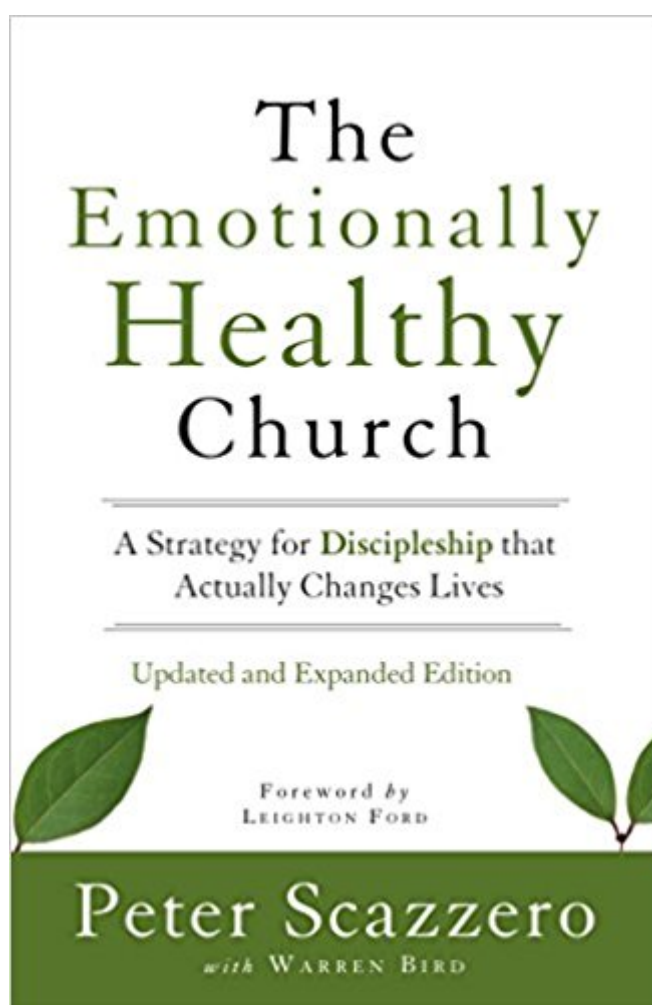


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# The Emotionally Healthy Church, Updated And Expanded Edition: A Strategy For Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives



## Synopsis

The Emotionally Healthy Church, Expanded Edition, the newly updated and expanded edition of the groundbreaking bestseller *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, features a fuller, deeper look at the six principles contained in the original and includes a crucial, additional chapter: *Slow Down to Lead with Integrity*. New Life Fellowship in Queens, New York, had it all: powerful teaching, dynamic ministries, an impressive growth rate, and a vision to do great works for God. Things looked good—but beneath the surface, circumstances were more than just brewing. They were about to boil over, forcing Peter Scazzero to confront needs in his church and himself that went deeper than he'd ever imagined. What he learned about the vital link between emotional health, relational depth, and spiritual maturity can shed new light on painful problems in your own church. In this revised and expanded edition of his Gold Medallion Award-winning book, Scazzero shares refreshing new insights and a different and challenging slant on what it takes to lead your congregation to wholeness and maturity in Christ. Our churches are in trouble, says Scazzero. They are filled with people who are: unsure how to biblically integrate anger, sadness, and other emotions; defensive, incapable of revealing their weaknesses; threatened by or intolerant of different viewpoints; zealous about ministering at church but blind to their spouses' loneliness at home; so involved in "serving" that they fail to take care of themselves; prone to withdraw from conflict rather than resolve it. Sharing from New Life Fellowship's painful but liberating journey, Scazzero reveals exactly how the truth can and does make you free—not just superficially, but deep down. This expanded edition of *The Emotionally Healthy Church* not only takes the original six principles further and deeper, but also adds a seventh crucial principle. You'll acquire knowledge and tools that can help you and others: look beneath the surface of problems; break the power of past wounds, failures, sins, and circumstances; live a life of brokenness and vulnerability; recognize and honor personal limitations and boundaries; embrace grief and loss; make incarnation your model to love others; slow down to lead with integrity. This new edition shares powerful insights on how contemplative spirituality can help you and your church slow down—an integral key to spiritual and emotional health. *The Emotionally Healthy Church, Expanded Edition* includes story after story of people at New Life whose lives have been changed by the concepts in this book. Open these pages and find out how your church can turn a new corner on the road to spiritual maturity.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Zondervan; Updated, Expanded ed. edition (June 30, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0310520754

