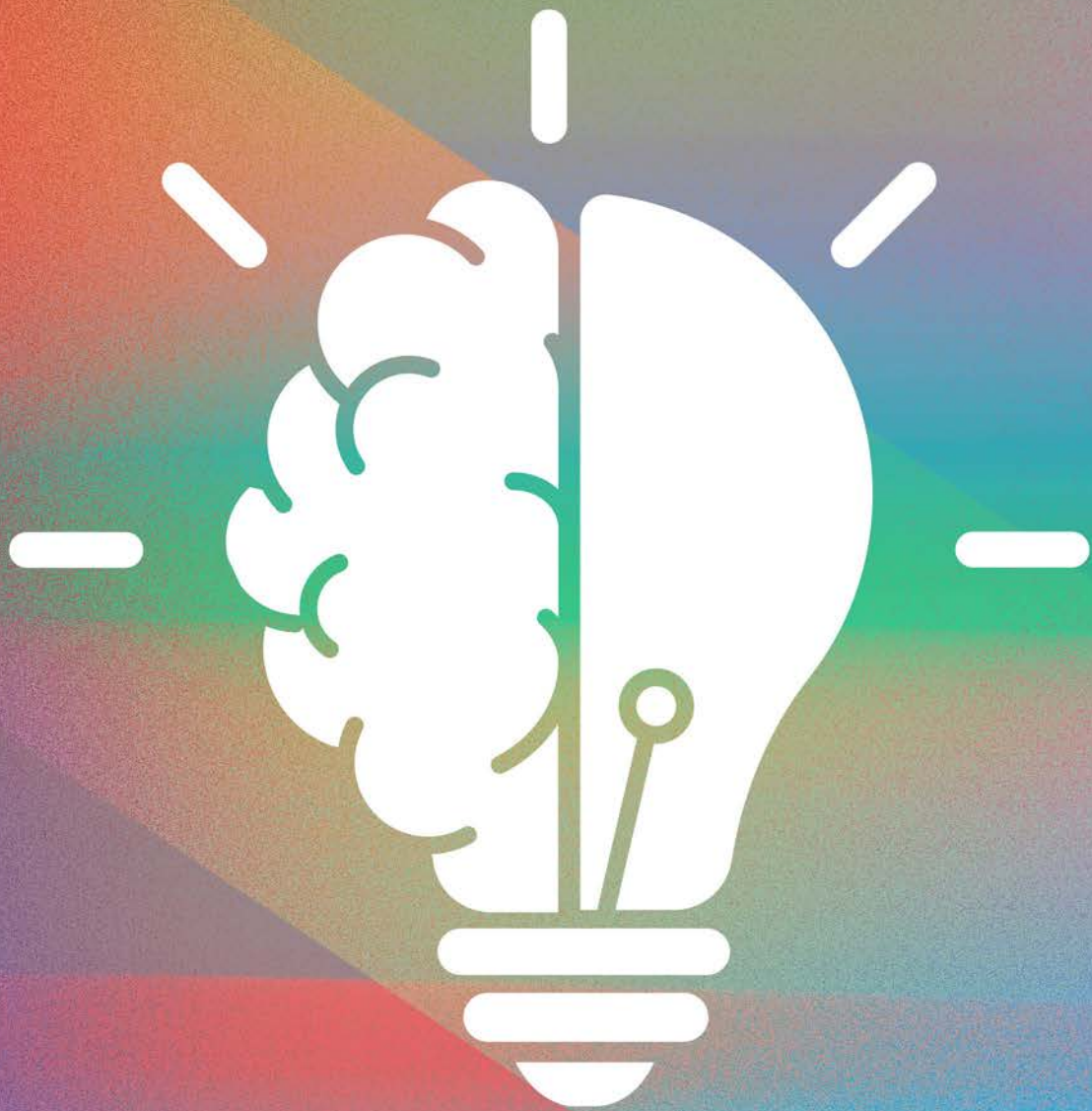


EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



STEWARDSHIP OF THE SOUL

INTRODUCTION

The following eight weeks will include concepts and strategies of emotional intelligence alongside personal testimonies on how to apply these concepts and strategies and why they work.

You will be challenged to take time each week between classes to study the concept. Ask the Lord to speak to you, be obedient when He does, and be prepared to share.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

LESSON ONE: BEGINNING YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH JOURNEY	1
LESSON TWO: STRATEGIES FOR SELF-AWARENESS	15
LESSON THREE: SELF-MANAGEMENT	28
LESSON FOUR: STRATEGIES FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT	35
LESSON FIVE: SOCIAL AWARENESS	50
LESSON SIX: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL AWARENESS	60
LESSON SEVEN: RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	68
LESSON EIGHT: STRATEGIES FOR RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	78
ADDITIONAL NOTE SPACE	84
APPENDIX	88



SECTION ONE: PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

NORMAL VS. HEALTHY

To be emotionally unhealthy means to be unable or unwilling to recognize and regulate your emotions in a way that promotes growth and/or produces change.

This inability or unwillingness is often rooted in how you grew up. Your family of origin provides your first standard of measurement for most behaviors in your life. Often, what we classify as "normal" is so only because it's what we know.

Emotional intelligence begins with changing the standard from normal to healthy. Normal is a comparative measurement based on subjective standards. It doesn't matter what normal is if it isn't healthy. Healthy things grow, and growing things change. Our journey to emotional health and spiritual maturity begins with being willing to recognize and admit when we're unhealthy.

HOW YOU ARE MADE:

1. YOU WERE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

God created us in His image. This sets us apart. However, being made in God's image begs the question: Does God have emotions?

From Genesis to Revelation, we read about the feelings of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Delight, joy, anger, jealousy, sorrow, anguish, grief, sadness, compassion, and more are all documented within the pages of His Word for our reflection and understanding. Not only does God have emotions, but He expresses each and every one of them—which is an essential aspect of your emotional quotient, or EQ.

UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN

Your thoughts or your mind can be measured or captured in your biology. EEG, MRI, CT, and PET all measure different types of responses in the brain.

The area of the brain most heavily implicated in the processing and expression of emotions is the limbic system. It's structure includes the thalamus, amygdala, hypothalamus, and the hippocampus.

THALAMUS

The thalamus serves as a gate-keeper for incoming signals.

HYPOTHALAMUS

The hypothalamus activates our fight or flight response by releasing adrenaline. All emotions trigger physical responses like changes in pulse, blood pressure, and breathing

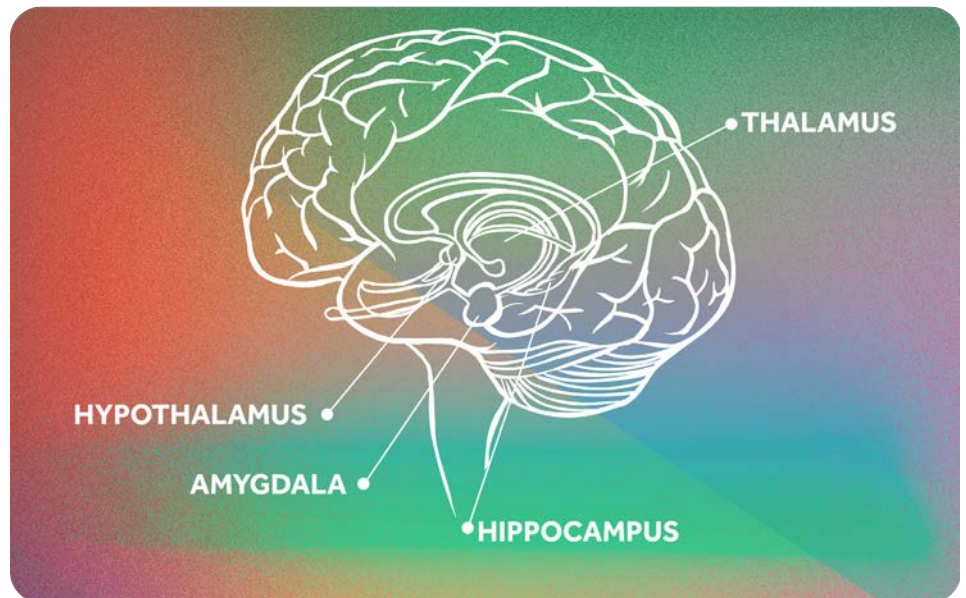
AMYGDALA

The amygdala determines emotional responses and attaches emotional content to our memories. Memories with strong emotions tend to stick.

