

You Are Called to Belong

Sermon by Todd Lester

May 17, 2015

Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Also Hebrews 2:10, 1 Timothy 3:14-15 (NCV), Ephesians 2:19, Romans 1:6

THE BENEFITS OF BELONGING

IN GOD'S _____: I LEARN MY TRUE _____ [_____]

Ephesians 2:19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Also Hebrews 2:11, 1 Corinthians 3:16

IN GOD'S _____: I AM SUPPORTED BY _____ [_____]

Ephesians 2:21-22 We are carefully joined together in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through Him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by His Spirit. Also Romans 1:12, 1 Corinthians 12:27

IN CHRIST'S _____: I DISCOVER MY _____ [_____]

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. Also 1 Corinthians 12:15-16

IN GOD'S _____: I AM _____ AND I AM _____ FOR _____ [_____]

Psalms 100:3 He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Also Galatians 6:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 Peter 5:2

IN GOD'S _____: MY LIFE BECOMES _____ [_____]

John 15:4-5 A branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

Ephesians 3:21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever!

Body of Christ

Our church is the living body of Christ, composed of all the members of our congregation who reveal his Spirit in their lives. How do members of our group (or church) fit in the body of Christ? What is each person's special contribution to Christ's presence in our church? We can affirm group members (or think of the wider church body at Westheights) by choosing what function of the body of Christ they serve.

For this activity, first read through the descriptions together. Then go back over the list and think of people in your group or in the wider church who fulfill that role.



HANDS: You reveal Jesus by the special skills you can do for others that they cannot do for themselves.

BACK: Your faith is strong because you hold up to crises, fear and doubt, reminding those around you that Jesus is near.

SHOULDERS: You show us Christ's gentleness by being the kind of person we can go to when we need a shoulder to cry on.

FEET: You go where God sends you to share Christ's love with others. You take your faith places.

MOUTH: Just like Jesus, you say what needs to be said to comfort, encourage and challenge.

EYES: You have the eyes of Christ because you can share his compassion in the way you look at someone.



EARS: You show love and respect for someone through your Christlike listening skills.

KNEES: As a prayer warrior, you demonstrate Jesus' reliance on prayer through your devotion to God.

ARMS: You use your arms to embrace people and comfort them just like Jesus did.

LEGS: You have the courage to stand up for what you believe in, even when it isn't popular.



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Icebreaker/Introduction

'Body of Christ' is an activity for participants to reflect on how the people of the church function together to fulfill the purposes of God. The page suggests reading the descriptions and thinking of people in the group, or the church, who are like that. An alternative would be to focus on just the people in your group – you could go around the circle and have people share the gifts they see in each individual.

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made that really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

What are some groups that you have been part of during your life (eg. cliques in high school, clubs, teams, projects)? Why were you in those groups? How is being part of the church different than being part of those kinds of groups? What is your view of church buildings?

[Ephesians 1:5](#), [Hebrews 2:10](#), [1 Timothy 3:14-15 \(NCV\)](#), [Ephesians 2:19](#), [Romans 1:6](#)

THE BENEFITS OF BELONGING

IN GOD'S FAMILY : I LEARN MY TRUE IDENTITY [IDENTITY]

Focuses on [Ephesians 2:19](#), [Hebrews 2:11](#), [1 Corinthians 3:16](#)

Would you agree with Todd's statement that most of our identity comes from relationships? Can you think of specific things (experiences or things said to you) in your past that have shaped or influenced your identity (for good or bad)?

Todd said that we need to get our identity from God's family – what kinds of things go into that (ie. what are the actual elements of our identity in Christ)?

How do you feel about Todd's statement that our spiritual family is more important than our physical family?

IN GOD'S TEMPLE : I AM SUPPORTED BY OTHERS [STABILITY]

Focuses on [Ephesians 2:21-22](#), [Romans 1:12](#), [1 Corinthians 12:27](#)

In what ways does society tell us that we can 'do it alone' (as Todd said)? Do you see signs that are beginning to counter that (eg. social media, crowd-sourcing)?

Do you agree with Todd's statement that the biggest epidemic today is loneliness?

What are some examples from your life where you have felt supported by others in the church?

Todd pointed out that we are designed for connection (like Lego). What are some ways or who are some people you have felt connected with?

IN CHRIST'S BODY : I DISCOVER MY UNIQUE VALUE [CAPACITY]

(it may be helpful to consider it this way: In Christ's Body: I Discover my Unique Role [Ability])

Focuses on [Romans 12:4-5](#), [1 Corinthians 12:15-16](#)

Do you understand your place in the body of Christ? Have you found a way to contribute in some way to the work of the church?

What is one new way that you can make a difference at Westheights?

IN GOD'S FLOCK : I AM PROTECTED AND I AM CARED FOR [SECURITY]

Focuses on [Psalm 100:3](#), [Galatians 6:2](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#), [1 Peter 5:2](#)

Can you think of a time when you needed protecting and someone (in the church or outside the church) provided it?

Todd reminded us that it is our very weaknesses that God wants to use to help others. Are there experiences or difficulties which you have faced in your life that could actually equip you to be a support for someone in a similar situation?

Who is someone you know that you can show care for?

IN GOD'S GARDEN : MY LIFE BECOMES FRUITFUL [PRODUCTIVITY]

Focuses on [John 15:4-5](#)

In John 15 Jesus is encouraging us to stay connected to Him (the vine). What are some ways that we can do that?

Consider the Fruits of the Spirit in [Galatians 5:22-23](#). What specific fruit(s) would you most like to grow in your life?

Todd concluded with this scripture and reminded us that we are called to belong, be connected and involved.

[Ephesians 3:21](#) Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever!

How can the church bring glory to God?

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Hebrews 2:10 God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory.

Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 (NCV) Although I hope I can come to you soon, I am writing these things to you now. Then, even if I am delayed, you will know how to live in the family of God. That family is the church of the living God, the support and foundation of the truth.

Ephesians 2:19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

Romans 1:6 And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.

THE BENEFITS OF BELONGING

IN GOD'S FAMILY: I LEARN MY TRUE IDENTITY [IDENTITY]

Ephesians 2:19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

Hebrews 2:11 So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father.

That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

IN GOD'S TEMPLE: I AM SUPPORTED BY OTHERS [STABILITY]

Ephesians 2:21-22 We are carefully joined together in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through Him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by His Spirit.

Romans 1:12 When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

1 Corinthians 12:27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

IN CHRIST'S BODY: I DISCOVER MY UNIQUE VALUE [CAPACITY]

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.

1 Corinthians 12:15-16 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body?

IN GOD'S FLOCK: I AM PROTECTED AND I AM CARED FOR [SECURITY]

Psalms 100:3 He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Galatians 6:2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

IN GOD'S GARDEN: MY LIFE BECOMES FRUITFUL [PRODUCTIVITY]

John 15:4-5 A branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

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