

## **Attachment to God and to others**

God lovingly pursues us for present and eternal connection (Rev 3:20)

He desires primacy over all other connections (Matt. 22:37, Col. 1:18)

He desires total dependence on Him. (John 15: 5)

He desires total submission to Him (Matt 26:42)

We are hardwired for relationship. The three persons of the triune God is already in relationship, and we are made in His image with the capacity to connect.

### **Connection with God**

It starts at the Cross and continues with our taking up the cross.

Connection is for now and into the future, through good and bad times.

The body of Christ plays an important role

Our God connection is targeted by spiritual forces.

### **Emotional experiences impact us.**

- Infants internalize emotional experiences with their primary caregivers and register these in implicit and explicit memories.
- These emotionally based beliefs relate to sense of self and sense of the other.
- The way we think, act, and feel in relationships (to one another and to God) is influenced by these emotional experiences and core relational beliefs developed from infancy.
- These relational/attachment styles can be changed.

### **Care-giving experiences and attachment styles**

- Secure attachment style: when a child grows up with mostly consistent responsiveness and attentiveness to their needs.
- Anxious-Preoccupied attachment style: inconsistent or unpredictable caregiving where a parent is nurturing and attentive towards the child at times, but insensitive or antipathetic at other times.
- Dismissive-Avoidant attachment style: when a child has a parent or caregiver who is consistently emotionally unavailable or unresponsive to his/her needs.
- Disorganized/Fearful Avoidant attachment style: when a child grows up in an abusive and fearful environment.

### **Core Beliefs Impacting Relationship**

#### Our Sense of Self

- Am I worthy of love?
- Am I competent to get love?

#### Our Sense of the Other

- Are others trustworthy?
- Are others capable of loving me?

### **Secure Attachment Style**

- Holds positive view of self and of the other.
- Comfortable with both closeness and autonomy
- Copes with stress by managing self and seeking out loved ones.
- Able to experience and regulate emotions.
- Trusting comes easier.

### **Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment Style**

- Perceives self as inadequate but views others positively.
- Yearns for intimacy and highly sensitive to any rejection.
- Needs repeated assurance from relationships to feel secure. Tends to please and over function.
- Losses of job, health, relationships, possessions seen as proof that one is being and will be abandoned.
- Feels easily overwhelmed by emotions - high anxiety.
- Perceived by others as needy/dependent.

### **Dismissive Avoidant Attachment Style**

- Views self as competent. Tends to be self-reliant. Views the other as unreliable.
- Uncomfortable with emotions and with those perceived as controlling or needy/dependent.
- Over-regulate emotions. Appears as distant and not needing intimate relationships.
- Uncomfortable with closeness and feels self sufficient to meet own needs.
- Difficulty asking for support when in need.
- Struggles with internalizing the presence of God in daily life.
- Fills void with busyness or numbing activities.

### **Disorganized/Fearful Avoidant Attachment Style**

- Perceives self as unlovable and others as untrustworthy and uncaring.
- Longs for intimacy but feels very vulnerable in close relationships.
- Over-regulates and/or under-regulates emotions. Underlying intrapersonal and interpersonal chronic anxiety
- Pursues relationship for assurance of worth and safety and distances from relationship by pushing away with anger, distrust, fear.

Past experiences with authority figures may influence the way we relate.

Authoritarian: harsh and punishing, controlling

Laissez-faire: no guidance and limits, neglect

Authoritative: benevolent leadership

Projection to current figures in leadership

Internalized tendencies to respond by being rebellious or passive/passive aggressive, risk taking or risk averse, assertive, or submissive.

### God as Father

Difficulty in trusting that God cares (especially when under stress)

Quick to read into situations as a punishment from God

Sees limit-setting as controlling instead of for one's protection and welfare.

Difficulty accepting correction, consequences, and discipline— seen as harsh and punishing.

### **Healing attachment wounds**

- Know the character of God and His Word
- Awareness of and challenge unhealthy core beliefs about self and others and unhelpful engagement styles
- Manage anxieties and taking responsibility for the part self plays **now** in relational dynamics and taking risks to balance closeness and autonomy needs.
- Providing a safe and non-anxious presence in relationships aid others to heal.
- Recognizing the Spirit is at work in us and desires and helps our growth.

## Growth in emotional maturity skills

1. Observe and change unhealthy emotional patterns in your relationships:  
Avoid gossiping and triangulating others to pass on your anxiety.  
Focus on changing self instead of others. Allow others emotional space to be different.  
Avoid dealing with differences by cut-offs or distancing from others. Stay in connection.  
Be responsible instead of over-functioning or under-functioning.
2. Practice self-reflection. E.g., How do I generally deal with conflicts?  
Who am I avoiding in the family? What is my part in the dynamics? What can I change?  
How do I give people emotional space?  
What are my triggers and daggers?
3. Learn to recognize and name emotions.
4. Learn self-regulation.
  - 1) Monitor thoughts, feelings, and actions
  - 2) Prepare for anxiety producing and challenging situations with calm answers
  - 3) Transform responses by reappraising the situation - e. g. attributing different reasons, using positive reframes
  - 4) Use of relaxation methods, focused breathing, body scan,
  - 5) Use of time out "I can't talk now because my limbic system is very activated"
  - 6) Use of peaceful imagery
  - 7) Change of position – stand or sit or stretch
  - 8) Transforming automatic negative thoughts to balanced thoughts
  - 9) Learn empathy for self and others. Be kind in thought and in deed.
5. Focus on changing self.
  - a) Being aware of one's part in patterned interactions
  - b) Assume responsibility for that part
  - c) Change the part one plays
  - d) Planning small, manageable steps
  - e) Inform others of change
  - f) Anticipate reaction from others
  - g) Prepare non-reactive response to their reaction
  - h) Hold new position till new pattern is established
6. Learn social skills.  
How to stay in good connection with people  
How to deal with conflict  
How to take a stand on what you believe and allow others to have their own beliefs