

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 28: People Perceive God's Presence in Many Different Ways

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DRAFT

As I have facilitated tens of thousands of hours of Immanuel approach sessions, I have noticed that different people can have very different subjective experiences as they perceive and connect with God's living, tangible presence. And the same person might even have very different experiences from one session to the next. I have also observed that most of us have fairly specific expectations regarding how God might present to us, and these preconceived ideas can get in the way. My observation is that people often perceive the Lord's presence in subtle or unexpected ways, but conclude that the process isn't working because they don't recognize what's happening.

A helpful analogy is to think of someone who is waiting so intently for an important phone call that she forgets to check her mail, and thereby misses the letter from the very person she is waiting to hear from. Or she is waiting for a letter and checking the mailbox so constantly that she doesn't notice that this person is actually on the radio, telling her exactly what she needs to know but in the form of a radio announcement. Or she is so focused on sitting beside the radio that she forgets to check her e-mail, and doesn't realize that the message she is so eagerly anticipating is already waiting patiently in her inbox. Or she is focused so intensely on her laptop, checking her e-mail every thirty seconds, that she don't realize that the information she needs is playing on the television. Or she ignores the knock at the front door because she is staring so intently at the TV in the living room, and thereby leaves the delivery man carrying the message she is waiting for standing on her front porch. Or she is waiting for a clear, loud message from one of the people standing in the same room with her, and so doesn't notice the faint sound of the person calling to her from a distance.

The main purpose of this chapter is to help people avoid missing God's tangible, personal presence because they are so focused on preconceived, expected possibilities that they don't recognize him as he presents to them in ways they are not expecting. And the way I am going to do this is to provide a bunch of true-story examples, so that you can get a right hemisphere, experiential, intuitive feel for the kind of variety you can expect to encounter.

I. Examples from my own experience:

My own experience is a good place to start. For many, many years my only experiences of connection with God were two very subtle forms of guidance. The first is that thoughts providing some form of helpful information would come into my awareness, these thoughts had a very subtle but recognizably distinct feeling, and I learned to recognize these thoughts as from God because they always turned out to be true, fruitful, and life-giving. My experience with "discovering" the Immanuel approach provides a good example. As described in chapter three, I got to a place of profound, humble powerlessness in the context of working with several particularly complicated patients, I asked God for guidance regarding how to move forward, the simple but brilliant Immanuel approach breakthrough thought came quietly but very clearly into my mind, this thought definitely had the (subtle but recognizable) quality and feel of thoughts

that come to me from God, and it turned out to be wonderfully true, fruitful, and life-giving.¹

The second very subtle form of guidance-God connection is that I would get a subjective sense of direction regarding certain courses of action – in some situations I would get a very subtle but recognizably distinct sense, “Yes, this is good and right, I should go ahead with this,” and in other situations I would get a similar but opposite sense, “No, this somehow is not a good plan, I should not go ahead with this.” And I learned to recognize these subtle senses of direction as from God because they always turned out to be accurate and valuable. (Whenever I would follow this leading and go ahead with a possibility that felt right and good, things would turn out beautifully. And whenever I would ignore one of these “*don’t go ahead*” warnings, things would turn out badly.)

However, even though I knew that these thoughts and senses of direction were coming from God, neither of these forms of subtle guidance ever included a sense of tangible *personal* presence. That is, there was no subjective perception that there was a *person* listening to me and/or responding to me.

