

# Emotional Intelligence in Christian Higher Education

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This paper explores the importance of emotional intelligence in Christian higher education. Specifically, it addresses possible implications between emotional intelligence skills and success in the areas of learning, mental health, and career preparation. The paper addresses the following questions: Is there a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement? Does emotional intelligence provide tools that enable students to conquer depression, chronic anger, and burnout? Is emotional intelligence necessary to ensure the students' later success at work? One of the primary tasks students engage in during the college years is managing emotions (Chickering, 1969). Therefore, this paper examines emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, managing emotions, motivation, empathy, and social intelligence (Goleman, 1995). A biblical reflection is also presented.

The college years are some of the most transitional years in one's life. The college years represent a period when changes occur, "a period during which certain kinds of experiences may have substantial impact" (Chickering, 1969, p. 2). After leaving behind friends and family, college students are propelled into environments filled with challenges. During these years students encounter other students from different backgrounds, cultures, and values along with great deals of freedom (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). Student identity back at home might find itself in conflict with the new identities being formed. Not surprisingly, Erikson considered this stage an "identity versus identity confusion crisis" where the young person's main task is to answer the question, "Who am I and where am I going?" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The search for identity has therefore been given precedence in most college student psychosocial theories (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

In the area of college student development, no other psychosocial theorist has had a greater impact than Arthur Chickering (Pascarella, & Terenzini, 1991). His theory includes seven dimensions of development known as vectors. The seven vectors include developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and integrity (Chickering, 1969). For the purpose of this article, attention is given only to the second vector, which is managing emotions.

Chickering believes that intuition and emotions contribute to decision making and behavior. Throughout college, students make important decisions about what they might perceive as "unreasonable parents, arbitrary authorities, impersonal institutions, [and] inflexible rules" (Chickering,

1969, p. 40). These experiences frustrate students, who must learn that ignoring or giving full vent to emotions will only aggravate the problem (Chickering, 1969).

For development to flourish, students must learn self-control, which fosters openness to new information and learning; the opposite is also true, that if emotions continue to be unbridled, then input is restricted and development hampered (Chickering, 1969). Therefore, a chief developmental task involves increasing self-control and the integration of emotions (Chickering), the very hallmarks of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

## WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the role that emotional intelligence plays in education. Researchers, therapists, psychologists, and educators have explored emotional intelligence in relation to academic success and emotional adjustment (Humphrey, Curran, Morris, Farrell, & Woods, 2007), social and behavioral changes in school (Kelly, Longbottom, Potts, & Williams, 2004), and teaching students with disabilities (Chantrell, 2009). Researchers have attempted to determine if there is a genuine distinction between cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence (Chantrell). Strokes, for example, believes that there is “no clear one to one relationship between the two. Someone who scores low in cognitive intelligence can be emotionally intelligent” (Chantrell, p. 158).

Researchers have struggled to reconcile the terms *emotion* and *intelligence*, considering the term *emotional intelligence* to be a paradox. For decades rationalists believed that reason and emotion were diametrically opposed (Humphrey et al., 2007). However, in recent years psychologists and neuroscientists have challenged this assumption and have found that “emotion enables reason to function” (Humphrey et al., p. 237). They believe that “the control of one of the main neurochemicals to facilitate cognition, dopamine, is predominantly a part of the emotional system of the brain, the limbic system” (Humphrey et al., p. 237).

At a basic level emotional intelligence may be defined as “the capacity to be in touch with and express feelings [or] the capacity to struggle with difficult and conflicting emotions and to reflect on them” (Chantrell, 2009, p. 158). Some researchers provide a more sophisticated understanding of emotional intelligence that includes the following components: *emotional awareness*, the ability to identify one’s emotions correctly; *emotional application*, the ability to identify which emotions are appropriate in specific situations; *emotional empathy*, the ability to enter into the feelings of others; and lastly, *emotionality*, the ability to use emotions for effective decision-making (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 240).

