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their own emotions and distort others' perceptions of them, leading to negative consequences. Spiritual intelligence (SI) pertains to an individual's ability to grow spiritually and become authentically mature. Simply put, SI is about people "getting it." Faith sinks in, resulting in consistent spiritual fruit, humility, and other related attributes we'd expect from those who emulate the mind of Christ. In spite of billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of ministry hours invested annually among some 300,000 U.S. congregations, significant spiritual results are rare, almost non-existent. What's wrong?

The primary culprit behind low SI is that we do not utilize the methods Jesus did in growing the souls of his followers. How else do we explain church boards gone wild, staff betrayals, congregational bickering and splits, and the incessant string of clergy scandals? Is the power of Scripture and the Holy Spirit unable to overcome sin's hold in greater numbers?

Looking back over my 25 years in pastoral ministry, the most potent results (in terms of raising spiritual intelligence) came when we specifically implemented the methods Jesus used with his Twelve. My churches did most of the things that churches do, such as worship services, sermons, age-group ministries, fundraising, strategic planning, outreach, pot-lucks, small groups, and so on. These are not bad, but they will not take people where they ultimately need to go.

After three years, 11 of the 12 whom Jesus selected went on to change history. Granted, none of us are Jesus and we probably won't have access to our people 24/7 for three years, but why not compare our efforts to what Jesus did? If we look closely at our Bibles, we find a significantly different strategy for soul growth than is found in nearly every American church. We focus on the *what*, but Jesus focused on the *how*.

Jesus implemented a combination of four ministry methods during his short pastoral tenure. They are markedly different than what we typically do in the local church:

1) Jesus selected a travel team. He picked twelve who pretty much went on a three-

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: Beyond Pampers & Depends

by ALAN NELSON

After half a century in the church, I have observed a surprisingly low correlation between the amount of time and energy people put into church life and their level of spiritual maturity. Our people only progress from Pampers to Depends. After decades of witnessing long-time Christians behaving badly, the self-destructive antics of church leaders, and hearing war stories *ad nauseam* behind pastoral office doors, I'm convinced there's something strategically errant in our system of growing people.

In spite of what many books, semi-

nars and sermons suggest, the error of our ways is not so much matters of attitude, doctrine, volition, skills, competence, resources, or ministry styles. Something else looms large in our blind spot, resulting in diminished spiritual intelligence.

A few years ago, Daniel Goleman and colleagues popularized the concept of "emotional intelligence," pertaining to our awareness of our own emotions, the emotions of others, and the way we come across to others. Those lacking emotional intelligence (EI) are unable to control

year road trip with him, doing life together as he taught and performed miracles. Team members committed to each other to journey together as they grew spiritually. In this setting they developed mutually earned accountability, the type of accountability required for developing SI. Without that our preaching, teaching, and Bible studies are like feathers flung in the wind or water on the back of a duck. Resistance to change means we'll rarely work through the difficult things holding us back from maturity. By going deep with a few, Jesus assured their likelihood of experiencing what they needed to become mature souls.

Why all four Spiritual Intelligence methods are needed in order to create synergy

...It's the Goldilocks angle of "just right" balance

Too much TRAVEL TEAM
Social Christians who enjoy each other but grow little.

Too little TRAVEL TEAM
Lack of accountability and real-life application.

Too much DIRECTIONS
Christians who confuse knowledge with faith; critical, spiritually rigid.

Too little DIRECTIONS
Wandering and vapid Oprah-esque spirituality; biblical ignorance.

Too much EXPERIENTIAL
Entertainment-driven emotional spirituality; self-righteous.

Too little EXPERIENTIAL
Dry, passionless faith lacking humility and attractiveness to others.

Too much PATH FINDER
Ego-feeding of Path Finder; hero worship by followers.

Too little PATH FINDER:
Wandering and snail-paced growth of followers.

“... the longer I am out of the weekly pulpit and ministry mosh pit, the clearer it becomes how few truly revolutionary thoughts we've come up with during the last half century.”

2) Jesus provided directions. The travel team did not gather to pool their own shallow ideas. Jesus unpacked Old Testament scriptures as well as wove in stories of the day and played off of extenuating circumstances. In other words, he seized the moment. Jesus recognized that God is ready to speak through a number of means and did not limit this to Torah sermons in the synagogue. Bible exposition is the focus of many church ministries, but we confuse Bible knowledge and sermon hearing with maturity.

3) Jesus helped them to experience the journey. Rarely do you see Jesus using methods typical of Western classroom pedagogy. There was occasional synagogue teaching and mountainside sermon series, but most learning came in the field, on the road, and among the people. This lack of lecture method in teaching should make us shudder when we ponder the 20-50 minute “monologue” we consider the high point of our ministry week. Experiences ignite the heart. Consider the difference between watching a missionary's slides and taking a group to hold AIDS babies in Africa. Jesus took the travel team through an array of experiences.

4) Jesus served as a path finder. A path finder is part mentor, spiritual guide, teacher, and coach, but not quite any of these as they are typically defined. Near the end, Jesus instructed the Twelve to become path finders for others (Matthew 28:20). A reason so many of the faithful never become faith-full is that they're consumers; passive info gatherers instead of developing their own travel teams. Too many professional pastors undermine the priesthood of all believers by implying by their actions that they're the ones qualified to take people deep into their soul growth.

While the typical church does bits and pieces of these four methods, they are nearly always seen as ancillary to the primary: sermons, events, and programs. They rarely use *all four together* as Jesus did. As a result, people never acquire escape velocity to break free from the old nature's gravitational pull.

I love pastors; most of them anyway. We're a caring bunch with our own quirks. At the same time, the longer I am out of the weekly pulpit and ministry mosh pit, the clearer it becomes how few truly revolutionary thoughts we've come up with during the last half century. Let's get real: the newest, coolest churches emerging today aren't that much different from their predecessors. While pastors often dismiss the advice of those not in the daily grind of church work—with some justification—the proximity of ministry creates a myopia that keeps us from seeing what's preventing our people from maturing spiritually. We unknowingly perpetuate what we've seen and done in the past, tweaking the old jalopy, convincing ourselves that in so doing, we're now on the “cutting edge.”

It's not so much a matter of giving up what we're doing as it is adapting it to the framework of Jesus' methods. How can we take our preaching, programs and events, and help people use them in the context of their own soul growth plans? How can we help them take responsibility for their soul growth, using tools and methods Jesus used? Otherwise we'll continue to get what we've gotten—sporadic soul growth and rare SI.



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