Also, the sense of contingent, interactive, back-and-forth communication was very minimal. For example, often these thoughts and/or senses of direction would just come spontaneously. I knew they were from God, they were very helpful, and I greatly appreciated them, but there was no sense of interactive, back-and-forth communication. It was more like finding a notice posted along the side of a trail, letting me know that there were wild strawberries in the nearby meadow, or a warning notice letting me know that I should be careful not to touch the poison ivy. I would be grateful for the helpful advice, but it wouldn’t feel like I was having a living, real time interaction with another person. In other situations I would ask for guidance, and then thoughts and/or a sense of direction would come in response, like the situation with the Immanuel approach breakthrough insight. This was at least interactive communication, but it still felt very limited – like sending an e-mail asking my supervisor for help with a difficult question and then getting an e-mail response with the answer. It definitely felt like I was getting a contingent response to the question I had asked, and I was grateful that the reply was prompt and that the advice was excellent; but it wasn’t like talking to someone standing in front of me, where I could see and feel the moment-to-moment interactions as the dialogue exchanges went back and forth repeatedly and as the other person’s facial expressions were quickly, constantly changing in response to my thoughts and emotions. I was grateful for these quick, simple thoughts and senses of direction from God, but the *interactive* aspect of these communications still felt very limited.

Furthermore, these two subtle forms of guidance from God did not include attunement. I was grateful that God would give me spontaneous help and guidance, even when I hadn’t asked for it. And I was grateful that he would send back answers when I did ask for help and guidance. But in these interactions I never had the sense that there was a personal presence, and that this personal presence was seeing me, hearing me, understanding me, joining me in my emotions, genuinely caring about me, and glad to be with me.

For me, the next level of connection with God came in the context of Theophostic-based healing.

¹ Just in case you’re wanting to review the Immanuel approach breakthrough thought but don’t want to go back and look for it in chapter three: “I should turn away from focusing on the traumatic memories – take a ‘time out’ from my repeated attempts to help these people push into their traumatic memories – and turn to focusing on helping them establish a connection with Jesus and then spend time just being with Him.”

I would be working with a traumatic memory, I would ask God to come with healing and truth, new thoughts and insights would come into a painful memory that had been stuck for many years, and then the toxic, traumatic content would suddenly resolve. The old, familiar negative distorted thoughts (lies) would suddenly be replaced with the new truth, the old, familiar negative emotions would suddenly be replaced with shalom, and following these sessions I would observe clear, dramatic, lasting fruit. This was all wonderful – I was very grateful for the lasting fruit, and these more intense, more dramatic experiences of God’s healing power were very encouraging and strengthened my faith. But with respect to *relational* connection with God, my Theophostic healing moments were very similar to my experiences with subtle guidance – there was still no sense of a *personal* presence, the *interactive* component was still very minimal, and there was still no sense that God was actually *attuning* to me (seeing me, hearing me, understanding me, joining me in my emotions, genuinely caring about me, and glad to be with me).

Actually there was one Theophostic-based exception, in a session in which I was working on the memory for my earliest experience of stealing. The memory started with myself as a five or six year old standing outside the neighborhood convenience store with several of my friends. They were enthusiastically telling me about how easy it was to steal candy. “Come on!” “You can do it,” “Watch us,” they encouraged. The oldest and most experienced casually walked into the store, took a candy bar and started eating it, put other candy in his pockets, and then went to the cash register to buy one inexpensive item. I was intensely uncomfortable with the whole situation, but as I balked their encouragements turned into challenges and taunts, “What’s the matter? Are you scared? Are you a sissy? We do it all the time.” Eventually I walked in and spent a long time picking out a piece of gum – one of those really long sticks of bubble gum you could get for five cents back in the 1960’s. (It had a red wrapper, and it was cherry flavored if I remember correctly.)

And then, as I was lingering in front of the cash register counter trying to decide whether or not to actually walk out with the 5 cents’ worth of soon-to-be-stolen bubble gum, Jesus suddenly appears right beside me. He was about two feet away, to my right, and just a little behind me – between the cash register counter and the pastry rack – and he was squatting, with his knees bent and His elbows on His knees, so that His face was just slightly above the level of my own. He was all white and opaque, like a cloud, so I couldn’t really make out a lot of details, but I could tell that He was smiling and that he was looking towards me. All of the visual imagery in this memory was faint (maybe a one or two on a scale of 1 to 10), and the image of Jesus was also faint, just like the rest of the memory. However, I also knew, absolutely, that Jesus’ presence in this memory was true and real, just like I knew that the whole gum-stealing scenario was a true and real memory from my personal, autobiographical experience.²

