

FOREWORD BY K.J. RAMSEY

A T T A C H E D

T O G O D

K R I S P I N

M A Y F I E L D

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DEEPER SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

Attached to God

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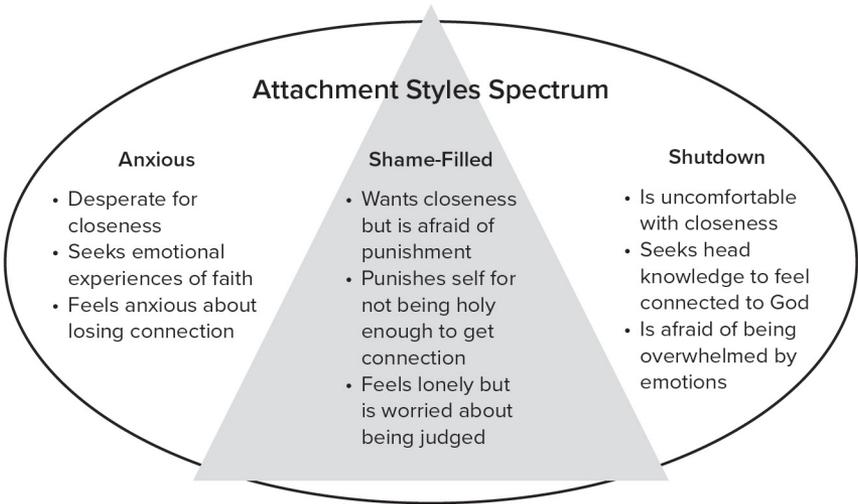
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Chapter One

THE STILL FACE OF GOD



Everyone finds themselves on this spectrum sometimes. Shame-filled spirituality fits in the middle because you're both desperate for closeness and uncomfortable with it, embodying elements of both anxious and shutdown attachment styles. If you feel far from God, it's helpful to ask, "Am I relating to God with anxious, shutdown, or shame-filled attachment style right now?"

WHAT'S YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE?

This assessment will give you an idea of which attachment style you tend toward in your relationship with God. Attachment to God is best understood on a spectrum. No assessment is perfect, so while this tool will help you begin to identify your attachment style, it will be important to read further descriptions of each style to find out which one resonates with you most.

1. **I study the Bible . . .**
 - a. to understand God's message or plan for me.
 - b. to learn God's plan for the world and build a theological framework for my faith.
 - c. to make sure I am obeying God and not sinning.
2. **At church (in the present or past) others experience me most as . . .**
 - a. vulnerable and authentic.
 - b. reliable and helpful.
 - c. quiet and shy.
3. **I believe spiritual growth comes *most* from . . .**
 - a. spending time with God in prayer or meditation.
 - b. learning about God through studying the Bible.
 - c. rigorous accountability to others.
4. **What I find most compelling about Jesus's life is . . .**
 - a. God made it possible for us to be together.
 - b. God fulfilled a salvation plan that began in Genesis.
 - c. God took the punishment that I deserved.
5. **I feel most frustrated with God . . .**
 - a. when God seems silent.
 - b. almost never. I don't usually feel frustrated with God.

- c. when I feel like God sets standards for holiness I can't live up to.
6. **I feel like I fit best when . . .**
- a. serving the needs of others (food bank, hospitality, maintenance team, etc.).
 - b. in an accountability group.
 - c. in a small group or Bible study.
7. **During a musical worship service . . .**
- a. I love reading the truth in the lyrics.
 - b. I feel uncomfortable.
 - c. I hope to feel close to God, or I do feel close to God.
8. **God loves me . . .**
- a. just like God loves everyone else.
 - b. because God has to love me.
 - c. despite the fact that I don't deserve it.
9. **My biggest concern about my relationship with God usually is . . .**
- a. Am I continuing to learn the Bible and do what's right?
 - b. Have I done something wrong that's creating distance between me and God?
 - c. Am I making God a big enough priority in my life?
10. **When I recognize I've sinned . . .**
- a. I know God has already forgiven me, so no need to talk to God about it.
 - b. I confess, but I still feel bad.
 - c. I immediately confess and ask for forgiveness.
11. **I worry most about . . .**
- a. going to hell or losing my faith.
 - b. staying emotionally close with God.
 - c. doing enough for the kingdom of God and the gospel.