A pioneer researcher on mood and emotion, Peter Salovey, divides emotional intelligence into five domains: *knowing one’s emotions*, which is characterized by self-awareness and self-understanding; *managing emotions*, which is the ability to handle emotions such as anxiety or gloom; *motivating oneself*, the ability to exercise self-control and delay gratification; *recognizing emotions in others*, characterized by empathy; and *handling relationships*, the ability to manage the emotions in others (as quoted by Goleman, 1995, p. 43).

### Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is “ongoing attention to one’s internal states” (Goleman, 1995, p. 46). It means being aware of a mood and the thoughts about that mood (Goleman). Even when a person does

not know how feelings work, Goleman argues that emotions “that simmer beneath the threshold of awareness can have a powerful impact on how [that person] perceives and reacts” (p. 55). To shake a bad mood, it is fundamental to be able to identify the emotions that produced it (Goleman).

### Cognitive Reframing

Goleman (1995) believes that emotions such as anger, anxiety, and melancholy can be managed successfully. He believes that the thoughts that exacerbate feelings of rage, worry, and gloom must be challenged and replaced with soothing thoughts. Goleman calls this “cognitive reframing” (Goleman, p. 74). In the case of anger, anxiety, and depression, rumination prevents the person from coming up with viable solutions to problems; it hinders critical thinking (Goleman). When it comes to negative emotions, the thoughts a person dwells upon create misery and despair. Emotional intelligence skills allow the person to rethink situations to see them in a different light. This new perspective brings both relief and healing.

### Motivation

Paramount to achievement are “motivation, zeal and persistence” (Goleman, 1995, p. 80). Emotional intelligence encompasses all three, according to Goleman. Emotions and the way a person handles them can either get in the way or enhance a person’s ability to succeed (Goleman). Therefore, the capacity to delay gratification and to persist in the face of obstacles is in many cases more important than IQ level (Goleman). An important component of persistency is optimism (Goleman). Martin Seligman defines “optimism in terms of how people explain to themselves their successes and their failures” (Goleman, p. 88). Optimistic people believe that failures can be conquered. They see failure as an opportunity for growth. This is why the emotional reaction to defeat “is crucial to the ability to marshal enough motivation to continue” (Goleman, p. 89).

### Empathy

“Rapport, the root of caring, stems from emotional attunement,” which is the capacity for empathy (Goleman, 1995, p. 96). Communication research indicates that “90 percent or more of an emotional message is nonverbal” (Goleman, p. 97). Therefore, the ability to perceive someone else’s emotions is closely related to the capacity to read nonverbal communication such as tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions (Goleman). An infant child first learns empathy from his caretakers. When a parent lovingly responds to a child’s emotions, an emotional connection is formed between them called attunement (Goleman). This emotional exchange teaches the child that he is understood and it gives birth to empathy (Goleman).

### Social Intelligence

Hatch and Gardner (Goleman, 1995) believe that interpersonal intelligence, also known as social intelligence, is characterized by certain abilities: (a) the capacity to organize groups “is the essential skill of a leader, [which] involves initiating and coordinating the efforts of a network

of people” (p. 188); (b) the ability to negotiate solutions, which consists of mediating between people to prevent conflict; (c) the capability to make personal connections, and to recognize and respond with sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others; (d) lastly, social analysis, which is the capacity to “detect and have insights about people’s feelings, motives and concerns” (as quoted by Goleman, p. 118).

Having considered the importance of the above concepts, self-awareness, cognitive reframing, motivation, empathy, and social intelligence, it is now time to explore their implication on higher education. After exploring the advantages that emotional intelligence can provide to college students in the areas of academic achievement, career success, and interpersonal relationships, Vandervoort (2006) asserts that “a focus on emotional intelligence as part of the standard college curriculum could lead to a variety of positive personal, social, and societal outcomes” (p. 6). This supports Chickering’s second vector. Managing emotions is an important task for college students. Chickering’s theory can be further explored by considering how learning emotional intelligence skills in college can enhance learning, improve overall mental health, and provide integrated career preparation.

