

## **Building Family**

Week One: Created to Belong

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**Introduction:** Hello my name is.... Welcome to church. I want to welcome everyone today as we begin a new message series called Building Family where together over the next 6 weeks we are going to be talking about how you can find belonging in the local church.

**Kids say crazy stuff and they ask even crazier questions.** I remember the exact days that my kids said their first words and every since then, they've never stopped talking.

**Talking with my kids is one of my favorite things to do.** To listen to how they think and what's going on in their life can be enlightening at times. Kids see the world different than we do. I'll never forget some of their questions over the years, they are etched in my mind.

**Some of them are funny:** papa since your eyes are blue, does that mean you see everything in blue?, In the olden days was everything black and white?, How bad was the great depression? Why do I have two eyes if I only see one thing?, why did bad words get invented if I'm not allowed to say them? Or My tummy hurts, am I pregnant?

**As kids get older, their questions go from funny to uncomfortable and you're tempted to avoid an answer:** Like: *papa, where do babies come from? I don't know ask your mom, she's a doctor*".

- *One time my youngest daughter breelyn smacked me on the bottom walking up the stairs and when I asked her why she did it, she said because you always smack mom before you go to bed!*

*You're kids are always there watching! Haha. That's funny.*

That's funny and uncomfortable but sometimes they will ask you something deep. Like "catch you off guard deep". My oldest daughter adilyn asked me one of these questions recently.

She's seven and I had just picked her up from school. As we were driving home suddenly out of nowhere she asks me: "Papa, do you ever feel alone?" I paused for the words and then asked "what do you mean?" she responded "Like, do you ever feel like you don't belong? I thought about it for a second and responded honestly Sure I have felt that way before, and then I asked her "do you ever feel that way?"

*Yeah I feel that way a lot. I just wish I had more friends, that they would really accept me. She didn't even pause and said this as if it was no big deal. I'll never forget how I felt when she said that.*

As I thought about this conversation, I started thinking about my own struggles in life, specifically my struggle to find belonging and identity.

- How is it that, before kids can even read and write, they're already figuring out how to tease and hurt others, who gets invited to birthday parties and who doesn't, who gets to join in games at recess and who gets left out, who gets to sit with you on the bus and who has to sit alone?

From the moment we enter this world, we are being measured, tested, evaluated, and compared with others.

**Example:** The well baby exam. We get numbered by percentile by weight, height and even the size of our head! I remember I was in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile for head size. Didn't go well on the playground but there's a lot of brain up there!

At seven-years old, my daughter was already expressing something that is in every human heart: **We all have a deep need to belong.** *Did you know that need isn't bad and it isn't optional to our wellbeing.*

**Illustration:** We need to belong, to be accepted. To know and be known. It isn't just a nice thing to want, it is essential to us like oxygen, food and clothing, shelter. Many of us don't think about belonging this way. We think we can do without it, and the results are toxic.

**Illustration:** Back to my own kids, We recently moved into a new house. It was way better than the other one, my kids had tons more room, a bigger yard and places to ride their bike and play galore... But we don't have any close neighbors and she cried for Norah.

**Did you know** that this desire for relationship, for belonging, This desire to know and be known was put there by God, you were created to belong

### **Ecclesiastes 3:11**

Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. **He has planted eternity in the human heart**, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

*Because **God created you to belong**. We are created to belong... the desire to be known by others and to know others...for relationship. To know that our lives matter, that we are worthy, we are good enough, we are loved and acceptance.*

Can I ask you the same thing my daughter asked me? ***Do you ever feel like you don't belong?***

**What if I told you that God made you to belong—to him and to others.** When you look around our world, it seems like we are more connected than ever before and yet more isolated and alone at the same time.

To move forward sometimes we have to go back... in this case back to the beginning. Why? because this desire to belong comes from our creator, it comes from God. What do we learn when we go back?

