

## Belong to One Another

**We belong to Jesus Christ, and He gives us to one another. Embrace a lifestyle that shows “ownership” in the lives of those Christians close to you.**

**Joshua 7; Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 6:19-20**

We belong to Jesus, and He gives us to one another. Rom 12:5 says, *“so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

This Together to “Belong to One Another” is one of the most important because individualistic Christianity has degraded faith together and blinded us to our need for each other’s help for life and the growth of our spirits.

1 Cor 6:20 and 1 Cor 7:23 both tell us that Jesus bought us with His blood. *“You are not your own; you were bought at a price.”* Then, like a librarian, Jesus loans us out to each other.

It really is true that Christians belong to one another. God proclaims it in the Bible. Since Jesus is our Lord, He has the right to tell us to think and act like we belong to one another. Therefore, we are to embrace a lifestyle that shows “ownership” in the lives of Christians, especially those with whom we are close.

In heaven where sin does not exist, we will still belong to one another as citizens of heaven. We will not cease to be the body of Christ or the family of God. In heaven we will belong to one another in ways we do now, plus wonderful ways that are not yet known.

Imagine ignoring all the Bible says about belonging to and looking out for one another through all of the Togethers. Then you will go to heaven with a small, stunted spirit. You will not be selfish – the old self which made up so much of your personality will be left behind. But, you will have a lot of learning to do. You will not have the innate ability to think of others very much. To fit into heavenly society, that will have to change.

Work hard now to at least daily consider seriously each of your Christian family members, your spouse, and your friends as well as people important to them. Then pray. If the Lord asks you to do more, get into action. Be ready when you get to heaven to belong to others, to identify with them in their marvelous experiences, and to be involved in helping make heaven all that it can be for them – and to let them return the favor.

Something that is very hard for us to imagine on this side of heaven’s doorway is the feeling of consistently belonging. Everywhere we go in heaven, we will belong. Imagine going anywhere in heaven and not at all feeling like a stranger. In heaven, we will be able to confidently enter every venue knowing that we belong there and that the people there will feel we belong with them. However, the extent to which we perceive the closeness of belonging with all the people from many cultures across many centuries will be affected by how we experienced belonging before death.

Think about going to your own daughter's wedding as compared to going to a wedding of someone you hardly know. At your own daughter's wedding, you feel like you truly belong. At the stranger's wedding, you feel much more distant. At the first you belong to the wedding party. At the second, you are a guest.

In heaven we will belong to everyone else, no matter where we are or who we are with. But will we experience "belonging" to its fullness? We probably have been to events where we felt out of place, even though others felt we belonged there as much as anyone. How we work out feeling like we belong now will affect our sensitivity to belonging in heaven.

Everyone will consider us a part of their heavenly family. There will be no favorites making our belonging only partial. And whenever we need something, there will be someone there feeling extremely privileged to help us. Everyone will add to everyone else's joy in heaven. But the magnitude of our perception of belonging, of being wanted, of others' joy at our presence will vary for each of us as we have accepted our status of belonging in Christian relationships now. Do we enjoy being wanted in relationships and their activities now? If not, we need to focus our attention on when others are enjoying us.

Some people have a jump start on experiencing belonging. Those who come from wonderful families desire vacations with family. Those of us who came out of painful families would rather not be with family on vacation. But in heaven we will have no sin making relationships painful. We will grow in our ability to enjoy being with those to whom we belong.

It makes no sense to wait until heaven to get started learning to enjoy belonging to others. Those of us who could not trust our parents and siblings to relate to us lovingly need to concentrate on acquiring appreciation of belonging. Things should have changed. Our Christian Inner Circles should be quite different because others understand belonging. God has given us new creatures in Christ to belong to and learn to trust.

When we Christians take this truth that we belong to one another to heart, we will create close, intimate relationships where trust and safety in belonging can grow. We want to grow to desire more to be with those in our Christian Inner Circles. Not to just "do" things with them, but to be a significant part of their lives.

That will prepare us to confidently enter every place and activity in heaven knowing that we belong there and that the people there will feel we belong with them. Imagine going anywhere and not at all feeling like a stranger.

"Biblical belonging" is not to be likened to belonging to a book club or some store's rewards program. Nor is it satisfied by church membership where we can say we belong to First Church of Whatever City. It is not easy like that. We must be careful to not dismiss belonging as something we think we already do very well.

If we belong to other Christians and they belong to us, then we are responsible for their well-being. Even though they are primarily responsible for themselves, there is a biblical sense in which we are connected to them because God has decided that we belong to one another.

This especially applies to our Christian friendships, our Christian families and our Christian marriages. Therefore, we are responsible to watch out for them and want to because their lives co-mingle with ours.

Belonging is one of the most necessary of human needs. Belonging to an organization such as a church is inferior to belonging to familiar and available people. It is easy to be lonely with just church attendance. That is why God wants us to belong to one another in more dedicated relationships. The kind of belonging He has in mind leads to substantive involvement with one another. Taking responsibility for one another's success in God's kingdom means implementing all of the Togethers at one time or the other over time.

Belonging to one another means that we can count on one another when needed. We can use one another to walk the life of faith. We need to be able to take advantage of one another to a reasonable extent. Jesus will ask us both to depend on Christians we belong to in friendship and family as well as to be his servants when those close to us need our help.

