

BELONGING

(ἔστε)

To be, to belong to.

Any feeling of dissatisfaction and disconnection can have an adverse affect on your relationships and your ability to succeed in life. On the other hand, belonging to a religion or local community can influence your sense of identity and the extent to which you participate and positively engage in your sphere of society. There are many reasons why people cannot settle, and as a result, feel that they do not belong or fit in. Most of the time this has to do with not satisfying an emotional need to be **accepted**. Whether it's family, friends, co-workers, or church members, we all have an inherent desire to belong. From a spiritual perspective this yearning often has to do with being connected to something or someone greater than ourselves (a superior power). But basically, it's about each individual developing meaningful relationships that have more substance than a simple acquaintance or familiarity. In essence, the need to belong is the need to give and receive **affection** from others. Consequently, for us to live healthy and productive lives the sense of belonging needs to be satisfied on a continual basis. And this is where God comes in!

In Mark 9:41 Jesus makes this statement, ***“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”*** Here, the Lord assures us that because we belong to Him whoever blesses us will receive a reward. Jesus is implying that our relationship with Him is so strong that whenever anyone shows any act of kindness toward us it's as if that person was doing it unto Him personally. In Jeremiah 31:20 the Lord says, ***“Therefore My affection is stirred and My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy, pity, and loving-kindness for him.”*** We can see from the first verse of scripture that the Lord places much value of us because we belong to Him – thus satisfying an emotional need to be ‘accepted’. But included in this relationship (and mentioned in the second verse), is the very thing we need if we are to satisfy the deep desire to belong, and that is, ‘affection’. **Acceptance** and **affection** are very important in our relationship with God. If they were not present we would become dysfunctional and without any sense of identity! But with them, we can grow into the people God has created us to be and in turn influence the people around us.

Ephesians 1:6 declares that we are, ***“Accepted in the beloved.”*** What an awesome privilege! The term “acceptance” in the Greek means more than just being part of something, it signifies that we are the objects of divine satisfaction. Yes, we are literally His delight! The Lord delights in us and wants to shower us with affection. If you are struggling with your sense of belonging, I want to encourage you to keep reminding yourself that you belong to Christ. He loves you so much that He was prepared to go to the cross to buy you back. In His eyes you have extreme value. You have been fully accepted into His family - with all the privileges of a rightful heir!