

Jesus and EQ

The ability to be aware of your emotional state and to manage those emotions is one of the greatest skills to ever master. Think of the number of people you have to say, *"Are you aware that you are grumpy, and your grumpiness is affecting the whole holiday for everyone else?"* There are certain emotions that you want to be dominant in your life; joy, peace, patience, hope, trust etc. There are other emotions, which if they stay in your system for too long, become toxic; envy, offence, anger, bitterness, dejection, anxiety and despair. **When a team is feeling dejected during a game it affects their performance. #Confidenceplayers.** That's why we say to them, "heads up!" These emotions are linked to various diseases too. **It's important for us to keep learning how to manage our emotions and have them contribute to our lives instead of contaminating our lives. Emotions lead to decisions and actions, so it behoves us to be aware of them and manage them well. We live in a consumerist society where people want breakthrough without changing their ways. God is more interested in your character than your comfort.** I keep emphasizing the importance of EQ. When I feel pain as I am being burnt by a hot stove I know I should move away from the stove. If I get pricked on my foot by a thorn, I quickly learn that I need to wear shoes in that garden. Some people feel certain emotions and then become friends with that emotion instead of letting it send an accurate message to them. Some even embrace the emotion as part of their personality, the enemy has lied to them that by defining them that way. I was reflecting the other day how even the Incredible Hulk was somewhat aware of the impact his anger had on others. When Dr David Bruce Banner would start turning into the Incredible Hulk he would say to his boss, *"Mr McGee, don't make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry."* That's self-awareness. Technically speaking when he became Hulk he was not that self-aware I guess. So we won't use him as our standard. I am grateful that **Jesus modelled and taught high emotional intelligence.** Jesus consistently demonstrated high emotional intelligence (EQ) in His teachings and interactions. In this message we will unpack verses where Jesus models and teaches emotional awareness, emotional expression, emotional management, social awareness, relationship management and motivation.

1. Empathy and Compassion

Matthew 9:36: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

When was the last time you looked at a group of people and picked up where they were at emotionally? I don't think Jesus just took a quick glance at the crowd. I think He saw the crowd and pondered. **We need to slow down and become observers of life. We need to be delivered from hurry sickness.** He saw the crowd and could pick up that they were harassed and helpless. He could liken this to sheep without a shepherd. Sometimes it's only when we look at people and take time to reflect on their situation that the compassion flows. In another scripture it says, "Jesus looked at the rich man and loved Him." (Mark 10:21). **Sometimes love flows out of looking.** Compassion often flows when we begin to understand the plight of people. In order to do this, we need to SEE them. Jesus saw the crowd. **When you come to church do you SEE people?** He must have said something about this because the Gospel writer had to get it from somewhere.

His compassion resulted in multiple levels of action and instruction. It was not just a mushy gushy feeling. *Matthew 9:37-38* *Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

He shares a powerful revelation that there are not enough harvesters despite a great harvest of people. You can see His heart is to reach them. Following that, He asks His disciples to pray about it.

It is interesting that He doesn't leave it to Himself to pray. I also find it interesting that the disciples become the answer to that prayer because the following verse is about Jesus sending them out.

*Matthew 10:1-8 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. **6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.** 7 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.*

True ministry always starts from a place of compassion. He continues with the sheep analogy. He goes where the compassion is. We need to note that this commissioning started out with Jesus' compassion for the crowds.

Jesus' righteous action did not always stem from mushy gushy sweet emotions. He healed this person stemming from a place of hating sickness. He was moved in His inward parts. *Mark 1:41:"Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!'"*

Jesus' compassion for children resulted in feelings of indignation towards those who discriminated against them. One emotion can lead to another.

*Mark 10:13-16: "People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, **he was indignant.** He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'"*

Emotional Expression and Sensitivity: Jesus showed indignation when His disciples were insensitive to the children, demonstrating His deep emotional engagement and value for all people, especially the vulnerable. **He allowed Himself to feel indignant and this led to righteous action.** Indignation is a feeling, characterized by, or expressing strong displeasure at something considered unjust, offensive, insulting, or base.

