

# Discovering Relational Wisdom®

A Better Kind of Smart™



**Building better relationships  
by taking every thought, emotion,  
word, and action captive to Christ**



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# INTRODUCTION – RELATIONAL WISDOM PRE-FORUM CONFERENCE

Welcome to the *Discovering Relational Wisdom Pre-Forum Conference!*

This Pre-Forum Conference is designed to teach you how to improve your ability to develop authentic, enjoyable, productive, and lasting relationships. The principles you will learn today have the potential to impact every aspect of your life, including your worship, marital intimacy, parenting, and friendships, as well as your workplace performance and career advancement.

I say "potential to impact" because there are no quick and easy shortcuts to developing better relationships. We've all developed attitudes and habits that undermine our relationships, and it takes a lot of determination and effort to change some of the ways we view and engage others.

But the good news is that we *can* change. This process will go more smoothly if we are willing to admit where we've gotten it wrong in the past, if we decide to learn and practice new relational skills, and if we are open to accepting advice and assistance from those who love us and want to help us grow.

My motivation for developing this seminar is my belief that every person on the face of the earth has been made in the image of God, and since God is highly relational, we are designed and called to be highly relational as well. That both excites and challenges me!

Your motive for exploring these concepts may be different than mine. That's okay – we're all on a journey of learning and growing. Whatever your motive is, I hope that what you learn in this seminar will enable you to understand yourself and those around you more and to enjoy deeper, more fulfilling relationships in every area of your life.

~ Ken Sande

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## Feedback and Suggestions

We would welcome your evaluation of this seminar and the individual who teaches it to you. Please visit [www.rw360.org/survey](http://www.rw360.org/survey) and give us the benefit of your experience, comments, and suggestions on how we can improve the delivery of this material.

This seminar was developed by Ken Sande and the Certified Relational Wisdom Instructors who serve on behalf of Relational Wisdom 360. This is version 3.9.

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# 1. PURSUING RELATIONAL WISDOM

*"Get wisdom.... Prize her highly, and she will exalt you." Proverbs 4:7-8*

## What is relational wisdom?

In essence, relational wisdom (RW) is the ability to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself ... better yet, as Jesus has loved you (Matt. 22:37-39; John 13:34-35).

**Living Out the Two Great Commandments**

## Why is relational wisdom worth pursuing?

First, because *life is all about relationship* (Gen. 2:18; John 3:16, 4:1-42; 13:34-35, 17:20-23)



*"It is not good that the man should be alone...." Gen. 2:18*

Second, because *God promises to bless people who pursue wisdom*

Proverbs speaks about four types of people, only one of which receives God's blessing.

- The **Simple** – Requires instruction
- The **Scoffer** – Resists instruction
- The **Fool** – Rejects instruction
- The **Wise** – Receives instruction

**Which one do you want to be?**

*"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Prov. 1:22*

*"Blessed is the one who finds wisdom.... Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ...all her paths are peace.*

*She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed." Prov. 3:13, 16-18*

Third, because *relationally-wise people experience less conflict and enjoy richer, more enduring relationships* (James 3:17-18; Prov. 17:14; 20:3)

Fourth, because *relationally-wise people bring out the best in others* (2 Sam. 23:8-39)

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was a time of wisdom, it was a time of foolishness.”  
—Charles Dickens

Fifth, because when we are working with others, *relationship usually trumps expertise*



“He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.” Prov. 22:11

Soft skills can either **magnify** or **diminish** the value of our hard skills, as well as those of people around us.



According to Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves<sup>1</sup>:

- Relational skills are the *single biggest predictor* of performance in the workplace and the strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence.
- *Ninety percent of top performers* are high in relational skills.
- People with high relational skills earn an average of **\$29,000 more per year** than people with low skills.
- See [www.rw360.org/workplace](http://www.rw360.org/workplace) for over fifty articles on the value of relational skills in business, healthcare, education, athletics, and military settings.

Sixth, because *Jesus was highly relational* and calls us to be like him (John 13:12-15; 15:9; Eph. 5:1-2)

Seventh, and most importantly, because *relational wisdom enables us to know, love, and enjoy God more deeply* (John 8:29; 14:21-23)

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<sup>1</sup> *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. (San Diego: Talent Smart, 2009), 19-22

## 2. THE CHALLENGE OF EMOTIONS

*“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?  
Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?” James 4:1*

**Relationships can be challenging, because they are fueled by emotions, both positively and negatively.**

Emotions, which are built into all people by God’s design,<sup>1</sup> are *physiological* experiences that involve measurable neural, muscular, respiratory, hormonal, and cardiovascular changes that impact our thoughts and *move us to action* (Exod. 32:19; 2 Sam. 18:33; Mark 1:41).

