

Belonging to One Another

Week 5: A Body That Stays Present

Scripture:

Romans 12:14-16

Motivation (Why You Need This):

Over the last few weeks, we've been looking at how we belong to one another as a local expression of the church body.

There have been very specific markers that must be evident as we navigate relationships with one another...

- **A body given** (Romans 12:1–2) – *a full surrender all of our whole self to Him*
- **A body that serves** (Romans 12:3–8) – *service that is self-sacrificial*
- **A body that loves** (Romans 12:9–10) – enduring and gives of self
- **A body that pursues** (Romans 12:11–13) – makes belonging a priority

Pursuit “starts the engine”, but ***being present*** “keeps the engine running”.

This week's verses describe what mature Christian relationships look like once they have gotten past the introductions.

If I'm honest, most of the actions/reactions we'll talk about today are very difficult.

They don't come naturally to us, but only as we are surrendered to the Lord and empowered by the Holy Spirit can we walk in these.

The deeper question this week will not be "do I have friends at church?"

The question we ask today is deeper...

"Is anyone in this church body better cared for because I am here?"

That question shifts the burden from consumption to contribution.

Information (What You Need to Know):

So, as we've been doing, let's read all these verses out loud together.

Romans 12:14 (ESV) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

What does staying present mean?

■ **We bless others**

Romans 12:14 (ESV) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

✓ Bless means *to speak well of*

Paul begins with how we speak about people who have wronged us, including people in the church. Being present in a church body is impossible if our words toward others are harsh.

✓ Jesus is the greatest example of blessing and not cursing

1 Peter 2:23 (NLT) He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

■ **We sit with people in victory and pain**

Romans 12:15 (ESV) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

✓ This requires ***nearness***

You cannot weep with someone you don't know is weeping. You cannot rejoice with someone whose news you never hear.

✓ This requires ***listening***

People aren't always looking for solution, but someone to be present with them.

✓ This requires ***continuation***

There is a big difference between being in the moment and being in for the long haul.

■ **We seek to live in peace with one another**

Romans 12:16 (ESV) Live in harmony with one another.

✓ In the Greek this literally reads *the same thing toward one another minding*

✓ There is not uniformity, but unity

○ Uniformity is man-made; unity is Spirit-born

○ Uniformity demands that we look alike; unity demands that we love alike

Our identity isn't lost when we find our shared purpose in the Savior

- **We include everyone and view ourselves with humility**
Romans 12:16 (ESV) ...Do not be haughty [*arrogant, conceited*], but associate with the lowly [*those cast down*]. Never be wise in your own sight.
 - ✓ Believers shouldn't feel superior toward anyone in the body of Christ
 "A Christian should never say, 'This task is beneath me,' or 'This person is beneath me.' Jesus did not consider our condition as beneath him. One of the signs that the gospel is transforming us is that we will associate with all kinds of people." – Christ Centered Commentary
 - ✓ This points back to everything we've already commented on...
 - Bless rather than curse
 - Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep
 - Live in harmony with one another

Application (What You Need to Do):

So, I'll end with the question I began with...

Is anyone in this body better cared for because I am here?

A word about today.

After the service, our Kids Ministry team will have tables across the front.

I want to say a word about why they are there today, on this particular Sunday.

Everything Paul has described in verses 14–16 — the presence, the associating with those who cannot yet advocate for themselves, the willingness to show up week after week when no one is watching — is exactly the work of children's ministry.

Our children cannot rejoice or weep on their own. They need adults who show up.

If you have children of your own here, this is worth considering.

If you have never worked with children, this is worth considering. The people who teach our kids are doing some of the most important discipleship work in this church.

Their names will not be on any stage. Their labor will not be publicly acknowledged most weeks. But the body knows. And the children know.

Please consider being present for our kids.