

## From Pastor's Desk

### **We Long to Belong** by Juma Henry

“Love your brothers and sisters in God's family.” (1 Peter 2:17b NCV)

#### **We long to belong to Gods Family'**

The Bible tells us that all believers “**belong in God's household with every other Christian.**” (Ephesians 2:19) This means church is not something we go to, rather it's something we *belong* to – a family of God's people. It's more than an organization, more than an institution, even more than a group of like-minded people.

We are a family forged by the fires of God's love, and we are to “**be devoted to each other like a loving family.**” (Romans 12:10a GW) We are to love one another like brothers and sisters. This sense of family togetherness allows us to create authentic Christian community, where we are accepted, supported, and challenged to fully live out the purposes of our lives. We belong, and we help others belong.

Family is synonymous with a deep, unwavering commitment to support one another, no matter how rough it may get. You do things for family you wouldn't do for any one else, and you make allowances for family members you might not make for anyone else.

For many of us, this image of family fails because we've never really been in a loving, wholesome family. We've only seen broken models, shattered relationships, and hurting hearts. The Good News is that God wants to provide you with the very things you've longed for in a family, and he can do that in Christian community.

As we learn to love one another, we can create the sense of family necessary to trust one another, accept one another, and serve one another. We learn the power of unconditional love. Our small groups – family circles – are meant to be Holy Spirit-led laboratories for learning to love one another deeply and earnestly (1 Th. 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22).

#### **This means:**

**1. Belonging helps you develop healthy relationships** – We may have learned unhealthy methods of relating in our physical families, but in a community of believers we can see models of good relationships. We'll learn that it takes honesty, vulnerability, effort, and a lot of forgiveness to make relationships work.

**2. Belonging develops godly character** - Character tends to be more caught than taught, and in Christian community we're able to see, up close and personal, the character traits of others. We'll see maturity modeled, and we'll see immaturity displayed, and we may get to model or display some of that ourselves as we all learn and grow together.

**3. Belonging teaches biblical values** – We've all picked up values intentionally and unintentionally. Some of these values may be right; some of them may be wrong. By bringing them into the family setting of a Christian small group, we're able to measure our values against the standards of the Bible and in the context of mature Christian beliefs.

**4. Belonging gives you a fresh start** – You may be fortunate enough to have already seen healthy family relationships modeled in your home, or in your congregation. But there are many of us who emerged from shaky home environments. This is your chance to belong to a loving family and to start fresh in developing healthy relationships, godly character, and biblical values.