



HOW TO TRULY BELONG

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Based on Romans 12 & C.S. Lewis' "The Inner Ring"

Scripture Reading — Romans 12:3–8 (NIV)

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.*

4 For just as each of us has one body with many members,
and these members do not all have the same function,

5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body,
and **each member belongs to all the others.**

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.
If your gift is prophesying, then **prophesy** in accordance with your faith;

7 if it is serving, then **serve**;

if it is teaching, then **teach**;

8 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**.

1. Seek Christ-esteem, not self-esteem

Our culture says: *"Feel better about yourself and you'll belong."*

The gospel says: *"See yourself the way Christ sees you."*

- Not **too high**: I'm not so good that I didn't need Jesus to die for me.
- Not **too low**: I'm not so bad that Jesus didn't want to die for me.
- Christ-esteem = a realistic, grounded confidence rooted in His love.

"The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he has done for us, not by what we are and what we do for him."

(The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:3)

Reflection:

- Where am I relying on self-promotion, performance, or image to feel I "belong"?
- What difference would it make to walk into a room already knowing, *"I am fully loved and accepted in Christ"*?



2. Commit completely (don't just "hover" on the edge)

Paul uses the picture of a **body**: if you belong to Christ, you already belong to His people.

"Each member belongs to all the others." — Romans 12:5

Belonging is not:

- "I'll be around *until* something better comes up."
- "I'll keep it casual so I don't get hurt or trapped."

Belonging **grows** where there is:

- Commitment
- Staying power
- A decision: "*These are my people, this is my church family.*"

Reflection:

- Where am I holding back from commitment because of fear, busyness, or uncertainty?
- What is one concrete way I can *choose* to commit (group, team, regular service, etc.)?

3. Choose diversity (not "people just like me")

The body of Christ is **many different members**, not a club of people who look and think the same.

Church is not:

- A group of people in the same life stage
- A circle of friends who all agree
- A cosy bubble of "people like me"

Church is:

- People of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, and stories
- A family where we learn to love across difference
- A place where "almost everybody is interesting"

Reflection:

- Do I scan the room for "my type of people"?
- Who is *different* from me that I could move towards, listen to, and learn from?

4. Contribute whatever (don't only consume)

Consumerism itself isn't evil — we all need to receive.

But to **truly belong**, we also need to *give*.

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us." — Romans 12:6

Paul lists gifts that build community:

- Prophesying



- Serving
- Teaching
- Encouraging
- Giving
- Leading
- Showing mercy

The pattern is simple:

"If your gift is... then do it."

Don't overcomplicate it:

- Don't wait to be asked.
- Don't wait for a platform.
- Don't wait for recognition or thanks.

Reflection:

- What do I have in my hands? (time, money, skills, encouragement, hospitality...)
- Where can I quietly "spot" someone else — just giving that little nudge that helps them keep going?

The Deepest Secret of Belonging:

C.S. Lewis and the Inner Ring

C.S. Lewis describes how, in every new place (school, job, church), there are "**rings**" of people who *really* belong:

- First ring: people who seem to be "in".
- Then an **inner ring**: they go for drinks, have the in-jokes.
- Then an even **inner inner ring**: *"They've got a WhatsApp group."*

Our lives can easily become a constant chase:

"How do I get into that inner ring?"

"How do I become part of the people who truly belong?"

Lewis' insight (and the heart of this talk) is this:

At the **centre of the universe** there is already a perfect, eternal "Inner Ring":

God the Father,

God the Son,

God the Holy Spirit,

living in perfect love.

Through Jesus, when you belong to Him, **you are brought into that inner life of God.**

- You are not on the outside, trying to get in.
- You are already loved from the very *centre* of reality.
- There is nothing you can do to be "more inside" than you are in Christ.

Once you belong to Jesus, you exist in the heart of the universe.

What that means for belonging:



Because you already belong in the **truest inner ring**:

- You don't have to chase the "right" people, the "cool" group, or the safest circle.
- You don't have to walk into a room scanning for the most impressive, important, or secure people.
- You are now **free** to look for those on the **edges**:
 - the new person
 - the quiet one
 - the awkward one
 - the lonely one

This is exactly how Jesus lived:

- He didn't scramble to be at all the right parties.
- He moved towards lepers, tax collectors, and sex workers.
- He **loved people into belonging**.

A final challenge

Because you already belong to Christ:

- You have nothing left to prove.
- You are already in the "inner ring" that matters most.
- You are free to turn outward.

So today:

- Seek Christ-esteem.
- Commit completely.
- Choose diversity.
- Contribute whatever you've got.

And then, like Jesus,

**go to the margins,
and love people into belonging.**

CS Lewis Essay [The Inner Ring](#)