ISBN-13: 978-0310520757

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.9 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 184 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #41,970 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Leadership #64 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Pastoral Resources #98 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Discipleship

## Customer Reviews

'This book addresses one of the greatest challenges church leaders face -- how to be healthy people creating healthy communities. It is written by a battle-scarred practitioner who knows whereof he speaks. I wish I'd read it 20 years ago.' -- John Ortberg, Author, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

New Foreword from the author After several years of living out the principles of *The Emotionally Healthy Church* within the local church I pastor, I wrote them in the first edition of this book. My intention was to speak particularly to pastors, elders, deacons, and ministry and small group leaders. Little did I know that the book's message would spread beyond church leaders to countless others struggling with the integration of emotional health and biblical spirituality. Even more of a surprise was the centrality of this issue not only for the church in North America, but around the world. During the seven years since the first edition, my understanding of the six principles that make up emotionally healthy churches has grown deeper, sharper, and broader. I have grown theologically as I have encountered new personal and leadership applications of the material. As a result, each chapter has been edited, expanded, and updated. Moreover, this journey has led me to add a seventh, indispensable principle: lead with integrity. The pace of my life slowed down considerably when I began integrating emotional health with my discipleship. It takes time -- lots of it -- to feel, to grieve, to listen, to reflect, to be mindful of what is going on around and in us. This radically shifted my priorities at home and in my work. Emotional health also created a hunger within Geri and me for a deeper communion with God. This in turn led to an exploration of contemplative

spiritual practices, culminating in a four-month sabbatical in 2003 - 2004. Our aim was to study the riches of the contemplative tradition and its applications for a missional church like ours. This immersion into such spiritual disciplines as silence and solitude transformed us, and eventually, our church. Insights from these experiences are sprinkled throughout the book. While the contemplative tradition helped me considerably in my efforts to lead with integrity, I had yet to apply emotional health to my leadership. That turned out to be a challenging, complex task. I describe this unfolding in the new chapter 11, "Slow Down to Lead with Integrity." One final note: Resist the temptation to breeze through these pages. This is not a book meant to be read quickly in one or two sittings. This is not simply the latest fascinating idea to incorporate in your God-talk with colleagues or parishioners. I invite you to wrestle deeply with these truths as you consider how they apply to both your inner life and leadership. You could spend a lifetime plumbing the depths of each -- from limits, to brokenness, to grieving, to learning to love well. Please read slowly, prayerfully, and thoughtfully. As you do, ask the question, "How is God coming to me through this?" Consider making personal applications in a journal or in the back of the book, noting the page number for future reference. Be sure to grasp the central thesis: Emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. When you understand this, you will walk through a door in your spiritual journey. Few ever return to a tip-of-the-iceberg discipleship that overemphasizes activity but does not deeply transform from the inside out. By God's grace, you will never be the same. And you will embark on an exciting journey toward a beautiful life that will touch everyone around you -- in your family, church, workplace, and neighborhood. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Pastor Scazzero does a good job of identifying the problem. He points to effective lifestyle solutions. However, I finished reading parts of the book with a sense that it is an unfinished story. There is a lack of explanation of how healing comes about because of the principles that are given. For me, the best chapter was the one about the gift of limits. Many could go deeper. The author is part of a board-run church. The dynamics are different in churches operating under congregational, episcopal or team leadership models. Perhaps the biggest weakness of the book is a lack of developmental editing. Many parts seem jumpy and perhaps repetitive. It ends like an info-mercial, encouraging the reader to buy the next product. Not that the product is bad. But I wish publishers would pay more attention to the content and the editing.

