



Be a Peacemaker.
Transform Your Relationships.™

INTRODUCING RELATIONAL WISDOM

Welcome to Relational Wisdom!

We are honored that you've decided to join us in exploring and practicing the life-changing relational principles God has gifted to us through his Word.

As you'll see, relational wisdom is so simple that a ten-year-old child can understand it, and yet so profound that adults can spend the rest of their lives plumbing its depths.

We hope that you will visit our site often and take advantage of all the resources we've designed to help you grow in your ability to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbors as yourself!

Why?

Why do some people seem to have closer and more enduring friendships and marriages than others?

Why do they perform so well in the workplace and advance so quickly in their careers?

How do they maintain such a close and influential connection with their children and relatives?

Why do they seem to have less conflict, and when it does arise, why are they able to resolve it so quickly and completely?

Why are they so effective at helping others resolve their conflicts that their friends and coworkers call them peacemakers?

Most importantly, why do they have such a relaxed and appealing Christian witness?

A Better Kind of Smart

Well, it's seldom because they've got a higher IQ than others. Studies have consistently shown that high intelligence quotients do not automatically translate into success at home or in the workplace.

There is another kind of smart, however, that correlates strongly with success in all aspects of life. The Bible calls it "wisdom," and God promises great blessings to those who pursue it earnestly.

*Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.
She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.*

*Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and 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.*

[Proverbs 3:13-18](#)

[Proverbs 4:7-8](#) puts it even more succinctly: “Get wisdom. Prize her highly and she will exalt you.”

God’s wisdom can be applied to all aspects of life, including money management, physical health, sexuality, politics, families, friendships and employment. Having spent thirty years reconciling people estranged by conflict, I’ve been particularly interested in the principles of wisdom that apply to relationships in the home, church, and workplace.

We call this group of principles *relational wisdom*®, or simply *RW*. These timeless concepts can improve every aspect of our lives.

RW Definition and Paradigm

Relational wisdom®, in essence, is the desire and ability to live out Jesus’ two Great Commandments, namely, to *love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself* ([Matt. 22:37-39](#)).

Relational wisdom may also be defined as *your ability to discern emotions, interests and abilities in yourself and others, to interpret this information in the light of God’s Word, and to use these insights to manage your responses and relationships successfully.*

As you learn these skills, you can experience stronger relationships and less conflict at home, at church, and in the workplace, as well as improved team-building, better job performance and a more credible witness for Christ.

The Bible’s teaching on relational wisdom can be organized in terms of six core skills or disciplines that are grouped into three pairs. One pair focuses on how we relate to *God*, another on how we relate to *ourselves*, and the third on how we relate to *others*.

Each of these three pairs has an “*awareness*” component (what we see and understand), and an “*engaging*” component (what we do and say). These skill sets may be described in the following terms:

- **God-aware, God-engaging**
- **Self-aware, Self-engaging**
- **Other-aware, Other-engaging**



These six skills are closely linked and reinforce one another in a circular direction (thus the “360” in our ministry name). The better we know and follow God (God-aware, God-engaging), the more we will know and discipline ourselves (self-aware, self-engaging), which opens the way for us to better understand, relate to and serve our neighbors (other-aware, other-engaging).

To close the loop and spur us on developing relational wisdom, the Lord promises that the more we obey his command to love our neighbors, the closer we will draw to God himself ([John 14:21-23](#)). Thus, relational wisdom is a circle of interrelated skills that continually fuel one another.

To see a “values-based” version of this paradigm, which is designed for use in secular settings, please visit www.rw360values.org.

Skills Defined

As we will see in the [Biblical Foundation](#) section, the Bible teaches extensively on each of these six skills. Of course, it does not use expressions like “God-aware” or “God-engaging.” Instead, it uses words like *remember*, *faithful*, *humble*, *disciplined*, *compassionate*, and *serve*. This teaching can be summarized in the following definitions and synonyms for each of the six core skills of relational wisdom.

- **God-awareness** (remember) is the ability to view all of life in the light of God’s character, works and promises.
- **God-engagement** (faithfulness) is the ability to trust, obey and imitate God in a way that pleases and honors him.
- **Self-awareness** (humility) is the ability to discern your own identity, emotions, thoughts, values, interests and abilities.
- **Self-engagement** (discipline) is the ability to manage your thoughts, emotions, words and actions so that they advance God’s purposes.
- **Other-awareness** (compassion) is the ability to understand and empathize with the experiences, emotions, values and interests of others.
- **Other-engagement** (service) is the ability to love, encourage, serve and resolve differences with others in a mutually beneficial way.



Inside, Outside

These definitions describe the biblical ideal for each skill. When we walk close to God and draw steadily on his grace, we are able to live *inside* the circle of relational wisdom. This generally results in peaceful and fulfilling relationships with the Lord and the people around us.

But if we ignore God and decline his grace, we are living *outside* the circle of relational wisdom. Instead of remembering God, we forget him. Instead of being faithful, we are fickle. We become proud instead of humble, indulgent rather than disciplined, insensitive instead of compassionate, and manipulative rather than serving.