HIPPOCAMPUS

The hippocampus integrates thoughts and feelings, which basically means builds memories.

THE LIMBIC SYSTEM



3. YOU WERE MADE TO INVITE OTHERS TO JESUS

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.” - Matthew 5:14 NLT

“For you are a chosen people. You are royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.” - 1 Peter 2:9 NLT

You have been called out of the darkness not just to live in the light but as a light. The most significant expression of our influence in the lives of those around us happens through the vehicle of our soul.

Too many Christians are guilty of false advertising because we are not stewarding our souls in a way that adequately communicates what we have access to in and through Jesus.

False advertisement has a way of compromising the integrity of whatever it’s trying to promote. Regarding the good news of Jesus, the gospel never lacks integrity. The problem is God chose us—broken, stubborn, prideful, rebellious people—to be the vessels or carriers of this message. So, while the message never lacks integrity, many vessels do.

A vessel is a carrier or a dwelling place. As Christians, we are the dwelling place of the spirit of God.

“How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty.” - Psalm 84:1 NIV

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DEFINED

Emotional Intelligence is defined as your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others as well as your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships. There are four skills of Emotional Intelligence, broken into two areas of competencies:

PERSONAL COMPETENCY

1. Self-Awareness
2. Self Management

SOCIAL COMPETENCY

3. Social-Awareness
4. Relationship Management.

DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The skills of Emotional intelligence are designed to work most effectively in a linear progression.

If you have people in your life, there will be a real temptation to try and jump straight to relationship management. The problem with doing that is that you won't see people as they are. You will see people as you are. Start with the first skill and do the work before you try moving on.

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize and understand your own emotions and behavioral tendencies in the moment. In other words, "When I feel _____, I tend to _____."

This sentence will become a staple in your emotional intelligence journey, and it is what we will refer to as your snitch list. Your snitch list is as it sounds: something designed to tell on you.

Emotions often serve as an alarm system. Creating this snitch list is a practical way to equip yourself with the skills to not only recognize those alarms but to manage them in a healthy way.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Take time outside of class to reflect and answer these questions. Remember, the more you put into this process, the more you will get out of it.

1. In your own words, what is Emotional Intelligence?

2. Is it easy for you to put language to your emotions? Why or why not?

3. How “lovely” is His dwelling place in you?

4. Start working on your snitch list.

Create that note in your phone or fill out that page in your journal. Begin to put some language to those feelings and those behaviors.

WHEN I FEEL...

I TEND TO...

--	--

5. What does an emotional hijacking look like in your life?

LESSON TWO: STRATEGIES FOR SELF-AWARENESS

Moving forward, this class will spend two weeks on each skill. The first week will serve as an introduction, while the second week will provide practical strategies to help grow that skill. These strategies are a mix of the how and the why, of science and the Bible.

LEARN TO THOUGHT MAP

Learning to map our thoughts is the first step towards regulating our emotions. Our thoughts precede our emotions; in other words, thinking comes before feeling. Remember: Think-Feel-Choose. Thoughts create narratives, and narratives assign value and meaning to our experiences. The more you can deconstruct your thoughts, the easier it will be to regulate your emotions and curb emotional hijackings.

“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and redeemer.”
- Psalm 19:14 NIV

The discipline of learning to think about what you're thinking about will drastically cut down on how many emotional trenches you must wade through simply because you will be able to readily recognize their source. To recognize the source of your emotions, you need to be able to trace them back to their origin and map them out.

LEAN INTO YOUR DISCOMFORT

Not all emotions will be uncomfortable, but typically, the ones we avoid are. These emotions are also usually the ones we struggle with managing. It is incredibly unlikely to hear someone struggle to handle outbursts of joy.

We will have to learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable long enough to figure out why these emotions are challenging. Our knee-jerk reaction when we feel something we don't like—be it insecurity, jealousy, shame, doubt, fear, or disappointment—is to reach for our favorite distraction as soon as humanly possible.

This is not to suggest we adorn ourselves with every unpleasant feeling. The balance is to lean in—not move in—to these valleys of our lives.

“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.” - Psalm 23:4 NLT

Too many of us are fashioning identities around the valleys—the loss, the abuse, the betrayal, the addiction, the hardships, or disappointments.

VALLEYS ARE MEANT TO SHAPE US, NOT DEFINE US.

One of the most helpful aspects of David's emotional discourse is its authentic, raw, unfiltered nature. He wouldn't filter or try to clean up his feelings for God; they were this messy, uncomfortable, politically incorrect emotional vomit that he would lay before the Lord. After this unfiltered processing, he would then ask: okay, where am I missing it, God?

"Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and my heart"
- Psalm 26:2 NLT

The pattern of David's dialogue is seen repeatedly in the Psalms and is what I would call the "but God" pattern. It starts with a genuine and honest outpouring of where he was living mentally and emotionally, followed by the "but God" invitation.

Oh Lord, it feels like you have forgotten me, BUT God, I will call out to you!
Psalm 88

My soul is in anguish and Distress, BUT God, I will worship you! **Psalm 6**

My heart weeps, mourns, and laments over my loss, BUT God, I will praise you!
Psalm 42

Over and over again, we see this pattern mapped out, but it's important to understand that order matters.

Testing before processing produces judgment, processing and then testing produces discernment. Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit that comes about when we ask and receive; judgment impedes our ability to process through.

TESTING BEFORE PROCESSING PRODUCES JUDGMENT, PROCESSING AND THEN TESTING PRODUCES DISCERNMENT.

2. Create a family genogram for at least three generations. This would be you, your parents, and your grandparents. See page 90 in the appendix for an example.

LESSON THREE: SELF-MANAGEMENT

Self-awareness is the foundational skill upon which each of the remaining skills are built. The sole purpose of becoming self-aware is to identify areas in your life that need better management.

**“ANYTHING THAT IS MENTIONABLE
IS MANAGEABLE.” - MR. ROGERS**

SELF-MANAGEMENT DEFINED

Self-Management: the ability to use awareness to regulate emotional responses to situations and people.

Learning to regulate your emotions does not mean that you stop feeling them, but rather you stop obeying them. The struggle to manage our emotions appropriately is typically not from a lack of effort but from the wrong approach.

WHAT MANAGEMENT IS NOT:

We need to understand what it means to manage. One effective way to better understand this concept is to understand what management is not.

SELF-MANAGEMENT IS NOT DENIAL

As it pertains to emotional intelligence, denial is best characterized as a refusal to acknowledge that you are feeling something. This is an important distinction from biblical denial, which is more of a refusal to give in to something, be it sin, lust, greed, immorality, etc.

Biblical denial has its place regarding our emotions, but it's not in acknowledging them. Remember, being out of touch with your emotions doesn't make them go away. It enslaves you to them.

“You cannot heal a wound by saying It's not there.” - Jeremiah 6:14

The fact that self-management is not about becoming less emotional cannot be overemphasized.

Because the sentiment of being overly emotional tends to carry a negative connotation, when we seek to correct this characterization, we tend to think that the solution is to "stop being so emotional." This is not a sustainable approach to effective self-management and usually does more harm than good.

Emotions enhance our human experiences, alert us to pain, and enrich our connections with others. Management executed in the form of denial will hinder all of this.

SELF-MANAGEMENT IS NOT CONTROL

Confusion in this is understandable, especially as this curriculum is framed around biblical principles, which tells us self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. **However, this section refers to control in the sense of being rigid and unchanging.**

The best way to illustrate this is to think of the controlled variable in an experiment, which would be the variable that is constant and unchanging no matter what. In our lives, such rigid control is a manifestation of pride rooted in fear.

Fear is a fierce motivator and a relentless nag. It will drive all your decisions but never bring you to a place of peace. Pride gains its place in the equation when we stop, or perhaps never started, trusting the Lord.

Our deepest fears, often the areas we fight for most control, invite us to trust the Lord. This is the beauty of well-regulated emotions. They still hurt and expose insecurities and vulnerabilities but play an integral role in the depth and wholeness we find in Jesus.

RIGID CONTROL IS A MANIFESTATION OF PRIDE ROOTED IN FEAR

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Take time outside of class to reflect and answer these questions. Remember, the more you put into this process, the more you will get out of it.

1. Which unhealthy type of self-management are you prone to? (There may be more than one.)

2. Are you able to recognize the pride, fear, or shame motivating those efforts?

3. Which of the owner's resources do you need access to in this season of your life? (Peace, security, joy, intimacy, comfort, etc.)