### **CONTEXT:** Two accounts in Genesis

- This first story of creation in **Genesis 1** gives the big picture, birds eye view of creation. God shows us our purpose and then
- We get a different perspective. It is the same story but with more details. Instead of viewing God's act of creation from the Hubble Telescope, **Genesis 2** shows us God's act of creation from here on earth, from the ground up.
- ***In the second account of creation, we see how God has created us to belong:***

- **Genesis 2** gives us a picture of a God who is present with us. Down in the dirt getting his hands dirty.

When we put both Genesis one and Genesis 2 together, we see such a great picture of our deepest need:

First we see that:

### **1. God belongs.**

God creates the universe, it is good, then the crown of his creation is us, look at this account in:

### **Genesis 1:26**

**26** Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,<sup>[a]</sup> and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

In this first account we see that God created us in His Image. We see that God belongs completely to himself in perfect unity.

**"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,..." This is the trinity.**

One God, Three persons, cooperating in complete unity. The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit. While the trinity is a mystery in terms that God is bigger than we can understand, one way, although not complete way to see God is: One God, Three persons. No illustration is going to be perfect because:

**You and I live in a three-dimensional world.** All physical objects have a certain height, width, and depth. One person can look like someone else, or behave like someone else, or even sound like someone else. But a person cannot actually be the same as another person. They are distinct individuals.

- God, however, lives without the limitations of a three-dimensional universe. He is spirit. And he is infinitely more complex than we are.
- That is why Jesus the Son can be different from the Father. And, yet the same. The Bible clearly speaks of: God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. But emphasizes that there is only ONE God.

- If we were to use math, it would not be,  $1+1+1=3$ . It would be  $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ . God is a triune God.

Some have also described this relationship like water. **Water has three forms:** liquid, solid and gas. It is still water but operates in three different forms.

**Here's my point:** God belongs to himself and He created us to belong as well. We see this big idea of belonging in the first genesis account of our creation.

Next we see that:

## ***2. God created us to belong in him.***

### **Genesis 1:27-28**

<sup>27</sup> "So God created mankind **in his own image, in the image of God he created them;** male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

**In his image:** Imago dei. It is a familiar term.

**Illustration: Natures paternity test:** You always look like your dad when you're born.

Our success and fruitfulness is found in him. **Be fruitful and multiply**  
So many paths, so many ways. None will fulfill you.

## **THEN WE SHIFT FROM BIRDEYE VIEW TO UP CLOSE AND**

**PERSONAL:** It is in the second account of Genesis 2 that we see our need to belong and how God meets that need.

### **Genesis 2:18**

<sup>18</sup> Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

In his image, God forms man from the ground and breathes life into him. Then God creates a world, a Garden, and puts Adam in it—a place for

him to belong. And God gives him a purpose, shares his power, by allows him to name all of the animals and invites him to live from his creation. **But something was still missing.**

- God didn't just realize it in that moment, He records this for our benefit. Even though Adam had a home, a job and an intimate relationship with God, **a piece of the plan was yet to be realized.** God in his love and grace, created us to belong so he creates Eve, a helpmate suitable for Adam.

It is in this place we see God's solution to our desire to belong. God gave us belonging when He gave us family.

Next we see that:

### ***3. God created us to belong in family.***

It's such a beautiful picture of the way things were created to be. The Hebrew word is *shalom*, and it means deep interconnectedness, flourishing, wholeness. God says to us: You belong. You belong to me. You belong to each other.

It is in this environment that you and I were created to belong and in that belonging we were meant to thrive.

**But we traded God's plan for our own way. When you look at Genesis 3 you see that sin results in:**

The thing about belonging is that in order for us to belong, we have to choose God. God isn't a tyrant, a dictator or bully. He's a parent. Although he knows what we need, infinitely better than our natural family, We have to make the choice on our own

**There are two significant trees in the Garden.** One is the tree of life, and God says, "eat from this tree, and every other tree, all you want...save one.