The Good News of the Gospel

The good news is that even though we often fail in our relationship with God and others, God has secured a path for our full restoration. He sent his Son to pay the price for our sins on the cross, and he is pleased to forgive those who believe that Jesus died for their salvation and was resurrected to give them new life ([Acts 10:43](#)).

When we put our trust in Jesus, he delights to draw us back into the circle of his love and give us grace to reconcile and to relate to one another in ways that reflect his compassion, kindness, humility and patience ([2Cor. 5:17](#); [Col. 3:12-15](#); [RW and the Gospel](#)).

The Biblical Foundation for Relational Wisdom

The Bible Is All About Relationships

From God's declaration in [Genesis 2:18](#), "It is not good that the man should be alone," to Jesus' summary of the law in [Matthew 22:37-38](#), "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbor as yourself," and his prayer for us in [John 17:21](#), "May [they] all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you," Holy Scripture is saturated with instruction about relationships.

Our God is an intensely relational God who calls us to emulate his commitment to relationship: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" ([Eph. 5:1-2](#)).

Therefore, it should not surprise us that the Bible contains thousands of passages that teach us how to deepen, protect and enjoy our relationships with God and the people he has placed in our lives.

Relationships in the Bible Are Three-Dimensional

God's teaching on relationships is consistently three dimensional. In passage after passage, he tells us how to be faithful to him (love, trust, worship, obey), how to discipline ourselves (know yourself, self-control, put off/put on), and how to serve our neighbors (love, pray, encourage, forgive).

Many passages in the Bible go a "full 360." They start with a focus on God, then teach how we are to manage ourselves and look out for our neighbors, and then close the circle by focusing back on God. We see this pattern in passages like [Exodus 20:1-21](#), [Philippians 2:1-11](#), and [Ephesians 4:30-32](#), which reads :

“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.”

Passages in the Bible that talk about God are intended to inspire and motivate us. These passages encourage us by reminding us what God is like, what he has done, and what he promises to do for us and through us. In these “360” passages, God gives us a double dose of motivation: having two opportunities to reflect on how he loves and serves us, we can be doubly motivated to love and serve others the same way.

For a more detailed discussion of the three-dimensional design of relationships, and related writings by CS Lewis, John Stott, Tim Keller, and John Frame, see [Wired to Be 3D: RW and Tri-Perspectivalism](#).

The Theology of Relational Wisdom

The Bible’s teaching on relationships can be organized in many different ways. I have found it helpful to organize these teachings into six primary skills or disciplines.

Each of these disciplines encompasses hundreds of Bible passages and is tied to major theological concepts that form the foundation for the Christian faith. Here is a brief list of some of the Scriptures and theological concepts that are associated with each discipline.



God-awareness (remembering) is your ability to view all of life in the light of God’s character, works and promises.

- [Psalm 77:11-12](#); Psalm 103; [Romans 8:28-39](#); [Ephesians 3:14-19](#); [2Peter 1:3-8](#)
- Doctrine of God, Creation, Trinity, names of God, redemptive history, gospel

God-engagement (faithfulness) is your ability trust, obey and imitate God in a way that pleases and honors him.

- [1 Kings 3:6](#); [Proverbs 3:5-6](#); [Matthew 25:21](#); [John 14:15](#); [1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1](#); [Ephesians 5:1-2](#)
- Covenants, attributes and promises of God, law, example of the saints

Self-awareness (humility) is your ability to honestly discern your own emotions, interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses.

- [1 Peter 5:5](#); [Psalm 139:23-24](#); [James 4:1-3](#); [Mark 7:21-23](#); [Phil. 2:3-4](#); [2Timothy 2:22](#)
- Doctrine of man/sin, image of God, idols of the heart, justification, forgiveness

Self-engagement (discipline) is your ability to master your thoughts, emotions, words and actions so that they advance God’s purposes.

- [Galatians 5:23](#); [Matthew 16:24-25](#); [John 8:29](#); [Titus 2:11-12](#)
- Sanctification, spiritual disciplines, accountability

Other-awareness (compassion) is your ability to understand and empathize with the experiences, emotions and interests of others.

- [Mark 6:34](#); [Luke 10:30-37](#); [Rom. 12:15](#); [1 Peter 3:8](#); [Philippians 2:3-4](#)
- The church as the body of Christ, discernment, Christian worldview

Other-engagement (serving) is your ability to encourage, cooperate and resolve differences with others in a mutually beneficial way.

- [Mark 10:42-45](#); [John 12:24-26](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14-15](#)
- Love, sacrifice, service, evangelism, discipleship, teaching

For additional insights into the theology of relational wisdom, see [Emotion in Christian Anthropology](#).

Biblical Narratives Illustrate Relational Wisdom and Foolishness

Every narrative in the Bible describes a relational interaction. People are constantly enjoying or struggling with God, themselves, or others.