LESSON FOUR: STRATEGIES FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT

As we move from the skill of self-awareness to self-management, we must understand that the strategies of self-management are employed from at least a basic level of awareness. More awareness will come if we start managing what we've become aware of. Don't be alarmed by this or interpret this as a bad thing; this is normal and healthy and signifies that we are moving in the right direction.

We will need reactive and proactive strategies for progression and sustainable growth. This means some strategies will directly respond to what we've become aware of, and others are designed to promote further awareness. The strategies outlined in this lesson will include a variation of both.

Note: management does require discipline. If we become aware of unhealthy patterns but don't apply the discipline necessary to change them, we only reinforce them.

"No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." - Hebrews 12:11 NLT

The following strategies are designed to help implement some discipline as you learn self-management. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should get you started with managing some of the things you learned growing in self-awareness.

Some of these strategies will be easier than others, and some will be very challenging at first, not because they're not necessarily complicated but because they're different from what you've been doing. We don't naturally gravitate towards what is healthy but rather what is familiar.

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM AND THE ADJUSTMENT

The standard will define both the problem and the adjustment necessary for accuracy of operation.

Time and patience are needed as you grow in understanding. This is a multifaceted approach because emotions are the byproduct of our thoughts and the influencer of our feelings. This may seem overwhelming upon first hearing, but remember the interdependent nature of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Typically, identifying the problem has less to do with the "what" and more with the "why." It's challenging to adjust what you're feeling if you don't understand why you're feeling that way.

Don't expect immediate results; feelings don't change overnight, so they should not be used as the measuring stick for success. Let's explore other measurables through our next strategy.

Based on the dynamic of their relationship, there will be a domino effect as we start making adjustments. The more I think according to my standard of measurement, the more my feelings reflect those thoughts and influence my behaviors. The more I choose those influenced behaviors, the more reinforced those thoughts become.

Once we understand that our emotions are indicators, we stop seeing them as the problem and start seeing them as the clue to the problem. With an understanding of the actual problem, you can identify adjustments that are more likely to be sustainable and yield the desired results. You won't always nail the adjustments the first time, and that's okay; adjusting the adjustment is okay. Use your newfound self-awareness to identify what is working and what isn't.

SET MEASURABLE GOALS WITH TIMELINES

Your growing self-awareness and established standard have created an opportunity to measure growth. This is done by creating goals centered around the adjustments you identified that need to be made. Before you set a goal, it's important to be honest about where you are starting from.

"Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us." - Romans 12:3 NLT

Some other helpful tips for goal setting would be to include timelines and to be specific about the goal.

Goals work best when written down and can be referred back to. Goals should be challenging but also achievable. Don't be overzealous in your goal setting; set one or two goals a month and regularly assess your progress.

SEEK OUT AND MAINTAIN ACCOUNTABILITY

Technically you can grow on your own but it's going to be so much harder.

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble." - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NLT

There is immense value in finding someone to be accountable to, and it's your job to pursue the person you are accountable to. Find someone managing their own life in a way that inspires you, and ask them to keep you accountable. Share your goals with them, ask for feedback, and be humble enough to receive it.

STAY IN YOUR LANE

Emotional intelligence is not done in isolation. The very premise of the idea of becoming emotionally intelligent requires a careful evaluation of myself and others. It is of the utmost importance, though, that in our assessment, we protect our standard of measurement.

The quickest and almost undisguisable way to change your standard is to get caught in the comparison trap. The moment you start comparing yourself to others, you've inadvertently made them the standard of measurement.

The trap of comparison promises to yield one of two possible results: pride or insecurity. Both create neurochemical chaos and hinder the stewardship of our souls.

“Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct.”
- Galatians 6:4-5 NLT

The best way to guard your heart against this is to stay in your lane; remember who you are and what you’ve been created for and called to. As you focus on your own growth you will find it easier to champion others.

TEACH YOUR THOUGHTS TO OBEY

Research shows that about every ten seconds, we experience what’s known as a burst of consciousness, which happens when we become aware of what we are thinking about. We will either take those thoughts captive, or those thoughts will take us captive.

“We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”
- 2 Corinthians 10:5 NLT

DEALING WITH TERRORISTIC THOUGHTS

The quickest way to an emotional hijacking is through terroristic thoughts, which show up for the sole purpose of creating chaos and wreaking havoc in our lives. These are different than difficult thoughts, which cause us to think critically and provide growth opportunities.

These thoughts usually show up in the form of accusations, doubt, or deception. Understanding that an emotional hijacking starts in my thought life re-emphasizes the importance of maintaining order in this area, which can be easier said than done, so let's look at some practical tips.

STREAMLINE RACING THOUGHTS

Racing or obsessive thoughts are typically rooted in fear. Not necessarily fear in the form of terror but in the form of worry, insecurity, or uncertainty. If you're overwhelmed or overstimulated, your brain can have a difficult time creating order, so one thought will lead to another, to another, and so on and so forth, seemingly with no logical pattern or connection.

To streamline racing thoughts, write them down and look for patterns or connections. This will create a thought map with a beginning and an end, bringing clarity and order. If you can't write them out, try talking them out. Creating a discipline of doing this will train your brain to more readily recognize these patterns, allowing you to catch them sooner the next time.

INTERRUPT OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS

Obsessive thoughts form through repetitions or loops in our brains whereby we think the same things over and over. Often, the best way to interrupt this loop is to say it aloud, ask for feedback, or create a reminder on your phone so your brain can move on from this thought.

Suppose the repeating thought is rooted in a lie (about God, self, or others). In that case, it has to be interrupted with truth originating from your standard of measurement.

DECONSTRUCT INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

Intrusive thoughts can be the most difficult to manage because they are often tied to painful life experiences. Experiences that did happen were painful and very much left a real impact on our mental and emotional health. Dealing with intrusive thoughts begins with deconstruction.

Deconstruction is isolating one thought at a time and testing its credibility. To deconstruct an intrusive thought, it can be helpful, though not always necessary, to determine its origin. Typically, the longer a thought pattern has existed, the harder it is to deconstruct because it has become a part of who you are.

To continue further, consider if the thought originated with you or if it was something someone else said to you? Because we are trying to determine credibility, it's essential to remember that just because something feels real doesn't make it right.

THE ONLY WAY TO ESTABLISH A THOUGHT'S CREDIBILITY IS TO MEASURE IT AGAINST MY STANDARD OF MEASUREMENT.

Everything in management comes back to the standard of measurement. Every nuance of a thought can be measured against or filtered through our standard.

Not every thought in our life can be sparkly and fuzzy; lots of healthy thoughts are hard, but the difference between a hard healthy thought and a toxic intrusive thought is their impact on my life, in other words, the fruit they produce.

Remember: examining the fruit in our lives is now standard practice for continued growth.

PRACTICE EMOTIONAL GRANULARITY

There's a time for disciplining our thoughts, and there is a time for expounding upon them. This strategy is centered around the latter.

Emotional granularity is the ability to define our emotional state with greater specificity. Learning to increase our emotional vocabulary enhances our brain's ability to process those emotions.

Think of words as tools for your brain; the more words we have to describe how and what we are feeling, the more tools our brain has access to for processing those emotions.

Limited emotional granularity can predispose us to emotional hijackings. Studies show that people with a larger emotion word bank are better at emotional regulation. This is a simple strategy that requires minimal effort but produces worthwhile results.

CREATE RHYTHMS OF WORK, REST, AND PLAY

Everything about our divine design and calling was created with rhythms in mind. These rhythms, marked out in scripture, note the need for three things: work, rest, and play.

WORK

The work element existed from the beginning when God created man and placed him in the garden to work and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

The garden provides this picture of the provision we've all been entrusted with to steward. This looks different for all of us, but the value of our work should never be tied to a dollar amount, level of education, notoriety, or fame.

All work is valuable when we see it as an act of worship to the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)



REST

Because we are designed for regular rhythms of work, we will always require regular rhythms of rest.

Every part of our being—body, soul, and spirit—proves we were created with rest in mind. Your physical body becomes fatigued upon exertion, you daily need sleep, and it takes time for your muscles to recover from work.

Your soul, which characterizes your mind, will, and emotions, recovers and regenerates during sleep. Sleep is necessary for information processing, memory retention, focus, and mood regulation. Sleep is not the only form of rest for your mind. Removing all activities and screens and simply allowing our minds to wander in a creative and exploratory fashion can be wildly regenerative.

