INTRO

- What helps you move from acquaintance to friend? What makes the difference?

Shared Life is a series exploring four communal practices through which God forms us as a church: ***Gather, Belong, Serve, Give***. Today, we consider how we build meaningful relationships and share life together through belonging.

READ

1 John 1:1-3; Acts 2:42-47; Rom 12:10, 13-16

REFLECT & RESPOND

1. Belonging Begins with Christ

Because of Jesus, we are invited into fellowship with the Father and the Sonand into His family. We were once alienated from God, but through Christ we have been brought near. We are no longer strangers, but members of God's household (Ephesians 2:12–13, 19; Colossians 1:21–22; 1 Peter 2:9–10).

Q: What difference does it make to see belonging as something we receive in Christ rather than something we have to create or earn?

2. Belonging is Expressed Through Shared Life

The early church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, fellowship (*koinonia*—participation and shared life), the breaking of bread, and prayer. They expressed their faith through consistent presence, shared meals, generosity, mutual care, and joy. Small groups are one practical expression of this shared life today. They create space for people to be known, cared for, encouraged, and challenged as we follow Jesus together.

Q: What stands out to you about the shared life of the early church? In what ways have you experienced, or would like to experience, something similar?

Q: How do small groups help make belonging real rather than remaining only an idea?

3. Belonging is Somethign We Extend To Others

As a church grows, the temptation is for community to become a clique. Romans 12 calls us to something more: honouring one another, sharing with those in need, rejoicing and weeping together, and associating with the lowly. True belonging is not only something we enjoy; it is something we extend.

Q: What can we do to help someone move from being a stranger or newcomer to feeling genuinely included?

Q: What are practical ways you can help cultivate a culture of belonging in our church, or your relationships beyond the church?

Practical Step

This week, take one intentional step toward someone in our church or small group:

- invite them into a conversation or meal,
- encourage them specifically,
- ask how you can pray for them,
- include them in something your group is already doing.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus for bringing us near and making us members of His household.
- Ask God to deepen our shared life so that people are known, valued, and cared for.
- Pray that we would keep reaching toward one another so that belonging remains a culture, not a closed circle.