Many of these examples illustrate how the six skills of relational wisdom reinforce and support one another. For example, when David was a young man, he typically lived inside the circle of relational wisdom. When he first came into the service of King Saul ([1 Sam. 17-18](#)), David remembered God’s goodness and holiness and faithfully obeyed him. His God-awareness fostered humility and self control, which overflowed in compassion and sacrificial service to others.

Other narratives illustrate how disastrous it can be if we spin outside the circle of relational wisdom. Consider David’s affair with Bathsheba ([2 Sam. 11](#)). When he walked on the roof of his palace and saw Bathsheba bathing, David forgot God’s holiness and laws. He swerved from being faithful to being fickle, ignoring commandments that stood in the way of immediate pleasure. Giving in to pride (“I’m the king; I can do what I want”), he chose to indulge his lust, being completely insensitive to how his actions could harm others. When Bathsheba became pregnant, David resorted to wicked manipulation. He called her husband home from the army and got him drunk so he would sleep with his wife. When that failed, David sent Uriah back to his death in battle. Sexual immorality and murder haunted David’s house for generations afterwards.

Similar narratives involving other familiar figures—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Samson, Saul, Abigail, Absalom, Solomon, Esther, Peter, and Paul—illustrate the blessings of walking in wisdom and the disasters that await us when we fail to value the relational principles God has revealed to us in his Word.

RW and Emotional Intelligence

A Cousin to Relational Wisdom

Relational wisdom (RW) is similar to a psychological concept known as “emotional intelligence,” which is often referred to as “EI” or “EQ” (emotional quotient). Although there are major differences between RW and EI (as detailed below), both concepts encourage an understanding of the ways that human neurology (which is, after all, designed by God!) affect our emotions and relationships.

Emotional intelligence has been defined as the ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups. This concept first appeared in psychology circles in 1920 and has been studied and refined ever since. It was popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995, whose book *Emotional Intelligence* spent over eighteen months on the *New York Times* Best Seller List.

The concept has gained further exposure through Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, authors of the best-selling *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and founders of [TalentSmart, Inc.](#), a consulting firm that serves 75% of Fortune 500 Companies. Ken Sande has attended their training and qualified as an *Emotional Intelligence Certified Trainer*.

These three psychologists, Goleman, Bradberry and Greaves, describe emotional intelligence as being made up of four core skills that are similar to those in the relational wisdom paradigm: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship-management (essentially the bottom two-thirds of the [RW paradigm](#)).



Although the EI model does not include a focus on God, these authors acknowledge that people’s world view and values, which are often tied directly to religious beliefs, can have a significant bearing on the four core skills of emotional intelligence.

Extensive Evaluations, Proven Benefits

Through over 700,000 individual appraisals, Bradberry and Greaves have demonstrated that emotional intelligence is the single biggest predictor of workplace performance (a far higher correlation than IQ). More specifically, they’ve found that 90% of the top

performers they've studied are high in emotional intelligence. Conversely, just 20% of bottom performers have high emotional intelligence.

Not surprisingly, people with high emotional intelligence also earn more money – an average of \$29,000 more per year than people with a low degree of emotional intelligence. High emotional intelligence has also been shown to correlate to enhanced empathy, higher stress tolerance, greater flexibility to change, and even better health and recovery from illness. ([Click here to learn of additional workplace benefits.](#))

Emotional Intelligence Has Downsides

Although secular materials on emotional intelligence can have value (see [Common Grace RW: Teaching and Learning from Non-Christians](#)), Christians should be aware that these materials, as well as emotional intelligence itself, can also have significant downsides.

As a growing number of [secular articles](#) indicate, high levels of emotional intelligence can actually contribute to several relational problems, including:

- Over analyzing people and situations, which can become emotional exhausting and paralyze decision making
- Excessive self-criticism
- An inclination to agree to questionable actions out of sympathy or excessive sensitivity to others' emotions
- Using emotions to side step questions and critical thinking by others
- Difficulty shifting our focus from single individuals and relating effectively to groups of people

But there are even deeper problems. Secular materials on emotional intelligence typically ignore God's existence, the reality of sin and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. This leaves EI open to several serious distortions.

First, since traditional teaching on EI lacks an objective moral compass, people may feel free to do "what is right in their own eyes." This leaves them open to the temptation to manipulate others, either intentionally or unintentionally, for their own advantage (often referred to as "[the dark side of EI](#)").

Second, since the primary motivation for improving EI is usually personal advancement (e.g., job promotions or increasing income), these relational skills can easily be used for selfish reasons rather than the good of others, which often requires personal sacrifice.

Third, apart from the transforming power of the gospel, growth in EI depends entirely on human effort. Many people can see some improvement in a relational skill through sheer will power in the short-term, but without the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, these changes are often superficial and short-lived.