In addition to the mental visual image, I also had a tangible, subjective sense of the Lord’s gentle friendship presence – I could somehow just feel his friendship, relational presence as a *person*. I could also somehow sense that Jesus understood me, that he loved me, and that he was glad to be with me. And even though this awareness of Jesus’ personal, loving, attuning, friendship presence was gentle and quiet, it was also poignant and profound. Furthermore, as I stood beside Jesus, seeing His smiling face and feeling His presence, I began to perceive new truth regarding this memory that had previously always been miserably shameful and confusing. I didn’t hear an

² As discussed in more detail below, when I recall past events the visual images associated with the memories are usually faint, dim, and vague – usually a one or two on a scale of zero to ten, as in the candy store memory.

audible voice, and it wasn't even like I could sense Jesus sending his thoughts to me, as if we were communicating telepathically – I just began to have new, helpful, healing insights regarding the experience and I somehow knew that these thoughts were coming from Jesus.³

During these same years there was also one other occasion on which I perceived God's presence as *tangible*, experienced God's presence as *personal*, engaged in communication with God that was much more *interactive*, and sensed that God was *attuning* to me, but this was not in the context of Theophostic work. As described in chapter seventeen, I was doing a devotional exercise during a THRIVE conference, with instructions along the lines of "Invite God to be with you and speak to you, and then pay attention to any images or thoughts or emotions that come into your awareness. Write them down, trust that they are from the Lord, and then ponder and appreciate them." I had previously had many negative experiences with this kind of exercise, and so my initial response was to expect another round of frustrated disappointment. Even so, I obediently followed the instructions. I got a mental image of Jesus' smiling face, but I could feel that it was just an imagination image that I was generating for myself as I was asking myself the question, "So what would it look like if I could see His face?" And I had the thought 'I'm glad to be with you,' but I could feel that it was just a thought that I was generating for myself in answer to my own question, 'So what might the Lord say to me?'" Another frustrating, disappointing experience of not being able to perceive or connect with God's living presence, just as I had expected.

And then suddenly I had a second mental image of Jesus' face, but this image was spontaneous, unexpected, not initiated by me, much more engaging, and had a smile that was *alive*. The image was in shades of brown and it was very faint, but I could still make out enough detail to see that he was looking at me and to see that his whole face was smiling. The image definitely came with the awareness of Jesus as a *personal* presence.

At the moment I perceived this new, spontaneous image of Jesus' face, the following thoughts also came into my mind: "Just because you can accurately guess that I'm here and that I'm glad to be with you doesn't make it not true – just because you accurately deduce these truths doesn't disqualify them!" And the sense I had was that He said this with a smile and a chuckle – He wasn't upset with me or rebuking me, but rather was on my side, and laughing *with* me regarding my logical error and spiritual fussing. Just as with the one Theophostic session, it wasn't like Jesus was talking to me or even thinking to me – the thoughts just came into my mind and I somehow knew they were from Jesus. And again, even though they were all very subtle and faint, I also knew with certainty that the image, thoughts, and Jesus' presence as a person were true and real.

When I started using the Immanuel approach my experiences of connecting with God went to a whole new level, the key being that I began to *regularly, consistently* perceive God's tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence. Whenever I would get together with my prayer partner to work on my own healing we would use the Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God, and in almost every session (maybe 80%?) I would perceive God's tangible presence, experience

³ Note that with some people, this kind of spontaneous experience of God's tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence occurs fairly frequently in the context of Theophostic. But this was not my experience. For myself, until I started using the components of the Immanuel approach that are designed to deliberately and systematically facilitate this kind of perception and connection, I experienced this tangible, personal, interactive, attunement connection with God only on this one occasion. **see comment for thoughts re include or delete**

God to be present as a person, engage in communication with God that was interactive, and have the sense of receiving attunement from God. Whenever I would get triggered and then work on healing on my own I would use the Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God, and I would regularly (maybe 50%?) be able to perceive and connect with God's tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence. In my personal devotional time I would use the Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God, and I would usually (maybe 70%?) be able to connect with God's tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence. And when I was going through the average day I would often pause to briefly use the Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God, and in most (maybe 60%?) of these situations I would become aware of and connect with God's tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence. Furthermore, as I have been faithful and persistent with ongoing Immanuel approach work over the past ten years, my ability to consistently perceive and connect with God's tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence has progressively improved (each of these percentages has slowly but steadily increased).

