

Attention: It's Possible to Be Present Without Belonging

One of the deepest needs in every human heart is the need to belong. You can have a successful career and still feel lonely. You can have hundreds of friends on social media and still wonder if anyone truly knows you. You can even come to church every Sunday and still feel like you're standing on the outside looking in.

There is a difference between attending and belonging. A person can sit in the same pew for years and never truly become part of the family of God. The church was never intended to be a weekly event. It was designed to be a spiritual family. **When David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, this wasn't simply a parade. It was a defining moment for the nation.** The symbol of God's presence was coming into the center of Israel's life. Everyone was invited to celebrate because everyone was invited into God's presence. That is the picture of assimilation. Assimilation isn't about filling seats. Assimilation is about bringing people into the presence of God and into the family of believers.

Unfortunately, **there was one person who completely missed the significance of the moment.** Her name was Michal. Everyone else was celebrating. She was criticizing. Everyone else was embracing God's presence. **She was standing at a window.** That image is heartbreaking. One woman stayed at the window while everyone else entered into worship. Many people today are standing at spiritual windows. They watch worship. They observe ministry. They attend church. But they never truly step inside.

Need:

David understood that the Ark belonged in Jerusalem. Before this moment, the Ark had been neglected. God's presence had been pushed aside. Israel had become comfortable living without the center of God's presence.

The church today faces a similar danger. We can become excellent at producing services while neglecting relationships. We can build buildings without building people. We can welcome guests without helping them become family. Statistics consistently show that many first-time guests never return—not because they disliked the sermon, but because they never formed meaningful relationships. People rarely stay where they feel invisible.

Jesus never called us merely to gather crowds. He called us to make disciples. Discipleship requires relationship. Relationship requires intentionality. And intentionality is the heart of assimilation. The enemy knows that isolated believers are vulnerable believers. A sheep separated from the flock becomes easy prey. A coal removed from the fire grows cold. A branch disconnected from the vine cannot bear fruit. Assimilation isn't about church growth. It's about spiritual survival. The greatest tragedy is not when someone leaves the church building. The greatest tragedy is when someone never becomes connected to the Body of Christ.

Background:

When you look back at David's early life, **he was an outcast among his brothers** (Ps. 69:8). His brother minimized his role as a lowly shepherd when he came to see about the welfare of his brothers in the fight in the valley of Elah against the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:28). However, the **Lord was with David. God saw his faithfulness and a heart for worship.** The Lord anointed David to be king of Israel **in the right season of his life** (Acts 13:22). The Lord created a process to bring David not only into a divine family but a leader of His people.

Prior to David becoming king, after defeating Goliath, King Saul became jealous of the fame of him because God's favor was on David's life. King Saul tried to kill David multiple times. Eventually, for the safety of his life, David fled from place to place, feeling like a fugitive and an outcast. In time, the Lord moved Saul out of the way and promoted David as king of Israel.

Fast forward about 20 years later. For 100 long years the **ark of the covenant** had been separated from the tabernacle and other places of worship. It represented God's presence with His people. **After bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem, King David was ecstatic.** He was so excited for what the Lord had done, **he couldn't wait to get into a building to worship God.** David felt a powerful sense of belonging. He began to worship the Lord right in the streets of Jerusalem. **King David began dancing before the Lord** with such excitement that he praised God right out of his royal clothing, wrapped in just a tunic. His wife, **Michal "despised him in her heart,"** **viewing his behavior as vulgar and undignified for a monarch.** She thought he ought to be ashamed of himself dancing like a commoner or wild man rather than a king. When David returned home, **Michal mockingly confronted him** for exposing himself before slave girls. **David fiercely retaliated, declaring that his worship was before the Lord**—who chose David over Michal's father, Saul—and stating he would gladly humble himself even further. David knew he belonged to the family of God before anything, and he was due His praise.

1. The Presence of God Must Be Your Pursuit (v. 14-15).

- a. David danced before the Lord with all his might.
 - i. *“One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.” (Psalm 27:4, NKJV).*
- b. People worshiped Christ before they followed Him—believed He was God.
 - i. King Solomon associated with the wrong people and turned his heart.
- c. People are missing breakthroughs sitting next to doubters and busy bodies.
- d. Lose sight of your problems and praise God with honor.
 - i. *“I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad.” (Psalm 34:1–2, NKJV).*

2. Let Christ Be Your Primary Focus (v. 20).

- a. Michal was embarrassed of how David danced and worship God among servants.
 - i. She was physically close but spiritually distant.
 - ii. Demas failed to assimilate because he loved the present world (**2 Tim. 4:10**).
- b. **Chick-fil-A** is never in the poor part of the city.
 - i. They would rather protect their brand and values than make money.
 - ii. If one cannot assimilate, they’re terminated. Bad behavior isn’t accepted.
- c. God is not looking for an audience.
 - i. *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.” (Isaiah 6:1, NKJV)*
- d. Move from observing what God is doing to participating in His purpose.

3. We Must Value God's Approval More Than Human Opinion (v. 20-22).

- a. David reminded his wife that God chose him and he did not need human approval.
- b. The apostle Paul stood firm on his call to Christ.

- i. *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10).*
- c. People don’t know where you were before Christ saved you.
 - i. People have no idea of what you were smoking or drinking when Jesus found you.
- d. Stop giving people access into your life.
 - i. *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” (2 Corinthians 6:14–15, NKJV).*