

Letters to the Church



JULY '23

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

Do you ever struggle to feel like you belong?

Inherent to humanity is an undeniable and unavoidable longing to belong. Each of us knows the pains of rejection, shame, and feeling othered - contrasted against the comforts of being valued, honored, and embraced. We all find a sense of who we are by who we consider to be our tribe, our community, and our family. Ask yourself, when you declare: "These are my people," who are you thinking of?



God made us to be communal creatures. The declaration that "it's not good for man to be alone" is on page two. (**Genesis 2:18**) Yet we live in an age when, ironically, despite having technology providing more ways than ever to connect, people are seemingly more isolated and alone than ever. We won't find a solution with the next social media platform. God's answer to bind broken humanity back together is by the Church that his Son has bought with blood.

The basic requirement for establishing any people group is a unifying value or shared principle. There must be some attribute that binds and bonds individuals to the membership of the community. So, for Penn State grads, it's their Alma mater. For Yankee fans, it's the Bronx Bombers. For Italians, it's their food and culture. For Christians, it's Christ.

The Bible teaches that because of the fall of Adam, there is a separation between God and man; therefore, there is strife between man and man. Yet, Christ is the resolution to both conflicts. Jesus became our mediator and made the way for peace with God and among men. "He himself is our peace." (**Ephesians 2:13 - 14**) Here is where we, as Christians, find our unifying value and shared principle. As much as we would have been unable to have a true relationship with God without Christ, we would have been unable to have a true relationship with one another without Christ. Praise God, that now in Christ, we are one. (**Galatians 3:28**)



Forever in Christ we are one, and only by Christ we are one. There is no other basis or bond. Indeed, there could be no other. We belong to him and one another because we are "in him." We are said to be "in Christ," "in Jesus," or "in Christ Jesus" 87 times in the New Testament. A Christian doesn't just believe in Jesus; believe that you are in him. No other belief system has this kind of distinction. A Muslim would never say, "I am in Muhammad." You'll never hear a Buddhist say, "I'm in Buddha." Confucius may have said many things, but never did he teach that his followers would be "in Confucius." No, only the Christian knows and can share that kind of deep association. This is the one and most vital thing that gives us our tribe, our community, and our family. Only in Christ do we have one another, but in Christ, we do have another - wholly and for all eternity!

In an age of fractured dissension, fierce individualism, and a foundation of trust in the sovereignty of selfhood (hence the rampant isolation and loneliness) - here is a harmonious and devoted community all arranged under and for the one who makes us one. Don't feel alone. Don't allow yourself to become isolated. Don't neglect to come and be with your local church regularly. A Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ, a Christian comes to others by Jesus Christ, and our community is eternal in Jesus Christ. As a Christian, this means I can know that I am accepted and united to "my people" for eternity.

The struggle can be over. In Christ, you belong.

YOUR PASTOR & SERVANT,

SHAWN WEIR