An Opportunity to Go Beyond Emotional Intelligence

As Christians educate themselves on the benefits and deficits of EI, we can initiate conversations to introduce others to the distinguishing qualities of relational wisdom, which include:

- Seeing the human brain and all its marvelous functions as being designed by God to enable us to know him, experience his love and enjoy fulfilling human relationships.
- Recognizing that sin has impaired the brain, causing it to perform erratically, which leads to harmful behavior, conflict and broken relationships.
- Through the gospel, God has provided a remedy to the damaging effects of sin and a way for us to replace our erratic, harmful behavior with consistent, beneficial behavior.
- The motivation for developing relational wisdom is to improve our ability to love and serve God and the people around us rather than advancing our own interests at their expense.
- The Bible provides a proven and objective moral compass that shows how to use our relational gifts and abilities to serve and bless rather than use and harm others.
- God himself empowers us to improve our relational skills through the transforming power of the gospel and the indwelling work of his Holy Spirit.
- Initial development of RW skills is facilitated through easy-to-learn-and-apply acrostics.

RW Acrostics

When emotions rise, [rational thinking often plummets](#).

To help you recall and apply the basic principles of relational wisdom when emotions threaten to override your judgment, we have summarized the key principles of RW as simple acrostics. Here is a brief overview of these acrostics, along with some testimonies of how others have put them into action in order to get “upstream of conflict.”

To remember that relationships are always three dimensional

Practice the SOG Plan

- **S**elf-aware: How am I feeling and acting?
- **O**ther-aware: How are others feeling? How am I affecting them?
- **G**od-aware: What is God up to?



As the following testimony shows, this simple acrostic can be literally life changing.

“Thank you for developing the SOG Plan. My husband has returned to school, so we’ve moved in with his parents to make ends meet. My father-in-law is a teddy bear and so easy to live with. My mother-in-law is not so easy. She means well but just can’t keep from making “little suggestions” about our marriage, parenting, spending ... you name it, she’ll try to control it. There’s days I just want to scream I feel so trapped.

“SOG has been a lifesaver. So simple and yet so powerful. It’s helped me to stay ahead of my emotions and head lots of hurtful words off before they leave my mouth. It’s also reminded me to put myself in her shoes and realize that she really is trying to help, clumsy as she is. Also to be more thankful for the many sacrifices she is making to help us through this tight time.

“Most of all, SOG gets my eyes back on the Lord so I remember that he has a purpose for bringing us here, something way more important than simply saving money, and probably more to do with smoothing off sharp edges on my character...”

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

Follow a Trustworthy **GPS** (God Positioning System)

- **G**lorify God (Trust him absolutely)
- **P**ursue God (Seek him earnestly)
- **S**erve God (Do what pleases him)

Testimony:

“My boss is a difficult man to work for. He rarely gives clear instructions, seldom offers encouragement or praise, and criticizes me in front of other people. After a couple of years of this kind of treatment, I developed a very negative attitude toward him and began acting just like the rest of the people who work for him. I gossiped about him behind his back, did just enough work to keep my job, and laughed when others secretly made fun of him.

“Then I heard about the GPS principle. Boy was I convicted. I realized I had been looking to my co-workers and my own sinful heart for guidance in this situation instead of seeking direction from God. In effect I was saying, “The Bible is nice for Sunday school lessons, but when it comes to real life problems, it has nothing to offer.” How dishonoring that attitude is to God ... and what a terrible witness it was to my co-workers.

“So, I asked God to forgive me for relying on worldly guidance, and then I opened my Bible to find his direction. By doing a search using the words like “suffering” and “employment,” I soon came across [Luke 6:27-36](#), [Romans 12:17-21](#), [Ephesians](#)

[6:5-8](#), [Colossians 3:22-24](#), [1 Timothy 6:1-2](#), and [Titus 2:9-14](#). I'd never realized that God has so much to say about how I should treat a difficult employer.

"It took a while to change the bad habits I'd developed at work, but by God's grace I'm steadily gaining ground. My boss hasn't changed (I'm still praying for him) but some of my fellow workers have noticed how I've changed. When they ask me why, I'm giving credit to God for his guidance and grace. I never thought a bad boss would create opportunities for witnessing!"

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

READ Yourself Accurately

- **R**ecognize and name your emotions
- **E**valuate their source
- **A**nticipate the consequences of following them
- **D**irect them on a constructive course

Testimony:

"My teenage daughter knows exactly how to push my buttons. Even when I come to her with valid concerns, she rolls her eyes or uses a tone of voice that triggers my anger and throws me completely off course.

"READ is helping me to counter her tactics. Before I approach her, I think about the emotions she will try to trigger. I confess the pride, expectations, and desire to control that cause those emotions. I visualize how far off track we'll go if I give into them. And then I think of how to do a "180" to go in the opposite direction, to be patient, gentle, and in control of my emotions (not her!).

"What a difference in those conversations! It's almost funny to see the puzzled look on her face when her old tricks don't work. She can still throw me off when she surprises me, but if I can handle planned conversations better and better I hope to soon be able to handle her ambushes too."

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

SERVE Every Person You Meet

- **S**mile (Home, office, church, store, telephone)
- **E**xplore and Empathize (Show interest and compassion)
- **R**econcile (Be a peacemaker)
- **V**alue (Express appreciation and admiration)
- **E**ncourage (Give courage, inspire, put wind under their wings)

Testimony:

“Your RW material made me wonder if I was really called to be a pastor. After reading your [Cinderella Man blog post](#), I realized I’d never learned how to read and empathize with people the way a Christ-like shepherd should. I was always wrapped up in my teaching and agenda and missing clues about their struggles and needs.