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEARNING

Is there a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement? Higher education professors are aware that a paradigm shift is taking place. In the past the mission of the college was to instruct; a new paradigm is emerging where the mission of the college is to produce learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995). This shift demands that the college creates “environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves” (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 4). A story is told about a biology professor who was committed to using dynamic teaching methods to reach his students. His supervisor came to one of his classes to evaluate his teaching. Since the professor was not lecturing and the students were engaged in a lively discussion, the supervisor later said, “I came today to do your evaluation. I will come back another time when you are *teaching*” (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 6). This shows the contrast between the teaching paradigm and the learning paradigm. The biology professor understood that *teaching* takes place whenever the student is *learning*. Part of that understanding is grasping the vital role that emotion plays in the learning process.

Neuroscientists “are highlighting connections between emotion, social functioning, and decision making that have the potential to revolutionize our understanding of the role of affect in education” (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Damasio (2007) has found that the aspects of cognition most often employed in education, which include learning, attention, memory, decision making, and motivation, are affected by emotion. Changes that take place in the mind such as “focusing of attention, calling up of relevant memories, and learning the associations between events and their outcomes, are the processes with which education is most concerned” and are made possible through emotion (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007, p. 7).

Contrary to what educators have believed in the past, Immordino-Yang (2009) asserts that emotion and thinking are never truly separated. Learning involves both cognitive and emotional processing (Immordino-Yang). For a student to apply himself to study, he must first motivate and engage himself to carry out the task (Immordino-Yang). The motivating factors associated with learning are related to emotion. For example, a student who excels in school might be motivated

by the desire to please his parents, avoid punishment, or reach a goal such as attending college (Immordino-Yang).

## Research Findings

Low academic achievement is related to a poor self-concept, a lack of motivation, and difficulties with social interactions (Pellitteri, Dealy, Fasano, & Kugler, 2006). A study was conducted to determine if emotional intelligence interventions would be effective for elementary students with reading disabilities. The researcher's goal was to provide a model of emotional intelligence for educators. This model was designed to help teachers adopt an *emotional lens* with which to view the student (Pellitteri et al.). Creating an environment where the student could disengage negative affect and adopt positive emotions would result in improved learning (Pellitteri et al.).

The interventions were designed to elicit a positive emotional experience for the reader. The positive emotions could then supersede the negative emotions associated with the reading environment. The goal was for the teacher to turn the written page into a "stimulus with positive affective association that [could] awaken the motivation to read" (Pellitteri et al., p. 166). One way of doing this was to allow the student to read without having to decode words. Difficult words would be read as "non-sense words," to allow the reader to focus on the fluency of the reading process (Pellitteri et al., p. 167). The ability to read a whole paragraph fluently increases the reader's feeling of competence and therefore allows the reader to attempt to decode words more comfortably (Pellitteri et al.). "The more educators come to understand the nature of the relationship between emotion and cognition, the better they may be able to leverage this relationship in the design of learning environments" (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007, p. 9).

A study in 2009 was conducted to examine the relationship between two possible predictors of academic success among Bible college students (Samples, 2009). One predictor was emotional intelligence; the second was spiritual maturity. The students were given the MSCEIT to measure emotional intelligence and the Faith Development Scale to measure spiritual maturity. The results were measured against age, gender, class level, ethnicity, and self-reported cumulative GPA. Samples found that emotional intelligence does have an effect on academic success. However, spiritual maturity does not (Samples). She also found that emotional intelligence is moderately correlated to spiritual maturity (Samples). Samples suggests that emotional intelligence curriculum must be included in academic settings, particularly among lower class levels.

## Teaching with Emotional Intelligence

Palmer (2007) understands that to reach the mind of the student, the teacher must also touch the student's emotions. Separating mind and emotion results in "bloodless facts that make the world distant and remote, and ignorant emotions that reduce truth to how I feel today" (Palmer, p. 68). Even though academia recognizes empirical observation and logical reasoning as the only two sources of knowledge, the emotionally intelligent professor *mines* the student's emotions (Palmer). Palmer asserts that to thrive in life people "rely on knowledge embedded in feelings" (p. 208). Therefore, the role of the professor, as emotional coach, is as important as the professor's cognitive role.