12. **During quiet time or Bible study, I usually . . .**
- a. feel guilty, or I feel pressure to have a “spiritual experience.”
 - b. feel like God has a special message for me.
 - c. learn things to ground my faith and worldview.
13. **When thinking about the Christian life . . .**
- a. sometimes I worry if I will ever change or grow.
 - b. I’m excited about continuing to grow and become more like Jesus.
 - c. I feel like I do a good job of following Jesus, but there’s always room to grow.
14. **It seems like God . . .**
- a. doesn’t move in me, or interact in my life, as much as in the lives of those around me.
 - b. is just waiting to connect with me.
 - c. likes me just as much as God likes everyone else in the world.
15. **When it comes to decisions in my life . . .**
- a. I don’t feel capable of making good decisions.
 - b. I ask God in prayer about nearly all of them.
 - c. I make them based on my understanding of the Bible.
16. **When I follow Jesus’s teaching to care for the least of these, my biggest motivation is . . .**
- a. that I am emotionally impacted by the suffering of others.
 - b. to avoid God’s judgment of injustice.
 - c. fulfilling that part of the life of a follower of Jesus.
17. **When I think about heaven . . .**
- a. I look forward to worshipping God forever.
 - b. I worry if I will fit in there.
 - c. I think about what needs to be done before then, like global missions and local ministries.

18. **I feel closest to God . . .**
- a. during a musical worship service.
 - b. after I've confessed my sins.
 - c. learning theology or grasping truths from the Bible.
19. **When I don't have time for my regular spiritual practices . . .**
- a. I worry that I'm drifting from God.
 - b. I feel like God's disappointed with me.
 - c. I remind myself that my other tasks, like work and family, are important too.
20. **When I feel anxiety or sadness . . .**
- a. I ask God to help me feel better.
 - b. I feel like if I really believed the Bible, then I wouldn't feel those emotions.
 - c. I remind myself of biblical encouragements to "be strong and courageous" and to "rejoice in the Lord always."

Scoring Key

Tally the number of each letter for each section (noted below), then tally each column.

Section 1 Questions #1–5	Total A answers = _____	Total B answers = _____	Total C answers = _____
Section 2 Questions #6–10	Total C answers = _____	Total A answers = _____	Total B answers = _____
Section 3 Questions #11–15	Total B answers = _____	Total C answers = _____	Total A answers = _____
Section 4 Questions #16–20	Total A answers = _____	Total C answers = _____	Total B answers = _____
	Total from Column = _____	Total from Column = _____	Total from Column = _____
	Anxious Attachment	Shutdown Attachment	Shame-Filled Attachment

WHAT DOES MY NUMBER MEAN?

The higher the number score in each column, the more likely you tend toward that style of attachment. While this gives you a starting point, reading through the chapters on the attachment styles will help you further explore your attachment with God. Ultimately, in reading about each style, you should be able to identify which you feel best fits your style of relating to God.

