

FIND YOUR PURPOSE

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

# OUR PURPOSE: GOD'S FAMILY



**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

Human beings have a fundamental need to belong. We want and need deep and long interpersonal attachments. Just as the devastating effects of the epidemic of loneliness are becoming better known, so the benefits of belonging are also becoming better known.

We see our desire to belong in our longing for stable families and strong friendships. We get a sense of belonging through our connections with political parties, the schools we attend, the sports teams we support, the hobbies we pursue, the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the businesses we work for, the communities we belong to, and of course, our national identity.

But many or all of these connections and attachments change, weaken, break, or end as life goes on. We lose our sense of belonging and often end up feeling outside, excluded, alone. **How can we find belonging that will satisfy and stay?** In Ephesians 2:19-22, the Apostle Paul points us to where we can find a stable and strong sense of belonging.

## BACKGROUND

- Sermon 1: God's purpose is to glorify himself in grace-and-truth filled relationships.
- Sermon 2: Our first purpose is to glorify God in grace-and-truth filled relationships.
- Sermon 3: Our second purpose is to give God pleasure.
- Sermon 4: Our third purpose is to receive and return God's love.
- Sermon 5: Our fourth purpose is to be part of God's family

Ephesians 2 is about how the two greatest ever gaps were bridged by the Gospel. The first chasm that the Gospel bridged was between God and sinners (Ephesians 2:1-10). The second chasm that the Gospel bridged was between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-22).



How can I find belonging?



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# 1. WE ARE GOD'S NATION

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints (19)

## We were strangers and aliens

The Gentiles were born outside Israel, the nation in covenant with God. As such they were estranged and alienated from God. As Paul put it earlier in the chapter: **Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world** (Eph. 2:12).

## We are fellow citizens with the saints

What caused this massive change in status from strangers and aliens to fellow-citizens and saints? **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ** (Eph. 2:13). They didn't pass through a bureaucratic citizenship process nor participate in a naturalization ceremony, but they passed through the supernatural blood of Christ which abolished any hostility and established peace between them and God (Eph. 2:14-18).

They are now part of God's nation (the church) which he is building into the greatest, biggest, best, richest, holiest, happiest, strongest, longest nation that ever existed or ever will. It started weak, small, poor, imperfect, and divided. But it's growing bigger, better, richer, closer, holier, happier, and stronger through the years. It's attacked like no other nation, and has its defeats, setbacks, divisions, and failures. But it's a nation that will one day occupy the whole earth for all eternity (Mat. 5:5) and will be united in every way - in its theology, spirituality, politics, faith, words, and actions.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Are you in God's nation?** Unlike the Gentiles of Paul's day, most of us were born into the church and baptized into God's nation. Like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism gives us certain privileges and responsibilities that the unbaptized don't have. However, baptism is like the naturalization certificate I received when I became a citizen. It said I was an American citizen with all the privileges and responsibilities that came with that. But it didn't and couldn't give me love for America. That came as I learned more about American history and the great sacrifices Americans made to secure freedom for this nation. Similarly, Baptism cannot change our hearts to love God, but the blood of Christ that founded God's nation can. Reflect upon Christ's sacrifice, trust in it, and you will find your heart loving God and his new nation even more than America.

**Where are your loyalties?** When I became a US citizen at the Gerald Ford museum, the judge told all of us (representing 70 nations), that he wasn't asking us to stop loving the nations we came from, but simply to love America first and most. Similarly, we who are American citizens love our nation, but when we are part of God's nation, God calls us to love his nation even more and to prioritize its interests over America's.

CHURCH FIRST  
AMERICA SECOND



It's great to belong to such a great nation.  
But belonging to a family would be even better.



## 2. WE ARE GOD'S FAMILY

**You are...members of the household of God (19).**

All Christians have God as their Father, other believers as their brothers and sisters, and the church as their spiritual family. God's family is:

- A diverse family (1 Cor. 12:14-21)
- A united family (1 Cor. 12:12-13)
- A loving family (John 13:35)
- A caring family (Matt. 25:40)
- A connected family (1 Cor. 12:26)
- A fruitful family (John 15:5)
- A gifted family (Romans 12:4-8)
- A growing family (Eph. 4:16)
- A rich family (1 Pet. 1:4)
- A practical family (50 "one another" passages in NT).
- A happy family (Ps. 133:1)
- An imperfect family (the whole Bible and the whole of church history)
- A permanent family (Rev. 7:9-17)

