

## Levels of Belonging

Several of us have recently read “The Search to Belong” of which the thesis is all humans, not just *function*, but find belonging/community in four environments: Public, Social, Personal, Intimate.

- *Public belonging* is experienced when we connect through outside influences. For instance I experience community with 75,000 people in Mile High Stadium during a Bronco game. When we lose, we lose together and strangers console one another. A large worship service is obviously the example of public belonging in the church setting.
- *Social belonging* is experienced when we connect by sharing a “snap-shot” or hint of what it would be like to share personal space/belonging. Social belonging is “neighbor relationships”; a space to find those with whom we can grow “deeper” relationships; a space to begin the risk of sharing who we really are.” For example I will BBQ with my neighbors this summer to belong socially and see where it goes. But if it never gets beyond BBQ, that’s okay, because the need to get personal/intimate is most likely being met somewhere else. I think we err when we try to force social to become personal. I presume that many people who claim that someone is “unfriendly” says so because they are disappointed (or demanding) that the social relationship hasn’t become more/deeper.
- *Personal belonging* is experienced when we share private (not “naked”) information, experiences, or feelings. For instance I called my friend Jon the other day to wish him a happy 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. After making fun of his age we touched base on our wives, kids, and our ministries (he is a pastor in another state). He remarked that we don’t get to interact much, and we don’t, because we are both so busy with our churches, families, and friendships. But our conversation was very personal because over time our friendship has grown from public and social to personal. When we talk we pick up like we see each other daily when in fact we are lucky to see each other once a year. We can share difficult, meaningful, and self-disclosing information at the drop of a hat. This is personal belonging.
- *Intimate belonging* is experienced when we share “naked” information, experiences or feelings and we do not feel ashamed. For instance I experience community when I talk with my wife about my deep fears, or when I confess that same ‘ol sin to my covenant group.