Chapter Two

YOUR STYLE AND WHAT IT MEANS



Attachment Style

Anxious

Shutdown

Shame-filled

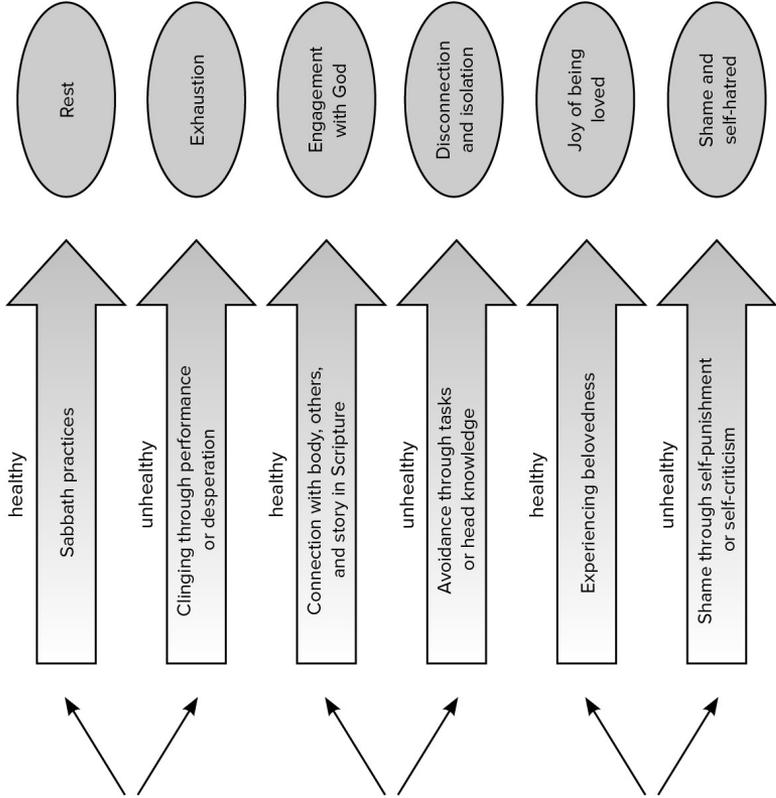
Need

To know God won't abandon me, no matter what

To know God is present with me in all emotions—even sadness and worry

To know that God likes me

Map



Chapter Three

ANXIOUS SPIRITUALITY



Breathing Prayer Exercise

1. Sit in a quiet place. Rock forward and back, right and left to find a comfortable position.
2. Focus on your breath, but let it flow naturally.
3. Choose a phrase or word you can comfortably say within the time of a breath in or out. Traditionally many have used phrases like *Lord Jesus, have mercy*, but it can be as short as one word and can be a feeling you would like to experience while with God, like *safe, calm, loved, or peace*.
4. Set a timer on your phone. Two minutes is a fine place to start. As you breathe deeply in through your mouth and out through your nose, come back to the phrase you've chosen.
5. If your mind drifts—and it will—that's part of the process. Simply refocus.
6. After the allotted time, check in to see if your body feels any different.
7. You can do this same breathing prayer with an image instead of a word. I often imagine a baby crying on his mother's chest—a picture I was given during a particularly difficult part of my life. Throughout the exercise, continually bring your focus back to the image.

Chapter Four

SHUTDOWN SPIRITUALITY



Brief Body Scan Exercise

1. Sit upright in a comfortable position. Take three intentional breaths. They don't have to be deep breaths, just comfortable and grounding.
2. Notice your whole body, and see if you notice any immediate sensations. It might be pain in your neck, hunger in your stomach, or a little tension in your chest. Or maybe you feel numbness. You might notice a heaviness in your shoulders. Don't jump to interpreting the sensation; just notice it.
3. If paying attention to your whole body feels overwhelming, start with your toes, and move up along your legs, noticing each part until you reach your head.
4. Rather than judging these sensations, try to notice them simply as data.
5. That's it. Great job. If you make a habit of noticing your body sensations twice a day, it's a great foundation for knowing and engaging with your emotions.

Chapter Five

SHAME-FILLED SPIRITUALITY



The Loving Face of God

1. Think of someone who likes you. It could be a partner, a family member, a good friend, a mentor—or even a pet.
2. Close your eyes, and imagine their face. What does it look like when you first greet them? Imagine the shape of their eyes, the upturn of their smile.
3. Notice how your body feels as you focus. Your shoulders might relax, or you might feel your gut stop clenching.
4. Now, without putting pressure on yourself, gently consider that perhaps this is a better picture of God's feeling toward you than what you've been told.
5. How does this new picture compare with your usual picture of God?
6. If God delighted in you in this way, how might this change your style of relating to God?

Chapter Seven

FROM ANXIETY TO REST



Commandment Exercise

1. Think about some commandments you follow in your walk with God. Jot down five of them, such as:
 - being honest with my words and actions
 - caring for the least of these
 - being faithful to my spouse
2. Take time to meditate on each of these commandments you try to follow, and consider the ways they are helpful to you and those you know. Rather than these commandments—this Divine wisdom—being a demand that we show God our love, consider how they might show God’s love for you, those you love, and the most vulnerable in your community. Consider the natural consequences of suffering that could happen without this guidance.
3. Now reframe each commandment into a statement about God’s wishes for you and for the world:
 - “God wants me to be in a healthy community where people treat each other well and trust one another.”
 - “God wants the poor and sick—people made in God’s image—to be cared for.”

- “God wants my marriage to be an emotionally safe place of refuge.”
4. Lastly, take two minutes to consider these statements and what they say about God’s attitude toward you.
-

Monument Exercise

In our lives, I hope most of us have times of poignantly experiencing joy, peace, love, and acceptance. They often surprise us—and then pass quickly. Take a moment to find your own monument to God’s love.

