

# ***The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)***

## **Chapter 36: Using the Immanuel Approach On Your Own**

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People frequently ask, “Can I use the Immanuel approach by myself, or will it only work with someone facilitating for me?”

The simple answer is, “Yes, you can use the Immanuel approach by yourself.” I know many people who use these principles and tools, without a facilitator, to engage with the Lord for emotional healing and also to connect with him for many other reasons throughout the average day. Using Immanuel approach principles and tools to become increasingly aware of God’s living presence *throughout the average day*, and to increasingly *abide* in an interactive connection with him is the core of what I call the Immanuel lifestyle, and applying the Immanuel approach principles and tools by yourself, without a facilitator, is obviously an important part of this “all day every day” picture.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Life Model Works team has just released a little book about Immanuel approach interactive journaling – a simple tool to help you more effectively use the Immanuel approach on your own.<sup>2</sup>

However, I would like to offer a number of important cautions with respect to using the Immanuel approach by yourself. The first is that you might get poor results because you are unable to troubleshoot effectively. You may not be able to think very clearly if you end up triggered into the thoughts and feelings from a traumatic childhood memory, and in this situation it’s really good to have a facilitator to help with troubleshooting. You may also be unable to troubleshoot effectively because of blind spots. Many of us have defenses and/or blockages that we don’t seem able to see on our own, and without the help of someone else to spot these we just keep going around and around, missing the same blind spot problems over and over again.<sup>3</sup>

Another concern with respect to possible poor results is that you will be more likely to miss subtle counterfeit and contamination. A facilitator (or people with you in a small group exercise) can be very helpful in identifying and resolving counterfeit and contamination, and when you use the Immanuel approach on your own you can get poor results due to missing counterfeit and contamination.<sup>4</sup>

A facilitator (or people with you in a small group exercise) can also contribute to better results by augmenting your faith and capacity. And, conversely, you can therefore get poorer results when you use the Immanuel approach by yourself because you are working without the benefit of this

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the fun, beautiful interaction with Jesus regarding the plumb and the prunes (described in chapter) occurred in the context of our friend using the Immanuel approach on her own.

<sup>2</sup> For this short, practical, easy-to-access description of Immanuel approach interactive journaling, see E. James Wilder, Anna Kang, John Loppnow, and Sungshim Loppnow, *Joyful Journey: Listening to Immanuel* (East Peoria, IL: Shepherd’s House Inc, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Review chapters eleven and twelve for additional discussion of why it is always helpful (and sometimes necessary) to have a facilitator who can help you with troubleshooting.

<sup>4</sup> Review chapters thirty-one through thirty-three for additional discussion of how a facilitator (or the other people in a small group exercise) can help with identifying and resolving problems with counterfeit and/or contaminated interactive connections.

additional faith and capacity.

Yet another concern with respect to possible poor results when using the Immanuel approach on your own is that you do not have the benefit of the subtle but important ways in which your brain works better in community. That is, when you use the Immanuel approach by yourself, you do not have the benefit of the quiet but powerful neurology associated with describing your mental content to another person – the interpersonal neurology that pulls the content through the front of your brain and makes it much easier to feel it’s importance, understand it’s meaning, and see how it fits into your personal story. When you use the Immanuel approach on your own, the process can bog down because you don’t feel the importance or recognize the meaning of subtle manifestations of God’s presence (and/or you don’t feel the importance or recognize the meaning of subtle troubleshooting guidance).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to concerns about possible disappointing results, there is also the concern that you might get yourself into a traumatic memory and then have trouble getting yourself back out again. As the reader may remember from chapters fourteen and twenty-four, when a person gets intensely triggered and is in deep non-relational mode, she may need a facilitator (or a person from her small group) to provide very directive and persistent coaching in order to get back to a good place.<sup>6</sup>

Once you have become familiar with the Immanuel approach, have experienced many fruitful connections with God, and have become utterly convinced of it’s effectiveness and value, these concerns about possibly having a disappointing experience, or even possibly having a scary, painful experience are less critical. You will notice that your interactions with God are usually more subtle and less intense when you don’t have another person to interact with, you might miss an occasional counterfeit or contaminated interactive connection, you will miss the benefit of extra faith and capacity, and you will occasionally encounter some kind of blockage that you can’t resolve on your own; but these will be minor (or at least manageable) problems, and you will still receive the many blessings of being able to use the Immanuel approach as part of every day life.

You might even have the more intensely negative experience of getting really triggered into deep non-relational mode, and then having difficulty getting back to your original positive memory, appreciation, and connection with Jesus. But even this scary and painful experience will not cause you to permanently abandon the Immanuel approach. You might decide that you will only use the Immanuel approach with a facilitator until you build more capacity, gain more skill, and get more healing, but you won’t abandon the Immanuel approach all together.

In contrast, when you are just beginning to experiment with the Immanuel approach the risk is much more strategic. When you are just starting with the Immanuel approach, the biggest risk is that you will try to apply the principles and tools by yourself, you will have a disappointing experience because of the potential difficulties just described, and then you will (erroneously)

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<sup>5</sup> Review chapters seventeen and eighteen for additional discussion of why it is always helpful (and sometimes necessary) to work with a facilitator or small group, so that you can describe your mental content to another person.