Emotions provide the greatest pleasures of life, such as love, joy, delight, acceptance, belonging, peace, worship, passion, and ecstasy, to name just a few.

Emotions are also tied to our greatest struggles and agonies in life, which often involve feelings such as sadness, embarrassment, anger, bitterness, jealousy, self-pity, and regret.

Jesus felt a wide range of emotions, including love, compassion, joy, pity, anger, sorrow, and agony (John 11:5; Matt. 14:14; Heb. 12:2; Mark 1:41; 3:5; 14:34; Luke 22:44). Yet he never sinned (1 Pet. 2:22). His emotions never surprised or overwhelmed him or moved him to act contrary to his Father’s perfect will (John 8:29).

Not so with us—because of the fall, sin has corrupted our whole being, including our minds, emotions, and will. Therefore, like a computer with a defective motherboard, we are unable to *consistently* understand and control the emotions that are triggered by people and events in our lives (Gen. 3:6-13; Jer. 17:9; Eph. 4:22).

Therefore, while positive emotions usually move us to do good things, negative emotions often move us to sin against God and one another (Gen. 37:11; 2 Sam. 11:2-4).

*“When my soul was embittered ... I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.”  
Psalm 73:21-22*

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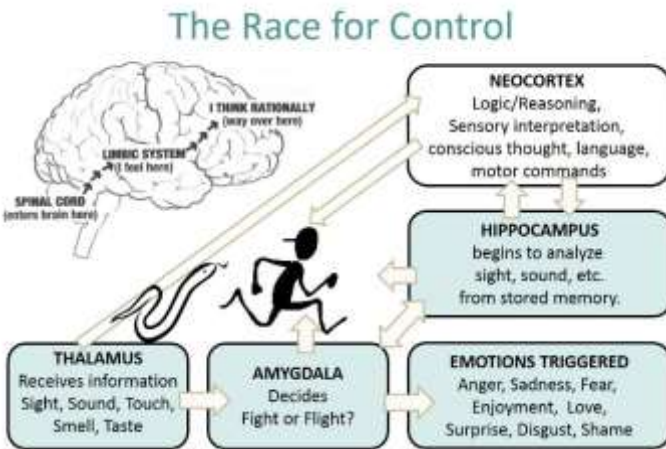
<sup>1</sup> For more information on the theology of emotions see [www.rw360.org/Emotion-in-Christian-Anthropology](http://www.rw360.org/Emotion-in-Christian-Anthropology)

# All of us are capable of feeling a wide variety of emotions

| Core Emotions  |                |               |  |            |              |   |             |              |
|--|----------------|---------------|--|------------|--------------|---|-------------|--------------|
|  | Sadness        | Shame         | Fear   | Enjoyment  | Love         | Surprise  | Disgust     | Anger        |
| High   | Despair        | Guilty        | Terrified  | Ecstatic   | Worship      | Shocked   | Revulsion   | Fury         |
|  | Depression     | Sorrowful     | Dreading   | Overjoyed  | Adoration    | Stunned   | Despising   | Hostility    |
|  | Grief          | Worthless     | Fearful  | Excited    | Infatuation  | Alarmed   | Detesting   | Hatred       |
| Medium   | Loneliness     | Disgraced     | Afraid   | Thrilled   | Loyalty      | Astonished  | Loathing    | Animosity    |
|  | Hurt           | Dishonored    | Frightened   | Delighted  | Attraction   | Perplexed   | Contempt    | Bitterness   |
|  | Hopelessness   | Humiliated    | Anxious  | Passionate | Respect      | Bewildered  | Scorn       | Exasperation |
| Low  | Sorrow         | Remorseful    | Insecure   | Cheerful   | Compassion   | Disoriented   | Aversion    | Antipathy    |
|  | Self-pity      | Unworthy      | Intimidated  | Happy      | Fondness     | Confused  | Rejection   | Resentment   |
|  | Distress       | Embarrassed   | Nervous  | Satisfied  | Friendliness | Wondering   | Disrespect  | Mad          |
|  | Unhappiness    | Bashful       | Worried  | Glad       | Kindness     | Unsettled   | Disapproval | Frustration  |
|  | Gloom          | Regretful     | Uneasy   | Contented  | Liking       | Puzzled   | Dislike     | Annoyance    |
|  | Disappointment | Uncomfortable | Concerned  | Pleased    | Acceptance   | Bemused   | Distaste    | Irritation   |
| Spirit of Fear   |                |               | Spirit of Power, Love, and Self-control                    |            |              | Spirit of Anger   |             |              |
| <i>"God gave us a spirit not of fear ..."</i><br>(2 Tim. 1:7a) |                |               | <i>... but of power and love and self-control" (1:7b).</i> |            |              | <i>"Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9).</i> |             |              |

