

EQ skill: Empathy. The Definition of Empathy.

(January 15, 2026)

Paul prayed for the Philippians, “that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.” (Phil. 1:9) Although the word hadn’t been invented yet, when Paul was praying for love that increased in knowledge, he was praying that the Philippians would grow in empathy.

I am aware that there is some disagreement on the definition of the word “empathy.” But for our purposes, we are going to refer to empathy as “the ability to understand what someone else is experiencing: physically, intellectually, cognitively, and emotionally.” Empathy is the ability to understand the information and feelings of another person. It is empathy which allows me to meaningfully relate to another person without confusing my experience with their experience. And it is the increasing understanding of empathy that allows me to truly love and help another person.

Daniel Goleman wrote the book “Emotional Intelligence” and coined the term “EQ.” He defined emotional intelligence as “the ability to...understand your effect on others and manage yourself accordingly.” Empathy is the core of this understanding...and it will greatly inform our love.