



Sermon Growth Guide

October 10, 2021

Belong - Give Yourself

Romans 12:3-8

Key Verse: Romans 12:5 “so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

Big Idea: In Christ, we belong to one another.

Foundations

This week we continue in Romans 12. What are the practical, everyday implications of the Christian life? In part, we learn that we belong to one another. I am bound to you and you are bound to me. We belong to one another. The pattern of the world isolates us into loneliness; God is bringing us together in belonging. In Christ, we learn to view ourselves through Jesus' eyes and that vantage ushers us into a mutual desire to serve one another with the gifts given to us.

Yes, our belonging to one another leads us to serving one another with gifts, spiritual gifts in that they are given to us by the Spirit. The Greek word for gift here is pronounced “khar'-is-mah.” It's found in the same family as the grace of God “khar'-ece.” God's grace is poured into our hearts and then we pour “graces” (gifts) over one another through true belonging.

Do you know the gifts that God has entrusted to you? One of the best discernment models for understanding your gifts is the model of communal discernment. Together, spend time this week helping one another know how God has gifted each of you.

Lift up this time in prayer. Thank God for each person around you. Thank God for the way he has gifted his church to flourish through true belonging.

Understanding God's Word

How is the believer called to think in verse three?

How is the believer-to-believer relationship described in verse five?

What gifts are listed in verses six through eight?

Applying God's Word

The world says we own everything about the hours in our days. Scripture says that in Christ, we belong to one another. Host a discussion on what healthy, Kingdom belonging looks like in your circle. How can you even better be present for one another in life's highs and lows?

Witnessing God's Word

The community of the Beloved should not look like the community of secular culture. How can your church community be even more vibrant in regards to this week's message on belonging to one another?

How about creating a culture of invitation so that even more might come to belong? How can your circle grow in its desire to help others taste and see the goodness of Biblical belonging?

ALONE IS NO GOOD. JESUS INVITES YOU TO BELONG.

Through his word, God is so clear: alone is no good. As God's people, we belong to Him and to one another. You are created with incomparable dignity and worth and given purpose for every hour of your life. You are created as a communal being. You are hardwired by God to thrive in godly community.

How's your heart been through this series? Personally, I've found a lot of hope. Hope lives best when you've come to believe that there's something better out there. I hope because I recognize that I have plenty of room to grow in walking as a healthier human being, a communal being hardwired for godly community.

One more level—down in openness here—as much as I've loved this series, there has been Temptation of Despair that I've had to battle. Not because I disagree with the teaching, the revelation, rather the opposite—this series has

implicitly highlighted for me personally that real community is really hard. Am I alone in feeling this or are you with me? And it's not just the cultural waters we're swimming in. I'm weak! I struggle to invest in close friendships. Just last weekend my Life Group agreed to cancel our meeting for that week because of the collective exhaustion, and I drove that conversation!

But we need each other. God calls us into Kingdom community. At some point we gotta tap out and hand our lives over to God, amen? We gotta rise-up and lie-down and walk-in His strength and His strength alone. God desires incredible community for me and for you and to press into this understanding we're continuing through our Belong series by focusing our attention on Romans 12:3-8.

The Big Idea today is that In Christ, we belong to one

another. You and I are called away from loneliness and into a life of belonging. Belonging to God and belonging to one another. Belonging to one another, our topic for today and the topic at the heart of Romans 12:3-8, requires three things: Right thinking, sacrificial thinking, and giftedness thinking. Walk with me through the text: Right Thinking (verse 3), Sacrificial Thinking (verses 4 and 5), and Giftedness Thinking (verses 6-8). First, Right Thinking, verse 3.

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” Recall Paul's line of reasoning that establishes this imperative: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The Bible places a remarkable vote of confidence



in your mind, your perspective, your understanding of who you are and whose you are, being able to transform from a life without God to a life with God. And, of course, that is because of the power of the Spirit at work in his people. Remember the trajectory presented in this series: Alone, Risk Being Known, Open to God, Open to Others. We all of us start in “the pattern of the world,” a pattern marked, in part, by loneliness, the great global masquerade.