Even the spirit part of you that communes with God honors and celebrates rest. Establishing and protecting a sabbath is a must. (Exodus 20:8-11) A sabbath is 24 hours when you cease from all work, paid and unpaid. Putting a sabbath on the calendar and planning for it will be a significant deposit in your life.

PLAY

Work and rest are indeed important, essential even, but so is finding things to delight in. Believe it or not, having fun is necessary for survival.

When having fun, laughing, or doing things that put us in a good mood, our brains release chemicals that increase our brain activity. We can learn better, connect with people easier and think deeper. These experiences are wired into our design by our creator. (Ecclesiastes 3:13) He never intended for us to live lives void of pleasure; He simply provided boundaries for that pleasure because, in His omniscience, God knows exactly how much is too much.

PROTECTING THE BALANCE

We can easily fall out of rhythm when any of these areas of work, rest, and play becomes excessive. The negative effects of this are not always immediate but are inevitable. Obviously, these rhythms will change based on seasons and demands.

Still, establishing them is non-negotiable for the person truly committed to growing their emotional intelligence. Once these rhythms are established, creating systems to protect them will provide an added layer of proactive management. Some practical systems or structures include things like:

- Pick one day a week to honor the Sabbath, and try to keep it consistent
- Block out daily time for spiritual disciplines such as reading the Bible, worship, and prayer
- Set up—and honor—screen time limits for apps
- Turn off all non-essential phone notifications
- Create a Do Not Disturb block on your phone
- As often as possible, leave work at work
- Plan annual vacations
- Plan monthly dates with S/O, kids, friends, family
- Try new hobbies
- Protect healthy sleep habits
- Exercise 3-4 times per week
- Create an 80/20 for eating (eat 80% clean, providing 20% margin for indulgences)
- Drink 1/2 body weight in ounces of water daily

CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

Cultivating gratitude daily is proven to decrease depression and anxiety, reduce anger, manage stress more effectively, and promote generosity. People who are more generous sleep better, experience less physical pain, have better immune systems, and enjoy healthier relationships.

Over 100 times, scripture tells us to be thankful and intentional about expressing that gratitude. It's as if our creator knew the implications this small habit would have on us.

Cultivating gratitude starts with the conscious decision to acknowledge all you have to be thankful for. It's not a one-time thing. Cultivation takes time and consistency, but it has to begin somewhere, so start today.

Start by making a list every single day of three things you are thankful for and why and one person you are thankful for and why.

GLANCE BACK, FOCUS FORWARD

The work that we put into growing in the skill of self-awareness required us to look at our pasts, the familial generations before us, the patterns, behaviors, and tendencies that made a name for themselves in our lineage for us to learn and grow from them.

Those things undoubtedly influenced the journey to the place we now find ourselves, but how we choose to manage our lives from this point on will determine what influences our future.

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.” - Isaiah 43:18 NIV

Your past is a part of you, but the more that you disentangle yourself from those toxic habits and unhealthy patterns, the more time you should spend focusing forward. Even the good things of our past are just a springboard for our future.

Growth is forward-moving, so the more emotionally intelligent we become, the more time we spend focusing on the present and dreaming for the future. The Lord tells his people in Isaiah 43 that we can't dwell on the past because if we do, we won't recognize what he is doing in the here and now.

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” - Isaiah 43:19 NIV

God wants to take us places we have never been before and do things we've never done before, but He can't do that if we remain shackled to the past. As you journey through the skills of emotional intelligence, if you find yourself stuck in an issue from the past, use these self-management strategies to make adjustments to ensure operation accuracy in your life. We glance back to see how far we've come, but we focus forward to achieving our potential.

APPLICATION OF STRATEGIES

1. Identify at least one problem and one adjustment that you have become aware of.

2. Create one goal around this adjustment. Write it down; include a start date and a stop date.

3. Share it with someone else who you would consider asking to keep you accountable.



SECTION TWO: SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

LESSON FIVE: SOCIAL AWARENESS

This second section of emotional intelligence will focus on navigating our emotional health while in relationship with others. This is called social competency, and the first skill of social competency is Social Awareness.

Social Awareness: your ability to accurately perceive the emotions, desires, motivations, and needs of others.

The greatest obstacle in social awareness is not the need to see people but to understand how you see people. There's a real temptation to view everyone else as the problem or the cause of emotional disorder in our lives. But remember, the skills of emotional intelligence are linear for a reason. When we try to become socially aware without first becoming self-aware, we don't see people as they are; we see people as we are.

PREDATORS AND PAWNS

Social awareness with a low EQ will populate our perception of the social world with predators and pawns. In practical terms, you will look to others as a means of having needs met through pawns and seek to protect yourself from perceived harm from predators.

If we have become adept at self-awareness or management, our social awareness will be motivated by self-preservation alone. A simple study into Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs reveals how quickly social awareness comes into play with regard to human flourishing.



The moment we progress beyond our basic survival needs, our needs involve others. The way we engage and interact with others will be significantly influenced by our emotional intelligence or lack thereof, but the key to this influence being a healthy one hinges on respecting the order of emotional intelligence skills.

Our existence as humans was always designed for interdependence both biblically (Genesis 2:18) and scientifically. We can't and shouldn't aim to avoid this. Still, as it depends on us, we should approach that interdependence as healthy as possible. We do this by respecting the order of the skills of emotional intelligence.

THE VALUE OF ORDER

“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” - Matthew 7:5 NIV

While the scriptural context for this verse encompasses a warning against judgment, what it reveals about emotional intelligence is even more applicable. When Jesus calls out these “hypocrites” for the planks in their eyes, his objective is to help them understand how their lack of self-awareness has obstructed their view of others.

His charge to remove the plank from their eyes is for visual clarity.

The return on this commitment does not promise conflict or drama-free relationships, but it does protect our ability to navigate those with the emotional health and maturity afforded to us by new levels of emotional intelligence.

As we transition into the social competency skills, you will learn that it is possible to have healthy relationships with every person in your life, even if the people in your life never change, simply by understanding the order of the EQ skills.

CREATED FOR SOCIAL AWARENESS

Is social awareness a necessity? In the era of social media, we can “follow” people’s lives without engaging with them in person. Is it the same? Does it foster the same connection in our lives? We are going to explore these questions and more as we unpack our biological and spiritual proclivities when it comes to social awareness.

Social Awareness starts with accurately perceiving the emotions, desires, motivations, and needs of others. This does not mean judging or assigning value to these things in others. It simply means to acknowledge them.

There’s a unique balance between recognizing those things in ourselves and looking beyond ourselves to recognize them in others. The more work we have done to create language and identify patterns in our lives, the easier it will be to recognize them in social settings.

As with other skills of emotional intelligence, you were created with the capacity to be socially aware. Our biological wiring, paired with our spiritual mandates as Christians, should motivate us to do this well. Our need for connection is so strong that many researchers will argue that it’s as fundamental as our need for food and shelter.

Research overwhelmingly shows that those with strong social connections have better mental and physical health, are prone to longer life spans, display more self-esteem, and have stronger immune systems.

One study showed that patients receiving chemotherapy were less likely to get sick if someone was going with them to the treatments. Another study showed that patients who had suffered from a heart attack were quicker to heal and less likely to have another one if they were returning home to a loved one.

MIRROR NEURONS

Another biological element of our ability for social awareness is what is referred to as mirror neurons, which are a class of neurons that discharge when an individual executes a motor act and observes another individual performing the same or a similar motor act.

Studies have shown that when people observe certain behaviors being demonstrated, the same neurons necessary for completing the task are fired while watching the task being completed. Simply put, this is the brain's proclivity towards empathic behavior or empathy. While some are more naturally inclined towards empathy than others, we are all biologically wired with the capability.

IS SOCIAL AWARENESS SPIRITUAL?

Understanding our biological wiring for social awareness helps us understand its necessity. Still, it doesn't teach us how to steward those needs.

If our creator saw fit to biologically wire us with the need for social connection, it must have a role in our purpose. Scripture is rich with imagery and social awareness principles that we see threaded throughout for observation and application. Each story, character study, or governing principle relating to our interaction with others will point us back to the value of social awareness.