However, even within my Immanuel approach experiences there has been quite a bit of variability. For example, usually I have perceived an image of just Jesus' face, but occasionally I have seen a full length view, as with the experience in which I was talking to him about my friend Thomas and had an image of Jesus walking beside me. Usually my images of Jesus have been just in shades of brown, but on very rare occasions (several out of many hundreds) I have perceive subdued colors. Usually my images of Jesus have come forward in the middle of my internal mental awareness, where it has been easy for me to notice them, but sometimes they have hovered around the edges in a way that was easy to miss. Usually my mental images are subtle and faint (maybe a 1 on a faint-to-vivid scale of 0 to 10), but occasionally they have been *very* subtle and faint (maybe a 0.5 on the 0 to 10 scale), occasionally I have just gotten a sense of Jesus' presence without any visual image at all, and occasionally the visual images have been just a bit more vivid (maybe a 2 on the 0 to 10 scale).

In fact, all aspects of my connections with God have been quite variable with respect to clarity and intensity. The clarity and intensity of the thoughts that come to me from the Lord have varied greatly, from being very faint and subtle (maybe a 0.5 on a 0 to 10 scale) to being clear and strong (maybe a 5 on a 0 to 10 scale). The strength of the sense that the thoughts are coming to me *from Jesus* has varied greatly. Sometimes they have been very subtle (maybe a 0.5 or 1), and even with the Immanuel approach I have still never heard an audible voice, or even had the sense that Jesus was talking to me in the internal imagery. But the sense that the thoughts are coming to me directly from Jesus has sometimes been quite clear and strong (maybe even a 7 or 8). The clarity and intensity of the sense that God is with me *as a person* has varied greatly, from being faint subtle (maybe a 1 or 2) to being much clearer and stronger (maybe a 5 or a 6). And the strength of the sense that God is attuning to me has varied greatly, from being subtle (maybe a 1 or 2) to being much clearer and stronger (maybe a 6 or 7).

The *interactive* aspect of my experiences of connecting with God has also varied along a wide spectrum. On one end are experiences in which I asked a question and it felt like I got just one thought from the Lord, but this one thought felt like a contingent, interactive response to my question. On the other end of the spectrum are experiences like my interaction with Jesus regarding my friend, Thomas. As described in chapter eight, this connection with God felt like an extended contingent interaction with a close friend, with a number of thoughts going back and forth between Jesus and myself, and also with constant, subtle nonverbal interactive communication – subtle facial expressions and body language messages from each of us that said to the other, “yes, I’m still aware of you walking beside me, I’m still glad to be with you, and I’m noticing and understanding your thoughts and emotions.”

As the reader can see, I have experienced quite a bit of variety with respect to every aspect of my connections with God, and especially with respect to the clarity and intensity of each component. It is especially important to be aware of how subtle and faint God's presence can sometimes be, and to be diligent with describing everything that comes into your awareness so that you don't miss these. Regarding my own experience, I know that I would have missed many of the particularly subtle and faint manifestations of the Lord's presence if I had not been working with a facilitator and disciplining myself to describe everything.

