

Create Belonging Pt. I

by
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When you and I are healthy we create belonging around us. Have you been through books, videos, sermons, counseling, prayer ministry, seminars and small groups only to feel something is still missing? Do you feel there is more out there that you need but don't have?

Infants naturally create belonging. When you and I function the way we were designed, we, too, create belonging around us. Traumas quickly stop the natural process of creating belonging. When painful absences occur and bad things happen we become stuck in our pain and wait for others to create belonging for us. The first step in recovery so we can heal, grow and mature is the ability to create belonging around ourselves instead of waiting for others to do it for us. This crucial but often misunderstood process is often ignored. For some answers, let us look at a most unlikely woman.

King David is advanced in years. His days are numbered. Throughout his life David faced and survived lions, bears, giants, power-hungry sons, fanatical kings, enemy nations and even a destroying angel. Powerless against his own mortality, we find David in 1 Kings at the ripe age of seventy. The seasoned king is preparing to leave his earthen vessel. In spite of covers and clothing, David's body is cold. David is unable to warm himself. He requires intervention. David's servants, concerned for their master's well being, step in and choose a young virgin named Abishag the Shunammite to nurse and serve the king in his last days. Calling in a caretaker for bodily warmth was not unusual in ancient times. In fact, both the second century Greek physician Galen and the Jewish historian Josephus mention the use of another person to provide warmth as a medical procedure. Even though David's servants sought this young woman for her beauty, David's relationship with Abishag was nonsexual. David was not interested in pleasure but heat.

There is more drama to this story but let us focus on how Abishag created belonging. Abishag, a young virgin, an ordinary person like you and me, created belonging with as little as her warmth for the renowned King David. Abishag, with her presence and availability, lessened the suffering of the great king. She used what she had available to produce life and blessing. While some see Abishag as a victim, others view her as a hero. Not long after Abishag appears on the scene, we see David's son Adonijah trying to lay claim to Abishag in a political maneuver. Interestingly, scholars attribute Abishag as the woman spoken of by Solomon in Song of Solomon. Abishag is the focus of affection between two of David's sons. This young woman is presented kindly in the Biblical text which indicates she may have been popular and well liked. People want to be around Abishag. I suggest Abishag was more than a source of heat or another pretty face. When you create belonging, people gravitate toward you. "I enjoy being around you!" "You are so much fun!" "You make me smile." "I love your hugs." Belonging is contagious. While scholars are unsure of Abishag's marital standing with David, one thing is clear. Abishag was a source of life. People wanted to be around her. Something good emerges when belonging is created. There is warmth. Joy grows. Appreciation flows. Blessings abound.

David's fragile state is a vivid reminder to the significance of belonging. Mighty David needed the help of another, someone other than himself. His helper was not one of his mighty men or an experienced warrior. No, this was a lone, young virgin. Ironically, it was David's son, Solomon, who

penned, *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?* Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 Belonging not only keeps us warm and helps us when we fall. Belonging reflects the Kingdom of God and the beauty of His Creation. Belonging is the natural response from people who live from the heart Jesus gives.

Skill 3 of the 19 Skills THRIVE offers is known as *Form Bonds for Two* or “Synchronize Attachments”. Form bonds for two refers to the bond two people share by synchronizing attachment centers so the two can move closer or farther apart in satisfying ways. Having another person interact with us and reciprocate our signals builds security, stability and helps us prepare for Skill 5, known as *Family Bonds* or Bonds for Three. Two way bonds develop mutual mind, a function of the cingulate cortex at Level 3 of the control center. Mutual mind helps us feel understood, heard and “felt”. When we have a strong bond with another person we develop the confidence to advance, explore and persevere. Bonds form our view of life. Bonds create our interpretation of the world around us. Joy and the pain we feel when bonds fail influence the values that make our decisions of what we pay attention to. Bonds that are new always change our identity and even modify our reality. Our brain is wonderfully designed to rely on other people to achieve optimal growth and development.

Throughout our lives, especially in the most vulnerable times, we need community, relationships and available people to be with us. How painful it is to have no help in times of difficulty, no ear to listen, no face to sympathize, no shoulder to cry on. As the wise king said, “woe to him is who is alone when he falls, he has no one to help him up.” Learn more in the next edition of Nathanael’s Tree about how you can create belonging around you. Watch for Volume 13 of Dr. Jim Wilder’s Munchies teachings where more on Creating Belonging is examined. Until then, follow Abishag’s example and be a source of warmth, life and joy. Create belonging today.