

Belonging

5 Chapters of My Life--part 3

April 21, 2013

God is writing a story with your life that has five chapters.

Chapter One: "Brokenness." Our story hardly gets any traction at all until we discover we *are* broken people--broken thinking, broken living, but especially broken ways. In order to get us to see the truth about ourselves God often resorts to broken dreams. Chapter One: "Broken."

Chapter Two: "Beloved." Chapter One is not meant to discourage us. It's meant to lead us to the wonder of Chapter Two, that we *are* the Beloved! That's how God sees us through Jesus Christ. God wants to have us live on the basis of this new foundation, that we are profoundly loved!

Chapter Three: "Belonging." We are made for community. Living as the Lone Ranger, or centrally for our own interests misses the point of life.

DAY 1

1. We are made in God's image. God is one being, but exists in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Read the following verses and underline how the Persons of the Trinity (God) relate and treat One Another.

John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. ⁶ "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

2. How important was unity to Jesus?

3. About how many times did Jesus note how His mission was to honor the Father? Did you get the idea that God the Father and God the Son were almost "tripping over each other" to honor the other?

4. Other-centered living starts with God, within the Trinity, within the Godhead. God's mission was to bring other-centered living not only to this earth, but into people's hearts, that they might actually learn to live that way! What is your biggest take away from the passage, above?

DAY 2

1. Everyone has been given a longing to "belong." What does "belonging" mean to you? What kind of belonging would you like to be a part of?

2. Belonging starts with a common bottom line.

1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

What is it that unites us? What is the bottom of line of belonging? What does Paul say in 1 Cor. 1:9?

3. What unites us is that we are all equals at the foot of the cross! The following are the first two stanzas of Amazing Grace.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see!

Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed.

a. Which of the concepts in this song strike you?

b. Which of the concepts unites every Christian with another one?

3. Underline the phrases or concepts that undergird our common bottom line as Christians...

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

DAY 3

1. Belonging depends on unity. Unity is hard for one central reason. Though we are Christians, we can still be driven by our latent self-centeredness.

2. The church that started in Corinth had trouble with maintaining unity.

1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

a. In verse 10, to what and to Whom does Paul appeal?

b. List four directives from 1 Cor. 1:10 that would help us experience unity and a sense of belonging?

3. In the following verses, Paul highlights several patterns that torpedoed unity and belonging. Read the passage...

1 Cor. 1:11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

a. What problem plagued the people in v. 11?

b. Paul gives an example of their quarreling. How would you describe what was happening?

4. Paul gives them a reason to change their thinking and re-unite. Read the following verses...

1 Cor. 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

a. To what principle did Paul appeal?

b. How would that help them recapture their unity?

c. Is there something in this passage that you needed to hear?

DAY 4

1. Belonging and unity doesn't "just happen." It requires intentionality by Christians. It requires maturity, defined by other-centeredness.

Read our passage for today...

Romans 15:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." ⁴ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

2. What is the basis for our unity? (v. 7).

3. What is our motivation to be? (v. 6).

4. Jesus, and only Jesus, deserved to be treated as He pleased. Instead, what did He do? (v. 3).

5. Unity is dependent on both on God's power and Christian maturity.

a. What is Paul's prayer in vv. 5-6?

b. What items must be done by mature Christians if we are to experience unity?

v. 1 _____

v. 2. _____

v. 4 _____

v. 6 _____

v. 7 _____

6. What strikes you from our passage today?

7. What do you need to put into practice?

8. Finish with prayer, that you will be an agent of unity, and help others feel they belong!

DAY 5

1. We belong to God.

1 Cor. 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

2. Relating to people can sometimes damage our awareness of belonging. But our relationship with God makes belonging not subjective to the ups and downs of human nature. It is a settled fact. How can the assurance that we belong to God affect how you treat others, and give them a taste of belongingness?

3. We belong to one another.

Romans 12:5 ... so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

a. We don't think that way. We live as if we belong to ourselves. How would your pattern of life change if you really believed you belonged to others in the church?

b. How would your approach to coming to church change?

c. It is the immature that demand that they feel they belong. It is the mature that work for the sense of belonging for others! Paradoxically, when we pursue "belonging" for ourselves we lose it. But when we pursue "belongingness" for others, the reality of our belonging intensifies! Which of these two sides of this do you find yourself pursuing? Are you a "consumer" believer or a "retail" believer?

4. Belonging is felt partly through care...

1 Cor. 12:25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

a. Is there someone who needs care?

b. What can you do to communicate care?

5. As we close this week, what is your biggest take away about belonging?