Exercise: Mark (✓) and count each of the emotions you have felt at some time in your life.  
(Number of marks: \_\_\_\_ /96)

## In high stress situations, the “emotional brain” can hijack the “rational brain” ... and your whole body along with it.



*"Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him."*  
Gen. 4:8

*"So David took Bathsheba ... and lay with her."*  
2 Sam. 11:4

*"[Peter] denied [Jesus], saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.'" Luke 22:57*

*"Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate" (Acts 12:14).*

Data enters the brain through the thalamus, which sends impulses to other parts of the brain. Impulses arrive at the limbic system (amygdala) a few nanoseconds before they get to the neocortex, which allows our emotions to take control before you are able to rationally process the information ([www.rw360.org/hijacking](http://www.rw360.org/hijacking)).

# The downward spiral of emotional hijacking, flooding, and relational failure<sup>1</sup>

- **Definitions**

- **Hijacking** occurs when our emotions (in the amygdala) overpower rational thinking (in the neocortex)
- **Flooding** is the sense of feeling *incessantly* swamped by our own or others' emotions

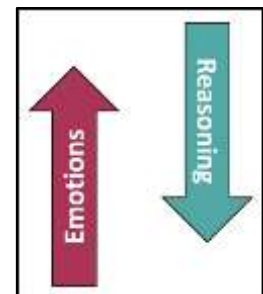
- **Triggers and Downward Spiral**

- James 4:1-3 - Desires become controlling idols:  
I desire → I demand → I judge → I punish
- Triggers: poor communication, misunderstanding, conflicting agendas
- Defensive reaction to criticism (sarcasm, anger, yelling, silence, fleeing)
- We begin to see ourselves as innocent or unappreciated victims
- We develop a critical spirit, assuming the worst about everything others do
- We grab evidence that supports our view and ignore evidence that doesn't
- This puts the other person into a no-win (lose/lose) situation
- We experience prolonged physical distress (pulse, adrenaline, respiration)
- We feel increasingly confused, frustrated, and out-of-control
- As emotions intensify, we have less brain capacity for rational thinking



- **As Flooding Increases**

- It becomes increasingly difficult to recover from feeling hurt or angry
- We lose hope for a positive resolution
- We develop a hard, uncaring heart, partly as protection and partly as punishment
- We avoid the other person, spending more and more time apart
- We eventually give up on our friendships, relatives, churches, jobs, or marriages



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Emotional Intelligence*, by Dan Goleman (New York: Bantam, 1996), 129ff, 289-300

- **Common Tendencies of Men and Women (sometimes reversed)**
  - Men tend to avoid conflict at all costs, often because they are afraid of emotional flooding
  - Women generally want to engage: “We need to talk”
  - Fear of flooding often compels men to “stonewall” (withdraw into silence or leave)
  - The more a woman presses to discuss ... the more most men will pull away (Prov. 21:9)
  - This results in further frustration and flooding in the woman, which prolongs the spiral
  
- **The Three-Fold Pattern of Emotional and Relational Failure**
  - Failure to understand and faithfully obey God’s instructions
  - Failure to understand and consistently control the emotions and interests that are driving us
  - Failure to understand and wisely engage the emotions and interests of others
  
- **Are you tired of being controlled by an invisible puppeteer?**
  - If you fail to develop the ability to understand and master emotions, they will act like an “invisible puppeteer,” jerking you around, provoking impulsive words and actions, and damaging your relationships



**There is hope:**

*As you grow in relational wisdom, you can learn to anticipate, prevent, and reverse this spiral, and become skilled at building healthy relationships.*



# 3. DEFINING RELATIONAL WISDOM

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39*

## Relational Wisdom: A Theology for Life

The Bible provides a highly effective way to deal with relationships and the emotions that fuel them. These truths may be organized into a discipleship paradigm called "*relational wisdom*."

