

# Traits of Emotionally Mature Leaders

The heart of our churches is its leadership. It's so important that our leaders show up emotionally whole so that they can be effective in carrying out the work that we do. Here is a list of emotionally mature behaviors that leaders should aim to exemplify.

**1: Emotionally mature leaders understand that taking things personally is a choice.** *“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” (James 1:2-5)*

I can recall during a virtual meeting someone who thought they were on mute began to complain that the meetings were long and boring. From then on, the leader of the meeting decided that person was her enemy and did everything possible to make her uncomfortable. When she asked questions, the leader responded with snark and sarcasm. The leader ignored her and left her out of meetings. The leader's behavior escalated the situation as we all watched the two of them spar during meetings. As a leader, we must realize that people are human, and because of that, they are flawed. We can't control their opinions or how they behave but we can control how we react. To maintain self-control, we need to change our perspective and recognize that it's about growing or maturing. We also can use these maturing opportunities to gain wisdom, so we can handle situations from the 'perfect and complete' part of ourselves when we respond.

**2: Emotionally mature leaders must commit to taking steps to remain actively engaged in spiritual, emotional, and professional development.** *“For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” (Hebrews 5:13)*

Spiritual development means daily prayer and active study of God's word. Personal development means building self-awareness, learning our triggers, and how we react when triggered yet maintaining self-control. Professional development, yes this is needed among church leadership too, means learning how to lead and navigate situations with gravitas and professionalism. All of these things are necessary to being an emotionally whole, spiritual leader.

**3. Emotionally mature leaders embrace an “I get to love you” approach.**

*“[W]hat are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.” (Psalm 8:4-5)*

I have never felt more loved than when I think of Jesus leaving His throne in heaven and coming to earth and dealing with the judgments of mortal men as he was scoffed, mocked, bruised, and

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severely beaten. But that's how much He loves me and you (oh how He loves us). I don't think it's possible to love anyone that much but we can attempt to come close by adopting an "I get to love you" approach with everyone we encounter. We should be excited that God placed people in our lives to love the way He loves us. Therefore, instead of seeing them as burdens, see every person as a blessing. Instead of being easily frustrated by the things they do, we should begin to see their errors as a teachable moment.

**4. Emotionally mature leaders understand that therapy and therapeutic services, including prescribed medication, can complement prayer and give deliverance.** *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."* (James 5:16)

It is not up for us to decide how or what God can and will use to deliver someone from evil. God can use the things of this world to make us whole and that includes therapy and prescription medication under a doctor's care.

**5. Emotionally mature leaders understand that mentoring is a tool to minimize damage.** *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Leaders can be hurt too. Leaders can and will suffer church hurt and church trauma as well. This is why it's so important that we continue to disciple all believers, both young and mature so that they all grow and mature in the faith.

**6. Emotionally and spiritually mature leaders leave people with their dignity intact.** *"Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct."* (Galatians 6:2-5)

I can recall when I was a teen I attended an evening revival. When service was over, as everyone was fellowshiping and chit-chatting, two of the ladies who preached during the revival approached me and asked me if I wanted to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Out of fear of saying anything else, I responded yes. Then they took me to the front of the church, raised my hands in the air, laid hands on me, and began to pray over me. Then they asked me to start speaking in tongues. At that moment, my mind went a million places. I was embarrassed, scared, and confused. I did not know if I had done something wrong or what. I wanted to fellowship with my friends as everyone else was doing but instead I was placed in this unwanted position that was causing me angst. Many people have tormented souls and are embarrassed easily (like I was). We don't want to cause further damage but with gentleness bring them to the feet of Jesus. Allow people to have their dignity.

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**7. Emotionally and spiritually mature leaders do not weaponize the pulpit or leadership platforms.** *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col 1:28)*

The pulpit/podium isn't the place to get things off our chest, seek vengeance, or use it to amplify our personal objectives. If your message doesn't heal the broken and point others to Christ helping them grow closer to Him then it's not beneficial.

**8. Emotionally mature leaders are ok with saying goodbye.** *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. (Matthew 10:14)*

I can recall being in a discipleship group and one of the other members of my group wanted to leave. I'm sure she had her reasons but when she approached the ministers about leaving, one of them said: "You just can't leave this group." To her, she felt that her dignity was violated. To me, it felt as if her rights were taken away. People will come and go. We have to be willing to let them and trust God's providence to keep and direct them. Remember they are His not ours.