

Belonging...

By Steve Stutzman

“For they searched for a city...” Belonging. Somewhere deep inside of each of us, as a person, is a person yearning to “belong.” The Holidays are upon us again, reminding us of our families, and where we “Belong.” We travel many miles just to sit around a room with those we call family. Often we go “home” – to the place where we grew up, where our parents are, and spend a day just belonging. Women gush over the new babies, the children, and how they have grown. The men hob-nob in another room, talking about the sour economy and how things aren’t like they used to be. The youth are bored- but everyone knows, someday they too will return to this place – to belong. Not having a place to belong can be one of the worlds very painful feelings. I remember one day when one of my boys, at a very tender age – maybe 3- came crying to Dorcas. She was doing a Creative Memory album and due to the business of our lives, was several years back in the album. The sad lad had noticed that his picture was not included with the others... in fact, he was not even in the family pictures. His little mind had been very busy, and he began to fear he did not belong. “Mommy,” He whimpered, “Did I really come from Wal-Mart?” It seems that the boy had observed carts coming OUT of the store, loaded with all manner of merchandise... and a baby. He began to fear that somewhere in that big, horrible store we had purchased him along with supplies. Of course, we calmed his fears and comforted him with the truth- but it showed me how early in life a feeling of not belonging can surface and hurt. The desire to belong is a powerful motivation. Gangs operate on this principle. Wars are fought over who belongs where, and who belongs to whom. Many times when this desire to belong is not met God’s way, entire lives are spent trying to answer the cry. Millions of \$\$ are made and hoarded, empires are built, and the homeless huddle under a bridge- all because of the hurt to belong. Many times the greatest pain people carry around in their lives is the pain of not belonging. The homeless feel rejected-no place to belong. Prisoners feel like society has no place for them- they “belong” only behind bars. The molested child grows up feeling alone and isolated- even in a family. People are hurt and ousted in school, from cliques, places they had tried so hard to belong in, but couldn’t make it. Then the church gets involved. Using the desire to belong as a way to promote good behavior, we deliver stinging blows of rejection to whip folks into line. The landscape is littered with wounded, scabbed over, and bleeding believers, who simply have given up on belonging. They don’t trust leadership, and won’t “just submit”, because they are still reeling from a wounding of spirit even they don’t understand. To many, this pain of not belonging is too much to risk again. Last night I heard a group sing a song that had a line: “Heaven is my Home, because that’s where my Father lives....” How true. After all, we “belong” to our parents, right? So if we are “Born Again” to God in Christ through the spirit, then Heaven is home. We have no continuing city here, and we find ourselves joining a parade of believers stretching clear back beyond Abraham, “searching for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” When an accident claimed the life of my mother, one sister, and one brother 37 years ago, my dad taught us a certain song. Every morning, those of us not in the hospital would gather and sing the lines, “God’s way is best, if human wisdom, a fairer way may seem to show, tis only that our earth-dimmed vision, the truth can never truly know...” Perhaps much of our struggle to belong comes from that “Earth-dimmed vision,” and we forget where we truly belong. Where do you belong? To whom do you belong? According to Col. 1:27 and Eph. 2:6, the reality of an Eternal Christ within us makes us heaven’s “homeboys”, residents, citizens. We may sojourn here on earth awhile, but heaven is Home. One day our visa to earth will expire- and we will return HOME. Home to where we belong. To belong is to believe. To believe is to belong. Do YOU believe?