- Relationships are three dimensional
  - God, Self, Others <sup>1</sup>
- Relationships involve two dynamics
  - *Aware* - What do I know? (Knowledge)
  - *Engaging* - What will I do? (Action)
- If you do not believe in God or actively think about his role in your life, you still need to see and address the outside values that guide your relationships, that is, you still need to be "**Values-Aware**" and "**Values-Engaging**"
- Relational wisdom is taught throughout Scripture, both as individual disciplines and in complete 360s (all three dimensions addressed in one passage), with each discipline fueling and supporting the others



"360" passages are everywhere: Matthew 22:37-39; 28:18-20; Exodus 20:1-21; and Philippians 2:1-11

*"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.\**

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*

*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,*

*as God in Christ forgave you\*\*" (Eph. 4:30-32).*

- ← \_\_\_\_\_ Aware / Engaging
- ← \_\_\_\_\_ Aware / Engaging
- ← \_\_\_\_\_ Aware / Engaging
- ← \_\_\_\_\_ Aware / Engaging

<sup>1</sup> For additional insights on three-dimensional interpretations of life by theologians like John Frame, John Stott, and Tim Keller, see [www.rw360.org/Triperspectivalism](http://www.rw360.org/Triperspectivalism).

# The gospel provides the motive, pattern and power for relational wisdom

The gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and rescue us from eternal separation from God, and he rose from the dead to give us new life. Through faith in Jesus, we are reconciled to God, adopted into his family, empowered to love others as he has loved us, and given the gift of enjoying him forever (Eph. 4:32; Titus 2:14; see pages 18-19).



## RW Can Start Anywhere on the Circle

- Although the ideal approach to relationships is to start with God-awareness and work clockwise through the other disciplines (doing a 360), life is seldom that predictable.
- In many situations you will first become aware of an inner turmoil (self-awareness, see Ps. 77) or see that another person is distressed (other-awareness, see 1 Sam. 1:8). Regardless of where you begin your response to a relational issue, seek to eventually look at it from all three perspectives. Do this not just once, but repeatedly, doing continual 360s as you seek to improve the relationship.



## Six skills or disciplines that can become habits

- **God-Awareness** (remember) is the ability to view all of life in the light of God's character, works, and promises<sup>1</sup>
- **God-Engagement** (faithfulness) is the ability to trust, obey, and imitate God in a way that pleases and honors him<sup>2</sup>
- **Self-Awareness** (humility) is the ability to honestly discern your own emotions, interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses<sup>3</sup>
- **Self-Engagement** (discipline) is the ability to master your thoughts, emotions, words, and actions so that they advance God's purposes<sup>4</sup>
- **Other-Awareness** (compassion) is the ability to understand and empathize with the experiences, emotions, and interests of others<sup>5</sup>
- **Other-Engagement** (service) is the ability to encourage, cooperate, and resolve differences with others in a mutually beneficial way<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. 16:12; Ps. 77:11-12; Ps. 111:2-3; Ps. 103; Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 3:14-19; 2 Pet. 1:3-8 • <sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 3:6; Prov. 3:5-6; Matt. 25:21; John 14:15; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Eph. 5:1-2 • <sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 5:5; Ps. 139:23-24; James 4:1-3; Mark 7:21-23; 2 Tim. 2:22 • <sup>4</sup> Gal. 5:22-23; Matt. 16:24-25; John 8:29; Titus 2:11-12 • <sup>5</sup> Mark 6:34; Luke 10:30-37; 1 Pet. 3:8; Phil. 2:3-4 • <sup>6</sup> Mark 10:42-45; John 12:24-26; 1 Thess. 5:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:8-9

## Definition

Relational wisdom is your ability to discern emotions, interests and abilities in yourself and others, to interpret them in the light of God’s Word, and to use these insights to manage your responses and relationships constructively.

## Relational wisdom is a cousin to “emotional intelligence”

|       |                     |                  |                         |
|-------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| EI/EQ | Personal Competence | Self-awareness   | Self-management         |
|       | Social Competence   | Social-awareness | Relationship-management |

By God’s general revelation and common grace,<sup>1</sup> secular studies on emotional intelligence have produced valuable insights on human neurology and behavior. Dan Goleman’s writings, including his best selling book, *Emotional Intelligence*, are particularly insightful.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately most of these studies ignore the central role of God in our lives.

