**Faith and Belonging**

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*For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on the earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his chosen treasure. Deuteronomy 7:6* NLT.

As I read this verse, I couldn’t help but feel gratitude and love spring up from my heart. How nice it is to belong. To feel a part of something or someone is one of the best feelings in the world. It is a sense of fitting in or feeling like you are a member of a group. Imagine that! We belong to the Lord God of the Universe who purchased us at a very high price.

I discovered there are two sides to belonging! The blessing of knowing that we belong to the family of God is not only comforting and stabilizing, it also comes with responsibility. The good news is that we belong to Christ, but He does not treat us like my grandchildren sometimes treat their “belongings”. It takes time for them to learn to not step on their toys or clothes, but to mature into taking care of the things given to them. The great news is our Father, whom we belong to—treats us as His chosen treasure. If we follow Him and His ways, He treats us well.

But we have a responsible side as well. Reading through various scriptures in the New Testament that talk about what it means to belong. 2 Timothy 2:19 clearly in the NLT tells us “*all who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil”.*1 Thessalonians 5:5 reminds us “*For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night.”*So we see there are standards God has set for those of us who belong to the Body of Christ. Paul gets even more adamant in Galatians 5:24. Those*who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to the cross and crucified them there.*I know I have a long way to go in these areas. But as we get ready to enter Easter weekend, it is good to be reminded of God’s desires. We belong to Him. It’s not our way, but His way, right?

I am not a joiner—which means I don’t really “belong” to many groups. I belong to my family! And I belong to Life Church. Within my Life Church family, I belong to my Life Group, that we call Hope and Prayer. I also belong to the Greeter team. It is a joy to belong to my family, they are my safe place. I am so blessed to have them in my life. The choice wasn’t to join, but the choice is how much I choose to interact and help them.

Joining Life Church was a decision—as was all the subgroups I am a part of. Belonging means showing up, supporting through finances and prayer. There was a season, I will admit where I wondered if I was a “part”. I struggled to feel connected after my husband passed. I looked for confirmation (really affirmation) that they still saw me as important. As I processed these “feelings” in prayer, I felt the Holy Spirit ask me to figure out what did I need to “feel” a part? I realized I was a part of the body of Christ because of what Jesus did on the cross. It was something I accepted by faith. It was the same with my church connection. It is by faith. So, by God’s grace, I began to walk in it as if I belonged. My feelings shifted. That’s when I joined the other sub-groups. I set aside my “self absorption” and began to increase my interaction with others. I needed them and they needed me. *Romans 12:* 4-5, *Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body, we are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.* Belonging means we need to be close enough to stay connected.

I will end with Jesus’ words to his opposition. *Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don’t listen because you don’t belong to God. John 8:17 NLT.*He clarifies that if we belong to Him, we will listen gladly to Him, whether it goes with our will or not.

I know many who don’t take advantage of belonging to the Lord, His family or a church. Let’s be examples of those who do! Take a peak at 1 Peter 3:15-17.

*Father, I thank you. We belong to you. Teach us how to take advantage of all the benefits and responsibilities of belonging. As we celebrate your resurrection, we are so grateful to you for suffering in our place. Thank you my Lord, In Jesus’ Name, amen.*