

# Blessed Be the Ties that Bind

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Attachment in the Body of Christ



# Attachment Principles

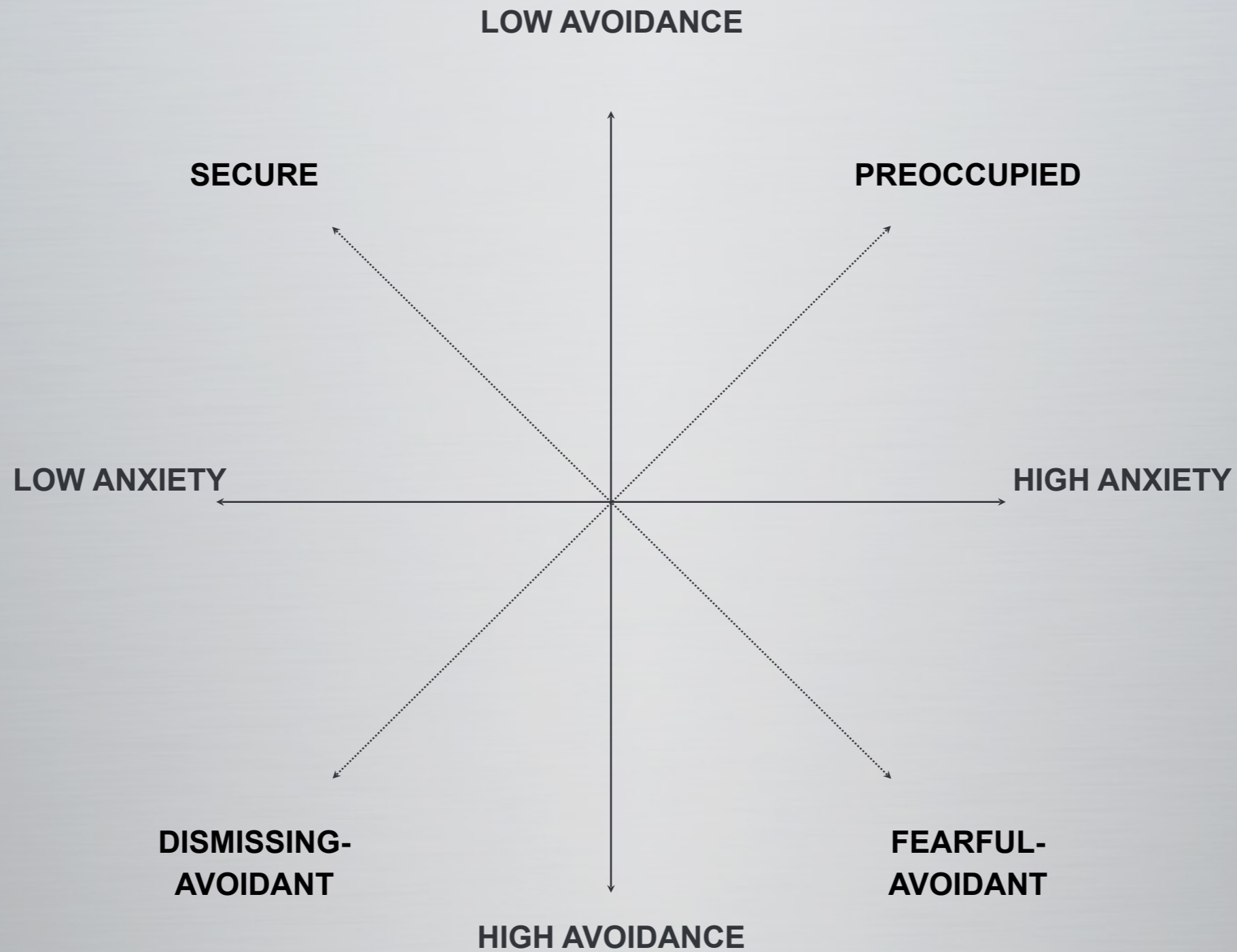
- Safe Haven
- Secure Base
  - A place to explore the world from (evangelism)
  - A place to engage rich relationships (fellowship)
  - A place to reach out for new ideas (education)
  - A place to address what is potentially frightening (confession; fear of God)
  - A place to grow (formation and transformation)

# Creating Attachment

- People come with attachment styles/patterns
  - Anxious
  - Avoidant
  - Secure
- New attachments follow patterns found in early hours of life
  - *How do we facilitate family bonds within the family as primary and with the church as exemplar?*
  - Looking into each others' eyes
  - Close proximity
  - Touch
  - Comfort



# Attachment Patterns in Adulthood



**Adapted from Fraley & Shaver (RGP, 2000)**

# Attachment Injury

- An attachment injury occurs when one partner violates the expectation that the other will offer comfort and caring in times of danger and distress. It is characterized by perceived abandonment or betrayal of trust during a critical moment of need (pain or gain).

# Responses to Attachment Threats

- Fight (criticize, nag, negative engagement)
- Flight (running away; active disengaging)
- Freeze (paralyze; stop growing; refuse to participate)
- Reach (turning toward, seeking comfort, protection, acceptance)

# Bowlby and Ainsworth's Attachment Theory: Big Ideas for Pastoral Care

- Bowlby: The capacity to make emotional bonds with other individuals, sometimes in the careseeking role and sometimes in the caregiving, is a principle feature of effective personality functioning and mental health.”
- Attachment styles follow people throughout life and across situations
- Scripture presents God as an attachment figure (ie Psalm 31)



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# Bowlby and Ainsworth's Attachment Theory: Big Ideas for Pastoral Care

- Research says that people seek God as an attachment figure, and in the pastoral care role, clergy members as well
- Both healthy and anxious patterns of attachment show significant orientation *toward* God attachments, whereas avoidant patterns often *avoid* God as well (significant to evangelism/assimilation efforts)
- Many church and spiritual conflicts can be perceived as attachment injuries and require attachment-based healing responses

# Bowlby and Ainsworth's Attachment Theory: Big Ideas for Pastoral Care of Families

- Attachment theory addresses childhood bonding, couple functioning, and receptivity to faith as an intimate relationship with God and others
- Healthy homes are safe havens
- Safe haven homes encourage exploratory responses and nurture faith relationships
- Healthy churches should help homes be safe havens as a foundation for lifelong spiritual health
- Healthy churches should BE safe havens, providing corrective emotional experiences as part of the spiritual formation/transformation process

# Attaching Curriculum Theory to our work with families

- The explicit curriculum-- What we intend to teach: Bible, theology, ecclesiology
- The implicit curriculum-- What we teach through the kind of place we are: how we “ARE” with each other; Church as FAMILY of God (learning because of the kind of place we are)
- Null curriculum-- lots of things we *don't* teach that teaches what we DON'T value (per class conversation- sexuality, while outside forces DO teach attitudes)
- Hidden curriculum-- stuff we don't get taught but we all know (the right answer is always Jesus; you pay