## RW Involves Six ranges of proficiency

|                    |   |               |
|--------------------|---|---------------|
| <b>Foolishness</b> | → | <b>Wisdom</b> |
| 0                  | → | 100           |
| Forget             | → | Remember      |
| Fearful            | → | Faithful      |
| Proud              | → | Humble        |
| Indulgent          | → | Disciplined   |
| Insensitive        | → | Compassionate |
| Manipulative       | → | Serving       |



<sup>1</sup>See [www.rw360.org/Common-Grace-RW](http://www.rw360.org/Common-Grace-RW) • <sup>2</sup>See [www.rw360.org/Emotional-Intelligence](http://www.rw360.org/Emotional-Intelligence)

## **In real life, people live both inside and outside the RW circle**

Even King David vacillated between relational wisdom and foolishness.

- Youth (1 Sam. 17, 24): remembered, faithful, humble, disciplined, compassionate, serving
- Old age (2 Sam. 11): forgot, fearful, proud, indulgent, insensitive, manipulative

## **RW is a “relational operating system” for life**

Just as Windows and Mac OS control every program on a computer, RW impacts every aspect of life, including worship, marriage, church unity, and workplace performance and advancement.

*The nature and quality of our “relational operating system” is often revealed by extreme stress.*



## 4. APPLYING RELATIONAL WISDOM

*“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things.”* Philippians 4:9

Relational wisdom is so simple a child can apply it, yet so complex you can spend the rest of your life developing it. You can start growing today by memorizing and practicing four simple acrostics.

*To be relationally wise in all situations ...*

### PRACTICE THE SOG PLAN

- **S**elf-aware: *How am I feeling and acting?*
  - What am I feeling? Why?
  - What do I feel like doing? What are the likely consequences?
  - What can I do instead?
- **O**ther-aware: *How are others feeling and how am I affecting them?*
  - What do others seem to feel? Need? Want? Fear?
  - How am I impacting others?
  - Is this really the best time to talk, counsel, or correct?
  - How can I serve, love, or forgive others?
- **G**od-aware: *Where is God leading me?*
  - Who is God? What is he like? What is he doing?
  - Am I acting in faith or unbelief? Do I trust in him or in myself?
  - What difference does the gospel make?
  - How can I pray? What Scriptures can guide me?
  - How can I show that I love, trust, and obey God above all things?
- \* **V**alues-aware: *Where are my values leading me?*



To become more God-aware and God-engaging ...

**FOLLOW A TRUSTWORTHY GPS (GOD POSITIONING SYSTEM)**

VALUES-CENTERED

→

GOD-CENTERED

- **G**et the best  
Role models, values, support
- **P**ursue wisdom  
Read, watch, study, evaluate
- **S**erve others  
Look out for others' interests as well as your own

- **G**lorify God <sup>1</sup>  
Trust him absolutely
- **P**ursue God <sup>2</sup>  
Seek him earnestly
- **S**erve God <sup>3</sup>  
Do what pleases him



*“And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.”*  
*Isa. 30:21*

To become more self-aware and self-engaging ...

**READ YOURSELF ACCURATELY**

- **R**ecognize your emotions <sup>4</sup> (see p. 6)
- **E**valuate their sources <sup>5</sup> \*
- **A**nticipate the consequences of following them <sup>6</sup>
- **D**irect them on a constructive course <sup>7</sup>

“DO A 180” <sup>8</sup>



**Key Point**  
 Emotions are like the wind. They can either capsizе your relationships or propel them on an exhilarating journey.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 3:5-7; Dan. 3:16-18; Luke 4:8; Acts 5:27-29; 1 Cor. 10:31 • <sup>2</sup> Jer. 29:13; Joshua 1:8; Ps. 119:45; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:24-25 • <sup>3</sup> John 8:29; Josh. 24:15; Matt. 5:16; John 15:8 • <sup>4</sup> Ps. 42:5; Matt. 14:30; Phil. 4:6 • <sup>5</sup> Ps. 73:2-3; Prov. 20:5; James 1:13-15; \* see also *The Peacemaker*, Chapter 5, and [www.rw360.org/cccf-idols](http://www.rw360.org/cccf-idols) • <sup>6</sup> Prov. 22:3; 15:18; Colossians 3:5-6 • <sup>7</sup> Prov. 15:1; 25:15; John 12:27; Col. 3:12-13 • <sup>8</sup> Luke 6:27-36; Rom. 12:17-21

To become more other-aware and other-engaging ...

