...

We have to wait on the Lord!

ISAIAH 40:30-31 (NKJV) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

Even youths and young men get tired... This refers to trying to do things in our own strength. When we do this we fail dismally. That was the problem with Israel, they kept trying to work at obeying the Law instead of trusting God by faith to be able to live according to His standards.

But when we wait on the Lord, He will renew our strength; He will carry us on wings like eagles, then we will run the Christian Race not be weary, then we will walk in the light and not faint.

Have you been trying to live as a child of light and failed dismally? This morning the Lord says: "wait on Me, come to me, live by faith and not by works or human effort, and I will give you the strength you need and the grace you need to adhere to My standards of holiness and to be part of My family".

CONCLUSION

Our ultimate "belongingness" is to belong to God's family". God loves us and He gave His own Son to make sure that we will be fully qualified and adopted members of His great family through Jesus work of the cross. Paul writes this:

Philippians 3:12 (ESV) Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Paul said, "I count everything else as rubbish that I may know Him (Jesus)". Then he added, "I haven't perfected this yet, but I am pressing on towards it."

He follows with the reason, "**because Christ Jesus has made me his own**".

The Message bible states this beautifully:

Philippians 3:12-14 (MSG) I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

We don't just belong to God's family, we belong to Jesus Himself – He has made us his very own. In Him our every desire for "belongingness" can be fulfilled.

Today we set all loneliness aside, we also stop running from that to which we belong. Like Paul, let us also run for the goal of perfection in Christ Jesus Let us embrace Jesus, whose banner over us is love. He is the one who has so wondrously reached out for us and made us His very own.