2. Mood and motivation

Jesus' personal mastery and resolve was very strong. He was not swayed by pressure from people. His life was straightened to God and not bent towards man.

Mark 1:35-39 ³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" ³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

In order to do this, it also requires a sense of Self-Awareness, Emotional Management and Boundaries.

*Luke 5:16:"But Jesus **often** withdrew to lonely places and prayed."*

Jesus recognized the importance of managing His emotions by taking time to recharge spiritually and emotionally, setting an example of self-care and emotional balance. This was something He did often. **Work-rest balance requires high emotional intelligence.**

3. Emotional Regulation

Matthew 21:12-13 "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.'"

Emotional Management: While Jesus expressed righteous anger, He did so in a controlled, purposeful way to correct injustice, not out of impulsive rage. In John 2:17 it highlights how His disciples remembered Ps 69:9 "Zeal for your house consumes me". The word zeal = zelos = passion, jealous over and the word consume speaking of being eaten up by something. We are called to be jealous over God's sacred things. **There are things that are set apart for God's use. It is appropriate to express controlled righteous anger when this does not take place.**

Teaching on Anger and Conflict Resolution

Matthew 5:22-24: "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment... Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."

Emotional Management: Jesus taught that unresolved anger needs to be addressed with reconciliation, encouraging emotional awareness and conflict resolution. Social Skills are also necessary when it comes to asking for forgiveness. A lot of us struggle with the awkwardness that comes with this. We end up just hoping they forget about it. **Do you avoid difficult conversations?** Do you know that trust is often eroded if you delay the difficult conversation. When you finally bring up the issue, people realise that although you were friendly all along you were carrying a big issue. They end up thinking that whenever they deal with you, they need to see beyond the smiles.

Teaching on Anxiety and Emotional Trust

Matthew 6:25-27: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

Have you been worrying about your outfit this morning?

Emotional Management: Jesus taught about managing anxiety by trusting God's provision, showing the importance of emotional resilience. In addition, He had figured out that worrying about things doesn't actually help practically, it is a time waster. **Often when our EQ is low, we fill ourselves with toxic emotions and toss out rational thinking and reasoning.**

4. Emotional Sensitivity

Jesus was sensitive to the pain of others and could also make himself vulnerable when in pain himself. Some people are sensitive to the pain of others but never show vulnerability when they are in pain. Others are only sensitive to their own pain but not the pain of others. Jesus demonstrated both.

*John 11:33-35 (At Lazarus' tomb): "When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled... Jesus wept." **He was moved by their pain.***

Matthew 26:38: "Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'"

Emotional Expression: **We bond with others, not just when we get to know them but when we allow ourselves to be known by them.** The disciples here were probably exposed to a side of Jesus they had never fully experienced. **Are there dimensions of yourself you have been afraid to reveal? What would happen if you did?** In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus expressed His emotional vulnerability, modelling that it is okay to acknowledge and share deep emotions with others. Jesus was able to express His needs and assertively make a request. These are social skills. **Many of us do not know how to ask for help.** It takes high EQ to know what your needs are and then to enlist your relational assets to assist. **Maturity is seen in interdependence not independence. When you don't communicate your needs, you tend to end up protesting.**

5. Social Awareness and Relationship Management

John 16:12: "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear."

The essence of social awareness is understanding others deeply. It enables us to manage those relationships. Jesus knew when His disciples were emotionally and mentally prepared to receive more difficult teachings, displaying emotional awareness and sensitivity. When you are leading people, it is important to know them and understand them. Jesus understood His disciples. He knew when to change gears in how He communicated with them. This also applies to how we relate to our children; knowing what methods of discipline work and which ones are no longer useful.

John 16:25 25 "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father."

