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## ***Belong, Believe, Behave***

Consider these three words: belong, believe, behave. In this phrase we may think about the adopted life we have in Christ and how to talk about it to others.

Most Christians think that “believe” comes first. They think that in order to belong to God you must make a decision to believe that the story of Jesus is a true story and that it means you have a chance to be saved. In this model belief leads to belonging. *If you believe in Jesus then you will belong.*

If your belief causes you to belong to God, then you had better behave! If you don’t behave, you may cease to belong. Why? Because a failure to behave reflects a lack of belief. If your belonging is based on your belief then a lack of belief would change you from belonging to not belonging.

Although this approach makes perfect sense from a human perspective it is in direct contradiction to the reality revealed in Jesus, the Word of God.

As the Word of God in the flesh Jesus says to the entire human race, "You belong!" He says to us that we belong to his Father, in the power of their Spirit. He says to us that we belong to, and are an intimate part of, the mutually indwelling (perichoretic) life that he shares with his Father and their Spirit.

The Word of God to humanity is “You belong!” The question that confronts humanity in the light of the Word of God is “do you believe what the Word says?” Whether we believe it has no impact on whether it is true or not. It is just like any other fact, such as the color of the sky. The sky is blue. It doesn’t become blue when you believe it; it was, is, and always will be blue. If you don’t believe it is blue it doesn’t cease to be blue. You can say the sky is green but it will not make it so.

The same is true of adoption into the Triune Life. The Word of God says we are included. We belong. Therefore it is a fact of life. It is an essential and unchangeable Truth of the universe. If you believe that you belong then you will behave like someone who does belong. If you don’t believe you belong then you will behave like someone who does not belong. But neither your belief nor your behavior establishes whether you belong or not. Jesus has established that you do belong and therefore the issue is settled forever.

When we want to tell people about Jesus it becomes quite clear what we need to say. We need say “you belong to the Father through Jesus!” We should *never* say “if you will believe in Jesus then you will belong to God.”

This is the true meaning of putting the Word of God before all human words and proclaiming the Word of God as true above all human thought.

~ Jonathan Stepp