

Belonging!

Scriptures: Galatians 3:27-29, II Corinthians 10:7, Romans 15:5-7

I. Intro. Everybody has a need to belong. Do you feel like you belong here at Alexanderwohl? Does this feel like your church? If so, great. If not, let's fix that! God created us to belong.

Here's what we know about belonging...

- It is God's original plan for ALL people.
- Sin and wounds have caused many not to belong.
- God sent Jesus to gather in those who don't belong.
- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us to help him gather them in.

There are two parts to the belonging task: helping ourselves belong, and helping others belong.

II. Part One. Helping ourselves belong.

1. Attack the attitudes: if you ever get to feeling like YOU shouldn't be here – or thinking you don't deserve to be here, because you are not good enough, or you don't do enough or you don't have the right ancestry – throw those thoughts right out the window. Jesus died so you could be here.

And, if you ever even start to feel like someone else doesn't belong here remember that it is only by God's grace that you, yourself, are here. None of us deserve to be here in the sense that we are good enough.

2. Be aware of our own agenda. Sometimes we don't feel like we belong, because of something inside of us: an issue from our family of origin, or from the school yard, or from previous group experiences. That's a very good time to talk with a pastor, or trusted church friend.

3. Make a choice, make a decision, make a commitment. Some say, "I don't want to join, because I don't feel like I belong yet." However, feelings of belonging often follow the fact of belonging. Go ahead and join. Most likely your feelings will follow.

4. Find a place to serve. A whole lot of belonging happens when we engage in serving. Being needed increases our connection to the church and increases our sense of belonging in the family of God.

III. Part Two. Helping new people belong:

1. Talk to them in the lobby. Don't just pass them by. If you feel too shy, ask God to help you overcome shyness for 30 seconds.

2. Talk to them when you see them in the community. I have heard it way too often in my four years here, "They will talk to me at church, but not at the store or ball game."

3. If you see them sitting by themselves in a pew, go sit with them.

4. Invite them to help in some way. Being helpful and needed helps people belong.

5. Get going on "Member Guest Activities". Let start having 3 or 4 members get together, plan a time for an activity you already enjoy, each identify a non-churched person you can invite to that activity, pull out your cell phones while together and invite them.

IV. The Vision. In the spirit of Joel and Acts where God says "*old men will dream dreams, and young men will see visions.*" let me offer this vision that is causing my heart to beat faster. The Lord says, "This is the vision I have for Alexanderwohl: **members excited about their church making a difference in people's lives.**"

Are you already excited? If not, are you willing to become excited?