As a small addendum note regarding my personal experience: I continue to experience the more subtle forms of connection with God that I described from before the time when I began to use the Immanuel approach – I still receive thoughts that just come into my mind, but that have that subtle, distinct feeling that is associated with guidance from God, and I still receive subtle senses of direction regarding possible courses of action. But now, with Immanuel approach principles and tools, I *also* regularly experience connections with God that include the perception of God's *tangible* presence, that include the sense of God's presence as a *person*, that include much clearer *contingent, interactive* communication, and that include the subjective experience of receiving attunement (it feels true that God sees me, hears me, understands me, joins me in my emotions, cares about me, and is glad to be with me).⁴

II. Examples from other's experiences:

One important, practical observation I have made as I have listened to hundreds of other's describe their experiences is that some people begin their Immanuel approach journey with just thoughts like the ones I described above from my *pre-Immanuel* approach experience – thoughts that they have learned to recognize as being from God.⁵ Even with the Immanuel approach tools, they initially get just these simple, subtle thoughts – no subjective feeling that the thoughts are coming from God, no mental imagery or other tangible manifestation that they recognize as representing God, no perception of God's presence as a person, no subjective sense of interactive communication, and no feeling that God is attuning to them. Just thoughts that they have learned to recognize as being from God by careful observation and discernment over time.

To be perfectly honest, the small percentage of people who have this very subtle initial Immanuel approach experience are usually disappointed. However, there are several pieces of good news that go along with this picture. The first is that these people perceive thoughts from God much more frequently and much more consistently when they use the Immanuel approach tools.⁶ The second is that these thoughts are important because they can provide guidance for moving

⁴ Healing moments in which I am working on a traumatic memory and healing truth just comes and replaces the old familiar lies, without any tangible, personal, interactive, attuning connection, are actually now quite rare, since my Immanuel approach healing sessions begin with establishing a tangible, personal, interactive, attuning connection with Jesus, and this connection continues as a background throughout the session. Now, in Immanuel approach sessions, I am almost always experiencing this kind of connection with Jesus at the moments when I experience healing.

⁵ For recipients who have not yet had this experience, part of their Immanuel approach work will be to learn to recognize these thoughts that are from God (with the help of describing everything out loud and then discerning with the facilitator).

⁶ This is especially true when they are working with a facilitator or participating in a group exercise, so that they gain the benefits of describing their mental content, out loud, to another person. With these ideal conditions, most recipients receive thoughts from God in pretty much every session.

forward. When the recipient asks questions like, “What’s in the way of my perceiving You more clearly, God? What’s in the way of connecting with You more strongly?” the answers often come as the subtle thoughts that they have learned to recognize as from God. And the third piece of good news is that these people usually move forward. If they consistently, persistently work with the Immanuel approach, and especially with Immanuel approach troubleshooting to find and remove blockages, they eventually begin to have increasingly rich experiences of connecting with God.⁷

Another observation I have made is that many people *initially* have connections with God that include some combination of mental imagery that they recognize as representing God, other sensory perceptions that they recognize as representing God, thoughts that feel like that they are coming from God, the perception of God’s presence as a person, the subjective sense of interactive communication, and the feeling that God is attuning to them, *but not all of them together*. And again, if they deliberately, persistently troubleshoot as part of repeated Immanuel approach sessions and an ongoing Immanuel lifestyle, their experiences of connecting with God will grow steadily clearer, stronger, and richer. Most people eventually get to the place where their experiences of connecting with God usually *do* include all (or at least most) of these pieces.

I would like to particularly comment on mental visual imagery and other sensory manifestations, since so many people ask about these details.

Many recipients *do* experience classic visual imagery that they immediately, easily recognize as representing God. Such as perceiving an image of Jesus’ face that they can feel is not just coming from their own minds. And many recipients experience other sensory perceptions that they immediately, easily recognize as representing God. For example, one woman had an image of herself leaning against Jesus’ chest, and then she noticed a tactile (touch) sensation that she immediately recognized as Jesus’ soft shirt rubbing against her cheek. And she noticed an olfactory (smell) sensation that she immediately recognized as Jesus’ personal fragrance. Another woman had an image of Jesus sitting in front of her, with his chair so close to hers that their knees were touching, and then she noticed a tactile sensation that she immediately recognized as Jesus’ knees pressing against hers. The session with Ian provides yet another example. As just described in chapter 23, when Ian had an image of Jesus in his childhood memory with his arm across Ian’s shoulders, Ian noticed a tactile (touch) sensation that he immediately recognized as the weight of Jesus’ arm on his shoulders.

