

**Stories of Belonging**  
The Beginning of Belonging  
Genesis 1-3  
*Small Group Notes*

We all long to belong and be connected in meaningful ways. Shame and fear often keep us from meaningful connection with God, ourselves, and others. During this series, we will develop a biblical theology of belonging. Through the pages and stories of Scripture we will see how God invites us to trust in His love and find true connection. God fully knows us AND fully loves us. As we belong and trust in Him, He calls us together to commit to connecting disconnected people to His love and His family. Who is God calling you to invite to belong?

**The Need:** We all long to belong.

“Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.<sup>1</sup>”

How does shame and fear keep us from belonging to God, ourselves, and with the family of God?

**Four Movements of the Gospel in the unfolding story of redemption in Genesis 1-3:**

**1. God creates everything good and desires to dwell with His creation.**

Read Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

**Observations:** God describes everything He creates as very good. There is no fear or shame. God the loving and holy Creator dwells with

His creation. Human beings are created in His image, rule over the earth and exist in perfect harmony with each other, their creator, and all of creation. Everything is as it should be: God’s people under God’s rule care for God’s creation. God delights in dwelling with His creation. He creates everything for His glory and our good. This is the ultimate picture of belonging.

**Questions:** How does the picture of God’s original creation shape our understanding of what it means to be truly human?

**2. Human beings rebel against God’s rightful rule and make it impossible for God to dwell with us.**

Read Genesis chapter 3:1-13

**Observation:** Humanity rebels against the Creator’s rightful rule by eating the forbidden fruit. Rather than trusting in the Creator, they seek to become as the Creator. Humanity not only sins (act) against God, they become sinful (condition of corruption). They now make it impossible for God who is light (1 Jn 1:5) and love to dwell with His creation. Rather than experiencing true belonging with God and one another, they now experience what the Creator never intended – guilt, shame, fear, and even death.

**3. Because of humanity’s rebellion, all of creation is subject to the taint of sin and death.**

Read Genesis 3:14-19

**Observation:** Humanity’s rebellion subjects all of creation against its will to the taint of sin and death (see also Romans 8).

**4. God’s desire to dwell with His creation will not be thwarted by humanity’s sin.**

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Brené. *Braving the Wilderness* (p. 31). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Read Genesis 3:15 and 3:20-21.

**Observations:** God will not sin, shame, fear, and death have the final word. He still longs to dwell with His Creation. Genesis 3:15 and 3:20-21 remind us that One will come, the seed of the women, who will defeat the sin and death. Just as God provided clothing to cover their shame from an innocent animal, so the Son of God will come and will take our shame upon Himself. He the sinless lamb of God will win the victory over our sin and death through His death and resurrection. He will remove the taint of sin and death. He will make it possible once again for God to dwell with his creation.

**How might God be calling us to respond to His Word:**

1. Our stories of longing to belong, invite us to see that our greatest longing can only be found in believing in the Gospel and trusting personally in Christ.
2. God loves us and longs to dwell with us. He loves us not because we are lovely, but because of His own goodness and glory. He longs for us to trust in His love. Our part is to trust and then allow Him to begin His work of making all things new again in us.
3. The church is called to be a new creation community. How can we seek out those who are captives to fear, shame, guilt, and the isolation that often follows? How can we help others know that they can belong?
4. Do you really believe that God will not allow sin, death, shame, and fear have the final word in your life?
5. Think about the example of Christ. Think about the shame He endured for our salvation. Think about how He became vulnerable for us. Can the world really believe that God longs for His creation apart for the church being willing to become vulnerable follow in Christ example?

*"I know that vulnerability is the core of shame and fear and our struggle for worthiness, but it appears as though it is also the birthplace of joy, of creativity, of belonging, and of love."<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid