

Practical Theology of Relational Wisdom

The Bible provides a wealth of guidance on how to build close relationships with God and the people around us. In the first part of this session we will organize this teaching into a simple, six-part discipleship paradigm called “relational wisdom.” This paradigm is similar to the increasingly popular concept of “emotional intelligence,” but is far more robust because it is centered on God, informed by Scripture, and driven by the gospel of Christ. The six primary skills or disciplines of RW are: God-Awareness and God-Engagement, Self-Awareness and Self-Engagement, and Other-Awareness and Other-engagement.

The second part of this session moves from the theoretical to the practical by introducing four simple acrostics that show how to practice relational wisdom in marriage, parenting, church, ministry, and the workplace. These acrostics include: (1) To be relationally wise in all situations, practice the SOG plan (Self-aware, Others-aware, and God-aware); (2) To become more God-aware and God-engaging, follow a reliable GPS (God-Positioning System, namely, Glorify God, Pursue God, Serve God); (3) To become more self-aware and self-engaging, READ yourself accurately (Recognize your emotions, Evaluate their source, Anticipate the consequences of following them, and Direct them on a constructive course); and (4) To become more other-aware and other-engaging, SERVE every person you meet (Smile, Explore and Empathize, Reconcile, Value, Encourage).

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1. 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

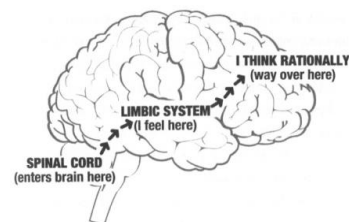
2. RW is a “*relational operating system*” (like Windows or Mac OS) that impacts every aspect of our lives, including worship, marital intimacy, church unity, and job performance and advancement.

- *Relationship trumps expertise* in most areas of life
- Soft skills (relational abilities) *magnify* or *diminish* the value of hard skills (technical expertise)



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

4. Relationships can be challenging, because they are often fueled by emotions, both positively and negatively (Matt. 14:14; Gen. 37:11, 28).



5. The Bible provides a powerfully 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** (So do continual 360’s)
- **Relationships involve two dynamics**
 - Aware – What do I know? (Knowledge)
 - Engaging – What will I do? (Action)

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, ESV)



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 successfully.

** The gospel provides the motive, pattern and power for relational wisdom (Eph. 4:30-32; 5:1-2; Titus 2:14).

6. Relational wisdom involves six relationship-building and preserving skills or disciplines:

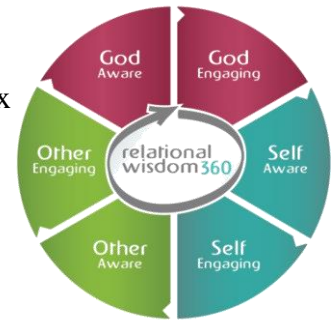
- **God-Awareness** (remember) is the ability to view all of life in the light of God’s character, works, and promises¹
- **God-Engagement** (faithfulness) is the ability to trust, obey, and imitate God in a way that pleases and honors him²
- **Self-Awareness** (humility) is the ability to honestly discern your own emotions, interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses³
- **Self-Engagement** (discipline) is the ability to master your thoughts, emotions, words, and actions so that they advance God’s purposes⁴
- **Other-Awareness** (compassion) is the ability to understand and empathize with the experiences, emotions, and interests of others⁵
- **Other-Engagement** (service) is the ability to encourage, cooperate, and resolve differences with others in a mutually beneficial way⁶

7. In real life, people live both inside and outside the circle (1 Sam. 17, 24; 2 Sam. 11).

8. Peacemaking, a special application of RW, is how we draw people back inside the circle (1 Sam. 25).

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

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.



PRACTICE THE SOG PLAN

- **Self-aware:** How am I feeling and acting?
- **Other-aware:** How are others feeling? How am I affecting them?
- **God-aware:** Where is God leading me?

FOLLOW A TRUSTWORTHY GPS*

*God Positioning System

- **Glorify** God (Trust him absolutely)
- **Pursue** God (Seek him earnestly)
- **Serve** God (Do what pleases him)

READ Yourself Accurately

- **Recognize** your emotions
- **Evaluate** their sources
- **Anticipate** the consequences of following them
- **Direct** them on a constructive course

SERVE EVERY PERSON YOU MEET

- **Smile** (Home, workplace, store, telephone)
- **Explore and Empathize** (Show interest and compassion)
- **Reconcile** (Be a peacemaker)
- **Value** (Express appreciation and respect)
Encourage (Give heart, inspire, put wind under their wings)

10. God designed and empowers us to grow in relational wisdom as he sanctifies and transforms us, conforming us to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:22-24; James 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-7).

- Change and growth take deliberate prayer and practice (Eph. 3:14-19; 1 Tim. 4:15)
- To grow in RW: (1) Subscribe to **RW Blog** (www.rw360.org/blog); (2) Take advantage of *Discovering Relational Wisdom 2.0* online at www.rw360.org/online-training