"Being part of a healthy church is essential to living a healthy life. God designed his church specifically to help you fulfill the five purposes he has for your life. He created the church to meet your five deepest needs: a purpose to live for, people to live with, principles to live by, a profession to live out, and power to live on. There is no other place on earth where you can find all five of these benefits in one place....Worship helps you focus on God; fellowship helps you face life's problems; discipleship helps fortify your faith; ministry helps find your talents; evangelism helps fulfill your mission. There is nothing else on earth like the church!" (Rick Warren)

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Are you in God's family?** If not, ask to be adopted and he guarantees your acceptance and full integration into his family. If you are, do you see how privileged you are? This is a privilege that humbles us rather than makes us arrogant and prejudiced. If you are in God's family, you will be in the most visible expression of it, which is the local church. That's where we find and express our purpose.

**Where is your love?** We are to love our natural families, but we are to love God's family even more (Matt. 7:21; Luke 14:26; Gal. 6:10). That is one of our great purposes in life. It's how God gives us a sense of fulfillment and fullness. God made us for this. Yes, we have squabbles and fall-outs from time to time, but we don't let that stop our love and care for one another. Love should be your top priority, primary objective, and greatest ambition (1 Cor. 14:1). Our relationships with other Christians are far more important than our career, our bank balance, our vacations. As Rick Warren wrote, "The best way to spell love is T-I-M-E." We are not only called to believe but to belong (Rom. 12:5). The Christian life involves commitment to Christ and to other Christians.

GOD'S FAMILY IS  
OUR FULFILLMENT



**Families are vulnerable and weak.  
How can we secure and strengthen God's family?**



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### 3. WE ARE GOD'S TEMPLE

**You are...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (20-22).**

**The Cornerstone:** In the ancient East, the cornerstone was the first stone set in any construction project. All other stones were set in reference to this stone, and therefore it influenced the whole structure. Sometimes they were engraved with the construction date together with the names of the architect and builders. When it was laid, it was often accompanied with an animal sacrifice, and wine and oil were poured upon the stone. Jesus Christ is our cornerstone, the first stone of God's building, the reference point for all other stones, influencing all other stones. If you look closely you'll see the names of the divine architect and builder. It was laid with the costly blood of the greatest ever sacrifice as he poured out his life to secure the building's eternal strength.

**The Foundation:** The apostles and prophets are the undergirding of this building. Their infallible teaching is the sure and certain base of everything built above ground. There are no cracks or weaknesses in this foundation. Nothing more and nothing less than this is required to provide the sub-structure for the superstructure.

**The Building:** On top of this are God's people, each one a nail, a brick, a 2x4, the glue, cement, a pipe, a window, etc. We are part of something much bigger and better than ourselves. We have a much greater purpose than to buy or build our own homes. We are part of building the greatest structure ever. It will never fall apart but will continue to grow closer, stronger, bigger, holier.

**The Occupant:** Who comes to live in this place? God! God comes to live in this building by his Spirit. We love it when our families fill our own homes, but we get even greater delight when God fills us as his home. He doesn't just visit, he dwells, he comes to stay, to occupy, and to bless.

#### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Are you God's house?** What a glorious honor! To be part of something much bigger and better than ourselves is so fulfilling and satisfying. We honor all who were and are part of this building. And we are continually seeking new building materials, even among the least promising and most broken people.

**Where are your priorities?** For many, their primary purpose in life is a bigger, better, more beautiful house. But that's not the Christian's priority. Our priority is being God's house, being part of the building that he loves to live in, and looking out for its interests above all other properties.

GOD'S PROPERTY  
IS OUR PRIORITY



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

**Find purpose in prioritizing God's family.** We will miss our purpose if we do not make God's family our priority. Ask yourself what can you do to move God's family up your list of priorities?

**Find purpose by participating in a small group.** It is impossible to even know everybody in a church of our size. That's why we strongly encourage everyone to be part of a small group of no more than 10-12 people. This is where the deepest relationships can be formed and the greatest sense of belonging enjoyed. Warren identifies different levels of fellowship: fellowship of sharing, of studying, of serving, of suffering.

**Prayer:** Governor, father, builder, thank you for giving me a deep and delightful sense of belonging in your nation, your family, and your temple.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Warren lists nine characteristics of a small group covenant. How will you cultivate them?

- We will share our true feelings (authenticity)
- We will encourage each other (mutuality)
- We will support each other (sympathy)
- We will forgive each other (mercy)
- We will speak the truth in love (honesty)
- We will admit our weaknesses (humility)
- We will respect our differences (courtesy)
- We will not gossip (confidentiality)
- We will make our small group a priority (frequency).

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