



THE WAYS

FIND STRENGTH IN BELONGING. At FPCM, you're loved and valued. Claim us as your family. Rather than withdrawing, allow struggles and disappointments to deepen your sense of belonging. Pray for chances to bring healing to relationships. Please be patient! God isn't yet finished with us or with you.

1. What does the word "belong" mean to you?

READ Hebrews 10:19-25

1. Why does belonging first begin with God's actions and outlook?
2. Why do you think some would get in the habit of not meeting together?
3. How are 1. Time spent together and 2. Encouragement crucial to belonging?

Scenario: An interaction with a church leader has left a bad taste in your mouth. It happened a few months ago; and whenever you see that person leading in service, it feels false because you know what they are really like. You find yourself sitting through those services frustrated with them and with the church. I mean how could a person like that be allowed to lead? You are starting to feel less and less like this is the place you want to be.

1. Why do hurts given by leaders often cut deeper?
2. What first steps has the person in this scenario avoided which helped create the scenario?
3. How does having a lot of church choices make belonging to a church family harder?
4. What needs to be done to help you feel like you belong?

Someone once said, "You will never find a perfect church, but you can find a church whose issues you can live with." We are not a perfect church, but we are a family where you can belong. Families fight, they get under each others skin, but in the end they belong together. Home is a powerful and elusive force in our world. FPC can be a home where, though difficulties may arise at the end of the day, the house is filled with love. You belong here. Make it a home.

PRAY TOGETHER. (Pray God would make FPC a place of belonging for you and for others who desperately need a home.)

DAILY Devotional

MONDAY: *READ:* Acts 2:46. *THINK:* The early Christians *Found Strength in Belonging* in each others lives. You don't belong to an amorphous community who gets together on Sunday mornings. You belong in a close network of relationships who share each other's lives, burdens, and tables. Life is undoubtedly getting busier, but you can *Find Strength in Belonging* in something as simple as a shared meal. *PRAY:* God would build a community of belonging here.

TUESDAY: *READ:* Rom. 14:7-9. *THINK:* We belong first to Jesus. In his death and resurrection, he makes a claim on your life and calls you friend, child, and heir. Though we were in rebellion, he adopted us into His family; and we belong with Him. *Find Strength in Belonging* to a God who created you, knows you, rescued you, loves you, and looks forward to spending time with you. *PRAY:* God would show you what He thinks of you.

WEDNESDAY: *READ:* Psalm 103:8. *THINK:* This is what the God that you belong to is like: slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. Too often the reason people choose not to belong to a local church is because we have not mirrored who God is in our interactions. The number one adjective non-Christians apply to the church is *judgemental*. That is not who we are and not who our God is. *Find Strength in Belonging* here just as you are. *PRAY:* We would be a church slow to anger and filled with unfailing love.

THURSDAY: *READ:* Matt. 12:25. *THINK:* Why is the downfall of churches all too often infighting and schism? Often because we prioritize *what* we believe instead of *who* we believe in and *whom* we belong with. Do not let disagreements, personal or doctrinal, upset the unity of the Church because part of our beauty is in our differences. *Find Strength in Belonging* by continually reminding yourself of who we believe in and whom we belong with. *PRAY:* for patience with people as we struggle to work out God's plan together.

FRIDAY: *READ:* Gen 45:4-5. *THINK:* Few families have been worse to one of its members than Joseph's. Sold into slavery and forgotten, Joseph has every reason to be bitter, hateful, and vengeful; but after playing a morally questionable trick on his brothers, Joseph calls for his brothers to "come close to him." We say *Find Strength in Belonging* because sometimes it takes strength to choose to belong. *PRAY:* the Spirit would help you forgive someone who hurt you.

SATURDAY: *READ:* Rom. 12:4-5. *THINK:* Not only do we, as member of the Body of Christ belong with one another, but we belong to one another. A hand belongs with an arm, but each also needs the other. Belonging is not just about home and feeling welcome. It is also about being needed. When you *Find Strength in Belonging*, the Church grows through your input and care. *PRAY:* the Spirit would show you what you have to offer FPC which we need.