“But the SERVE concept has given me hope that I can change. It’s so simple even a pastor can apply it!

“Every Sunday I pray it through before I head to church, asking God to help me SERVE every person I meet. What a difference a little deliberate focus can bring. Several people have commented that something has changed in me. I just smile and say, “That’s what the gospel should do to all of us.” Once I’m living this out consistently, I look forward to teaching my whole congregation how to serve one another better.”

When you need to negotiate an agreement ...

Practice the PAUSE principle

- 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)

Testimony:

“I share an office with two other agents. The three of us are in the process of hiring a replacement receptionist. Since there was potential for tension and disagreement, I consciously worked the PAUSE concepts into the discussion. As we started, I made a nostalgic comment about how much I had enjoyed working with both of them over the last three years. This gave us an opportunity to share a few memories that affirmed our relationship. As we went on, I sought to understand my partners’ concerns about each candidate. This approach reduced almost all of the tension we would have normally had in this kind of meeting and enabled us to comfortably agree on the person we would hire.”

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.

RW in the Workplace

The Value of Soft Skills

Relational wisdom can produce major benefits in any setting where people work together, whether in an office or warehouse, on a church committee or nonprofit board, or as a mission team in the field.

These benefits include improved productivity and team cohesiveness, better balance between work and family life, less conflict, reduced staff and volunteer turnover, higher customer satisfaction, and increased growth and profitability.

These benefits have been well documented in the workplace, although it took managers a while to see how closely connected they are to relational skills.

For years companies typically hired new employees on the basis of their “hard skills,” which generally included their technical expertise, education, certifications, and experience – qualities that are usually related to IQ and can be listed on a resume.

Over time, however, corporate executives and human resource managers noticed that employees with impressive resumes were often difficult to work with, disappointing performers, and a detriment to the unity and productivity of their coworkers.

In contrast, employees with only average technical skills frequently proved to be the most respected, valued, and productive workers in an organization.

This pattern (and many related academic studies) led companies to realize that what often proves to be the primary factor in employees’ value to a company is their “soft skills.” These skills include abilities such as listening, empathy, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and conflict resolution—the fruit of relational wisdom.

This principle applies to churches as well. What makes most pastors (and other ministry workers) successful and able to serve a church for a long period of time is not the excellence of their exegesis, hermeneutics, or sermon delivery but rather their ability to relate to their people with genuine humility, love, gentleness and compassion.

To see some of these qualities in action—and the career-changing impact they can have—[watch how Will Smith handles a disastrous work interview.](#)

Biblically Commended

The Bible repeatedly highlights the value of well-developed relational skills and their beneficial impact in group settings. For example, [Proverbs 22:11](#) says, “He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.”

In other words, when we come to the workplace or any group setting with a sincere desire to look out for the interests of others (instead of looking out only for ourselves, [Phil. 2:3-4](#)), and communicate in ways that encourage and build others up

([Eph. 4:29](#)), we will usually gain the respect and appreciation of those we serve ([Prov. 17:2](#)).

The Multiplication Effect

What makes relational abilities so valuable to working with a group is that every team member's soft skills have the power to magnify – or diminish – the value of not only their own hard skills but also those of the people with whom they are working.

The interface between these two sets of skills is illustrated by the following diagram, in which the operator is not a “+” sign but rather a “x” sign, which signifies the multiplying (or diminishing) effect of every worker's relational skills.



For example, if one member of a team is arrogant, insensitive, or insecure, and tends to discount or criticize others' accomplishments or ideas, the cohesiveness and creativity of an entire team can be undermined ($100 \times 0 = 0$).

In contrast, if a worker (or better yet, an entire team) learns how to read others' emotions and interests ([Prov. 20:5](#)), encourage the inexperienced or insecure ([1 Thess. 5:14](#)), applaud others' innovation and accomplishments ([Rom. 16:1-2](#)), and prevent or quickly resolve conflict ([Prov. 15:18](#)), the unity, energy, creativity, and productivity of an entire team can be magnified ([James 3:17-18](#)).

Proven Performance Benefits

The value of strong relational skills is revealed by the corporate world's growing emphasis on teaching “[emotional intelligence](#)” (also known as “EI” or “EQ”) to their managers. EQ is a secular version of relational wisdom. It does not address God awareness or engagement, but instead focuses on the four other skills of the [relational wisdom paradigm](#), which EQ writers refer to as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Even without a God-ward focus, increased EQ has proven to produce significant, measurable improvements in professional advancement and team productivity. As Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves write:

How much of an impact does EQ have on your professional success? The short answer is: a lot! We've tested EQ alongside 33 other important workplace skills, and found that it subsumes the majority of them, including time management, decision-making, and communication.