“Jesus replied, ‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” - Matthew 22:37-39 NLT

In this commandment, we make a case for the spiritual implications of social awareness with three big ideas. Social awareness, as it pertains to the healthy and effective management of our soul, shows:

- It's about you
- It's **not** about you
- It was always about Him

IT'S ABOUT YOU

The value of social awareness is about respecting your God-given design and commission.

The first biblical comment regarding our relationship status is that God says it is not good for us to be alone. Genesis 2:18 speaks to a foundational understanding of God's plan and purpose for humanity, which would always include collaboration and community, as evidenced by his first command to us, which was to "be fruitful and increase in number." (Genesis 1:28)

Your story was always supposed to be entangled with others. Simply put, you were never meant to do life alone. Whether you are in a place that you are willing to admit it or not, you need others. Recognizing that need and learning to steward it healthily will be things we will address in the weeks to come. For now, it's enough to understand that your biological makeup was a strategic setup for God's purpose for your life.

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

What if loving ourselves was never about us at all? What if it was all about learning to love others better? When we have done the work to grow in self-awareness and management, our ability to see and love others has a greater propensity for authenticity. Our commitment to personal growth will always influence our relational growth.

Our ability to understand the emotions, desires, needs, and motivations of others is a biological supplication with a biblical charge. It's what gives us all the opportunity to see into the souls of others but it's not something we approach haphazardly or with selfish intent.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." - Philippians 2:3-4 ESV

IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT HIM

We live in an era where it's commonplace rhetoric to make the good news of Jesus about me or you—man-centered gospel, they call it—but it always was and always will be about the One who is, who was, and has yet to come. This is Jesus Christ, the Living God. (Revelation 1:8.)

The difference between social awareness from a worldview and social awareness from a biblical view comes down to who is exalted in the process. As Christians, becoming socially aware should remind us all that we are not the stars of the show. Whether we are growing in self-awareness or social awareness, we do everything we do to bring Him glory.

Theologian John Piper characterizes the glory of God as, "the beauty and excellence of his manifold perfections. It is an attempt to put into words what God is like in his magnificence and purity. It refers to his infinite and overflowing fullness of all that is good".

This characterization humbly reminds us that becoming more aware of neither ourselves or others adds to God's glory but, I do believe it will increase our capacity for both seeing and sharing it.

God chose to create mankind in His image, which means there are expressions of Himself that He reveals through others as you become socially aware.

As we begin this second phase of emotional intelligence, you should see this as an invitation to experience more of God through His created beings—not just to see, to see what He sees.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Take time outside of class to reflect and answer these questions. Remember, the more you put into this process, the more you will get out of it.

1. Do you tend to see the worst, expect the worst and speak the worst of people?

2. If you're being honest, are you more likely to view people as pawns or predators?

3. Do you have meaningful social connections? Connections that cause you to feel understood and like you belong.

LESSON SIX: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL AWARENESS

Executing strategies for social awareness promises the best results when practiced by an individual committed to self-awareness and self-management. If you absorb the information from skills one and two for knowledge sake alone, you will lack the humility and objectivity necessary to apply these strategies correctly.

DISCIPLINE YOURSELF TO MAKE EYE CONTACT

The easiest way to avoid someone near you is to avoid making eye contact. Something about making eye contact with someone immediately makes us feel vulnerable.

Eye contact communicates an expectation, even if it's just the expectation of a response, and provides opportunities for us to fail if we don't meet them. Failure is often associated with rejection, so avoiding eye contact is a way of trying to avoid rejection.

Interestingly, eye contact in every other species is a form of aggression, but in humans it's a form of acceptance. Too many of us live for acceptance and not from acceptance, which is why we tend to avoid further threats to that.

Jesus tells his disciples that the eye is the lamp into the body. (Matthew 6:22, Luke 11:34). The eye lets light into the rest of the body. As often as we can, we need to let the light in us shine through to those around us. Look up. See people. Start with the everyday exchanges with the coffee barista or the server at lunch. Instead of walking with your head down in the halls at work, look up and make eye contact with the person passing. Make eye contact over meals and in meetings.

PAY ATTENTION TO BODY LANGUAGE

As we navigated the terrain of becoming self-aware, one of those early tells was our bodies. While you will not be as in tune with the bodies of those around you, they are subject to the same exposure.

“Body language can expose a person’s intentions: whoever winks the eye is planning perversity; whoever purses his lips is intent on evil.” - Proverbs 16:30 VOICE

Pay attention to the physical responses of those around you. Things like fidgeting, tapping, bouncing, or shuffling can often communicate nervousness or anxiousness. Clenched fists, grinding teeth, and tightened jaws can communicate anger. More subtle cues like posture can communicate insecurity.

The micro-expressions of humans are usually a subconscious snitch of the non-conscious, subtly revealing what you're actually thinking and feeling.

WHEN IN DOUBT, CLARIFY

No matter how emotionally intelligent we become, one blessing and curse of being a human being is that we are so wildly different. It is perfectly acceptable and encouraged to get clarification.

“Lovers of God hunger after truth, but those without understanding feast on foolishness and don’t even realize it.” - Proverbs 15:14 TPT

The easiest way to get clarification is simply by asking questions. Other things to consider when clarification is needed are character and context.

PEOPLE WATCH

One of the things that smartphones have significantly diminished is people-watching.

We've swapped out real people watching for social media scrolling, and we assume that because both are populated with people, it's the same.

The act of people watching happens when others are unaware of it. Think about it: When people know you are watching them, it changes how they act, how they talk, and how they respond.

Real life is wobbly and full of skinned knees. Not all moments are magical, and not all responses are romantic. These things are all a part of being emotional beings, and rather than those things making us feel isolated or alone, they can help us connect to one another in a way that prompts compassion, not judgment. The Bible says that when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 6:36) Be people who see the crowds in real life.

RETIRE THE MYTH OF MULTITASKING

One of the greatest barriers to us growing in real social awareness is that we're trying to do too many things at once, and one of the most significant stumbling blocks to focused attention is our smartphones; they have seduced us into the great lie that we can be two places at once.

We've fallen for the idea that we can pay attention to two things at once. We can't. It's a farce. What we refer to as multitasking with the idea that we are doing multiple things simultaneously is just your brain bouncing back and forth between tasks at rapid rates. Regarding social awareness, multitasking should be kept to a minimum.

Neuroscience data reports almost conclusively that multitasking is a myth predicated upon our inability to manage distraction.

BE PRESENT

It's more than just people and tasks that can compete for our attention and hinder our growth in social awareness. All too often, time is a well-camouflaged thief of the moment.

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:” - Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV

The past and the future are the two greatest seasons of hindrances to being fully present with people in the here and now. The past can drag us back with regret, and the future can often pull us forward in anticipation.

Don't let yesterday or tomorrow rob you of today. Scripture tells us that this is the day the Lord has made and that we should rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24) Time is a non-renewable resource with the people in our lives. There is a normal tension in time for all of us, but learning to be aware of it will help us focus on the time we can affect most, which is the present.

ACTIVE LISTENING

One of the best ways to be present today is to learn and apply the active listening strategy.

Active listening isn't just about the words being spoken but the message being communicated. The message is personal; the words are just one of the many ways to communicate. Author and leadership expert John Maxwell said that in a conversation we should put more energy into being interested and less energy into being interesting.

“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak,” - James 1:19 NLT

Outside of distraction, the two most significant barriers to active listening are pride and insecurity.

If you're the person who is formulating what you are going to say following the entire time someone else is talking, pride is the barrier for you. Suppose you're overthinking everything being said in the conversation and struggle not to internalize the entire dialogue. In that case, you should know insecurity is hijacking your ability to hear or see people.

One of the most effective ways to become a better active listener is to ask questions, as nothing communicates interest and social awareness more than asking questions. Inquisitive questions make people feel seen, accepted, and on their way to being understood. This is excellent social awareness.

PRACTICE EMPATHY

A lot of the challenges that we encounter with empathy are simply born out of a place of ignorance. Know this: Empathy is not sympathy. Sympathy means you feel for someone. Empathy means you know what they are feeling. Sometimes, it's empathy and sympathy, but they are not mutually exclusive.

Christians, in particular, can struggle with empathy because we allow our judgment of people to interfere with our love for people. Remember, social awareness is about recognizing what other people are feeling and why they feel that way. The ability to become aware of that doesn't mean I have to agree with it.

The most objective way to practice empathy is to simply recognize or acknowledge what someone else is feeling and then consider what it's like for you when you feel that way. Can you remember what it's like to feel hopeless, rejected, unworthy, talked about, lied about, or betrayed? Empathy bridges the gap between pain and hope. We think everyone needs our wisdom, and there will be a time for that, but it starts with our compassion.

