

# Belonging to God's Family

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray. Father, we want to hear your word. We want you to speak to us. We want you to change our lives, to transform us, to make us into the people you would have us be.
- Speak to us now. Amen. When we think we don't, we don't fit in.
- We feel lonely and isolated. We feel distrustful and defensive. And you know, all that can lead to serious health implications.
- Loneliness is a serious problem. We all need to feel we belong somewhere, that we're accepted, that we're part of a group. And when I was thinking about this service this morning, the one word that kept coming up, coming through my mind, was the word belonging.
- We need to belong. We need to feel that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. We need a place where we can share interests, we can share commitment.
- [ 1 : 18 ] It might be as part of a family, it might be as a friendship group, or a shared interest group. It might be co-workers, it might even be a congregation.
- But we need that place. And it isn't just a random idea. It's actually psychologically part of who we are, this need to be part of something bigger.
- And if you look at psychology textbooks and psychology writings, you'll see human beings are hardwired to need to be in community.
- It's only when we're part of a community that we are functioning properly. And I think that might explain some of the popularity of WhatsApp and Facebook groups, because they provide a space where people can feel that they're part of something bigger.
- They can share their opinions and their views with like-minded people. Not all of it helpful, but it's the psychology behind it.
- [ 2 : 39 ] I'm not surprised that we are made in this way. Because after all, God made us, didn't he?
- God made us in his image. And his image is an image of relationship. If we look at God, we have God the Father relates to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
- They all relate to each other. It's a trinity of relationship. So, of course, when he made humankind, he would make us relational beings, beings that need others to relate to.
- And we are here today as his church, part of a community of believers.
- And we have together our love of the Lord in common. We might be very different outside here, but when we're here, we share that love of Jesus.
- [ 3 : 44 ] We share that desire to serve him and to worship him. We belong to him. We belong to God.
- That's what the Bible says. He doesn't just put up with us. He doesn't just tolerate us. He really wants to be in that relationship with us.
- He really wants us to respond to him. That's what so much of the Old Testament is about. That covenant, that promise, where God says, I will be your God and you will be my people.

You are. He made us. There's a lovely verse in Psalm 100. It says, Know that the Lord, he is God.

He made us and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. That speaks of caring and of nurture and of tending.

[ 4 : 53 ] We are the ones that God nurtures and tends. We are the sheep of his pasture. We might think we know a lot about God.

We might read the Bible frequently. But you know, we can do all that and not have that intimacy of relationship with him.

We can have a lot of head knowledge but our hearts aren't moved. God invites us into a heart-to-heart, a spirit-to-spirit relationship with himself.

And when we engage in that and when we enter that, he connects us to a life that is full of the joy of that reciprocal relationship.

all those promises of being our God and being his people all apply to us.

[ 6 : 00 ] As we enter that relationship, we are transformed. Now, God is perfect and we are never going to achieve the same perfection that he has.

But because he is perfect, he will not disappoint us. Our human relationships, even the best of them, sometimes fail, sometimes disappoint.

because we are only human. We are not God. But when we make that connection with God, he holds us secure.

He doesn't let us down. He doesn't fail. I'm not saying we don't need human relationships. Of course we don't. They're very important. And they're something that keeps us straight, keeps us encouraged, gives us an outlook for our love, loves us back.

All very, very important. But that relationship with God is the most important. We need that spiritual bond with him.

[ 7 : 16 ] What happens is, it's a bit technical, I suppose. When we interact with God, it actually stimulates a bit of our brain. It's the bit in our brain that helps us process emotions.

It's involved with awareness and emotional awareness. It helps us regulate who we are.

And that bit of the brain is triggered when we interact with God. When we pray, when we listen to his word, when we read the Bible, when we get close to God, those signals in our brains get triggered.

That's good, because it means we know in ourselves that we're not alone, that we have a relationship with God.

We can experience him, we can feel it. And that bond that God reaches out to us with just grows.

[ 8 : 24 ] Our relationship develops over a passing of years. And the more we trust and the more we find our security in him, the more he changes us.

He wants us to understand who he is, his true character. He wants us to understand who we've signed up to, whose team we've elected to be part of.

And he will be there for us. So we belong to him because he made us. And because he made us, we feel at home with him.