Your EQ is the foundation for a host of critical skills – it impacts most everything you say and do each day. EQ is so critical to success that it accounts for 58% of performance

in all types of jobs. It's the single biggest predictor of performance in the workplace and the strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence.

No matter whether people measure high or low in EQ, they can work to improve it, and those who score low can actually catch up to their coworkers.... People who are low in EQ and job performance can match their colleagues who excel in both – solely by working to improve their EQ.

Of all the people we've studied at work, we've found that 90 percent of top performers are also high in EQ. On the flip side, just 20% of bottom performers are high in EQ. You can be a high performer without EQ, but the chances are slim....

Naturally, people with high EQ's make more money – an average of \$29,000 more per year than people with low EQs. The link between EQ and earnings is so direct that every point increase in EQ adds \$1,300 to an annual salary. These findings hold true for people in all industries, at all levels, in every region of the world. We haven't yet been able to find a job in which performance and pay aren't tied closely to EQ (*Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, pages 19-22).

Others studies have resulted in similar conclusions.

“The highest performing managers and leaders have significantly more 'emotional competence' than other managers.... The single most important contributor to the feelings of employee engagement, empowerment, and satisfaction is based on the relationship they have with the leaders of the organization.... Management practices that affect employee satisfaction can have bottom line results on productivity and profit.” (Kenneth Nowack, Ph.D., [Leadership, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement](#))

“A multitude of studies suggest that EI is a strong predictor of job performance.... A study found that partners in a multinational consulting firm who scored higher than the median on an EI measure produced \$1.2 million more in business than other partners did.” (Natalie Shipley, [The Effects of Emotional Intelligence, Age, Work Experience, and Academic Performance](#))

“When companies invest in the physical and relational wellness of their workers, returns on investment can range between \$1.50 and \$6.85 for every dollar spent on these types of programs.” [Relational Wellness: Corporate America's Business](#)

Read [Employers Reap a Double Benefit with RW Training](#) to learn how providing relational skill training to employees can improve their family lives ... and then loop back to increase a business's financial profitability, with up to a \$6.50 return on every one dollar spend on such training.

Click [100 additional articles](#) to learn more about the documented benefits of emotional intelligence in a variety of settings, including business, health care, education, athletics, and the military.

Workers Inspired by the Gospel

If the corporate world is consistently observing these kinds of benefits to be associated with high emotional intelligence, Christians should be especially motivated to develop their relational skills.

By building on the foundation for all relationships – God himself – and drawing inspiration and power from the greatest model the world has ever seen for relationship building – [the gospel of Christ](#) – we have the potential to be highly productive members of any group or organization the Lord calls us to serve.

RW and the Gospel

Relational wisdom is an outpouring of the gospel. It is one of the primary blessings unleashed through faith in Christ and therefore has the potential to transform every aspect of our lives.

To understand how good this news is, we need to first understand the truth about ourselves.

Bad News, Good News

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 ([Gen. 1:26](#)-click on citation to see Bible passage). But everyone on the earth has fallen short of that perfection. Instead of living for God, we have lived for ourselves ([Rom. 3:23](#); [Isa. 53:6](#)). 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 ([Matt. 25:41-43](#)).

But there is good news, which the Bible refers to as “the gospel.” *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 ([John 3:16-17](#)). 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.

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 ([Acts 26:15-18](#); [Eph. 3:14-19](#), [John 14:15-17](#); [John 14:26](#); [John 3:3](#); [Eph. 4:22-24](#); [Titus 3:5](#)).



God-Engaging

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 ([John 4:23-24](#); [Ezek. 36:26-27](#); [John 8:29](#); [John 14:23](#); [Rom. 12:2](#); [Eph. 5:1](#)).

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 ([Job 42:1-6](#); [Isa. 6:1-5](#); [Luke 5:8](#)). This leads us to humble ourselves, turn from our self-absorbed lives, and trust in Jesus as our Savior ([Rom. 2:4](#); [Acts 16:29-34](#)).

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 ([1 Cor. 1:30](#); [1Cor. 6:9-11](#); [Rom. 8:15](#); [2Cor. 5:17](#); [John 1:12-13](#); [Eph. 2:10](#)).

Self-Engaging

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 ([John 1:12-13](#); [Rom. 6:5-6](#); [Titus 2:11-12](#); [Gal. 5:22-23](#); [2Pet. 1:3-8](#)). Our old habits do not die easily ([Rom. 7:15](#); [Rom. 7:21-25](#)), but God promises to steadily transform us into his likeness ([2Cor. 3:18](#); [Phil. 1:6](#)).

Other-Aware

As God fills us and gives us the heart and mind of Christ, ([1 Cor. 2:16](#); [Gal. 2:20](#)), we are freed from seeing ourselves as the center of the world and enabled to become *other-aware*. We start to listen, understand, value and care for others! As we develop compassion and understanding, their joys become our joys and their sorrows become our sorrows ([Rom. 12:15-16](#); [1Pet. 3:8](#)).

Other-Engaging

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 ([John 13:34](#)). Thus the gospel results in relationships that are characterized by the same compassion, kindness, gentleness, and forgiveness that God has shown to us through Christ ([Col. 3:12-17](#); [Eph. 4:30-32](#)).