John 16: 29-30 29 Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

Often as parents we make the mistake of disciplining our 18-year-old like he is still 5. Sometimes we talk down to children and baby them when they are actually more advanced. In disciplining people it requires EQ to ascertain what approach to use. As pastors we often go through this, and it determines what and how we teach.

Jesus also had enough EQ to know that He can't use the same approach (one size fits all) for everyone when it came to His teaching style.

Matthew 13:10 – 12 (NLT) His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?" He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."

*John 1:47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "**Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.**"*

Jesus could have been offended by the fact that Nathaniel had despised where Jesus came from, rather He focused on Nathaniel's transparency and candour. **Do you know what it means to truly understand another person?** It involves knowing

Their strengths, weaknesses, limitations, aspirations, emotional triggers, deepest fears, goals, gaps, motivators and drainers, energizers, influencers and heroes. Do you know what they expect from you? Do you know why they are here?

When you understand others, it helps you to manage your expectations of them and also results in patience. A lot of people in the corporate world get frustrated because they assume everyone operates at the same standard and pace as them. **You demonstrate your low EQ when you assume that everyone around you processes information like you do.** Just as some computers process information at 3.8Gigahertz whilst others at only 1GHz, so humans are also different. With computers it depends on the clock speed, architecture, cache size etc whilst with us as humans there are so many factors such as experience, talent, gifting, passion and motivation. With gaming you need greater processing speeds (3.5 to 4GHz) whilst for other activities you don't need a fast processor. This is the same when dealing with people.

Understanding others helps you in dealing with rejection and staying focused like Jesus did.

Mark 6:4-6: "Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith."

This understanding resulted in Emotional Regulation: Jesus managed His emotions in the face of rejection. He stayed focused on His mission rather than allowing frustration to derail His work. This is a high level of emotional resilience. He had great EQ to understand why people accept and reject others. He understood how social ranking works. We rank people based on where they come from, how much money they have, their age etc. He understood human nature so well it was like He was not surprised by the behaviour. He didn't take it personally as He knew that He was not the only one rejected like this, it was a human phenomenon. It reminds me of the gentleman from America who was now doing half of his business in Africa. When I asked him why he doesn't just move here he said he would lose his celebrity status. That demonstrates a good understanding of human nature.

Do you take it personally when people resist the change you are trying to bring about? EQ helps you to understand that people will resist change even when the change is good. If you don't understand this you will end up reacting to their reaction.

Luke 23:34: "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"

Understanding others will help with Emotional Regulation and Empathy: Even in extreme suffering, Jesus controlled His emotions and showed empathy and forgiveness towards those who were crucifying Him. He understood how fickle people were. **People don't do things to you; they do things for themselves.**

Jesus could guard His heart because He knew the nature of people's hearts.

John 2:23-25 23Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

It is easy to be sucked in by the praise of man and then suffer the sting of betrayal later. This is not cynicism, it is just having an accurate view of human nature and rather using actions to test people as opposed to what they propose.

Reflection Questions

1. How self-aware are you about your own emotions, and how do you manage them in ways that positively impact others around you?
2. What emotions do you want to be dominant in your life, and how do you prioritize nurturing them?
3. When have you recently slowed down enough to truly “see” people’s emotional needs as Jesus did with the crowds?
4. Reflecting on Jesus’ response to rejection, how do you manage your own emotions when faced with resistance or a lack of support?
5. How do you interpret your emotions as they arise, and are there any negative emotions you’ve unintentionally befriended or incorporated into your identity?
6. How does understanding others’ strengths, weaknesses, and emotional triggers impact your patience and empathy toward them?
7. What steps do you take to ensure that your emotional responses, like anger or frustration, are controlled and purposeful rather than impulsive?
8. How can you become more consistent in seeking solitude, like Jesus did, to recharge emotionally and spiritually?
9. How might adopting Jesus’ approach to compassion and empathy change your relationships and responses to others?
10. How do you currently manage difficult conversations or conflicts, and what role could emotional intelligence play in improving these interactions?