God wants no one left out. We must help those who do not truly belong to enough other Christians to make good, loving and reliable Christian friendships. We can only include a few into our own friendship groups, but we can teach less-connected Christians that they need to build strong friendships and then introduce them to other Christians.

In belonging to one another we become fused together as the body of Christ. And, for each of us this means belonging to our friends and families in very real and practical ways. The most essential way we carry out belonging to one another is to pray for those with whom our lives are most entwined. Since what happens in their lives affects our lives in small or large ways, we want to practice remembering the various realities of their lives when we pray for them.

Here is a story I made up that might help us understand belonging to one another.

*The Jennings family worked hard to keep in mind that since they belonged to one another, they were to help with each other's success in faith and daily life.*

*This all started some time ago when Sarah was in tenth grade and complained to her parents that her friend Julie's parents had stopped coming to their church. Sarah's friend had mentioned that her parents were looking for a church where they felt they belonged.*

*Sarah's parents asked if Julie's parents had joined the church. Yes, they had. Sarah's parents then asked if Julie's parents had trouble with the doctrine of the church. They did not. This led to confusion, and the Jennings family studied "belonging" in the Bible. Quite a few discussions led to the discovery that biblical belonging has more to do with deep caring expressed in concern, gentle accountability, and help as necessary.*

*The Jennings family was turned upside down. Up to that point it was a family of individuals generally doing their own thing with minimal involvement with one another. Now weekly family times are set aside just for finding out how each other is doing in faith, in school, in work and in relationships. Between meetings family members are constantly available to one another. It would take a book on the Togethers to tell all of the new ways that family members help one another.*

*And, of course, Sarah's mother reached out to Julie's mother. Sarah's father also talked to church leadership so they could search for a remedy for families like Julie's.*

Parents wake up in the morning and think, "What do the kids need from me today? Is there a school program to go to? Do I need to pack lunches? Do I need to take anyone anywhere today?" They are

well aware that their children belong to them.

As kids grow older, they should also be trained to not just think of themselves. Other family members may need things from them that day. Perhaps it is a chore like emptying the garbage. Does the person responsible for emptying the garbage know that it is his or her contribution to the family, that others need the garbage taken out? Or perhaps it is that an older sibling belongs to the younger brother who needs friendliness and acceptance to go to school feeling good about himself?

Likewise, husbands and wives normally wake up aware of what the spouse needs from them during the day. Or they should because they belong to each other. Perhaps support and encouragement is needed by one for a difficult meeting at work.

If children are easier for parents to think of because they are dependent and the spouse not as easy because he or she is an adult, friends are even harder to think of when one rises in the morning. All those friends will be thought of and at least prayed for if there is a strong sense that they belong to us and their success in faith and in life are to some extent in our “hands” and need our participation.

Belonging can even exist for a home-bound elderly saint if he or she identifies with Christians she or he knows, as well as persecuted Christians around the world, and prays for them. Hopefully, that same elderly person will be included in the prayers of others and also visited and cared for.

Does God think of all these needs of others? Sure He does. So, obviously, it makes sense to rise early enough to think about the day’s challenges facing everyone in your Christian Inner Circle. This is superb “belonging” and the kind that so mimics God’s concern for each of us that it is extremely valuable worship because it reflects His character.

Let’s keep in mind what is happening in the lives of our closest Christian friends and family. Those in your Christian Inner Circle belong to you. They are a part of your life. Their hopes, dreams, opportunities and struggles are in God’s view also yours.

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There is more about belonging to one another at our website [ChristiansTogether.org](http://ChristiansTogether.org). Just go down the list of the Togethers and click on “Belong to One Another”.

### **Prayer to Embrace this Together**

*Holy God to Whom I belong. I praise You that You purchased me with the blood of Your own dear Son. I would not want to belong to anyone else, not even myself.*

*Lord, you declare that I belong to other Christians, all of them. Help me to be especially aware of my responsibility of belonging to those within my very own circle of Christian friends, spouse and family. And help me to remember those Christian acquaintances who have a special need as well as Christians around the world who are being persecuted.*

*Father, please help those in my inner circle to remember I belong to them. Help them pray for me and the circumstances of my life. And for my family.*

*Bless all of them with a secure knowledge that they belong to me and to those in their own Christian Inner Circles. Help them feel very loved.*

*I and those in my Christian Inner Circle will need Your help to grow our spirits to belong to one another in significant ways, far beyond friendliness and deep into sacrificial love and helpfulness. Empower us to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit for all of us to give You more glory in the way we watch out for one another and feel responsible for one another's spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational well being.*

*Please help us all to become more like Jesus and, like Him, to be exceptionally interested in the daily lives of those in our Christian Inner Circles, knowing what they are going through, caring deeply, and praying for them. Bring them to our minds every day and increase our sense of belonging to them and they to us.*

*May our lives worship You more through the depth of our belonging to one another, approaching a little more the complete belonging of Your three personalities of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*Make us strong in Your power to defeat the devil by so strongly belonging to one another that Satan cannot divide us and make us more susceptible to his evil temptations. Constantly urge us, Lord, to take seriously our responsibility for one another, especially within spiritual reality.*

*Help us all to prepare for heaven by growing more completely in our sense of belonging to one another so that when we arrive in heaven we will naturally feel our belonging with and to all the other citizens of heaven. I know that everywhere I go in heaven, I will belong. I want to prepare now to feel the joy of belonging, of not being so autonomous, or allowing myself to feel accepted and loved for who I am in Christ.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*