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, trust that Jesus' death and resurrection have saved us, and then follow him as Lord of our lives ([Rom. 6:23](#); [Eph. 2:8](#); [Acts 16:30-31](#); [Rom. 10:9-13](#); [1John 2:6](#)).

If you've not yet put your trust in Christ, you can do so right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

"Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I realize that my good deeds could never make up for my wrongs. I need your forgiveness. I believe that you died for my sins, and I want to turn away from them. I trust you now to be my Savior, and with your help I will follow you as my Lord and King, in the fellowship of your church."

If you say this prayer, it is essential that you find fellowship with other Christians in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied. This fellowship will help you to learn more about God and be strengthened in your faith.

Whether you prayed this kind of prayer years ago or just now, remember that mental assent to the gospel alone will not change your relationships. Many people who say they believe in Jesus have not truly made him the Lord of their lives. They still live according to their own desires, ways and agendas ([Gal. 5:13-15](#); [1John 2:9-11](#)). As a result, they are not growing into his likeness or relating to others like true disciples of Christ ([John 13:34-35](#)).

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 ([Eph. 1:16-23](#)).

For related thoughts, read [Always Bring the Gospel ...](#) and then move on to the RW Acrostics link below.

RW and Evangelism

Every person on the face of the earth has been programmed by God to long for meaningful relationships ([Gen. 2:18](#)). This is part of what it means to be made in the image of our highly relational God ([Gen. 1:27](#)).

Although sin has twisted this aspect of our nature in many ways, the desire for relationship is still one of the most powerful forces in the world. Every meaningful human activity depends heavily on the strength of relationships, whether in our friendships, marriages, parenting, businesses, churches, schools, sports teams, police departments or military units. Success and human flourishing in every area of life is all about relationship!

The human need for meaningful relationships provides Christians with daily opportunities to begin conversations about the wisdom principles in God’s Word, which focus primarily on relationships. Many of these conversations can eventually lead to discussions about the gospel of Christ, which gives us the power to experience relationships as they were meant to be: loving God with all our hearts and loving our neighbors as ourselves.



There are many ways that individual Christians can use RW360 resources to facilitate these types of conversations.

Our [Transformed pamphlet](#) makes it easy to share the gospel with friends, relatives and coworkers (see [Six Ways to Use the Transformed Pamphlet](#)). [Using Relational Wisdom for Witnessing](#) is a free one-hour online course that provides practical guidance on how to build relationships that open the door for witnessing.

You can also use our **online training, RW360 Smartphone App and DVD-based small group materials** to engage unchurched friends and coworkers in conversations or studies that lead to the gospel. All these resources are available in both “faith-based” (Christian) and “[values-based](#)” (secular) versions, which makes it easy to take them into virtually any setting.

One of the most effective ways to use RW resources for evangelism is through regular **community engagement**. This typically involves training members of your church, ministry or school as [RW Instructors](#) who go into businesses, schools, nonprofits, police or fire departments, military bases, sports camps and other secular venues to teach workshops on relational wisdom.

[Using Relational Wisdom for Outreach, Evangelism and Church Growth](#) describes how one pastor use RW360’s resources to strengthen his church and spread the gospel in his community.

Every Journey Begins with a Single Step

Would you like to see leaders and members in your church, ministry or school reach unchurched people in your community with these kinds of gospel-spreading engagements? If so, please visit our [Training and Certification Program](#) to learn how our *RW Instructor training* can prepare you to teach RW in a wide variety of settings in your community.

Values-Based Relational Wisdom

Common Grace for Secular Venues

Through [general revelation and common grace](#), all people, regardless of their religious beliefs, are able to learn, value and follow many of the relational principles that God has written onto the hearts of all people and woven into cultures around the world to enable civil societies.

Therefore, just as it is beneficial to teach and encourage all people, Christian and non-Christian alike, to obey civil laws, respect traffic signals, conduct business ethically, and treat employees fairly, it is equally beneficial to teach the basic principles of relational wisdom to all people who are willing to learn them.

With this in mind, RW360 has developed a “values-based” version of relational wisdom that we are using in a wide variety of secular venues, including: businesses, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, police and fire departments, military bases, [state legislatures](#) and even on [Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.](#)

Our values-based paradigm contains no religious language and introduces the relational skills of “values-awareness” and “values-engagement” in place of “God-awareness” and “God-engagement.” The six skills of relational wisdom are described in the following terms.

Values-awareness (remember) is your ability to honestly identify your true personal values.

Values-engagement (faithfulness) is your ability to consistently apply your values in real life.

Self-awareness (humility) is the ability to accurately discern your own emotions, thoughts, values, interests and abilities.

