



Portraits of God's People

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Connection: We crave it, seek it, and flourish with it. Connection grounds us and makes us feel safe. Although we can survive alone, we thrive when we work together. God designed His people to be communal creatures.

I am blessed to have a wonderful Christian family, and I pray I continue the legacy my grandparents and parents have set. I want to be everything for my children; I want to exhibit every fruit of the Spirit flawlessly. I want to be a homemaker, professional, gourmet chef, number one fan, Proverbs 31 woman, Titus 2 woman—and to know when to put on the exact hat the child in front of me needs and then be ready for the next child with another hat in hand. I hope to be everything for my kids, but I am so aware of all my human limitations.

I love the church, too. Without the church, my kids would be limited in their exposure to wonderful people with more wisdom than I could ever dream of. They would be subjected to me juggling all the hats and getting it wrong most of the time. I always misunderstood the infamous phrase “It takes a village.” I took it to mean that children are such handfuls that hundreds of people must take turns wrestling them into submission. Now that I am a mom, there is still some wrestling, but I understand that it takes influence from my village to make well-rounded, productive adults out of my children. There is no better village than God's people!

Lately it has been obvious how much I enjoy being home. I had a hard time staying away for a mere 48 hours for a retreat. The lodging was beautiful, the company fantastic, the weather perfect. There was nothing to complain about. I could not wrap my mind around it since my family and I had traveled out of state earlier that year, and I did not miss my house one time. When the retreat was over, I felt so much relief as soon as I stepped in my door. The sense of familiarity filled my soul. I realized when I laid eyes on my kids and husband that they are the reason I am a homebody, not my messy house. They are my home, my comfort, my people.

That is how God wants us to feel in the church. He wants us to know that is where we are supposed to be. He wants us to be able to rest easy, knowing there is space for us. He wants us to feel a sense of relief as soon as we walk through the door, overwhelmed with the familiar feeling of love.

I need to be around people who are of one mind in Christ but have unique strengths, qualities, and opinions. The world tells us we cannot get along with people who have different personalities, views, or skin colors. God's people know our differences are what make us the church. The church is strong, not because we are all mindless robots, but because we are all unique pieces that come together in an attempt to reflect God's light into a dark world. Our God does a beautiful job of portraying this idea in the metaphors He uses throughout His word. He wants us to be together. He wants us to build relationships. He wants us to be connected.

A blank canvas is where we all start
Endless possibilities to create art.

When you hear "a portrait of God's people,"
Do you think pews, preachers, and a steeple?
Shiny, happy people with a smile on their face,
The little children of the world in every race,
Their Sunday best pressed without wrinkle or stain,
Who present themselves well without any strain?

Or does your vision resemble your own life?
A struggling mom, a lonely wife?
A young lady with no direction,
No sight of a purpose, no sense of connection?
Are you unsatisfied with the portrait He has designed,
Wondering why this was the one you were assigned?

Other portraits seem tidy and neat—
Clean lines, confident strokes, complete.

Why would He make ours such a mess?
Colored with trauma, worry, anxiety, and stress,
Out of focus, on a grayscale,
No signs of vibrancy or even pastel.

When we look closely at others' portraits, we can see
The beauty hidden between colors where you wouldn't think it would be.

The reason we do not always see the flaws of others,
Sometimes unheard of, that may cause you to shudder,
Is that the Painter turned "mistakes" into art
To hang in His gallery, to make them a part.
This gallery is filled with portraits of all—
Spiritual giants, humble servants, who heard the call.

God has a special place for you;
Still painting your portrait, He is not through.
He has navigated a path where you can be confident,
Surrounded by people your talents will complement.

Nestle into the place He placed you with pride
In the building, branch, body, as the bride.
Flock to the family in reverence to the priesthood
As a worker in the kingdom of a King who is good.

Questions to Consider:

1. What makes you feel at home? How can you create that feeling in the church for other people?
2. What do you see as your role(s) in the kingdom of God?
3. What do you need from other Christians that you can't do yourself?