## SERVE EVERY PERSON YOU MEET

- **S**mile (home, workplace, church, store, telephone)<sup>1</sup>
- **E**xplore and **E**mpathize\* (Show interest and compassion)<sup>2</sup>
- **R**econcile (Be a peacemaker)<sup>3</sup>
- **V**alue (Express appreciation and respect)<sup>4</sup>
- **E**ncourage (Give courage, inspire, put wind under their wings)<sup>5</sup>



### Key Point

“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.”  
Philo of Alexandria

### \*EMPATHY

- **E**nlist all of your faculties
- **M**ove in physically, verbally, and emotionally
- **P**ray for discernment
- **A**sk caring questions
- **T**hink deliberately
- **H**elp in meaningful ways
- **Y**ield your convenience, pride, and resources

[www.rw360.org/empathy](http://www.rw360.org/empathy)

By practicing these skills in the ordinary interactions of life, you can steadily improve your ability to know and follow God, to read and discipline yourself, and to understand and serve other people.

<sup>1</sup>Num. 6:24-26; Prov. 12:25; 15:13; Matt. 7:12; [www.rw360.org/smile](http://www.rw360.org/smile) • <sup>2</sup>Prov. 20:5; Rom. 12:15; 1 Pet. 3:8 •

<sup>3</sup>Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; James 3:17-18 • <sup>4</sup>Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:17-18; Phil. 2:29; 1 Tim. 5:17 • <sup>5</sup>Isa. 40:28-31; Acts 4:36; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24-25

## 5. RELATIONAL PEACEMAKING

*“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” James 3:17-18*

### Peacemaking is a special application of relational wisdom<sup>1</sup>

Peacemaking is how we *draw ourselves and others back inside the circle of relational wisdom* (1 Sam. 25; Acts 6:1-7) through confession, correction, forgiveness, negotiation, and reconciliation.

#### THE SLIPPERY SLOPE OF CONFLICT

(Luke 22:56-62; Acts 23:1-5; Matt. 5:9)

- Escaping (Fear)
- Attacking (Anger)
- Peacemaking (Love)

#### FOUR G’S OF PEACEMAKING (1

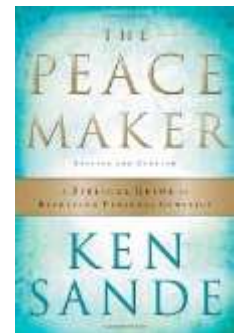
Cor. 10:31; Matt. 7:3-5; Gal. 6:1; Matt. 5:23-24)

- Glorify God
- Get the log out of your own eye
- Gently Restore
- Go and be reconciled



#### SEVEN A’S OF CONFESSION (Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13)

- Address everyone involved (All those whom you affected)
- Avoid if, but, and maybe (Do not try to excuse your wrongs)
- Admit specifically (Both attitudes and actions)
- Acknowledge the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)
- Accept the consequences (Such as making restitution)
- Alter your behavior (Change your attitudes and actions)
- Ask for forgiveness



#### FOUR PROMISES OF FORGIVENESS (Matt. 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32)

- “I will not dwell on this incident.”
- “I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.”
- “I will not talk to others about this incident.”
- “I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”

#### PAUSE PRINCIPLE OF NEGOTIATION (Phil. 2:3-4; Matt. 7:12)

- Prepare (pray, get the facts, seek godly counsel, develop options)
- Affirm relationships (show genuine concern and respect for others)
- Understand interests (identify others’ concerns, desires, needs, limitations, or fears)
- Search for creative solutions (prayerful brainstorming)
- Evaluate options objectively and reasonably (evaluate, don’t argue)

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see *The Peacemaker*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2004), [www.rw360.org/Peacemaking](http://www.rw360.org/Peacemaking), and [www.Peacemaker.net](http://www.Peacemaker.net).



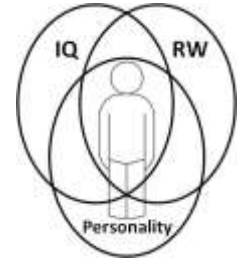
## 6. IMPROVING RELATIONAL WISDOM

*"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress." 1 Timothy 4:15*

### YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONAL WISDOM

Unlike IQ (intelligence quotient) and personality, which do not change noticeably after the teen years, your relational wisdom can improve significantly if you are willing to work at it.

Psychologists who study emotional intelligence attribute our ability to change to the "plasticity" of our minds. Christians attribute it to a transformational process called justification and sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13).