A group of distinguished professors was studied by researchers Baiocco and DeWaters (1998). Among the chief characteristics of successful professors, emotional intelligence emerged as an

indicator of dynamic teaching (Baiocco & DeWaters). These outstanding educators epitomize a number of emotionally intelligent “super traits” of excellence such as optimism, emotional literacy, and empathy (Baiocco & DeWaters, p. 111). Optimistic professors believe in the crucial role they play in a student’s life and trust their ability to improve as educators (Baiocco & DeWaters). Emotionally literate professors use vivid words to describe their teaching or their feelings about their teaching, words such as “passion,” “intense,” “vital,” “delight,” “fully devoted,” and “thrilled” (Baiocco & DeWaters, p. 117). Lastly, empathetic professors are committed to seeing the best in their students. They frequently use the word “love” to describe their feelings about their students and are found to be remarkably sensitive to their student’s feelings (Baiocco & DeWaters, p. 120). Baiocco and DeWaters found that emotional intelligence and a commitment to “student-centered” teaching are inseparable (Baiocco & DeWaters, p. 115).

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Does emotional intelligence provide tools that enable a college student to conquer depression, chronic anger, and burnout? College students experience a number of pressures in the areas of identity development, relationships, sexuality, peer pressure, academic competition, financial concerns, and social fears (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). These challenges often render students hopeless. The real concern for educators is that most students deal with these stressors through unhealthy habits. The American College Health Association, in a survey of 29,230 students, found that 9.8% felt that the use of alcohol had hindered academic performance, 33.6% did something they later regretted while drinking, and 45.4% did not get enough sleep in the past seven days (Kadison & DiGeronimo). Kadison & DiGeronimo assert that harmful coping mechanisms among college students include depression, sleep and eating disorders, substance abuse, anxiety, and sexual promiscuity.

#### Research Findings

A study conducted in Turkey tested 117 volunteers with the State-Trait Anger Scale. The 32 students who scored highest for consistent anger became the participants in the study. Consistent anger “reflects how often the state of anger is felt. Consistent anger may cause problems within interpersonal relationships; the greater the anger, the more aggressive behavior emerges” (Yilmaz, 2009). The 32 students were divided into two groups: 16 attended a 12-week emotional intelligence skill training program; the other 16 were in the control group. Yilmaz retested the 16 students who participated in the program and found that their levels of consistent anger decreased, indicating that the study group earned significantly better scores than their original scores and also significantly better scores than the control group. A follow-up test three months later showed no significant difference between posttest and follow-up scores (Yilmaz). Yilmaz concluded that “the emotional intelligence training provided to university students could have a long-term or permanent impact on their levels of consistent anger” (p. 571).

Burnout is common among college students (Yueh-Tzu, 2009). Unfortunately, it negatively affects academic achievement and overall health (Yueh-Tzu). A group of student volunteers in Taiwan was given a questionnaire that included the following sections: burnout, emotional intelligence, team innovation climate, negative affect, core self-evaluation, subjective workload, and demographic information (Yueh-Tzu). Researchers found that student volunteers with high

emotional intelligence “feel less burnout even though they subjectively feel they have contributed more than their team cohorts” (Yueh-Tzu, p. 877). Researchers concluded that since emotional intelligence alleviates the magnitude of burnout, EI workshops ought to be offered to college student volunteers (Yueh-Tzu).

One of the qualities of an emotionally intelligent person is self-awareness and affect regulation (Goleman, 1995). A study in 2009 was conducted to determine the relationships between nicotine use and depression among college students (Schleicher, Harris, Catley, & Nazir, 2009). Specifically researchers wanted to know if students expected nicotine to alleviate emotional distress (Schleicher et al.). The results on 315 undergraduate smokers tested revealed that students who suffer depression were likely to smoke in the hope that nicotine would alleviate their negative feelings and moods. Researchers concluded that mood management must be taught as early as adolescence (Schleicher et al.).