- This tree here, this one tree in the Garden, is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and you must not eat from this tree. For the day you do it, you will surely die."

- God's instructions to Adam and Eve were not a prohibition for its own sake; rather it was a prohibition for their own good, for their own flourishing.

And we know how the story goes. Adam and Eve didn't just sin, **Adam and Eve broke family**. They do what God warned them not to do.

**Before we get angry** I think sometimes we're really hard on Adam and Eve but we neglect to admit that at the core each of us nag the same fears and deceptions about God.

- And the focus shifts from God at the center, trusting God, loving God, and seeing themselves and each other as God sees them, ***a family that is whole and complete***.
- They act out of their anxiety and fear and they eat the forbidden fruit instead of trusting God. **They take matters into their own hands, move from being content to be like God to wanting to be their own gods.**

Here's what happened!

#### **4. We chose loneliness and isolation.**

### **Romans 5:12**

**<sup>12</sup> When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.**

- And now we see the story of our world unfold. How we can be so connected with technology but so isolated.
- The consequences of this decision has reeked havoc in our worlds and in our lives personally. Fundamentally changing how we relate to God and to others.

### **Today, we are more connected than ever but ....**

Statistics on connection, depression, pain, but without connection to our creator, no one can answer those deep questions, who am I, why am I here, what is my purpose. Sure we have distractions but deep down the worlds answers leave us empty and lacking.

**Our natural instincts actually make this worse.** When we're hurting we run away from God and others. We think we need to get our act together before we're good enough.

- ***We paint a picture that measures up to the Jones but deep down we long for a true and lasting sense of belonging.***

As our story unfolds we see the heart of God our Father. Even though Adam and Eve traded His plan for worse, even though they made that choice...

**God seeks them out and he seeks us out too.** Though his love has been spurned, though his children have distrusted him and disobeyed him, God comes looking for them.

God calls out to his children, who are hiding in the trees, "Where are you?" It's another one of those questions that catches you by surprise.

**As we come full circle:** Do you ever feel like you don't belong?

*Where are you?* God's not asking it for himself, as if God is ignorant of where his children are hiding. He asks it for their sake. He asks the same question of us for our sake.

*Where are you?* It's not a rebuke thundered from the mouth of an angry God who's about to smite you from planet earth. It's an invitation spoken in the love and grace of a broken-hearted parent.

*Where are you? Where are you hiding? Behind what are you hiding? How are you self-protecting? In what ways are you still trying to perform, please, hustle, control, keep me and others at a distance?*

*The truth is, we can't get home without God's help and his plan*

### **Romans 5:17**

**<sup>17</sup> For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.**

## ***5. Jesus brings us back to God.***

Jesus who would be stripped of his own clothes, humiliated on another tree, cut off and isolated from everyone, abandoned even by his closest friends.

One who, as the very embodiment of grace and truth, who went the distance to find us all in our place of hiding, take our shame upon himself, so that by his wounds we might be healed.

Jesus Restored our relationship with God. For the those who believe in His name he covers us with his very garments of righteousness, clothes us with himself—his very life and love—and makes us new.

### **Romans 10:9**

<sup>9</sup> If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

### **John 1:12**

<sup>12</sup> But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

## ***6. Jesus brings us back to family.***

### **John 10:28-30**

<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, <sup>29</sup> for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one."

**Whoa a bit obsessive much! YES.** You are his children. Have you ever defended your family against a threat? You mess with one of my children and it is on.

And Jesus wasn't just talking about his disciples then, he's talking about us now! **John 1:12-13** But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave

the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

**John 3:3** says you are born again, born into a new family, a redeemed relationships with God and with each other.

**Next week** we're going to unpack more about how God fulfills that sense of belonging in our heart but first you must understand that apart from Jesus, you will never belong, you will never be or do what you were created for. That longing in your heart, that's from God. He is calling you forward, he wants to fulfill the belonging in your heart by bringing you back into his family.

**Let's Pray**