Our text lays out what we must do so clearly, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” True belonging cannot exist outside of a correct understanding of identity and relationship. If you do not understand who you are and how you are to relate to the people around you, you cannot truly belong. Perhaps the

greatest pandemic of human history is the perverse way in which we view ourselves and one another outside of the mercy of God. Belonging to one another requires right thinking. Don’t think of yourself as the bee’s knees. Don’t think of yourself as the force that will save the person next to you. Likewise, others in the room need to hear the other end of this same verse: no pity parties! No presuming you’re the chief victim of every single incident. No perpetual dropped shoulders. No perpetual “downcastedness.” But rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. What is this God-distribution of faith? It’s the gospel of Jesus Christ! It’s what Paul just laid out in Romans chapters 1-11! Let’s take off our Western individualistic reading glasses for a moment. The faith is THE FAITH, Christianity, the Good News that has been distributed to all of God’s

people. Am I saying we’re all exactly the same? By no means! But don’t jump to verses 6-8 just yet. First, think rightly about yourself. Sober judgement. Real humility. Right thinking. I am one who was dead in my sin. I am one who has been bought by the precious blood of Christ. I am a child of God. I am an Oak of Righteousness, for the display of His splendor. But I’m not above anyone. I follow the Servant-King. I follow in the footsteps of the one who, “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,” (Matthew 20:28). And I know that ultimately Jesus is the chief victim of sin. Belonging to one another requires right thinking. Press into your identity. Know who you are. Know how you ought to relate with the world around you. You are a child of God called to bear witness to the Kingdom of God.

Belonging to one another also requires sacrificial thinking.



Verses 4 and 5: 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.” The metaphor of a body. Sound familiar? Paul loves this metaphor! It’s here in Romans. It’s also in Colossians and Ephesians. It’s also in 1 Corinthians. Many parts, one body. Great image. An image of belonging. And it’s right here in this image that we find this truth, “so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” I belong to you. You belong to me. We belong to one another. What’s the great cultural tagline from the past year and a half? “We’re all in this together.” Reality smacks us in the face and we realize that there is a boundness to being human. We affect one another. We infect one another. But the Bible goes so much farther regarding God’s people

than secular cultural will for the masses: God’s people are united together in a boundness that is watertight. You could float the Titanic with the glue, the strength, of real Christian community. Why? Because to belong to the other is to serve the other. Short of sinning, Christians sacrifice their top preference in order to serve the other believer. We serve one another. And in that service, that care, we are strong.

How? Romans 12:1. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” “In view of God’s mercies” can also rightly be translated “through God’s mercies.” You see, it is by being dunked, saturated, steeped in, dragged through the mercies of God that you have been saved. God’s love has been poured out abundantly over your heart. God’s mercy is God’s

power that saves you “from the dominion of the devil” making you “wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.” How do you serve one another? Through the mercy-power of heaven.

Belonging to one another also requires giftedness thinking. Verses 6–8: “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophecy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” You and I are united in our identity; we’re children of God. You and I are diversified in the gifts given to us. Unity and diversity. Unity in diversity, the body of Christ. Listen carefully, if you are not stewarding the spiritual gift or spiritual gifts God has entrusted to you then the body of Christ is



not being nourished as it ought. God has given you a gift, at least one, to bless the body of Christ with. Belonging to one another requires giftedness thinking. This list is not comprehensive, but it's the list Paul gives to the church in Rome and to us today while we are in this passage, so here we go:

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; God will, to the degree he sees fit, give information to one child for the edification of all the children. If you are that child, it is your responsibility to proclaim that word to the church family. A prophetic word never contradicts Scripture. A prophetic word highlights an aspect of the Kingdom of God that the church family needs to be steeping in together. "In accordance with your faith" means don't go off the rails. Stay hidden in Christ. Feed on the Word. Personally, I prefer the prophet to not even be aware that they are being prophetic.

I prefer for the congregation to look, listen, and agree "hey, that's a prophetic word we need to lean into in this season" and for the blessed soul who gave it to simply give it and move on walking as a child of God. "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought."