VALUE CULTURAL DIVERSITY

We are all weird to someone. Not everyone thinks like you, talks, cooks, dresses, or votes like you; if they do, your life is boring, and heaven will be a culture shock for you.

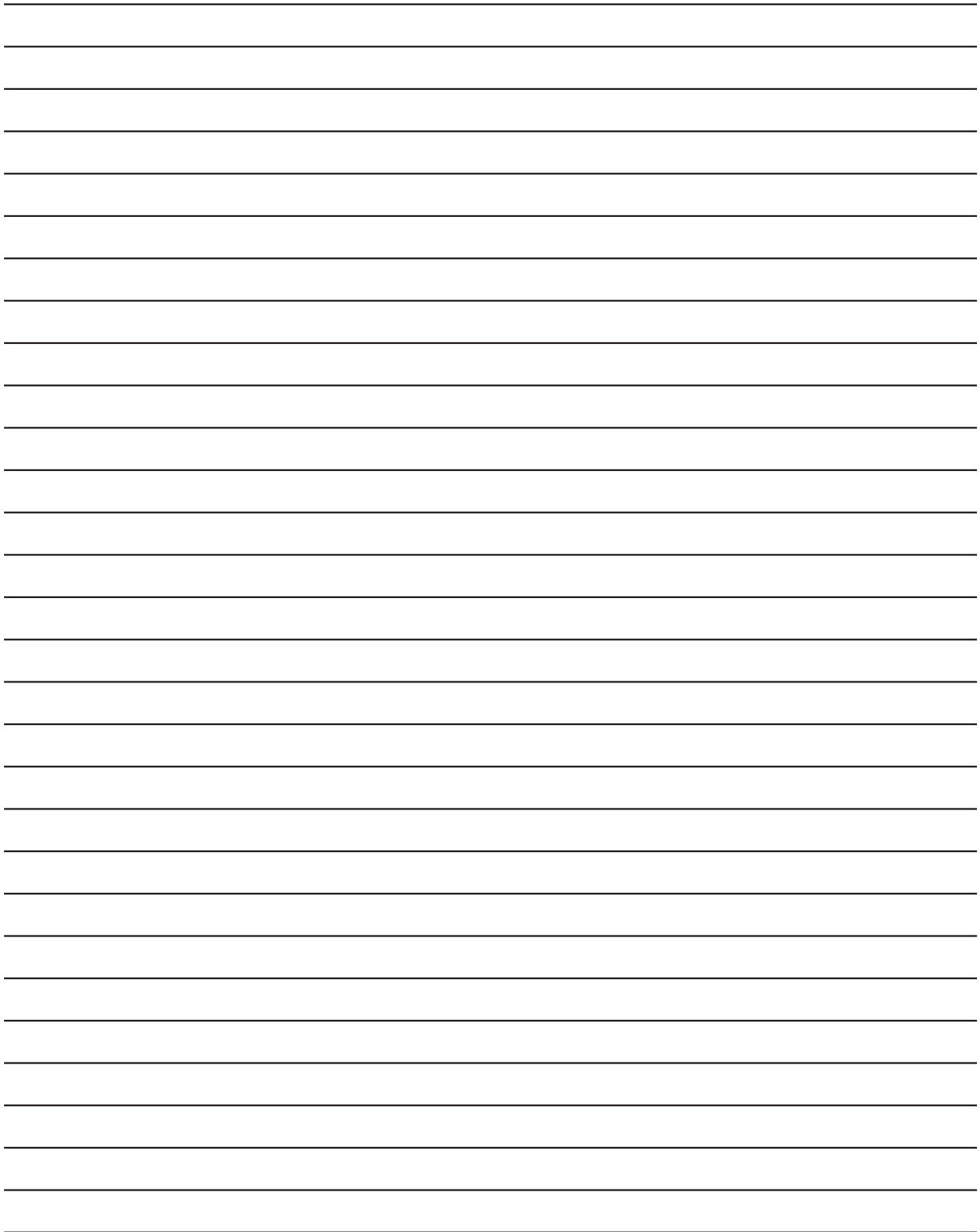
We live in a day and age where we let everything divide us, but the only thing that is supposed to divide us is the message of the cross. (Luke 12:51) The otherwise undistinguished early 17th-century Lutheran theologian Rupertus Meldenius said, "In the essentials unity, in the non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification." - Romans 4:19 NIV

Paul's contention was not to approve or disapprove of any of these beliefs or practices but to point out that different people groups will express their beliefs differently. He's giving some insight into how to navigate these differences. Still, his thoughts culminate in this urge to prioritize peace and edification even amongst diversity.

Valuing diversity is different from tolerating diversity. To value something means that I consider something with importance or worth, whereas to tolerate means I put up with it. Cultural diversity is not limited to color or ethnicity. It's valuing the things that make you different. You can value diversity without conforming to it. This opens up your social awareness to a richness and depth that doesn't threaten or diminish your individuality but celebrates it. We see more of our Creator when we value what's different in others.

"IN THE ESSENTIALS UNITY, IN THE NON-ESSENTIALS LIBERTY, IN ALL THINGS CHARITY." - RUPERTUS MELDENIUS



LESSON SEVEN: RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

As we prepare to apply the principles and language of emotional intelligence in all of these relationships, we must lead with the conviction that it is possible to effectively manage every single relationship in our lives, from those closest to us to those limited to a single exchange. Let's start by clearly defining what relationship management is.

Relationship management: the ability to use your awareness of your own emotions and those of others to manage your interactions successfully.

We tend to apply the same ineffective management style to relationships as we do to ourselves: deny, control, and suppress.

We hear the word “manage” as it pertains to the people in our lives, and we think that means master, change, or dominate; this could not be further from what we will be working towards.

In fact, one of the most encouraging aspects of management in our relationships is that it does not rise and fall on those we are in relationships with.

You can effectively manage a relationship with even the unhealthiest person in your life. To ensure we are not caught in these familiar traps, let us personify some unhealthy patterns we see with denial, control, and suppression.

DENIAL IN RELATIONSHIPS

Denial in our relationships is often characterized by avoidance. Avoidance in relationships isn't limited to problems, but it influences the entire dynamic.

Conflict is avoided, but so is depth and relational intimacy. This results in shallow relationships that satisfy our basic need for companionship and connection but, left to this type of management, will never actualize their full potential.

These shallow relationships are often centered around common goals or shared responsibilities. Avoidance provides equal opportunity for any and every relationship to stay above the surface. When the goals are met or the shared responsibilities change, the relationship often ends.

Denial can be a protective measure against rejection or failure. The subconscious threat may be that if we go deeper and one of us doesn't like what we find, it will end in rejection. If we purpose to grow and then fail, we've just messed up a good thing.

Denial can also simply be the byproduct of ignorance. People just don't know what they don't know, and common sense is not entirely common.

CONTROL IN RELATIONSHIPS

Remember: control as a form of management is a manifestation of pride rooted in fear.

Control is the counterfeit form of security protecting us from these fears becoming a reality in our relationships. Control can be very overt in its expression. Things like physical or emotional abuse, threatening, badgering, pressuring, demeaning, or isolation are all forms of control that are usually a little easier to pick up on.

Other times, the manifestation of control in a relationship may be less noticeable. Control expressed in more subtle ways like manipulation, guilt trips, blame-shifting, gaslighting, or coercion may go unnoticed for years.

Control feels deeply personal to the person in this type of relationship, but it's not personal. Control is a defense mechanism of self-preservation executed from deficiency. ***This in no way excuses the controlling behavior***, but this understanding will frame how we target healthy and effective relationship management moving forward.

SUPPRESSION IN RELATIONSHIPS

The dynamic pairing of denial and control comes together to form this wildly dysfunctional pattern of suppression characterized by not only avoidance and manipulation but also super-charged by distraction and external coping.

As it pertains to our relationships, our avoidance of the issues is not because we don't know that they exist but rather because we feel ill-equipped to deal with them or refuse to take responsibility for our role in the issues.

Rather than proceed in humility and grace, we distract ourselves with the next big thing. When the distractions run out, we run to our relational coping skill of choice, which, ironically, is usually some form of denial or control. These ineffective forms of management are often entangled.

Regarding relationship management, denial does not make the issues go away; it makes the relationship subject to those issues.