College counseling centers often treat students who suffer affective (emotional) disorders, especially depression (Mobley, 2008). Keith Mobley, a clinical psychologist, treated one of his clients, a 20-year-old male who suffered from depression and anxiety, through cognitive-behavioral therapy. This type of therapy focuses on “replacing maladaptive patterns with constructive alternatives, and improving coping and emotional regulation skills” (Mobley). Cognitive-behavioral therapy centers on *cognitive reframing*, which was previously presented as one of the constructs of EI. By fostering an empathetic and accepting relationship with the client, Mobley was able to teach the young man to label and express his emotions and to develop healthier (self-soothing) patterns of thinking. At the end of the therapeutic process, the student had learned affect regulation skills and developed a new career path (Mobley).

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CAREER PREPARATION

Is emotional intelligence necessary to ensure the student’s later success at work? The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) found that interpersonal skills are considered most important by employers (Liptak, 2005). Since most researchers like Goleman agree that emotional intelligence can be learned, Liptak asserts that EI can provide a plan for career counselors to follow, to better prepare students for the workplace (Liptak). He proposes the following five-step process. First, students must understand why emotional intelligence is important; second, students must identify EI skill deficits in themselves; third, students must comprehend how these deficits hinder career development; fourth, students must be taught to use EI skills effectively; lastly, students must be given the opportunity to practice EI skills (Liptak).

### Research Findings

A study was conducted to examine “the perceptions that university professors of educational leadership hold concerning the importance of including Goleman’s (1998) emotional intelligence competencies in leadership development programs” (Sanders, 2009, pp. 6–7). Sanders asserts that educational leaders must understand the importance of human emotions and how they influence their students. Her study included 170 participating professors, of which 90% considered leadership their area of expertise (Sanders). She found that the majority of professors “indicated

a willingness and desire to ensure that emotional intelligence is incorporated into educational leadership programs, but also indicated its absence” (Sanders, p. 104).

Teacher training is offered in many Christian colleges and universities. A recent survey shows that “record numbers of both new and veteran teachers are leaving the field of teaching at a high cost to their districts both financially and in loss of experience” (Justice & Espinoza, 2007). In light of this, Justice and Espinoza surveyed 160 beginning teacher candidates using the Emotional Skills Assessment Process. Results showed that “the skills of leadership, aggression, and change orientation were current strengths” (p. 456). However, qualities such as empathy, self-esteem, stress management, and drive strength, among others, needed to be strengthened (Justice & Espinoza). Researchers concluded that developing emotional skills as part of teacher training in college might strengthen teachers’ performance and keep them in the classroom longer.

Researchers recognize that compassion and affective sensitivity are necessary qualities for medical professionals; patient-centered care demands that physicians acquire both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam, 2008, p. 279). However, medical training often spoils these very qualities (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam). A study was conducted to examine the changes in medical students’ emotional intelligence and empathy across undergraduate medical curriculum (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam). “Indeed, researchers have noted declines in empathy, altruism, and self-confidence along with corresponding increases in cynicism, stress, and feelings of victimization” (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam, p. 280). Results showed that while most medical students enter their fields of study with idealism and enthusiasm, academic and financial pressures often become overwhelming, leaving medical students feeling isolated, anxious, stressed, and exhausted (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam). Empathy levels showed a significant decline; in fact “98% of respondents reported observing physicians refer to patients in a derogatory fashion” (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam, p. 282). Researchers concluded that EI can and must be “instilled, nurtured and taught” to medical students (Stratton, Saunders, & Elam).

