

Transformed

Where Do You Belong?

*“For just as each of us has one body with many members,
and these members do not all have the same function,
so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*
– Romans 12:4-5

In Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome, he was asking for help from the western part of the Roman Empire. You see, Jesus had transformed Paul on the road to Damascus interrupting his Jewish Priestly assignment to persecute those belonging to “the Way” (Acts 9:1-16). Because many in Israel had failed to believe in the true Messiah, Jesus transformed Paul to begin a new life urging Gentiles to join him in being born again in Christ. He understood that Jesus had come to rescue both Jews and Gentiles through His death and resurrection, and that He invites everyone to belong to this newly created, worldwide family of believers.

Isn’t it wonderful to belong? Belonging is a sense of fitting-in or feeling accepted as a valuable member of a group. God created us with a natural drive to seek out and establish meaningful and profound relationships. A sense of belonging is crucial to our well-being, including our spiritual health.

Personally, I have not always felt that I “belonged”. Growing up, for example, I was self-conscious about my height. In my first-grade class picture, I was one of two tall girls standing in the back row next to our teacher. Lindy and I were the two tallest kids in our class (taller than the boys) and were drafted for basketball, volleyball, or other sports where height was an advantage. I continued to be self-conscious during those tender dating years when I was typically taller than most boys at the prom. But as I matured, I worried less about what people thought and realized that being tall could be an advantage. I could reach high shelves and most importantly in veterinary school, palpate large animals without standing on a bucket, and jump in the saddle of tall horses without a mounting block! Now, in my older and wiser years, Jesus tells me to focus on what He thinks (Ephesians 5:17).

Paul talks about a sense of belonging and forming one body in Christ. Whether we like a certain part of ourselves or not, we can’t discount a specific body part simply because we don’t think it belongs! We can take comfort in knowing that it was God who knit us together in our mother’s womb, and we should praise Him because we have been fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14). You belong to him, and the Holy Spirit is within you. Oh, that God would help us believe and act on this promise.

Also, God did not create man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). He designed the universal church as His bride and all of us who are believers belong to Him. This reminds me of a time that I was traveling alone on business for two weeks in Rome, Italy, in preparation for an upcoming three-year assignment there. Although I was working with colleagues during the day, I was alone each evening and on the weekend. I work well alone and it did not bother me to be by myself....until Sunday came. I had searched and prayed the week prior for God to show me a church that my husband and I could join during our overseas assignment. There are hundreds of churches in

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the city Rome, so there were many choices. Then, God led my search to the Rome Baptist Church – honestly, I was intrigued by the name being Baptist myself (we later found out that the church was founded by Christians from Rome, Georgia). As I walked to the church on Sunday morning, I was surrounded by thousands of tourists visiting the Roman Forum and strolling the popular shopping district along via Del Corso. Although I was surrounded by crowds, I had a sense of loneliness. I felt as though I had little in common with the Sabbath vacationers. However, my feeling of seclusion immediately changed when I walked into the door of the Rome Baptist Church. Although I did not know a single soul in this church with members from 40-plus countries, the Holy Spirit gave me a strong sense of belonging. These people believed in Christ, as I did, and there was an instant aura of warmth as a fellow believer. As we sang familiar hymns in different languages, I thought, “this must be what heaven is like!” Since then, I treasure the opportunity to visit international churches. Each time that I do, the Holy Spirit welcomes me through fellow believers. Paul relayed this same message to the church in Corinth when he told them that, “*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it,*” 1 Corinthians 12:27. If we are in a relationship with Christ, we are in a relationship with each believer.

If you are reading this devotion, you are also a part of the body of Christian Veterinary Mission (CVM)! Your part may be prayer. Your part may be sharing the love of Christ in your school or workplace. Your part may be to serve on a short-term mission or as a cross-cultural fieldworker. Your part may be giving so others may go. Each of us belong and have a part to play. Go and be the church.

1) In your faith journey, how would you describe your personal relationship with Jesus Christ and specifically your perspective of belonging to Him?

2) How has God directed you (or is calling you) to belong and engage in a local church of fellow brothers and sisters?

3) As a part of CVM, what roles does God want you to play – in prayer, service and giving?



Dr. Lee Myers has served in private practice, and many years with the Georgia Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy. She served as President of the U.S. Animal Health Association and President of the National Association of Food Hygiene Veterinarians. Together with her husband, Dr. Billy Myers, they have served as CVM Associates with Christian Vets in Europe, ambassadors for the University of Georgia CVF, and leaders for many CVM short-term mission trips to the Navajo and Apache Reservations. Dr. Lee transitioned into the CVM CEO role in early 2022.

Email: lmyers@cvm.org