To be subject to something is a governing expression, so any relationship in which you refuse to deal with the issues is governed by those issues. To be clear, if you don't start managing the issues in your relationships, the issues will begin managing your relationships.

"I have already told him [Eli] that I am going to punish his family forever because his sons have spoken evil things against me. Eli knew they were doing this, but he did not stop them."
- 1 Samuel 3:13 GNT

We can't control our children, spouses, friends, or coworkers with whom we are in a relationship, but how we manage those relationships speaks to our character, not theirs. We are all prone to these unhealthy patterns because they're modeled and often celebrated around us. Exposing them in our lives is the first step towards healthy relationship management.

START WITH STANDARDS

Learning to transfer self-management principles over to relationship management will return to that keyword of regulating.

Making adjustments in our relationships to ensure the accuracy of operation will hinge on the standard used in our relationships. The biblical standard is love.

These are just a few of the many attributes of love , but none of them could stand alone and adequately encompass all that love is. There is one definition that does encompass all of these attributes and more.

Love is patient, kind, not jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. It does not keep a record of wrong, demand its own way, and is not irritable. - 1 Corinthians 13

Love hates what is wrong and hold tightly to what is good. - Romans 12

Love is humility, gentleness, and forgiveness. - Ephesians 4

Love is encouragement and edification. - 1 Thessalonians 5

Love is sacrifice and hard work. - John 14 & 15

“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” - 1 John 4:7-8 NLT

If the Bible is your standard of measurement, then God is your standard for love because God is love.

**STANDARD = LOVE
LOVE = GOD
GOD = STANDARD**

The problem is not that we need each other, or that our relationships satisfy needs in our lives. We go wrong when we view the relationship as our source rather than the vessel. God has no problem using relationships as vessels.

With God as the standard in and for my relationships, my need for others is not nullified, but rather, the interactions take on a deeper meaning. This standard revolutionizes how you understand relationships because you no longer approach them with your deficits or lack.

The questions you should ask of every relationship are: God, how do you want to use me in this person's life or God, how are you trying to use this person in my life? This is what it means to manage my relationships with God as the standard.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

This type of relationship management will be easier to execute if you allow the following three truths to serve as the relational rubric you are operating from and constantly referring to. To be clear, these truths will not always solve the problem, but they will point you to where the problem is.

When God is the standard for your relationships three truths are evident:

- Love is reliable.
- Your capacity to give love hinges on your ability to receive love.
- You don't give or receive love because you're good. You do so because He is good.

“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.” - 1 John 4:16-19 NIV

TRUTH NO. 1: LOVE IS RELIABLE.

Despite what your experiences may have told you or will try to tell you in the future, love is reliable.

Love does not evolve, nor is it evolving. Love existed before the earth's foundation was laid and was perfect and complete before you breathed your first breath. The only time love is unreliable is when we try to redefine it. The Bible qualifies the reliability of love through the credibility of how love is defined.

The problem is not that God is ever unreliable, but that we lack the discipline to live in God. You were made by Him for Him. The moment you change the definition of love to satisfy your flesh, you move out of what you were created for, and it will never satisfy you. If you find yourself in a place where love feels unreliable, ask yourself how you've redefined it.

God is love. This must become a foundational truth because maintaining a fixed definition of love is integral to healthy relationship management.

The problem in so many of our relationships is the fluid nature of how love is defined. Love is a feeling, a choice, an attraction, and a passion. Love is heterosexual, homosexual, and a-sexual. Love is what you can get or give; love is this; love is that. Love is not any of that. The moment we change the definition of love, we change the standard. Changing the standard is dangerous because it compromises reliability.

TRUTH NO. 2: YOUR CAPACITY TO GIVE LOVE HINGES ON YOUR ABILITY TO RECEIVE LOVE.

We live in a fallen world full of broken, hurting people, all trying to get their needs met, which creates a plethora of opportunities for us to be used, abused, rejected, abandoned, and betrayed.

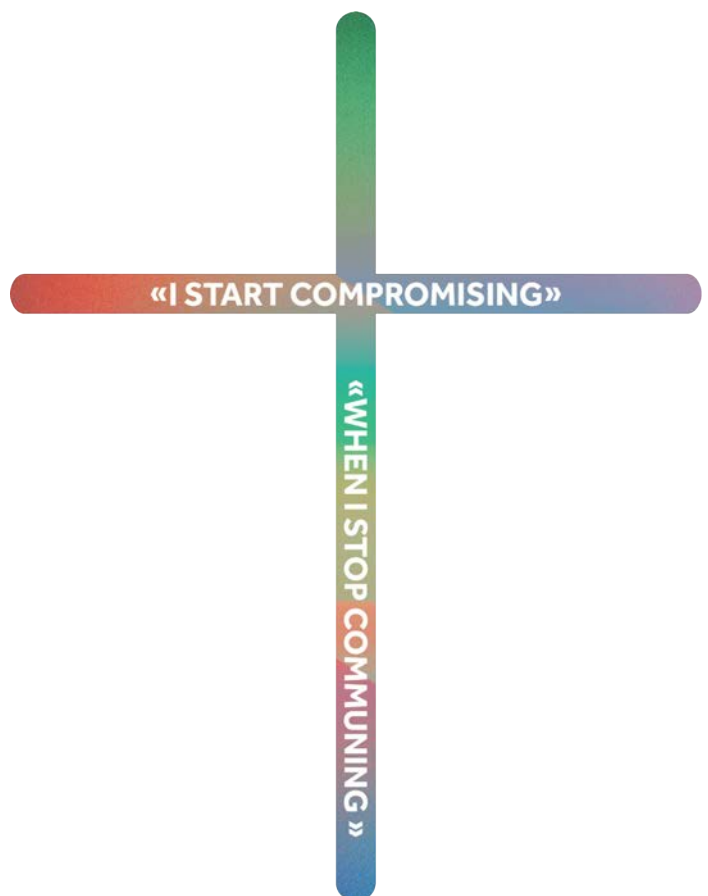
Those experiences are marked in scars that build up around our hearts to protect us from further pain. Those scars end up creating an emotional dam that keeps pain in and love out.

To move forward in a healthy, life-giving, love-filled relationship management, we must learn to let love in. Only when we learn to do this can we begin living from love, not for love.

“We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.” - 1 John 4:19 MSG

This communicates that regardless of how lousy past and present relationships may be, you are completely and wholly worthy of love. Effective management of our relationships is predicated on the truth that the love you need is available right now without strings and without conditions, and you will need to receive that love first. Remember, management brings order.

As it pertains to relationships, order states that where you are with God will determine how you are with others.



This compromise happens because we move out of love when we stop communing with God. When you are not living from love, you will live for love—your relationships are not free to be vessels of love because they operate as idols.

If you find yourself in a position where you feel like you are striving, which is stifling your ability to love others, let this truth redirect you to the standard. If you don't, your desperation for love will lead you to compromises that will invite guilt, shame, self-loathing, and comparison.

TRUTH NO. 3: YOU DON'T GIVE OR RECEIVE LOVE BECAUSE YOU'RE GOOD. YOU DO SO BECAUSE HE IS GOOD.

You'll never get to the place in your relationships where you don't need God.

"God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love."

- 1 John 4:17-18 MSG

We can reside in a life of love, and the Holy Spirit's seal says we can never be evicted. As long as you don't move out, His love has a chance to become mature and fully formed, which will then always work on you and flow through you.

If we just protect our connection to the Father, our standing and reputation are identical to Christ. If we were to take all the effort that we are putting into being good enough into simply being with the One who is good, these other things would take care of themselves.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Take time outside of class to reflect and answer these questions. Remember, the more you put into this process, the more you will get out of it.

1. Which aspects of denial, control, and/or suppression does your relationship management currently include?

2. How have you historically defined love?

3. Do you struggle with believing that love is reliable? Why or why not?

LESSON EIGHT: STRATEGIES FOR RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

As we prepare to map out some practical strategies for relationship management, know these strategies are not designed to be a stand-alone, quick reference cheat sheet for a struggling relationship. The most effective application of these strategies is predicated on growth and progress in the first three emotional intelligence skills.

CREATE SPACES FOR COMMUNICATION

Communication is the infrastructure for every relationship. Every relationship is different, but each one involves connection. Communication is what allows for the connection between two people.

One of the most significant barriers to communication is availability. Failure to communicate can send messages of disinterest and disengagement, which will negatively effect on the relationship.

