


Emotional intelligence *for* effective ministry



*Awareness of
our emotions
vitality impacts
mental health
and ministry
effectiveness.*

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

Experts in the field of leadership believe that truly effective leaders possess a high level of emotional intelligence (EQ). As an ingredient of excellent performance, EQ proved to be twice as important as IQ at all levels. EQ is the ability to work with others and effect change. Without EQ, a person can have the best training, an analytical mind, and technical expertise, but still won't make a great leader.¹

Many believe EQ is innate; that is, you are born with it. However, I am a firm believer that EQ can be learned because I have witnessed this fact personally and professionally. According to research, EQ is the management of self and of relationships self-competence and social competence.² Many pastors have shared with me that they never received EQ training in their formal ministerial education. That should change, and here's why.

The relational level

As humans, we crave connectedness because we were created with a relational identity. EQ is relational. God is relational; the Godhead is a prime example. His 10 commandments for us are relational: one section focuses on a relationship with God; the second, with other humans. God's greatest mandate for us is relational: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:36–40). Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie state, "It may help us to think of relationships as the connective tissue of the church."³ Whether church ministry, missionary work, spiritual direction, or chaplaincy, every ministry is relational. Jesus' ministry, discipling, was relational. His character is that of relational qualities, which reveals the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

EQ can be developed through a personal understanding and application of the grace and mercy of the gospel.⁴ Churches are now looking to train in EQ in order to minister more effectively. Studies show EQ is made up of five ingredients: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-regulation, (3) motivation, (4) empathy, and (5) social skill.⁵ As I have trained leaders around these ingredients, I have further developed the five EQ principles specifically for effective ministry leadership.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the gateway to transformation. We find our true self by seeking God, our Leader, first.⁶ When we

seek God and attune ourselves to His presence, we change. The manifestation of His fruit, which then overflows into every aspect of our lives—that is, our relationships and ministries—is a natural process when we abide in Him (John 15:4, 5). Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up to abide with His heavenly Father (Mark 1:35). Intimacy with God overflowed into His relationships with His disciples. Our fruit depends on our intentional relationship with Jesus.

The effectiveness of our leadership hinges on the degree to which we are abiding in Christ.⁷ This is foundational for every ministry. Many ministry leaders do not take time daily to abide. Does your abiding turn into planning a sermon, an object lesson, class, or counsel preparation? “Be still, and know that I am God” is an invitation to unhurried time with Him (Ps. 46:10, KJV),⁸ a time of spiritual renewal. It’s restorative; my soul finds rest in God alone (Ps. 62:1).

Studies show only 1 in 10 pastors take a full day of rest regularly.⁹ Many pastors find the Sabbath to be their most demanding day of ministry. Be intentional by scheduling a day free from work (at least a four-to six-hour block of time) simply to abide in Christ. Live well by giving mind, body, and soul a welcome respite from the cares of this world.

Self-regulation

We have an average of 400 emotional experiences a day. Those with a high sense of self-awareness understand *how* their emotions impact others and their job performance. They can regulate their feelings successfully and are motivated intrinsically.

How we manage our emotions or regulate them makes the difference in leadership success.¹⁰ Pastor Charles Swindoll states, “The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it.”¹¹

Because we encounter so many emotional experiences in a day, it is imperative to understand *how* our emotions impact others and how we can regulate our behavior appropriately. Self-control takes spiritual discipline by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to examine our lives in order to determine what kind of fruit we are bearing.¹² Examine yourself to understand your triggers (Lam. 3:40). Go deeper to identify emotions by examining the root of your behavior. Examine the sins of the generations before you to understand

habitual patterns passed down. Do you have soul wounds needing to be examined, processed, and dealt with by seeking additional behavioral health counseling?

Growth in EQ requires reflection. Journaling, an effective discipline of reflection, can help you to process emotions. It is a safe way to express ourselves before God so that we do not inappropriately sound off to others. Feelings need to be processed in a safe way, allowing us to manage them rather than be engulfed in them.¹³ Studies show that writing about feelings even has health benefits.¹⁴

Be specific by praying Scripture when putting on your armor before leaving home. I pray daily: *Lord, may I be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger* (James 1:19). I mindfully self-regulate my emotions during situations by taking a deep breath and then rating my emotions on a scale of 1 to 10. In most situations, I can respond calmly, kindly, and respectfully—and not impulsively; however, it takes self-control. Christ had self-control. “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats” (1 Pet. 2:23, NIV).