However, some people, especially initially, get visual imagery and other tangible manifestations that they do *not* easily recognize as representing God. For example, Stan (one of the men in our Thursday mentoring group) has consistently experienced unusual visual imagery and physical sensations during his Immanuel sessions. His visual imagery has usually just been different colors swirling together, “like one of those lava lamps from the 1970s,” and with respect to physical sensations he has usually described a feeling of warmth in his abdomen, chest, arms, and hands. But he has not experienced any *direct* subjective sense that these images and physical sensations represent God’s presence. The only way he knows that these images and sensations are manifestations of God’s presence is that careful observation and discernment over the course of years has consistently indicated that they correspond to God’s presence, guidance, and healing work. For example, the lava lamp imagery and the sensations of warmth always occur in

⁷ In my experience, these people almost always eventually perceive God’s presence to be personal and attuning, and experience a connection with God that is contingent and interactive.

response to his asking Jesus to minister to him, he has always had a clear sense that he was receiving healing during the time that he was perceiving the colors and the warmth, and he has always noticed lasting positive changes after these experiences.

Gail, an artist from Kansas, provides another example of sensory perceptions that were *not* initially, easily recognizable as representing God. The first three to four times she tried the Immanuel approach the only sensory perceptions she received were visual images of colors. “I see deep purple” (several minutes pause). “Now it’s just blank” (several minutes pause). “Now I see a lighter shade of purple” (several minutes pause). “Now it’s blank again” (several minutes pause). “Now I’m seeing red” (several minutes pause). “Now I’m seeing yellow.” *For the entire session.* She also experienced a profound feeling of peace and safety that began shortly after the opening prayer, persisted throughout the entire ministry time, and even continued for several hours after the ministry time. And she had a vague, subtle awareness that God was somehow present in the peace and safety. But with respect to sensory perceptions, all she got was a series of colors.

Eventually, several months later, she experienced visual imagery that was more easily recognizable as representing God’s presence. For the first thirty or forty minutes she saw colors, just as she had in the earlier sessions, but then a memory came suddenly and spontaneously into her mind. She remembered a beautiful New Mexico sunset that she had enjoyed with a friend many years earlier – a sunset so spectacular the she and her friend had actually pulled over to the side of the highway so that they could enjoy it more fully. And it just happened to include the colors she had been seeing. After savoring the memory of this spectacular sunset another memory came spontaneously into her mind – a memory of driving on highway 40 in the deep darkness of the high-desert night, and then coming over the rise outside of Albuquerque to the suddenly see the lights of the city spread out across the valley in dazzling beauty.

Finally, she got an image of herself being nestled in a pair of huge hands, and she had the sense that this was a message from God, “I am caring for you and protecting you.” But, again, in the first three to four sessions her only sensory perceptions were visual images of colors, with no easily recognizable connection to God’s presence.

And sometimes people have experiences that are half way in between. For example, one of our friends recently participated in an Immanuel approach group exercise, and when she asked, “God, help me to be aware of Your presence. What do You want to show me?” unexpected, spontaneous mental images and thoughts came into her awareness. She saw the gears of a machine interlocking and interacting with each other, she saw oil coating the different parts of the machine so that they could work together harmoniously instead of grinding together with friction and damage, and she somehow became aware of the truth that the different parts of the machine represented herself and other members of her family. She also somehow knew that God was the oil in the machine, and that God was showing her how his living presence could be the “oil” lubricating her relationships with her family, so that they could interact smoothly and harmoniously in ways that would be joyful and life-giving, instead of clashing and grinding against each other in ways that would be painful and harmful.

