

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 38: Rich, CPR, and the Immanuel Fireman

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DRAFT

Possible alternative titles: “Rich, CPR, and Immanuel,” “Rich, CPR, and Jesus-the-Fireman,”

It was April of 2014, and Rich and his wife, Kelley, had driven up to Portland for the day to get some more Immanuel approach training from their friends, Diane and Sharon. They had gathered with about ten others, and after a block of teaching in the afternoon and some fun fellowship over dinner, Sharon asked for a volunteer for the live demonstration that she wanted to provide as the last part of the training. Rich thought to himself, “Hey, this is just a free Immanuel session!” So he quickly put his hand up and took the spot.

Rich had already had maybe four or five Immanuel sessions, so he was familiar with the process and not at all anxious since it usually went pretty smoothly and easily for him. And the first steps of the process seemed to proceed in the usual smooth and easy manner. Sharon said a brief opening prayer, he went to a memory of a recent positive experience with the Lord, he focused on the aspects of the experience for which he was especially grateful and deliberately stirred up appreciation, he welcomed Jesus to be with him in the memory as a living presence, he asked for help to perceive Jesus and establish an interactive connection, he quickly sensed the Lord as a living, interactive presence in the memory, and when Sharon asked, “Can you see Jesus here in the room with you?” he immediately had a clear mental picture. “He’s right over here, leaning against the wall, chewing on a piece of grass with his hands in his pockets. He has a thick black beard, blue eyes, and tan skin. And he’s wearing wrangler jeans, a cowboy shirt, and a ball cap.”

But when Sharon and Rich asked, “So, Jesus, what do You want to do today?” Rich was suddenly in the middle of the memory for the worst experience of his life – he was at the airport in Portland Oregon, the year was 1996, and he was doing CPR on one of his friends.

Rich had been a construction worker. And not just any construction worker – he had been an ironworker – one of those guys that put up the steel girder skeletons for skyscrapers. (You know, those crazy guys you see in movies, walking around on the big steel beams forty stories above the street, with no safety net or safety harness.) By 1996 he had been doing this for twenty years, and he was working on a team that was putting up a parking garage at the Portland airport. Some of the men were putting in anchoring bolts and rigging stabilizing cables for the girder frame that had just been put up, when something went terribly wrong and the part of the structure that had not yet been fully anchored and stabilized collapsed.

Rich was maybe a hundred feet away when the structure collapsed, and he watched in horror as three of the men on his crew fell fifty feet to the concrete deck below. He raced to the scene of the accident, and being the first one to reach the bodies he immediately started CPR on Chris, who was closest. As soon as another crew member came running up, Rich quickly instructed him to take over CPR for Chris and then moved to start CPR on Don. And as soon as yet another man came running up, Rich instructed him to take over CPR for Don and then moved on to start CPR on Nick, who was a personal friend and a fellow believer.

The Portland airport has their own fire department, so firemen EMTs were on the scene in minutes. Maybe fifteen to twenty minutes after he first started CPR on Chris, three firemen were standing beside Rich and asking him to stop. “The leader of the fireman EMTs said, ‘You need

to stop now. You've done all you can. Let us take over now." But this was the worst part of this worst experience of Rich's life, because this was the moment at which it really sunk in that the three men on his crew, including his friend Nick, were dead. "When he said, 'Let us take over now,' but then they didn't resume CPR when we stopped, stood up, and stepped back, I knew that Nick and the other two guys were all dead."

This was where Rich ended up immediately after he and Sharon asked, "So, Jesus, what do you want to do today?" He was doing CPR on his friend, Nick, and the leader of the fireman EMT's was telling him that he needed to stop.

However, this time when he looked up at the leader of the fireman EMTs he realized that he was now looking at Jesus. "It was the same guy – the same Jesus that had been leaning against the wall and dressed up as a cowboy, but now he was wearing a full set of fireman's gear – the pants, the coat, the boots, the hat. He was very masculine, very strong, and he was telling me, man to man, 'You need to stop now. You've done everything you can. It's okay – I'll take over from here.'" As he was describing this new, Immanuel version of the previously traumatic experience, Rich also commented, "He had the kindest eyes, and he was right there inside of one of the hardest moments of my life. . . . It was very powerful to realize that Jesus was right there when I was trying to save my friends life."

Furthermore, as Rich and I were discussing the Immanuel version of this previously traumatic memory, we were able to clarify another beautiful aspect of his encounter with Jesus. When the firemen said, "Let us take over now," there was nothing they could do except make the official determination of death, put the bodies in bags, and take them to the morgue. They were just trying to spare Rich and his colleagues the additional trauma of continuing prolonged CPR on men who were now dead. But when *Jesus* said, "I'll take over from here," there was actually something he could do.

Jesus wasn't feeling like he had failed. Jesus wasn't feeling helpless in the face of death. Jesus wasn't going to trudge home, feeling depressed, and then tell his friends that he had had a really, really bad day. When Jesus said, "I'll take over from here," Rich somehow knew that he was also saying, "Hey, I can handle this. Taking care of people who have just died is what I do – this is routine for me. It's okay – Nick is with me now. I'll take it from here." And at the end of this little interaction with Jesus-the-fireman, Rich realized, to his amazement, that "the most tragic moment I have ever had to deal with" was now completely free of pain.

After the trauma in 1996, Rich had developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He had become angry, resentful, depressed, and irritable. "It took a toll on my marriage and family, because I was so short and abrupt." And whereas he had always enjoyed his work prior to this tragedy, after the accident it was just a job to pay the bills. The good news is that he got help. He worked with a therapist for a while, he received healing from a number of different Christian emotional healing ministries over the years, and most of his PTSD resolved. But the bad news was that he still had trouble with anger, and he still experienced the point at which he stopped CPR and acknowledged that Nick was dead to be the most painful moment of his life.

More good news is that these lingering splinters have now also been resolved. When I spoke with Rich in March of 2015, he reported that ever since the Immanuel session almost a year earlier, whenever he thinks about this experience he always, immediately, perceives Jesus-the-fireman to be with him in the memory. He has noticed a decrease in his anger, and the moment of stopping CPR – previously the most tragic moment he had ever been through – continues to be completely

free of pain.

Furthermore, Rich and I took a few minutes during one of our follow-up phone calls to put a little Immanuel icing on the cake. I coached Rich to focus on the living, interactive presence of Jesus that he could easily perceive to be with him in the memory, and when we asked, “Lord, is there anything you have for Rich today?,” he immediately sensed a response: “As soon as you started praying, what I heard from Jesus is that he’s okay with who I was, and that I brought him into hard, tough, ironworker situations that otherwise would have been without his presence.” And then Rich finished with, “I was not nice or polite – I was a really rough, tough guy – and I always struggled with that as a Christian. It means a lot to me to know that Jesus is okay with who I was, and that he’s pleased with how I brought him into those situations.”