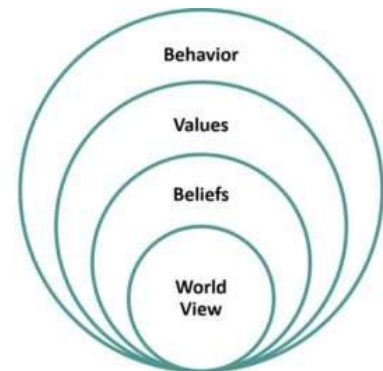
Self-engagement (discipline) is the ability to manage your thoughts, emotions, words and actions constructively.

Other-awareness (compassion) is the ability to understand and empathize with the experiences, emotions, values and interests of others.

Other-engagement (service) is the ability to love, encourage, serve and resolve differences with others in a mutually beneficial way.

Worldviews Shape Our Values and Relationships

Our values-based training helps people to understand how their worldviews impact their relationships. Drawing on concepts like the [Kwast Model of Culture](#) and



the [Schwartz Theory of Basic Values](#), we set forth [Six Primary Worldviews](#) and then unpack principles like these:

- Values arise from our worldview and play a pivotal role in our relationships.
- Worldviews and values are usually adopted randomly and frequently fluctuate depending on our situations, which causes confusion and instability in our relationships.
- Conflict also arises when our values clash with the values of our family, employer or community.
- Relationships also suffer when we behave in ways that are inconsistent with our stated values.

After laying this groundwork and introducing concepts of [emotional intelligence](#), we take students through a process of evaluating their worldviews and related value systems in comparison to others and considering how their values and emotions are guiding their relationships.

At the very least, this thoughtful evaluation can help people identify aspects of their worldviews and values that are undermining their relationships. In some cases, it may also move people to improve their values and even consider embracing an entirely new worldview.

Cross-over Learning

We believe that every person, regardless of their current worldview, can benefit from the evaluation process described above. We also believe that every person can benefit by learning more about other worldviews, especially the one that is grounded in the Bible.

Therefore, we have created over forty optional cross-over links between our two online courses, which allow students in the faith-based course to choose to go through the worldview/values evaluation described above, and students in the values-based course to choose to learn more about a Christian worldview and how the gospel inspires and empowers relational wisdom.

All these cross-over links are clearly labeled and entirely voluntary, so students are free to choose whether to take advantage of the additional information available in either of the alternative courses.

Our values-based material is explained in more detail at www.rw360values.org. Our online course in values-based RW, which is called *Exploring Relational [Wisdom 3.0](#)*, is available at the [RW Academy](#).

RW in the Movies

All Great Stories Have the Same Elements

One of the reasons that *Cinderella Man* is such a powerful movie is that it follows the classic formula for a great story. Allow me to explain.

Whether we're watching *Gone with the Wind*, *Les Misérables*, *The Hunger Games*, or *Downton Abbey*, the attractive force that glues us to a movie screen is the relational dynamics between the major characters as they contend with each other and the challenges that surround them.

In great movies, these dynamics always lead to some form of *redemption* (personal improvement, restoration, or reconciliation). This process revolves around a *hero* who is driven by a *desire* for something he sees and a *need* for something that he may not discern until the end of the story.

The hero is blocked by both an *inner flaw* and some form of external *adversary* (often representing an opposing worldview). This opposition intensifies to the point that the hero *nearly fails* in his quest.

But then near the climax he finally realizes that what he *desired* was not what he really *needed*. This *self-revelation* is the main point the story-teller is trying to convey to us, the ultimate *theme* or *moral* of the story. This revelation is either the result of the *final confrontation* or the means by which the hero finally gains a victory, bringing the story to a satisfying *conclusion*.

Think of your favorite movies (or books), and you will see these key story elements. Why are they so universal? I believe it is because they echo the greatest story in the world, our own redemption by God.

We all pursue desires that we think will make us successful and happy. But our adversary, Satan, and the inner flaw of our sin block us from finding fulfillment. As long as we seek our own ends and depend on our own efforts, we continue to fail. But when we finally see the emptiness of our desires and the futility of our efforts and realize that what we need is the grace and forgiveness that God offers to us through the gospel, we finally achieve victory over our adversary and our sin, and experience redemption and reconciliation with God.

These key elements of God's redemption story are woven into the tapestry of creation and echo through everyday life. Therefore, even when Hollywood writers and actors profess no faith in God, they cannot help but use these elements to present their own



stories. In the process they are compelled to draw on and portray all of the relational dynamics that are part of the great redemption story.

Fear, pride, jealousy, greed, judgment, vengeance – the bitter fruit of a fallen world – set the stage and build the tension in every story. Hope, love, compassion, sacrifice, forgiveness, and reconciliation – the evidences of God’s image and grace in us – enable our heroes to emerge from their challenges victoriously.

Great actors are especially adept at conveying a story and portraying the dynamics of human relationships, both good and bad. As we watch them, we see ourselves in Technicolor. If we pay careful attention, we can see our relational weaknesses and failures, and also learn how to relate to one another more thoughtfully and effectively.

To learn how emotional intelligence and your personal value system affect your ability to resolve conflict, see [Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution](#).

For more information on how to learn, practice and spread relational wisdom, see these [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

To begin developing these skills in your life, register for our online course, [Discovering Relational Wisdom](#), today!