Proactive communication is one of the most impactful deposits we can make. Such communication happens when we plan and protect spaces to connect through talking. As obvious and elementary as those sound, many of our relationships suffer because these spaces do not exist.

Start simple. Protect a 15-minute space each day for proactive conversations. To help, consider using these two questions:

- What is one thing you are thankful for and why?
- What is one thing you are concerned about and why?

Outside of the daily connections, shoot for one hour weekly and a 2-3 hour block monthly. These can happen over meals, coffee, or even on a walk.

Not all people require the same amount of relational depth, so it may take some time to figure out what each relationship requires.

CONFRONT, DON'T COMBAT

The more we communicate, the more opportunity for issues to arise in the relationship. If these issues affect the relationship, they should be addressed (Matthew 18:15-19.) It's how we address these issues that can create dysfunction and mismanagement.

When we approach the issues combatively, the other person in the relationship is a threat, and we address the issue with the goal of being heard, seen, and understood at any cost.

Well-managed confrontation provides the best chance of addressing an issue without wounding the other person. Confrontation is necessary to protect a relationship by addressing anything that may compromise it; the goal is to better understand another and his or her concerns.

This means listening more and talking less. (James 1:19) You can still be heard, but you have done the work of self-awareness and self-management to effectively communicate without defensiveness or aggression.

FORGIVE QUICKLY, OFTEN, AND FREELY

Even the healthiest, well-managed confrontations will provide opportunities to pick up offenses.

We must aim to not allow the responses or behavior of others to change the character of who we are. Self-management does not mean we will not be hurt, offended, or disrespected. Our best defense against such moments is to forgive quickly, often, and freely.

"If you freely forgive anyone for anything, then I also forgive him. And if I have forgiven anything, I did so for you before the face of Christ, so that we would not be exploited by the adversary, Satan, for we know his clever schemes."
- 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 TPT

CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS IN EVERY RELATIONSHIP

If boundaries provide the parameters for healthy interactions, expectations define the win.

Expectations in our relationships should not be approached like some wish list of demands. The most effective expectations are realistic, reasonable, and agreed upon. A realistic expectation is capable of being met.

Expectations should be reasonable, and all factors influencing the expectation should be considered.

Finally, both parties need to agree to the expectation. An expectation in a relationship not agreed upon by both parties is useless. For them to be agreed upon they needed to be clearly communicated.

An expectation provides an opportunity for a win in a relationship but does not guarantee a win. Prepare for there to be misses and straight up loses at times.

CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF OTHERS AND COMMUNICATE YOURS.

One of the quickest ways to get your needs met in a relationship is to meet the needs of another.

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” - Philippians 2:3 ESV

If you feel like your relationships are struggling, rather than making adjustments after adjustments centered around you and your needs, try to consider and meet the needs of those in your relationships and see if it doesn't improve the relationship's health.

RECOGNIZE THE SEASONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Every relationship will go through seasons. The Bible tells of many.

- David and Jonathan had seasons of friendship.
- Naomi and her daughters-in-law speaks to when a loss occurs and letting go.
- Paul and Barnabas speaks to those working relationships that remind us that not all who start a job together end a job together.
- Hosea and Gomer speaks to seasons of pain and redemption, even in the sacred marriage covenant. Mistakes and restoration.

The Bible says that there is a season for everything under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3.) Some seasons will bring life, and others will bring death. Death can give way to life if what we're holding onto is killing us. For your relationships to grow, some things will need to die.

There are times when it goes a step further, and not only do habits or patterns within our relationships need to die, but the relationship itself needs to die so that we can move forward.

Recognizing a shift in the season releases the grace necessary to navigate those seasons.

LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEALTHY AND SUCCESSFUL

Healthy and normal are not synonymous terms. Neither are healthy and successful. Learning to differentiate between the two will require some reconceptualizing.

This differentiation goes back to your standard of measurement. Healthy relationships produce good fruit in you and those around you.

Sometimes, what feels like a failure or an unsuccessful relationship is often brought about by making the tough choices that promote healthy growth for everyone involved.

APPENDIX

LIST OF FEELING WORDS

PLEASANT FEELINGS

OPEN	HAPPY	ALIVE	GOOD	LOVE	INTERESTED	POSITIVE	STRONG
understanding	great	playful	calm	loving	concerned	eager	impulsive
confident	joyous	courageous	peaceful	considerate	affected	keen	free
reliable	lucky	energetic	at ease	affectionate	fascinated	earnest	sure
easy	fortunate	liberated	comfortable	sensitive	intrigued	intent	certain
amazed	delighted	optimistic	pleased	tender	absorbed	inspired	rebellious
free	overjoyed	impulsive	encouraged	devoted	inquisitive	determined	unique
sympathetic	gleeful	free	clever	attracted	engrossed	excited	dynamic
interested	thankful	animated	surprised	passionate	curious	enthusiastic	tenacious
satisfied	important	spirited	content	admiration	drawn toward	bold	hardy
receptive	festive	thrilled	quiet	warm		brave	secure
accepting	ecstatic	wonderful	certain	touched		daring	confident
kind	glad		relaxed	close		optimistic	challenged
	cheerful		serene	comforted			
	elated		reassured	loved			
	jubilant						

UNPLEASANT FEELINGS

ANGRY	DEPRESSED	CONFUSED	HELPLESS	INDIFFERENT	AFRAID	HURT	SAD
irritated	lousy	upset	incapable	insensitive	fearful	crushed	tearful
enraged	disappointed	doubtful	done	dull	terrified	tormented	sorrowful
hostile	discouraged	uncertain	paralyzed	nonchalant	suspicious	deprived	pained
insulting	ashamed	indecisive	fatigued	neutral	anxious	pained	grief
annoyed	powerless	perplexed	useless	reserved	darned	tortured	anguish
upset	diminished	embarrassed	inferior	weary	panic	dejected	desolate
hateful	guilty	hesitant	vulnerable	bored	nervous	rejected	desperate
offensive	dissatisfied	shy	empty	preoccupied	scared	injured	pessimistic
bitter	miserable	stupefied	forced	cold	worried	offended	unhappy
aggressive	detestable	disillusioned	hesitant	disinterested	frightened	afflicted	lonely
resentful	repugnant	unbelieving	despair	lifeless	timid	aching	grieved
inflamed	despicable	skeptical	frustrated		shaky	victimized	mournful
provoked	disgusting	distrustful	distressed		restless	heartbroken	dismayed
incensed	abominable	misgiving	woeful		doubtful	agonized	
infuriated	terrible	lost	pathetic		threatened	appalled	
cross	in despair	unsure	tragic		cowardly	humiliated	
worked up	sulky	uneasy	in a stew		quaking	wronged	
boiling	bad	pessimistic	dominated		wary	alienated	
fuming		tense					

Adapted from the "List of Feeling Words" on PsychPage.
<http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/assess/feelings.html>

LIST OF EMOTIONS

Amazed	Foolish	Overwhelmed
Angry	Frustrated	Peaceful
Annoyed	Furious	Proud
Anxious	Grievous	Relieved
Ashamed	Happy	Resentful
Bitter	Hopeful	Sad
Bored	Hurt	Satisfied
Comfortable	Inadequate	Scared
Confused	Insecure	Self-conscious
Content	Inspired	Shocked
Depressed	Irritated	Silly
Determined	Jealous	Stupid
Disdain	Joy	Suspicious
Disgusted	Lonely	Tense
Eager	Lost	Terrified
Embarrassed	Loving	Trapped
Energetic	Miserable	Uncomfortable
Envious	Motivated	Worried
Excited	Nervous	Worthless

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DISCIPLESHIP CLASS EVALUATION

In effort to better improve the quality and study of our Wednesday Discipleship Classes, we at Dream City Church Omaha ask that you please take a moment to consider and answer the questions below. Evaluations are completely anonymous, and your feedback is greatly appreciated.

NAME OF CLASS ATTENDED: _____

TEACHER: _____

	Disagree			Agree	
This class helped me grow in my relationship with Christ:	1	2	3	4	5
This class helped me become more aware of my identity in Christ:	1	2	3	4	5
This class equipped me to walk in my purpose and calling:	1	2	3	4	5
I found the print curriculum to be valuable and helpful:	1	2	3	4	5

How has this class impacted your spiritual life?

What decisions or behaviors have changed since taking this class?

How do you see this class changing your life moving forward?

What has God revealed to you over the duration of this class?



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