As she was still savoring and pondering these images and thoughts, another set of perceptions began to flow into her awareness. She had the sense that Jesus was standing behind her, and

gently, carefully pouring anointing oil onto her head.⁸ She had a visual image of the oil flowing down over the back of her head, the back of her neck, and the back of her shoulders. She could actually feel the warm, smooth oil flowing over her head, neck, and shoulders in a way that was wonderfully comforting and soothing. And she was somehow aware of the truth that God's purpose was to comfort, affirm, and encourage her with this anointing oil. However, just as with the first part of this experience, she did not see an image of Jesus, hear his voice, feel his touch, or experience any other sensory perception that we would more quickly, easily perceive as representing his presence.

Our friend had a strong subjective sense of God's personal presence through both parts of this experience. And she knew that these visual images, tactile sensations, and thoughts were coming to her from God. But she did *not* get imagery or any other sensory perception that *directly* represented the Lord's presence.

III. The intensity and clarity of visual imagery: In my own experience one of the pieces I have been acutely aware of is the presence or absence of visual images, and when I do get images I am very aware of the quality, intensity, and clarity of the images. This has also been the case with almost every person I have ever spoken with regarding their Immanuel approach experiences of connecting with God. Furthermore, people have asked a wide variety of questions about the visual image aspect of the Immanuel approach. Fortunately, I have recently stumbled on case study and research information that provides a helpful observation regarding this aspect of our God connection experiences.

The short summary is that clarity and intensity of mental visual imagery varies from one person to the next in much the same way as musical ability, artistic ability, athletic ability, or even height. We each inherit a certain amount of natural ability with respect to the clarity and intensity of our visual images, and the amount of this natural ability varies widely throughout the population. A short excerpt from Oliver Sacks' book, *The Mind's Eye*, provides a particularly clear example of this wide range in natural ability:

“I first became conscious of great variations in the power of visual imagery and visual memory when I was fourteen or so. My mother was a surgeon and comparative anatomist, and I had brought her a lizard's skeleton from school. She gazed at this intently for a minute, turning it round in her hands, then put it down and without looking at it again did a number of drawings of it, rotating it mentally by thirty degrees each time, so that she produced a series, the last drawing exactly the same as the first. I could not imagine how she had done this. When she said that she could see the skeleton in her mind just as clearly and vividly as if she were looking at it, and that she simply rotated the image through a twelfth of a circle each time, I felt bewildered, and very stupid. I could hardly see anything with my mind's eye—at most, faint, evanescent images over which I had no control.”⁹

⁸ “He was being very careful, so that it would be an entirely positive experience – it was just the right amount, and none got onto my face or into my eyes.”

⁹ Oliver Sacks, *The Mind's Eye* (New York: Random House, 2010) page 288. Prior to reading Dr. Sacks' discussion in *The Mind's Eye* (pages 287-314) and then tracking down related research, I had not realized that the variability with respect to intensity and clarity of visual imagery was so wide and so regular, and I had not known that it had been so carefully and thoroughly documented. For a brief, understandable summary of the psychological and neurological research documenting this wide and

With respect to the Immanuel approach, the relevant point from all of this is that those of us who have images that are subtle, faint, and vague may simply have brains that are wired for mental imagery towards the subtle, faint, and vague end of the spectrum. This may be a disappointment, but it's important to understand that it has nothing to do with effort, determination, character, obedience to the Lord, purity of heart, or spiritual maturity. Just like my being born with sports related ability that is towards the lower end of the spectrum – this is a disappointment for me, but it has nothing to do with my effort, determination, character, obedience to the Lord, purity of heart, or spiritual maturity.

A related important observation is that many people start with God-related images that are very subtle, faint, and vague, but then these images become increasingly vivid, clear, and strong as the person finds and removes blockages.¹⁰ And an obvious question is, “How can I tell whether the images associated with God’s presence are subtle, faint, and vague because that’s just the way my brain is built, or whether there are blockages that I should be working to identify and resolve?” I would like to offer two thoughts in response to this question. The first is that many people with connections that are good in every other way report that the clarity, vividness, and strength of their God-related images tend to match the clarity, vividness, and strength of the rest of the images in their memories. A tentative implication I would like to offer is that if your God-related images are more subtle, faint, and vague than your other mental imagery, expect that this will change for the better as you work away at blockages.