### GOD DESIGNED US TO GROW

In fact God commands and empowers us to grow in relational wisdom as he sanctifies and transforms us into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:22-24; James 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-7).

"We all are being transformed.... This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."  
2 Cor. 3:18

### YOUR GROWTH WILL ULTIMATELY DEPEND ON WHAT "GPS" YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE BY

Most people would like to improve their relationships, but no matter how hard they try, they fall back into the attitudes and habits that frequently put them on the wrong track with God and other people (Rom. 7:15).

Because of his great love, God invites us to trade in our flawed ideas on how to live, to accept the gift of his kindness and forgiveness, and to trust that he will provide us with the best system for navigating life and relationships (Prov. 3:5-6).

This system has proven its superiority over thousands of years. Those who have trusted in it have found a wisdom, righteousness, security, and peace that is unmatched by anything the world has to offer (Ps. 23).

#### A Psalm of David

*"The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For you are with me;  
Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Ps. 23 (NKJV)*

## RELATIONAL WISDOM IS AN OUTPOURING OF THE GOSPEL

You can receive this proven “God-Positioning-System” by believing in the gospel of Christ. The word “gospel” means “good news.” To understand God’s good news, we first need to understand the truth about ourselves.

The Bible tells us that God created us in his image and designed us to reflect his perfect love and character by living according to his commands.<sup>1</sup> But everyone on the earth has fallen short of that perfection. Instead of living for God, we have lived for ourselves. We have loved and served worldly pleasures more than we have loved and served God. We have repeatedly broken his commands and pursued our own desires and goals. As a result, God’s justice requires that we pay for our sins by being eternally separated from him.<sup>2</sup>

But there is good news. *God is radically relational and perfectly wise.* In his great love and mercy, he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sins by dying on the cross.<sup>3</sup> He then raised Jesus back to life to show that his sacrifice paid our debt in full and opened the way for us to be reconciled to God and enjoy him forever. This mercy overflows in a series of repeated relational blessings.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

### God-Aware

It starts when Jesus makes us *God-aware* by sending the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts and minds so that we can know, value, and love God.<sup>4</sup>

### God-Engaged

As we become aware of God’s love and mercy, we are moved to become *God-engaged*. His grace enables us to worship him in spirit and truth, to glorify and please him with faithful trust and obedience, and to delight in imitating him.<sup>5</sup>

### Self-Aware

God-awareness also opens the way for true *self-awareness*. As we come to know the holiness of God, we are able to know ourselves more accurately. We see our sin and realize how empty and miserable we are when we live for ourselves.<sup>6</sup> This leads us to humble ourselves, turn from our self-absorbed lives, and trust in Jesus as our Savior.<sup>7</sup> But God also opens our eyes to see his many blessings: he has forgiven our sins, credited us with Jesus’ perfect record, adopted us as dearly loved children, and entrusted us with gifts and opportunities to know and serve him.<sup>8</sup>

### Self-Engaged

God-awareness and self-awareness lead to *self-engagement*. As we are filled with God’s Spirit and united with him through Christ, we are inspired and empowered to break free from the slavery of sin, to develop self-discipline, and to grow in godliness.<sup>9</sup> Our old habits do not die easily,<sup>10</sup> but God promises to steadily transform us into his likeness.<sup>11</sup>

### Other-Aware

As God fills us and gives us the heart and mind of Christ,<sup>12</sup> we are freed from seeing ourselves as the center of the world and enabled to become *other-aware*. We start to listen, understand, value

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1:26 • <sup>2</sup> Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6; Matt. 25:41-43 • <sup>3</sup> John 3:16-17 • <sup>4</sup> Acts 26:15-18; Eph. 3:14-19, John 14:15-17, 26; John 3:3; Eph. 4:22-24; Titus 3:5 • <sup>5</sup> John 4:23-24; Ezek. 36:26-27; John 8:29, 14:23; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:1-2 • <sup>6</sup> Job 42:1-6; Isa. 6:1-5; Luke 5:8 • <sup>7</sup> Rom. 2:4; Acts 16:29-34 • <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. 1:30, 6:9-11; Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10 • <sup>9</sup> John 1:12-13; Rom. 6:5-6; Titus 2:11-12; Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:3-8 • <sup>10</sup> Rom. 7:15, 21-25 • <sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 1:6 • <sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 2:16; Gal. 2:20 • <sup>13</sup> Rom. 12:15-16; 1 Pet. 3:8

and care for others! As we develop compassion and understanding, their joys become our joys and their sorrows become our sorrows.<sup>13</sup>