### Training Students to Work with Emotional Intelligence

Leadership is one of the highest-ranking qualities pursued by employers (Liptak, 2005). Goleman (2002) distinguishes between resonant and dissonant leaders. The resonant or emotionally intelligent leader is upbeat, enthusiastic, and empathetic (Goleman). The genius of this type of leader lies in his ability “to leave people feeling understood and cared for” (Goleman, p. 20). The dissonant leader, on the other hand, propagates fear, anger, and apathy (Goleman). Their leadership is “off-key” (Goleman, p. 21). Goleman asserts that a resonant leader is a master at “moving people toward shared goals” (p. 55). Resonant leaders connect people’s wants with the organization’s goals, create harmony, and value people’s input (Goleman). Goleman believes that dissonant leaders can learn emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness (self-confidence), self-management (self-control, transparency, optimism), social awareness (empathy), and relationship management (collaboration, conflict management) to become resonant leaders who guide their followers toward success.

Bradberry and Greaves (2005) tested more than 500,000 people to explore the role that emotions play in their daily lives. First, the results show a “global deficit in understanding and managing emotions” (Bradberry & Greaves, p. 39); second, women score higher than men in emotional intelligence; and third, middle managers score the highest in emotional intelligence. However, beyond that point, scores decline as level of management increases (Bradberry &

Greaves). Goleman (1998) calls this “The Peter Principle,” where people with special expertise are promoted assuming they can be effective leaders and successful managers. This explains why so many people who are “abrasive, thoughtless, and otherwise interpersonally inept are in so many positions of power in organizations” (Goleman, p. 43).

Silberman and Hansburg (2000) believe that success in the workplace demands interpersonal intelligence. In their book *People Smart*, Silberman and Hansburg identify eight skills emotionally intelligent people must adopt to work effectively with others. The eight skills are “understanding people, expressing yourself clearly, asserting your needs, exchanging feedback, influencing others, resolving conflict, being a team player and shifting gears” (Silberman & Hansburg, pp. 225–230). He concludes by emphasizing four steps: (a) wanting to adopt these skills, (b) being willing to learn them, (c) trying them, and (d) living them out (Silberman & Hansburg).

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

### The Gospel

The centrality of the Gospel in Christian higher education must be addressed. The majority if not all the studies on emotional intelligence have been conducted by secular sources. Therefore, the Christian educator must reflect on these theories through the lens of Scripture. The Bible teaches that man’s problem is sin and that the penalty of sin is death or separation from God (Rom. 3:23 and Rom. 6:23, New International Version). Therefore, no matter how emotionally intelligent a person is, if the issue of sin has not been addressed, that person remains a lost soul in need of redemption. On the other hand, a believer’s level of emotional intelligence does not make him or her more or less valuable in the eyes of God, nor more or less worthy of salvation, for justification rests solely on the merit of Christ’s sacrifice, not the believer’s good works (Eph. 2:8–9). Therefore, although teaching emotional intelligence to students can be a priority for educators, above all priorities, the calling to beckon the student to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is paramount.

### Emotions and The Believer

In some evangelical circles fact and faith are often considered important while feelings (emotions) are sometimes even ignored (Moreland & Issler, 2006). While a person must not rely on feelings concerning the assurance of salvation, for example, the believer can run the risk of ignoring emotions all together. As men and women created in the image of God, humans are emotional beings by design. Men and women were created for relationship, where emotions play a major role. Moreland and Issler believe that “if we desire to deepen our intimacy with God, we will need to become more aware of how our emotional life affects our walk with Him” (Moreland & Issler, p. 61). The battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan rages within the emotional life (Moreland & Issler). A sign of maturity and spiritual transparency is being aware of one’s emotions, and allowing God to rule over them with his goodness and grace (Moreland & Issler). Therefore, it is important to foster both spiritual and emotional health in college students.

