

## Essential: Belonging

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application  
Lynn Haven UMC – August 16, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter

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As our regathering and rebuilding process as a church continues over the summer, we are discussing what is essential to our existence as a congregation. These last three weeks in the series we will consider how **the church** is essential for life.

### Discussion Starters:

⇒ Over the last few months of this pandemic season there has been much debate by government officials about what activities and services are “essential.” If you made a list of activities or services “essential” for life, what would be on it?

The church and its ministries are an essential and necessary part of life. One of the lessons we have learned from Hurricane Michael is that the church is more than a building. In fact, the church is not a place. It is a group of people who belong to Jesus Christ, who are “called out” from the world, and who belong to each other.

*And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ...and each member belongs to one another. (Romans 1:6; 12:5 BSB)*

The most important thing the church can do today is give people a sense of BELONGING, so they start BELIEVING in God and His ways and BECOMING all that they can be in Christ.

Let us consider how we can create an environment that provides the essential sense of belonging people all want and need by using several New Testament metaphors for the church – a family, a temple, and a body. In future weeks, we’ll talk about believing and becoming.

### 1) The church is essential because it makes us part of a FAMILY.

*I am writing to you...[so] you will know how to live in the family of God. That family is the church of the living God... (1 Timothy 3:14-15 NCV)*

*You are members of God’s very own family...and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian. (Ephesians 2:19b TLB)*

*“Everybody who belongs to Christ belongs to everybody who belongs to Christ.” (E. Stanley Jones)*

⇒ What one thing can you do this week to reach out to a church family member to give them a sense of belonging? What types of things can you be doing to help others overcome the sense of isolation that has been a part of this pandemic season?

## **2) The church is essential because it makes us part of a TEMPLE.**

*You are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. (1 Peter 2:5a NLT)*

*In Christ the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:21-22 NIV)*

We are similar to Lego pieces, designed to be connected to each other and together we can become something amazing! In joining together with others, we find strength and stability.

⇒ What do you need to do to become more connected with others in the church community?

## **3) The church is essential because it makes us part of a BODY.**

The church is not a building, it is a living body (not an organization but a living organism). We discover our true value through our relationships with other Christians as we work together for the common good.

*All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27 NLT)*

*Just as there are many parts of our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others. (Romans 12:4-5 TLB)*

⇒ Everyone has a role to play in this community called the Body of Christ. What role do you see yourself playing? What contribution are you uniquely gifted to make in this community?

## **Discuss with your group:**

⇒ What do you need to do to be more connected to the church? What can you do to help others feel a sense of belonging to the church community? And what unique role might you play in this community of faith?