As the founding pastor of a large, missional, inner-city NYC church (New Life Fellowship), Peter

Scazzero's life and ministry were turned upside down when his wife told him that she was leaving their own church. Scazzero's journey from disorientation to reorientation and growth is the occasion for this book. Scazzero believes that the lesson he learned through his experience--"that emotional health and spiritual health are inseparable"--will be a "Copernican revolution" for the Church (50). It will require a whole new paradigm for the way we view pastoral ministry and Christian maturity. It will require restructuring of our churches' very DNA. Before Scazzero's awakening, his ministry was outwardly viewed as very successful. It had experienced tremendous growth in some of the hardest neighborhoods of NYC. It was different. It was diverse. It was fresh. But as every mystery novel and introduction to philosophy book reveals, things are never what they seem. Scazzero was a workaholic who neglected his family and friends in order to build "his" church. He was defensive, insecure, and often shied away from confrontation because he could not deal with rejection. What resulted was a church with those very characteristics--a church that split for those very reasons. After spending the first two chapters describing the problems he faced in his own life and ministry ("Part 1: Discipleship's Missing Link"), Scazzero spends the next two chapters generalizing and diagnosing the problem from a biblical point of view ("Part 2: Biblical Basis for a New Paradigm of Discipleship"). He describes the relationship between spiritual and emotional maturity and has the reader take a personal assessment of her own level of spiritual/emotional maturity. In the next six chapters, which comprise "Part 3: Six Principles of an Emotionally Healthy Church," Scazzero offers the primary substance of his work, which is summarized nicely in the introduction: "... Jesus' followers...need training and skills in how to look beneath the surface of the iceberg of their lives (ch. 5), to break the power of how their past influences the present (ch. 6), to live in brokenness and vulnerability (ch. 7), to know their limits (ch. 8), to embrace their loss and grief (ch. 9), and to make incarnation their model for loving well (ch. 10). Making incarnation the top priority in order to love others well is both the climax and point of the entire book. The church is to be known, above all else, as a community that radically and powerfully loves others." (18) Like a good topical sermon series, Scazzero fills out each of his six principles (which correlate directly with chapters 5-10 mentioned above) with biblical examples, personal narratives, references to and quotes from other Christian authors (such as Henri Nouwen), and word pictures to boot. After proposing and elaborating on his six steps to emotionally healthy churches, Scazzero briefly concludes--in "Part 4: Where we go from Here"--with a short chapter identifying the next steps for the reader, which include finding emotionally healthy mentors and becoming a mentor for others, practicing patience through all the set-backs in the process of developing emotional health in the church, and never forgetting the importance of prayer throughout the process. A final chapter includes questions and

chapter-by-chapter study guide materials for discussion groups. The Emotionally Healthy Church is part autobiography, part exhortational manifesto, part Christian psychology, and part "how-to."

Writing a book with so many parts is bound to have both advantages and liabilities. Such is the case with this book. On the one hand, these different elements allow Scazzero to draw from a variety of resources, both anecdotal and from the literature on the topic at hand. His convictions are forged in the fire of his own personal experiences, which gives this book poignancy not always found in such "six-steps" types of literature. Indeed, for each of his principles, he is able to offer countless examples of how that particular principle added to the transformation of either his own life and ministry or the lives of someone within his ministry. He gives stories. He gives names. He gives real-life people. This all tends to have an impact on the reader on the levels of pathos and ethos. Then his move to the relevant literature allows him to address how these principles are not particular to his specific ministry but can be generalized to ministry across the board in a way that should be relevant to the reader--to address the reader's logos. On the other hand, combining such a variety of parts into a single work can tend to dull a message that might otherwise be stated more sharply and succinctly. In this regard The Emotionally Healthy Church reads a bit like a sermon preached on a well-known biblical text. The pastor knows that the congregation knows the point of the passage, but the pastor still fears that the congregation has not yet internalized it. So instead of making a strong yet simple restatement of the message of the text, the pastor feels obligated to "fill it out" with illustrations, quotes from authorities, personal narratives, and a list of steps on how to get from here to there. Eventually all the extras begin to drown out the otherwise clear message, while the congregation starts to wonder if the pastor has missed his natural exit. Similarly here, despite Scazzero's contention that he is offering a "Copernican revolution" for ministry, very little of what he says is actually original. This, of course, is no fault of Scazzero's, and I am sure if Scazzero were asked, he would admit that he was not necessarily trying to be original. Indeed, I think his point is that it would truly be a "Copernican revolution" if pastors actually internalized the message and put it into practice in their churches. But unfortunately, I think many readers of this book will get caught up in the stories and illustrations and eventually begin to miss the proverbial forest for the trees. I do appreciate that Scazzero is reacting strongly against a results driven, works oriented kind of pastoral ministry, which is so common in American churches today. His emphasis on the personal aspect of pastoral ministry is something that can hardly be overdone. Again, the fact that his conviction is based on his own personal transformation from the former kind of pastor to the latter gives his message credibility and hopefully will allow him to connect with pastors who find themselves in similar situations or even seminarians like myself who may be looking ahead to