### Other-Engaged

This growing other-awareness spills over in *other-engagement*. As the Holy Spirit changes our hearts from being self-absorbed to being God-absorbed, we are freed from the desire to manipulate others to get what we want. Why? Because we see that we already have the best of the best in Christ! We learn to find our greatest joy and fulfillment in loving him and the people he has placed around us. Thus the gospel results in relationships that are characterized by the same compassion, kindness, gentleness, and forgiveness that God has shown to us through Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

### A Free Gift

God offers all these blessings to each of us as a gift. We don't have to clean ourselves up to earn them. We must simply admit our need, believe that Jesus' death and resurrection have saved us, and then follow him as Lord of our lives.<sup>2</sup>

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8*

But mental assent alone will not change your relationships. Many people who say they believe in Jesus have not truly made him the "GPS" of their lives. They still live according to their own desires, ways and agendas.<sup>3</sup> As a result, they are not growing into his likeness or relating to others like true disciples of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

If you are such a person – or possibly a new believer – pray that God would fill you with his Spirit, transform your mind through the daily study of his Word, and give you a deeper understanding of the gospel and the life-changing power he offers to all who trust in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

If you would like to learn more about what it would mean for you to trust in Jesus and make him Lord of your life and relationships, please talk with a seminar instructor or one of the counselors who are available as part of the seminar team.

## IMPROVING RELATIONAL WISDOM PRODUCES LIFE-CHANGING BENEFITS (see pp. 3-4)

- **Stronger relationships**
  - Experience, love, and enjoy God more fully (Jer. 29:13; Matt. 22:37; John 8:29; 14:21, 23)
  - Have more enjoyable, productive, and enduring human relationships (Ruth 1:16-18; 1 Sam. 20:17; Prov. 18:24)
- **Valued influence**
  - Your example and advice will be more credible and welcomed by others (Prov. 3:35; 16:23).
  - Improved "soft skills" enhance personal and team performance at work and in other group activities.
- **Compelling witness**
  - Noticeable changes in your character and relationships reveals God's transforming power in your life (2 Cor. 5:17-20).
  - Love and unity among believers show that we are Jesus' disciples and prove that God loves us and sent his Son to save us (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23).

<sup>1</sup> John 13:34, Col. 3:12-17; Eph. 4: 30-32 • <sup>2</sup> Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 10:9-13; 1 John 2:6 • <sup>3</sup> Gal. 5:13-15; 1 John 2:9-11 • <sup>4</sup> John 13:34-35 • <sup>5</sup> Eph. 1:16-23

## NOW IT'S UP TO YOU -- DEVELOP AND FOLLOW A PERSONAL RW ACTION PLAN

*"To learn, read ... to understand, write ... to master, teach"*

### RW Personal Study Course

If you really want to grow in relational wisdom, download our free *RW Personal Study Course* ([www.rw360.org/study](http://www.rw360.org/study)). It offers a variety of optional learning avenues, including: Bible study, reading, evaluating videos and movies, studying highly relational people, personal applications, and group discussions.

*You are free to do as much or as little of this study as you like*

### Instructor Certification

Those who complete the *RW Personal Study Course* are welcome to apply to become an *Authorized RW Presenter* or *Certified RW Instructor*. For more information go to [www.rw360.org/training](http://www.rw360.org/training).

**Immediate Personal RW Action Plan - By God's grace and with his help I will:**

- Pray daily* for God's grace and wisdom to grow in specific ways (James 1:5; 3:17-18)
- Sign up for the RW Blog* so I can receive weekly tips on applying and improving relational wisdom (Go to [www.rw360.org/blog](http://www.rw360.org/blog))
- Study the Scriptures*, starting with the passage compilations at [www.rw360.org/study](http://www.rw360.org/study), to confirm these principles and imprint God's Word on my heart (Acts 17:11; Ps. 1:1-3)
- Focus initially on becoming more (choose one):*
  - Self-Aware by applying the READ acrostic in my life every day for 30 days
  - Other-Aware by applying the SERVE acrostic in my life every day for 30 days
  - God-Aware by applying the GPS acrostic in my life every day for 30 days
- Share with this person what I've learned about RW* \_\_\_\_\_
- Focus on improving my relationship with this person* \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

We encourage you to provide feedback on this seminar by going to [www.rw360.org/survey](http://www.rw360.org/survey).

*"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might!"*  
**Ecclesiastes 9:10**