1. Identify a time you’ve felt safe or loved or calm or felt God’s presence.
 2. Is there a concrete reminder of that time? A picture, song, poem, or other object you can return to?
 3. If not, can you draw or create an image that reminds you of the experience?
 4. Take this reminder and place it somewhere you’ll regularly see it.
 5. This helps the emotional right side of your brain integrate the left-brained logical statements you know about God’s love.
-

Chapter Eight

FROM SHUTDOWN TO ENGAGED



Writing a Lament

Lament is a prayer to God that includes both complaint and praise. Take time to follow these steps, writing down each part, and join in the tradition of the psalms:

1. Tell God something you wish were different in your own life or the world, such as a health condition, difficult relationship, life stress, poverty, or racism.
2. Example: *God, I know there are children who do not have the food they need right now.*
3. Next, tell God what you feel when you think about this issue; additionally, write down any emotions you might feel considering God's inaction regarding this issue.
4. *I feel sad and frustrated that you see it all, and you still let it happen.*
5. Tell about a time in your own life or someone else's where God intervened.
6. *I know you fed the five thousand and gave the Israelites manna in the desert.*

7. Ask God to step in and address this suffering.
 8. *Please rescue starving children globally and in my own community.*
 9. Tell God you're confident that your prayer is heard.
 10. *I know you hear my prayer and that you care about children.*
 11. Praise or recognize one of God's attributes or characteristics, based on your past or present experience.
 12. *You are the God who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty. I praise you for your loving justice.*
-

Lectio Divina Exercise

1. **Read:** Read the Scripture and notice words or phrases that stand out. My wife asks our kids to notice if any parts of Scripture “sparkle” as they hear it.
 2. **Meditate:** Read again, and notice what feels personal to you—ponder the passage. There's no right or wrong. Simply notice what comes up as you give your attention to the passage.
 3. **Respond:** Tell God what stood out to you. You may hear a response; you may not. It is important that *lectio divina* be grounded in engagement with a *loving* God. (Hint: this means if you are hearing judgment, double-check that it's not your inner critic.)
 4. **Rest:** Sit with what you received from this time, quietly accepting that God is close, as is always true.
-

Stepping into the Story Exercise

1. Choose a brief story from Scripture. Read it through once.
 2. Identify one person in the story, as well as one specific scene. Read the story again, focusing on that person's particular experience. Notice what they might be feeling, what their goals and motivations are, what their background might be.
 3. Close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to be that person: the facial expressions you would see, the feelings you would have, what things would bring you joy.
 4. Notice how this way of engaging Scripture feels different from talking *about* the story.
-

Chapter Nine

FROM SHAME TO DELIGHT



A Pause from Evaluation

This exercise requires a blank, loose piece of paper (not in a journal!).

1. Make a list of the behaviors or activities that you tend to think God is most concerned about in your life.
2. Next to each behavior or issue, write two basic 1–5 scales that look like this:

1–2–3–4–5

1–2–3–4–5

3. One scale is for you, and one is for God. Don't fill out either of them.
4. Next, fold up the paper into thirds—like a letter. Place it somewhere you can't see it, such as in an envelope or a drawer. You won't be filling it out. This step is to intentionally pause evaluation of yourself while you spend time with God. Putting evaluation aside is a way to remember that God cares about more than just correcting your behavior.
5. Take three deep breaths and close your eyes for a moment. When you open them, notice three things that you can see and five things you are grateful for.

6. Your mind might want to return to evaluation, but remind yourself that the evaluation is still on the paper and you can return to it later. For now you are being grateful for what God has placed in your life.
 7. Afterward, notice how your body feels. Consider what you want to do with the evaluation paper. You might want to return to it, you might want to shred it—either is okay. There will be times of evaluation and reflection on behavior, but it's important to know that you can always take a break from evaluation as well.
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Walking in the Cool of the Evening Exercise

We can discover delight best when we set aside evaluation—even if only for a time.

1. Decide on a calm, quiet activity. Take a walk with God, or stare out the window. Putter around the garden. Put on your favorite record and do nothing else.
 2. Invite God to join you in your activity.
 3. As in previous exercises, acknowledge that there's no need to force yourself to feel any certain way or to have a “take away” from this encounter with your Divine Parent.
 4. Afterward, reflect on how this felt compared with other spiritual activities. Were there parts that were more or less helpful? Uncomfortable or boring? What does your body tell you about this experience?
-

Shame Art Exercise

Since shame can be so right-brain dominant, I want to invite you again to explore your emotional world through art.