pastoral ministry in their future and trying to shape what their conception of pastoral ministry should be. Yet, oftentimes the stronger one reacts against one polarity is the extent to which one finds oneself at the other pole. Here again *The Emotionally Healthy Church* may be susceptible to critique. Though Scazzero never states it explicitly and no doubt does not intend to convey this message at all, there is a slight feeling that comes across from this book that spiritual growth is not quite as important as emotional growth. In one sense, this criticism is unfair, since Scazzero's whole thesis is that the spiritual and the emotional cannot be separated, but on the other hand, one almost comes away with the impression that the reason they are inseparable is because the former is reducible to the latter. Again, this is certainly not Scazzero's intended message, and I am confident that he would reject this notion out of hand, but there is a sense in which this book's reaction could use a bit of a counter-reaction in order to balance his message. For example, at various points in the book Scazzero contends that the simple resolve to pray, memorize scripture, attend church, etc., will not in itself bring about spiritual maturity. This is because, as Scazzero states, "It is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature" (50). However, what is not explicitly addressed by this book is whether or not it is possible to be emotionally mature while remaining spiritually immature. Scazzero is correct that the resolve to engage in the spiritual disciplines is not sufficient to bring about spiritual maturity, but surely it is a necessary condition. Moreover, I would venture to say that one of the reasons the resolve does not bring about spiritual maturity is because the resolve is not followed by actual action. I know that in my own life I spend a lot more time thinking about how important prayer and Bible memory is for spiritual maturity than I actually spend praying or memorizing. I suspect that the same may be true for many of the spiritually immature in our churches. All that to say, I believe Scazzero's message is a helpful corrective to a (perhaps the) dominant polarity in our churches--the idea that spiritual maturity is solely a "spiritual" matter. Yet, I also firmly believe that the nomenclature of spiritual growth should not be completely overshadowed by the emotional. One simple but notable example of this danger can be found in Scazzero's chapter on the principle of living in brokenness and vulnerability (ch. 7). To illustrate how God tends to use people who are broken and vulnerable, Scazzero offers a list of biblical examples (p. 124). While this list includes some with authentic weaknesses, such as Moses's stuttering problem and Abraham's old age, Scazzero also includes things like David's affair, Jonah's obstinacy, and Moses's murder. It is true that God used these people in spite of and sometimes even through their weaknesses, but still I think it is important that we are able to distinguish between weaknesses and sins. While we might be wise to embrace the former, I think we should repudiate the latter as much as possible. Doing so will require that we

maintain a distinction between the spiritual and the emotional.[...]

I've been in many churches and ministries where the aura is void of emotion. You're supposed to do things just for the sake of doing them without taking any consideration whatsoever of others' feelings. At times I felt like I was doing God a service, while others I was just completely drained. I didn't feel like talking about what was on my mind for fear of it not being... "holy." And yet, being "holy" means being honest with who you are, 'cause God sure made us as people destined for His pleasure. We're broken people in a broken world, and Scazzero wants us to realize that that's just plain okay. Granted, we shouldn't stay complacent or inert with where we are, but we must recognize all that we are, faults and all, in order to pursue the greater good. My life has been without such guidance until I started attending the church I am at now; the pastor there introduced us members with this book. It takes a wise man to acknowledge that the church is full of broken bodies, and a powerful leader to let us open up our wounds so that they may mend. Highly recommended read for all Christians, whether they realize they're broken or not.

Scazzero rarely makes a biblical argument for his theory and when he does it is proof texting or sometimes just completely out of context. There are a few things to glean from this book but overall it is not worth the time.

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