



We Belong!

1 John 2:28-3:10

INTRODUCTION

We all have the desire to belong. We feel this desire in many ways. We will join clubs and sports teams, civic organizations and social causes, all for the experience of belonging. But for most people, the greatest desire is to belong to a family.

Belonging to a family gives us a true sense of our identity. It gives us a foundation to build upon. It gives us corporate strength to lean on when we feel weak. It gives us positive standards to live up to. It gives us freedom to explore our strengths and weaknesses. Belonging to a family is at the very heart of what it means to be a whole person.

John affirms that if we put our faith in Christ, we are a part of God's forever family. John calls us children of God. ***Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*** (John 1:12-13)

As children of God, we are secure in Him. Although we will face many trials and struggles in life, we know that we will always belong in God's family. We can look forward to the day when we will enter fully into our family inheritance in Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Study 1: 1 John 2:28-29

John was encouraging his flock to actively stay connected to Christ. In the face of those who would lead them astray, John called his people to stay true to their faith.

1. How would you characterize John's attitude toward the people he was writing to?

2. John instructs them to continue in him.
 - a. Who is the him?

 - b. What does it mean to continue in him?

3. What is John looking forward to?

4. Why is it important that the people continue in "him"?

5. What does John say about those who understand the character of Christ?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. In John 15:1-8 Jesus uses the illustration of the vine and the branches.

a. How does this passage relate to John's encouragement to continue in Christ?

b. If a person is attached to the vine, what can they expect to happen in their life? Look at vs. 2.

c. What is Jesus' point about remaining in Him?

d. What does it mean for you to bear fruit?

2. Most of us, at some point in our lives, have struggled with doing things that would disappoint our parents.

a. Why would you not want your parents to know this?

b. How does this relate to living our lives in connection with Christ?

3. What does it mean for you to live up to the righteousness of Christ?

Study 2: 1 John 3:1-3

John declares the amazing truth of our relationship with God. You can almost hear him shout his message.

1. How does John describe God's love toward us?
2. What is the implied awe and wonder in John's statement about God's love toward us?
3. What is the resounding affirmation that John makes?
4. How does our relationship with God change our relationship with the world?
5. What does John say about our ability to understand our relationship with God?
6. What does John promise will occur when Jesus appears?
7. What does John say we should be doing in the mean time?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What does it mean to you to belong to your particular family?
2. In what ways did you experience the love of your parents?
3. What does it mean to you to know that you are a child of God?
4. How does your identity as a child of God make you different from the world?
5. Why is it an encouragement that we are a work in progress?
6. What does it mean to you that one day you will be like Christ?
7. John says that we need to purify ourselves in anticipation of Christ's return. What does that look like for you?

Study 3: 1 John 3:4-6

After John affirmed our position as children of God, he addressed the issue of sin. The Gnostics taught that sin was a non-issue because the body was of no account.

1. Why would John make the point that sin breaks God's law?
2. How is lawlessness different from just breaking the law?
3. What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth?
4. Why would John stress that there was no sin in Jesus?
5. What does John say is the evidence that a person is really in Christ?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. In what ways do we try to excuse or downplay sin in our lives?
2. Why is it important that we are honest about the true nature of sin?
3. In light of Jesus' purpose for coming, why is it unacceptable for us to make light of sin in our lives?
4. How does Hebrews 4:15 relate to what John says about Jesus?
5. How does our relationship with Christ change our attitude toward sin?
6. What is the difference between continuing in sin and sinning?
7. How does living a life of sin speak out against genuine faith?

Study 4: 1 John 3:7-10

John continued to warn his people against false teachers.

1. What does it mean for a person to be led astray from the faith?
2. What is the contrast that John is making?
3. Who is the major influence in the life of the person who does right?
4. Who is the major influence in the life of the person who does evil?
5. In what way is the life of Christ at odds with the life of sin?
6. What does John say should be the experience of a true believer?
7. What test does John give concerning who is a true child of God?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. What are some false teachings in the church today that are leading people astray?
2. What does it mean for a believer to do right?
3. What is the evidence that a person is still under the influence of Satan?
4. What does it mean for a person to be born of God? How should that make a difference in their life?
5. What does this passage say about the importance of the focus of our lives?
6. How should knowing you are a child of God affect your day to day conduct?