## Self-Awareness

The Psalmist exemplifies the ability to identify uncomfortable, painful, and often raw emotions. In Psalm 42 he declares, “My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ Why are you so downcast o my soul? Why so disturbed within me?” In Psalm 55 he cries out to God, “My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me, fear and trembling have beset me, horror has overwhelmed me.” David recognized that God expects him to be transparent when he declared “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts, you teach me wisdom in the inmost place” (Ps. 51:6). One of the reasons why being able to identify emotions is not only acceptable, but essential, for the believer’s growth and maturity is that men and women are relational beings by design. The Christian life takes place in the trenches of relationship with God and others. Those relationships are not merely cognitive endeavors, they are deeply emotional. Therefore, God cares about emotions and enables the believer to identify and express them to him and others in appropriate ways.

## Cognitive Reframing

Romans 8:6 declares, “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and *peace*.” Cognitive reframing draws a connection between the thought life and the emotional life, which are inseparable. Peace of *heart* is the result of a *mind* stayed on God. Moreland & Issler (2006) assert, “For Christians the lesson is that we can and must learn to habitually place our minds on God if we are going to see lasting change in our moods, attitudes and behavior” (p. 86). Romans 12:2 declares, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The Apostle Paul declares, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—*think* about such things” (Phil. 4:8; emphasis added).

## Motivation

Optimistic people believe that failures can be conquered. They see failure as an opportunity for growth. Optimism’s closest relative is hope. The believer, more than anyone else, is the recipient of hope. David expressed this in Psalm 23 when he said, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil . . .” Then he asserted, “Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Ps. 23:4, 6). The New Testament corroborates the same message: “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17–18). In the midst of obstacles the Bible provides great motivation to persist. The Apostle Paul’s statement, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13), is the bedrock of Christian achievement.

## Empathy

The Bible declares that believers are comforted by a compassionate Father. It also says that the comfort believers receive allows them to comfort and care for others in need of comfort (2 Cor. 1:3–7). This progression shows that when the believer empathizes (cares) with others, he is being like Christ, who is himself the Master Comforter. Romans 12:15 further declares, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” Here the believer is called to leave behind self-centeredness and embrace other-centeredness, to be attuned (aware, responsive) to other people’s joy and/or sorrow.

## Social Intelligence

Because the Christian life takes place within the context of relationships, the Bible has much to say about social interactions. The believer is reminded in the first epistle to the Corinthians, for example, that love is a verb. Selfless love is characterized by truth, trust, and hope. It further explains that relationships do not flourish wherever envy, pride, selfishness, and anger exist (1 Cor. 13: 4–8). God’s people are called to clothe themselves with “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Col. 3:12), which are the essence of social intelligence.

## CONCLUSION

This article has explored the importance of emotional intelligence in Christian higher education. Specifically, it has addressed possible implications between learning emotional intelligence skills and success in the areas of learning, mental health, and career preparation. The article confirms that a positive relationship exists between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. It has concluded that emotional intelligence can provide the student with tools to conquer depression, chronic anger, and burnout. It determined that emotional intelligence is necessary to ensure the student’s later success at work. Finally, the article has established that the Bible teaches important principles concerning self-awareness, cognitive reframing, motivation, empathy, and social intelligence.

Clearly the need to teach college students emotional intelligence skills does exist. In a Christian context, emotional intelligence constructs must be filtered through the lens of Scripture. Once those biblically sound principles are established, emotional intelligence constructs can be implemented. In conclusion, the quest for emotional intelligence on a Christian campus is quite promising, as educators draw upon the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance to teach and practice them.

At least the following five activities should be borne in mind by those in Christian higher education who are aware of the importance of emotional intelligence in the lives of their students:

1. Ensure that the faculty understand the importance of emotional intelligence skills. Emotionally intelligent faculty will create more emotionally intelligent environments for their students.
2. Those responsible for curriculum development in institutions of Christian higher education need to incorporate instruction about emotional intelligence into curricula, especially curricula in educational leadership programs.

3. Incoming freshmen should be provided emotional intelligence skill training early in their academic programs.
4. The spiritual formation/development curricula in institutions of Christian higher education should consider incorporating emotional intelligence content into all their curricula.
5. The counselors in the mental health offices and departments on the campuses of Christian higher education institutions should be trained in the skills of emotional intelligence.

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