He gives us security. He forms who we are. As we feel secure with God, we feel at home with him. Yes, he is almighty God.

And we should fear and tremble. But he invites us to feel at home with him. To feel safe. To feel protected.

[ 9 : 39 ] To know that we are not alone. So we don't have to feel lonely and isolated. Because God is with us.

You are deeply loved by the one who made you. And that should give you real joy. To know that you are loved, not just accepted, not just tolerated by God.

but you are precious to him. He enjoys you just because you exist for him.

Think about that. It's transforming. And as we belong to him, as we know we belong to him, he gives us a purpose.

That first purpose, that primary purpose, is relationship with him. Think of Adam and Eve in the garden. As they walked in the cool of the evening with God.

[ 10 : 44 ] They had that primary relationship with him. And we too can walk with God. Maybe not in the cool of the evening or even in our gardens.

But wherever we are, we can turn to him. We can speak with him. And he gives us a purpose, a reason to be, serving him.

He gives us hope in all circumstances. Even the darkest days, we can find hope and comfort in his presence.

Psalms 23 says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear, I will not fear evil. What a hope and what a comfort.

And of course, there's always the hope of eternal life. And a life in all its fullness that starts now, but goes on beyond death.

[ 11 : 49 ] He gives us someone to trust. And he makes our trust in him grow.

And he connects with us. It's just amazing to know that we have a deep relationship connection with the living God.

That he allows us to trust in him and to feel secure in him. So how does all this work out?

Well, the Bible says it's like being in a family. We know we belong to God because he has adopted us into his family.

As we heard read, the spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again. Rather, the spirit you have received brought about your adoption to sonship.

[ 13 : 01 ] And by him we cry, Abba, Father. Sonship here is a technical term. Yes, it does mean being part of the family.

but sonship is a status. So ladies, we can be adopted to sonship because that means we have equal share in the inheritance. But the most amazing thing is that we can cry, Abba, Father.

God isn't an austere, Victorian Father. He is a welcoming, accessible dad. And he chose us even before the world was made.

Ephesians chapter 1 says, he chose us in him, that's in Christ, before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his presence.

He didn't choose us because we were good or worthy. He chose us because he loves us. We are his choice.

[ 14 : 18 ] And that adoption of sonship, it's not a reward for being good. It's a love gift from a father who just wants to pour out his blessing on us.

Jesus makes this adoption possible. It was through his death and resurrection that we have been bought, bought with that price from the slavery to sin.

And that purchase gives the right to become God's children. And thereby Jesus, brother and sisters, it's a grace gift.

It's wonderful. And it's the Holy Spirit that witnesses to our spirit that says, yes, you are adopted as a child of God.

This spiritual connection is there. You can enjoy that intimacy of relationship with God. You can call him Abba Father.

[ 15 : 38 ] A few years ago there was a book called I Dare to Call Him Father. If you can get hold of it, I suggest you do. But we can dare to call God Father.

We believe in Him. And we are therefore His adopted children. And so we become co-heirs with Jesus, co-heirs of that eternal, of eternal life, those eternal riches, those eternal blessings.

And the implications of being in God's family, of this new relationship, we've already looked at how God gives us a purpose when we come to Him.

And that purpose is to live in a way that pleases Him. It's to shine as lights in the world, beacons that draw other people to Him.

It's a place in His household, it's a place in the community of His people. We're in it together, not as individuals now, but as a family.

[ 16 : 58 ] And as family we look out for one another, we have each other's backs, we care for one another, we help, we encourage, and we all have a part to play.

you might not feel very active and you might not feel that there's anything for you to do, but there is. Each one of us has a role, has a part to play.

Each one of us can pray, each one of us can bring the needs of others to the Lord, and that's what we're going to do in a few minutes. We all have a part to play.

And the implication of this is that this adoption is for everybody. It's open to everybody who places their trust in Jesus Christ.

John 3 16 says whosoever believes in him, it's for everybody. It doesn't depend on our gender, our ethnicity, our status in life.

[ 18 : 08 ] As Paul wrote, there's neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave or free, because we are all one in Christ. It is for everybody.

There's no one excluded. If you take nothing else away from this morning, take this, you belong to God's family.

You are his, you are under his protection and can live in safety and security. Trust him.

Amen.