



The following notes are from a sermon given by Pastor Wayne Flowers on Sunday December 15th, 2019 at Smythe Street Church Fredericton NB.

We have been doing a series called “Home for Christmas.”
We are focusing on a very deep and basic human need.
The need to “belong.” The need to have a place you call “home.”

We have talked about “I Belong” and “They Belong.”

Today: We Belong

My goal: Show you that more than anything else **God’s people are a family first**.
Church should feel like family! It should **feel like home!** This is a place where we feel like **we belong!**

“Family” and “Home” are words that are packed with emotion, sentimentality and nostalgia!

**People know in their hearts what true family and home feels like.
We long for it. We hunger for it. We miss it greatly.**

Writers write about it...

Artists paint scenes of home...

Singers sing about it...

- Simon and Garfunkel sang: **Homeward Bound**.
- Michael Bublé sings: **I want to go home**.
- John Denver sang: **Hey it good to be back home again**.

Especially this time of year...

I'll be home for Christmas
You can count on me
Please have snow and mistletoe
And presents on the tree

Christmas Eve will find me
Where the love light gleams
I'll be home for Christmas
If only in my dreams

The truth is...

Everyone wants to have a family they belong to.

When that is taken away from their natural family, the desire does not cease.

We are called to be a family to the many **wandering orphans** in this world!

Seven out of 10 Millennials who dropped out of church **did not have a close friendship with an adult** and nearly nine out of ten never had a mentor at the church.”

The church is not a business!

- A **healthy financial bottom line** is important and necessary if we want to carry on certain ministries and have this place as a hub for our family life, but without the sense of family, it will **not suffice** or meet the spiritual needs of people around us.

The church is not a religious institution!

- Our most important task is not to protect our religious reputation and or glory in our religious distinctives.

Church is not an event or a production!

- Even though we put a lot into our corporate gatherings, it can be void of any vitality without life giving relationships.

The church is not policies, vision statements and missional directives.

- Without the sense of family they can become empty pages that do not touch the heart.

The church is family!

As credible and needed as all of the above is, the glue that holds this all together is the sense and reality of family.

We are brothers and sisters...

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. 1st Tim. 5:1,2

We are a household...

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Eph. 2:19

Church leaders are seen as fathers and mothers in the faith.

Paul spoke of Timothy as his "son in the faith."

He called himself a "father" to the church he pastored and led.

Women are like mothers to those they lead.

That said—and said strongly—I've seen too many Christian families who are not anchored in the relationships of God's first family, the church. Christians are raising children who, like them, see church as an event, not a family; who see being with God's people as an optional weekend activity.

I challenge and encourage everyone in the local assembly to make this place feel like home!!

What does that mean?

What is it that makes Home feel like Home?

What is it about some people that make you feel at home?

1. Don't worry about messing up my space.

It was the Christmas season and a large number of family had gathered together. The Mom asked her 6 year old daughter to pray. "What should I say?" He Mom said, "You know dear. Just say what you hear Mommy saying." To which the little girl responded by saying, "Dear Lord, why did I invite all these people?"

People are messy. They eat your food. They fill your sink up with dirty dishes.

They touch things and move things around. Oh, and by the way, isn't it wonderful.

You can have your perfect environment. It can be neat and tidy and sterile. Go ahead and die of loneliness. See if it is worth it.

2. What's mine is yours.

People who make home feel like home are not possessive and protective. They are appreciative and generous. No matter how blessed they are they always leave you with the sense that they really don't deserve what they have, so why get touchy about it. They are not prideful or arrogant about what they have, only grateful.

3. This is a safe place to be real.

Places that feel like home are places where fake smiles and fabricated storylines are not the norm. You do not have to impress or pretend that everything is super great. This is a place that welcomes and raw and real. Tears and fears are woven into the narrative. You will not be judged for being honest.

People are not perfect. Family is not perfect.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to get defensive about family? We are not all the same!!

4. You are not an intrusion or an inconvenience.

People who make home feel like home are people who let you know in so many ways that they are happy you are there with them. They listen. They are engaged. They feel blessed to have company. They never leave you with the feeling that you are privileged to be there. It is the exact opposite.

Conclusion

The clearest statement to others that we are credible as God's family is the love we share – first with each other, then with others in our community.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35

There's no need for anyone to say much to you about loving your fellow believers, for God is continually teaching you to unselfishly love one another. 1st Thess. 4:9

I want to send this part of the message home by means of a song.

The secret to making people feel like they are home...like they belong...
is to love them in real, recognizable, sacrificial ways!