

Including Everyone

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How can we help make the journey to the chapel doors feel less anxious and lonely for others?

As disciples of Christ, many of us choose to quite literally “stand in holy places” as we attend our Sunday meetings (Doctrine and Covenants 45:32). Coming to share the Spirit and space with one another, many are looking for connection, acceptance, and a feeling of belonging. We each carry the hope that we “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

But for some, the journey to the chapel doors includes feeling vulnerable, anxious, or lonely. Their experiences, family realities, or circumstances may not reflect an imagined “ideal.” This often leads to feeling like they stand on the outside looking in, even when that “ideal” doesn’t represent reality for any of us.

Our value to God is not affected by our circumstances, and in many cases, these less-than-ideal circumstances push us to grow and learn. But because of these circumstances, there are many who feel like it is hard to fit in or be fully understood. What can we do to open the doors that keep others from feeling like they belong with us, even when we may struggle with similar feelings ourselves?

The Call to Include Everyone

Creating belonging for everyone is part of our covenant keeping. At baptism, we promise we won’t let anyone suffer alone but that we’ll mourn with them, comfort them, and bear their burdens (see Mosiah 18:8–10).

Creating belonging is part of our Church. We are to include everyone in our worship just as the Savior welcomes everyone to partake of His salvation (see 2 Nephi 26:24–28, 33; 3 Nephi 18:22–23).

Creating belonging is an essential part of our journey to become like the Savior. Loving others and opening our circles to include those who are different from us is part of becoming perfect (see Matthew 5:43–47).

Ultimately, to be His, we must be one with each other (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

No Struggle Is Forgotten

God’s love for His children is not exclusive, but rather all-inclusive. He invites all to “come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33).



He knows and cherishes:

- The sister, recently divorced, who hurts during discussions about marriage.
- The young adult struggling with questions, pleading for answers.
- The sister suffering from anxiety, feeling deep loneliness and fear.
- The young black brother, uncomfortable as his class discusses incorrect understandings about race and priesthood.
- The sister who has not yet married and feels it means she has no value.
- The mother of a child with disabilities, worried that his involuntary movements are distracting to others.
- The brother with same-sex attraction, contemplating leaving the Church as he struggles to understand his future.
- The sister who worries how she'll be judged by others as she takes her first tentative steps back to church.

No circumstance, no situation, no individual is forgotten. “He remembereth . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33) because, like His early disciples, we all “belong to Christ” (Mark 9:41; see also Mosiah 5:7).

So What Can We Do?

What can we do to create connections and welcome weaknesses as well as see strengths?

We might start by pondering the following questions:

- How can I make a greater effort to reach out and get to know those I don't know in my ward or branch?
- What invitation can I extend to someone who might need a friend?
- How can I be an example of one who includes and loves others?
- Whom can I sincerely seek out and ask how he or she is doing?
- What comes to mind when I pray for inspiration to know how to help someone?

There is so much to learn from others as we get to know them.

In the coming months, we will share the stories of sisters and brothers who have struggled to come to know that they belong. We hope these stories will inspire each of us to more closely follow God's two great commandments: to love Him and to love all His children. ■