Motivation and passion

Leaders are motivated intrinsically—by passion. Many of us enter the ministry because of our passion for serving God. Serving is at the core of God’s mission for us. Are you burned out and needing to reconnect and recommit to your call? Examine the passions of your heart. Reconnect by noticing His presence throughout the day. It will change your perspective as you start to experience your day as “worshipful” rather than “dutiful,” focused more on God’s presence than on your own performance. Leaders set the climate as followers reflect their leader’s passion.

Servant leaders go first; they serve the mission of the organization, not personal agendas. They model the mission and what they teach. Servant leaders develop other leaders; they place the welfare of others above profitability; they reflect mutual reflect mutual honor and respect, collaborating to discover the best solutions for all.¹⁵ Jesus came to serve, not to be served. He developed His disciples into team players. Jesus knew that when He left, they would be well equipped to continue the Great Commission.

Empathy

As a result of abiding in Christ, we are transformed into His likeness by the power of the Holy

Spirit. The greatest qualities Christ was known for were His empathy and compassion. Empathy is to enter into the feelings of another; to identify with them; and to understand their disappointments, joys, and sorrows.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."¹⁶ In my former life as an elementary schoolteacher, my only rule in the classroom was the golden rule (Luke 6:31). Empathy. My first graders got it. They were so well-behaved that the principal would bring other teachers of all grade levels into my classroom to observe. Empathy is a vital life skill.

In the book *Leading With Kindness*, the authors say, "Indeed, most of the leaders we spoke with invoked the Golden Rule as their management philosophy, noting that adherence to this principle is the surest way to build close-knit, high performing communities." These leaders take the time to connect with staff, with words of encouragement and kindness. Staff feel valued and, as a result, they are motivated.¹⁷ Take time to listen, to practice the gift of presence. Communicate empathetically that "I think I know how you are feeling." Reflecting what we hear also provides clarity in a nonthreatening way, for example, "If I understand you correctly, you are saying . . ." We remain objective without taking on others' anxiety.

Social skills

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Col. 3:14, NIV).

We are living in an age of loneliness, an invisible epidemic affecting over 60 million people in the United States alone.¹⁸ We were created for community. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1, NIV). The Trinity is a wonderful example; God Himself is in community.


Research shows that a lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure.¹⁹ Dr. Robert Putnam, a political scientist and Harvard University professor, completed extensive research on "community" which showed that we are made to live in community because of our relational identity. He says if a person

were to join a community right now, it would literally cut in half the odds of that person dying within the next year.²⁰

As a hospital spiritual care chaplain, I see many patients who are alone, hungry, hurting. Many say that they believe in God but do not attend church. Who, then, is reaching them? So often churches wait for people to come to them when, in fact, we need to reach out to our communities as Jesus did. He engaged with them, displaying love, compassion, and hospitality. He went door-to-door to visit the poor, the needy, the lonely. I view Jesus as our first and greatest social worker.

Best practices for emotional intelligence

Best practices for emotional intelligence involve leading like Jesus. We are His ambassadors, representing Him (2 Cor. 5:20). "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15, NIV).



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God's mission for each one of us, in partnership with the Holy Spirit, is to carry the gospel to the world and to advance God's kingdom by reflecting Him. When we reflect Christ, we are communicating the fruit of the Spirit.²¹

"A man's worth is not measured by the position of responsibility that he occupies but by the Christlike spirit that he reveals."²² When we are transformed into the likeness of Christ, imitators of Him, and one in Spirit, then advancing His kingdom is a natural outcome.



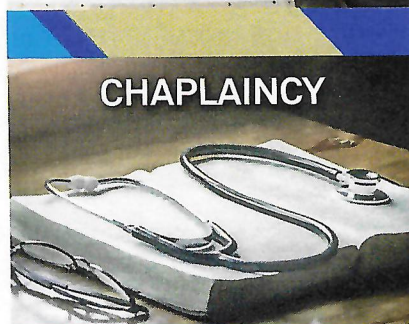
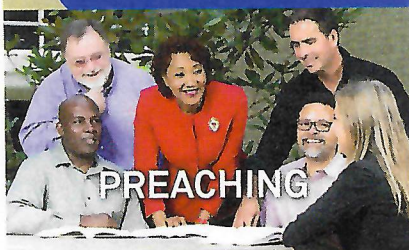
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