



# Belonging

John 1:12-13, Galatians 4:4-7

## *Desire for Belonging*

When we listed things that people desire, “belonging” was mentioned.<sup>1</sup> In particular, “belonging in family” was mentioned. “Identity”<sup>2</sup> was also mentioned, which is related to belonging.



## *Questions about Belonging*

1. What kinds of “belonging” do we experience in life? *Where* do we find belonging?
2. Why is belonging important to us?
3. How does belonging happen in our lives?

## *Belonging as a Christian*

When a person becomes a Christian through faith in Jesus Christ, he or she has a new kind of belonging and identity.

- 📖 “Yet to all who did receive [Jesus Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” (*John 1:12-13, NIV*)<sup>3</sup>
- 📖 “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ...” (*1 John 3:1a, NIV*)

Christians *belong* to God and his family. Christians *belong* to Jesus Christ (*Romans 1:6*). The Bible uses other images of belonging. For example, Christians *belong* to “the body of Christ.”

- 📖 “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (*Romans 12:4-5, NIV*)<sup>4</sup>



## *Benefits & Responsibilities of Belonging*

Belonging to the family of God and body of Christ has great benefits! It also has responsibilities.

<sup>1</sup> ‘belonging’ – to be a member or part of (a particular group); acceptance as a member or part.

<sup>2</sup> ‘identity’ – who or what a person is. Belonging to a particular family, group or culture is a factor in our identity.

<sup>3</sup> Through faith in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ we become ‘children of God.’ All humans are God’s ‘offspring’ in the sense that God made us all, and we are all one race (*Acts 17:28*). However, the Bible uses ‘children of God’ to refer to those who have entered into God’s family in a spiritual sense. To become God’s children, we must be ‘born of God’ (*John 1:13*) or ‘born again’ (*John 3:3-8*) which is a spiritual birth into a ‘new life’ in God’s family. This is a gracious work of God received through faith. We must be ‘adopted’ by God into His family (*Romans 8:23, Ephesians 1:5*).

<sup>4</sup> See 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 for more teaching on the body of Christ.

4. Considering the images of *the family* and *the body*, along with the following Bible passages, what are benefits of belonging to God's family?



📖 "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (*Galatians 3:26-29, NIV*)

📖 "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir." (*Galatians 4:4-7, NIV*)<sup>5</sup>

5. Considering the images of *the family* and *the body*, along with the following Bible passages, what are responsibilities of belonging to God's family?

📖 "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them;<sup>6</sup> they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister." (*1 John 3:9-10, NIV*)<sup>7</sup>

📖 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (*Galatians 6:9-10, NIV*)

6. In what ways is belonging to God different from other kinds of belonging in this life?

### Reflection & Application

- To whom or what do you belong? Do you belong to God and his family? Are you a "child of God?" Do you need to become God's child through faith in Jesus?
- If you are truly a Christian, you belong to God and his family. You belong to the body of Christ. Reflect on the benefits! And by God's grace, commit to fulfill your responsibilities.

<sup>5</sup> Christ, the Son, became human so that humans could become sons (Douglas Moo, *Galatians* [Baker: Grand Rapids, 2013], 267). Those who are 'adopted' receive all the rights, privileges & blessings of sons. In the case of God's family, this includes the blessing of the indwelling Holy Spirit along with all the benefits brought by the Spirit, including an intimate relationship with God the Father. 'Adoption to sonship' also includes inheritance of the status and blessings promised to God's people (*Galatians 4:7; 6:10*). This inheritance is securely held by God for his children (*1 Peter 1:3-5*).

<sup>6</sup> By the new birth, God implants in us His life, truth and power which results in deep, inward transformation. As God's children we should become like *the* Son of God (Jesus) who perfectly honored & reflected the Father in his earthly life.

<sup>7</sup> As Christians, this does not mean we won't sin at all, but we will be bothered by our sin. We will desire to live godly lives, and that attitude will show up in our behavior. 'Doing what is right' is evidence that we are God's children, but we *become* God's children by God's grace through faith, *not* by our own good works (*John 1:12-13, Ephesians 2:8-9*).