



CREATING A CULTURE OF BELONGING

Creating a culture of belonging motivates us to be intentional about how we move a child toward an openness of listening, understanding, and believing. It lets children know they are seen, known, and valued. No one feels excluded or confused. We create a culture in our ministries that's comfortable and approachable. This leads to a compelling context of biblical belonging that connects the disconnected in a Christ-centered community for the purpose of inciting a transformational encounter with Jesus.

In our culture today, we “belong” to a lot of things. We join clubs and teams. We serve on HOA's and committees. We associate belonging with participating in an activity with others.

But what does it mean to know you belong?

That goes a little deeper. Knowing deep down you belong is more than a name on a roster or participation in an event. It means you know you are accepted, wanted, and valued. You feel like you have a purpose and meaning.

We all long for this deeper sense of belonging. In a world that is telling young people to look within to fill that ache, we, as the church, get to speak to who God created them to be. We get to help them see, know, and feel that they always have a place to belong within His family.

Break Down Barriers

Before we start cultivating a culture of belonging, we should recognize and overcome barriers that can keep a child from feeling like our churches are a place where they feel seen, known, and valued.

What happens when a child walks through our doors? Is it chaos? Cliques? Does someone new feel like everyone knows someone except them?

From the get-go, let's create a space and a culture at church where everyone feels like they have a place. Let's call kids by name, help them find connections with others, and let every child that walks through our doors know that they are welcomed and wanted.

Celebrate Every Child

Too often, young people feel like they have to change themselves in order to belong. They need to talk

different, act different, think different, and be different. But we know the truth. We know that God made each and every one of them amazing and wonderful just the way they are. So, let's make sure they know that!

In our ministries, let's celebrate every child. Let's get to know them, show interest in them, and help them find things in common with each other. Let's help them know that they are loved and valued just the way they are.

Be a Part of a Team

Belonging isn't passive. It's active. Kids don't want to just be there—they want to feel like they have purpose and can participate. We get the amazing opportunity to help the children who come to our ministry be a part of something bigger than themselves. They get to play, learn, grow, and contribute as a part of a team.

When we plan games and activities where kids work together and cheer one another on, they know they are valued. Big all-in games where all kids can participate and cheer one another on can help every child feel that sense of belonging. Shy kids, loud kids, new kids, and regular attenders grow in relationships as they play and experience together.

When we give them the chance to create, explore, learn, and laugh as part of a team, kids know they are wanted.

What's one thing you can do this weekend to help kids be a part of a team?

True belonging doesn't happen by accident. But through intentional effort on our part as ministry leaders, we can help children start down that path of knowing they are seen, known, valued, and loved.



EPIC JOURNEY STAGE GAME

Supplies: None

Media: Epic Journey Slide and Video
[Click Here for Media Download Link](#)

Leader Prep: None

Game Rules:

- Show the video. Kids will act like they are running in place.
- If a river obstacle shows up, ask the kids jump in place.
- If the log obstacle shows up, ask the kids move to the side.
- If the bird obstacle shows up, ask the kids to duck.
- At the end, give every team points for participating.

Host Script: Hey everyone. My name is _____, and I'm so excited that you are here. I need you to get loud because today we are going to play a totally awesome game called, "Epic Journey!" If you are ready to have fun, let me hear you say, "Oh, yeah!" (*Oh, yeah!*)

Media Cue: EpicJourney_TitleSlide

Host Script: This game is called "Epic Journey." What's this game called? (*Epic Journey!*) Are you ready to hear how to play? (*Yeah!*) First, let's practice jogging in place. Ready? Go! (*Allow kids jog for a moment.*) Great jogging! When something shows up on the road, we are going to move our bodies out of the way! Let's see what might show up on the road. Let's get started on our journey! Everyone, go ahead and jog in place.

Media Cue: EpicJourney_Video

Host Script: Oh, no! A river! I don't think we can go around it. We have to try to jump. OK everyone, jump over! It's a big river, so keep jumping! (*Kids jump in place.*)

Great job! Let's keep going. (*Allow kids to jog in place.*)

Watch out! There are some birds. Let's duck down out of the way. (*Kids duck in place.*) Whew! That was close! All right, we will see one more thing on our journey. Are you ready? Let's keep jogging. (*Kids jog in place.*)

Watch out! There's a log over there! Everyone, move to the side and out of the way of the log! (*Allow kids to move side to side.*) Great job, everyone! Go ahead and find your seats.

Host Script: You all did awesome! Give someone close to you a high-five and say, "Great job!" (*Great job!*) I would go on an epic journey with any of you any time. Here at (*insert your church name*) we want you to know that you are a part of our team. We are here to share the good news of Jesus and we can't wait for you to learn more! Let's keep learning and having fun together!