

Mt. 7:24-27

Obviously, the pillar we are focusing on is: Know that you stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before.

While this pillar is perhaps referring to past staff, students and the traditions of the school, there is a very significant way that this idea relates to everyone and affects every aspect of our lives: attachment theory.

Attachment theory is the relatively new discovery in psychology that the relationship we have with our significant caregiver in the first few years of our life **can** shape the way we relate to other people for the rest of our lives.

There are 4 attachment styles, with secure attachment being the ideal style three insecure types of attachment. Trigger warning – you are going to recognise yourself in one of these descriptions:

A secure attachment where you learned to trust that your caregiver will always be there and be responsive to your needs. This is the ideal because it provides a secure base for you to go out into the world and form strong, healthy relationships with other people.

An anxious attachment develops when you are raised with inconsistent caregiving – they were sometimes there for you, but sometimes not. People with this style of attachment can be clingy in relationships and overdependent on others. They are highly sensitive to criticism or rejection, constantly seek reassurance from others, and experience intense emotional reactions to others. This is **my** attachment style.

An avoidant-dismissive attachment develops when a caregiver is emotionally unavailable or dismissive of a child's needs. These people tend to distance themselves emotionally from others, valuing independence at the expense of intimacy. They suppress their emotions and have difficulty with intimacy, appearing overly self-sufficient.

The Fearful Avoidant is associated with a history of inconsistent, frightening or neglectful caregiving. These people often exhibit contradictory behaviour – seeking closeness with others but then suddenly pushing people away. They often struggle to regulate their emotions and have difficulty trusting other people. They desire intimacy but are also intensely afraid of it.

Now just let me say this: all parents do the best they can. I look at my children and see that none of them have a secure attachment style. But as a parent, I did the best I could with where I was at the time – and so the point of this is not to blame parents, but rather to learn why we are the way we are and to consider how we might move towards a more solid, secure attachment.

Because none of us have the perfect start in life. We will all be standing on shoulders that have not been perfectly secure. What is even more significant is that we also will be providing the shoulders that our children will stand on. If we do not do any work on ourselves, any healing, then we will pass on to our children the same issues that were passed on to us.

But let me encourage you – you can change your attachment style. You can learn to find the emotional security that you may not have consistently found in your caregivers within yourself. In fact, I believe that this is one of our most important jobs in this life – to face our pain and learn to love ourselves so that we become a source of love and security for others in our life.

You will probably spend a large part of your life trying to find someone to love you enough to make you feel okay. But no one can ever do this for us – no matter how much or how perfectly they love us. The love we all need is a love that can only come from the inside. In the church we refer to this as the love of God – the love that says you are perfect and acceptable as you are, no matter what you do or how you perform. This is the love that Jesus came to bear witness to in his life and through his death – it is a love that will last – even we believe, through death and into eternity.

No matter what shoulders you were given to stand on in life, beneath all of those are the unconditional and unchanging love of God, which is always available to all of us, if we will stop seeking it outside, and instead, turn inside and ask for God to show us his love for us.