1. Bring to mind a time when you felt shame—whether it was an overwhelming, panic-inducing storm or a passing yet stinging pang of shame.
2. Draw a picture of the feeling. It doesn't have to be skilled. It could be a distinct picture or an abstract image.
3. Now draw a picture of the pain in whatever way makes sense to you.
4. Stop and take a breath. Notice what the pain and shame are saying. Perhaps it's a vague feeling of being unlovable; maybe it's a rushing feeling of all the mistakes you've made.
5. Ask yourself, "What is this pain telling me? What does it need to feel comforted? Who could provide God's comfort to me? Is it God? Is it someone who has shown me God's love in my life? What do they have to say about this pain?"

When we sit with our pain, we can find what we need for healing. Perhaps you can't believe you are lovable or that what you've done before doesn't reflect on your value. Take a moment to tell God about this part, both what you need to hear and that you need help believing it.

Chapter Ten

THE RISK OF TRUST



Relationship Repair Letter Exercise

Take some time to write a letter to God. Put to words the pain you've experienced in your faith. Be as honest as possible.

Refrain, for the moment, from trying to resolve your feelings through saying what you *should* feel or what the *truth* is. Just write your feelings, write out the ways you've felt hurt. Use the "Beginning a Forgiveness Conversation" section if needed.

Notice what you feel in your body as you put your feelings into words. Allow some time and space for the pain. God is with us in our pain, though we need not *feel* something to know it's true.

Step into the truth of *God with us* through a time of silence, allowing the pain to find air.

Next write down your need. Then finish the letter, signing your name.

Now write a letter that you imagine God would write back. Remembering that God is not defensive or dismissive, use the following prompt to begin God's letter in response to you:

Dear Child,
Of course you feel . . .

and continue what you could imagine God saying from that point, responding to your pain.

Then imagine what God would say in response to your need.

If it's helpful, close your eyes and imagine Jesus's face and what he would say in response to this pain.

Appendix

ADDITIONAL SPIRITUAL EXERCISES



DRAWING GOD

One way to explore what distortions you've received is to draw a picture of you and God. It doesn't have to be skilled. Taking a few minutes to draw a picture of you and God together can help break through your head knowledge and into your heart experience.

1. Draw a picture of you and God—it can be in any way you would like and any setting you choose. It could be metaphorical or literal. It could also be stick figures.
2. Then consider these questions:
 - How big is God?
 - How big are you?
 - How distant are you?
 - What are the postures?
 - Is there a metaphor or image that you chose to represent yourself or God?
 - Does anything stand out about this portrait of you and God?

In each of our hearts lives a distinct picture of who God is, and the more we understand that picture, the better we will understand why we reach for closeness in the ways we do.

JESUS, FRIEND OF SINNERS

1. Take a moment to think about the sin in your life. Can you imagine God holding it carefully, considering it? What would God do with this sin?
2. This idea might be too difficult for some. Some of us were given such intense teachings about sin that our bodies react with a trauma response to thinking of God seeing our sin. If the idea of God holding your sin feels too intense, perhaps imagine holding your own sin as you talk to God about it.
3. Whether you or God is holding it, what would you tell God about your sin?
4. Now pause for a moment. What is God telling you about your sin? Does God seem overwhelmed or disgusted?
5. Imagine Jesus, who was regularly condemned for eating with sinners. What does he have to say about your sin?

MEETING JESUS

From Pádraig Ó Tuama in his book *In the Shelter*, I learned about a practice that originates with Saint Ignatius. Here is my version of this simple exercise:

1. Close your eyes and imagine yourself walking. You choose the place and time.
2. In the distance you see a person walking toward you. As you get closer, you realize it is Jesus. He greets you by name.
3. He says something about the weather to start the conversation.
4. Then wait with your imagination for what he says next.
5. Then you can say whatever you'd like to Jesus and wait for a response.
6. When you are ready, you can say goodbye in whatever way you would like.
7. Reflect: Notice not only what was said but what tone of voice and body language were used. What stood out to you most about Jesus?

PICTURES OF CLOSENESS WITH GOD

1. Take an old magazine (or several) and think about closeness to God as you flip through the pages; what images stand out to you? What images display an emotion you would like to feel?
2. Notice what these images tell you about how you perceive closeness with God. Now take the positive pictures and keep them somewhere special for reference when you need them. I like to use ones that feel cozy and safe. You can pull these out when you want to be reminded of God's nearness.

3. This exercise helps engage your brain in a different way than hearing statements like “God loves you.” You may know a lot of theological facts about your relationship with God, but engaging different parts of your brain and different senses can help heal your relationship with God.