<sup>6</sup> For additional discussion of this concern, see the “Practical Considerations” section of Chapter Fourteen: Immanuel Approach Safety Nets, and the “Safety Net Intervention” section of Chapter Twenty-four: Immanuel Approach Exercises for Groups and Beginners.

conclude that the Immanuel approach doesn't work. Or you will try to apply the principles and tools by yourself, you will get intensely triggered and have trouble getting back to a good place, and then you will (erroneously) conclude that the Immanuel approach is too scary and dangerous.

I call this being "inoculated" to the Immanuel approach. If you inoculate people with a weakened form of an infectious disease, their immune systems will develop a resistance to the disease. And then if they encounter the real, full strength disease at some point in the future their immune systems will quickly repel it. Similarly, if you have a disappointing or frightening experience with trying the Immanuel approach on your own, you will develop a resistance to the Immanuel approach. So I call this being "inoculated" to the Immanuel approach because after this initial negative experience with the partial, weakened version you will be "immune" to the possibility of trying the full, more effective, and much safer version (that is, a one-on-one session with a facilitator, or using the Immanuel approach in a small group setting).

For example, if you have not yet tried the Immanuel approach and one of your friends tells you about it, you might respond with, "Wow. That sounds really exciting. I'd like to try it – how can I learn more? Could you do a session for me?" However, if you have tried it on your own, experienced disappointing results, and then (erroneously) concluded that it doesn't work, you will respond with, "Yeah, I already know about that. In fact, I tried it but it didn't work. It's just another fad – lot's of hype, but just another disappointment. I'm not interested."

Or if you have tried the Immanuel approach on your own, gotten stuck in a traumatic memory and had difficulty using the safety net, and then (erroneously) concluded that it is too scary and painful, you will respond with, "No thank you! I've already tried it and it was horrible. I got totally triggered into a really bad memory, that stupid safety net thing didn't work at all, and I was miserable for hours before I was able to get back to feeling okay again."

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you first experience the Immanuel approach in a one-on-one session with a facilitator or in the context of a small group exercise, so that you will have someone else with you to help you troubleshoot, so that there will be someone with you to help you use the safety net if you get stuck in a place of intense triggering, and so that describing everything to another person can help you feel the importance and recognize the meaning of subtle mental content. And then, once you have become familiar with the Immanuel approach process, once you have experienced a number of good interactive God-connections, and once you have become utterly convinced of it's effectiveness and value, you can begin to experiment with using the Immanuel approach on your own.

The *ideal* scenario is to start with one-on-one Immanuel sessions with a skilled facilitator, which will provide maximum safety with respect to the possibility of getting stuck in an intensely triggered negative place, and also maximum likelihood of good results in a reasonably short time.<sup>7</sup> And then you can start using the Immanuel approach by yourself after you have had a number of positive experiences, after you are comfortable with the process, and after you are totally convinced the Immanuel approach is worth pursuing.

Another part of the ideal scenario is to use interactive Immanuel journaling as described in *Joyful*

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<sup>7</sup> Beginning your experience with the Immanuel approach in the context of a small group is usually a fine way to start, and many have had good experiences with this. But starting in the context of a one-on-one session with a skilled facilitator is the ideal, with the highest probability of having a definitive positive experience and the lowest probability of having a disappointing or frightening experience.

*Journey*.<sup>8</sup> (This interactive journaling provides structure that helps keep your thoughts from wandering, and the process of putting your experience into words also provides many of the same neurological benefits as describing your mental content to another person.) And then, after you are getting consistently good results with Immanuel journaling, start building the principles and tools of the Immanuel approach into shorter, more frequent times of positive recall, deliberate appreciation, and connecting with God that can be scattered throughout the rest of the day.

Also, when you are first beginning to experiment with doing the Immanuel approach on your own, please start with just the initial positive steps. Please do *not* try working on painful memories until you have practiced with the positive memory, deliberate appreciation, and interactive connection steps to the point that you are getting consistently good results. Furthermore, just as with group exercises, practice with minor painful memories before moving on to more intensely traumatic experiences.

Unfortunately, some people are in situations that make it very difficult to obtain one-on-one sessions, or even to find group exercise opportunities. If you cannot find a facilitator to provide individual sessions or a small group to practice with, and you therefore decide to start with trying the Immanuel approach on your own, then my remaining emphatic recommendation is please, *please, please* do not quit if you have initial negative experiences. If you start with using the Immanuel approach by yourself and have disappointing and/or frightening experiences, *please* try working with an experienced facilitator before concluding that the Immanuel approach is ineffective and/or too scary and dangerous.

**Note/question to self:** At some point in the chapter include a footnote re facilitator/small group overlap, since many comments apply to both?

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<sup>8</sup> E. James Wilder, Anna Kang, John Loppnow, and Sungshim Loppnow, *Joyful Journey: Listening to Immanuel* (East Peoria, IL: Shepherd's House Inc, 2015).