If it is serving, then serve; Is anyone not called or gifted to serve? On some level we all of us are given these gifts. Serving is a bedrock of Christian life and practice: "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) We follow our Savior by walking out lives of service. Specifically, here, though, Paul may have in mind the office of deacon. Deacons lead us in our understanding and carrying out of the gift of service.

If it is teaching, then teach; How many of you are aware of the wild number of gifted teachers at First Pres? Seriously,

it's amazing. We have no shortage of this gifting. So, if you're new here and teaching is your wheelhouse, go to another church that needs you! I'm kidding. I'm just trying to express my gratitude that our church family is so gifted in this area. Let's use it well. Let's let our teaching lead us to total transformation of heart unto the likeness of Christ. Amen? Prophecy is more about revelation. "O, I wasn't even thinking about that / I've never seen this even though I've heard it before." Teaching is more about the giftset of being able to transfer information rightly and effectively.

If it is to encourage, then give encouragement; Does anybody need encouragement? If you are gifted with encouragement then pour it out. Don't be embarrassed that you seem to just always walk around the church with the ability to lift up people's spirit. You're my favorite gift in this season! Satan comes to steal and kill



and destroy and then God gifts one of us with Kingdom encouragement and BAM, life. An encourager shines the light of Jesus into the darkness of any despairing situation. This word the NIV translates as “encourage” is translated in other texts as “exhort.” Combine the thoughts of encouragement with this thought: the one gifted in exhortation effectively calls the people of God to fill up the sails of faith with the wind of action. Have you ever had someone lift you up out of the mire and compel you into Kingdom action? Life transformation happens. That’s this person. That’s this gift. Praise God.

If it is giving, then give generously; Give in purity of heart. Give simply in the sense that you hold no hidden agenda. Give without concern for lack. “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack...nothing.”

If it is to lead, do it diligently; The ESV says, “the one who

leads, with zeal.” This can be applied to so many areas of leadership, but just like the serving gift above is likely referring to the context and call of deacon, this charge and gift is likely pointing foremost to the context and call of elder, the overseers of the church. Elders, we need you to be diligent in your discernment, zealous in desire for the Kingdom of God to be poured out into the city through this church. Elders, I charge you, lead this body like you would carry an infant around this church building: wide awake, fully alert, diligent to care for that which God has entrusted to you.

If it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Paul concludes the list here, with mercy. Paul just took 11 chapters to display the mercy of God in Christ Jesus and now he begins this thought process, chapter 12 verse 1, by appealing to those same mercies. Are you and I called to show mercy? You better believe it! Are the have-received-mer-

cy-people-of-God able to extend mercy to one another? You better believe it. So let’s extend mercy here at First Pres well. Cheerfully, even, if we are to be Biblical about it! Don’t extend mercy on the outside while building up a grudge on the inside. Don’t build a bridge on the outside while you simultaneously construct the Hoover Dam around your heart. Lavish mercy on those around you. Think of one person right now toward whom God would have you extend mercy.

Do you know your gifts? There are a thousand spiritual gift assessments out there. 26% of them are excellent! But do you know the best way to discern your gifts? In community. Together. In your conversations with your Life Group, in your circle, spend time this week helping each other see what gifts the Spirit has poured out into the hearts around you. Does God want you to be blind about how’s He’s gifted you? Is He one of those Greek gods who gives



you a task that you can't do so He can zap you with a lightning bolt when you least expect it?

Friends, God has called you into right thinking and He has made a way for you to rightly understand your identity as a child of God and how you relate with those around you.

Friends, God has called you into sacrificial thinking, we belong to one another. Look around the room. These are those to whom you belong. These and

all the other children of God around this city and across the globe. The Holy Spirit empowers you to belong to his family. It takes great sacrifice. And it will free your heart. Set your hourly schedule through the lens of Kingdom belonging.

Friends, God has called you into giftedness thinking, not to lord our gifts over one another or to be puffed up into hot air balloons of irrelevance, but rather to bless one another as God builds up his bride. Your

giftings are not meant to be hidden from your sight. We can, by God's grace, help one another live as the body of Christ by belonging well to one another, by using our gifts as instruments of righteousness for the blessing of the bride of Christ.

But if you don't remember anything else today, just remember this one great Kingdom truth, "In Christ, we belong to one another."