The second thought I would like to offer is that we *all* have blockages that hinder our hearts from fully connecting to God, and we should *all* be faithfully working to find and remove these blockages – whether or not they affect the vividness, clarity, and strength of our God-related images. If you clear away blockages and your God-related images get clearer, stronger, and more vivid, great! But even if you clear away blockages and the clarity, strength, and vividness of your images do not change, *I’m confident that every other aspect of your connections with God will steadily improve.*

IV. Could this Really be from God?: Another aspect of Immanuel approach variety has to do with the fact that God sometimes chooses to manifest himself through visual images that are not only surprising, but sometimes even unorthodox. On the simple end of the spectrum, most people usually describe visual images that are pretty straightforward. For example, they report seeing a Jewish looking man in his mid thirties that they immediately recognize as Jesus. And, not surprisingly, people don’t have confusion or uncertainty with these images. However, in some sessions when I coach the recipient to describe whatever is coming into her awareness, after an uncomfortable pause I get a response along the lines of, “I’m getting an image, but I’m not sure if it could really be from God,” or “I see something, but I must be making this one up,” or “I’m getting something – I’m seeing images – but I don’t know if it’s okay for me to see Jesus like this,” or “I think maybe I’m just crazy – I have an image, but it’s crazy – I think this one must be

regular variability, see Wikipedia entries for “Mental Image” and “Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire.”

¹⁰ I realize that “God-related image” is cumbersome, and I also realize that the overwhelmingly most common God-related image is some form of seeing Jesus; but I deliberately use this cumbersome phrase because I want us to keep reminding ourselves that some people have *non*-Jesus images that are still associated with God’s presence and that still contribute powerfully to their experiences of connecting with God. (Like the images of anointing oil described above.)

coming from my own mind.”

In most of these sessions (when I finally got the recipient to describes the details), it has turned out that the images were, indeed, from God, but the recipient was tempted to reject them because they were so far outside of the box with respect to how she thought God might present himself. For example, in some sessions Jesus has presented himself as a lion. This lion has always been magnificent, beautiful, powerful as well as gentle, loving, wise, appropriate, attuning, joyful, helpful, and healing. And once the recipient gets over her initial confusion and uncertainty she always somehow knows that this lion is, indeed, Jesus. Furthermore, it usually eventually makes sense. For example, recipients who have been sexually abused by men have sometimes been very fearful about allowing an adult male Jesus to come into their childhood memories. And once these people have gotten used to the idea of Jesus being a lion, they have realized that the lion Jesus was the Lord’s gentle, creative plan for working around their fear of men. Even so, some people still have a lot of trouble with the idea of God presenting himself as an animal.

In other sessions Jesus has come into the person’s mental imagery as a child (he has usually been between the ages of six and ten). This child has always been gentle, loving, wise, appropriate, attuning, joyful, helpful, and healing. And once the recipient gets over her initial confusion and uncertainty, she always somehow knows that this child is, indeed, Jesus. Furthermore, just as with Jesus as a lion, the whole scenario usually eventually makes sense. For example, recipients who have been physically, verbally, or emotionally abused by grownups have sometimes been very fearful about allowing Jesus to come into their childhood memories as an adult. Or they may be uncomfortable with grownups in their child memories for other reasons, such as negative experiences with adults routinely dismissing or misunderstanding them. And once these people have gotten used to the idea of Jesus being a child, they have realized that the child Jesus was the Lord’s gentle, creative plan for working around their fear and/or discomfort with grownups.

In one session Jesus even came into the person’s mental imagery as a newborn baby. The recipient was working inside a memory of being a very young infant herself, and in the memory she felt vulnerable, painfully disconnected from those around her, overwhelmed by the whole situation, and incredibly helpless, since she didn’t yet have voluntary muscle control for her arms and legs. Her care-givers weren’t giving her the emotional connection that she needed, but she was so little that she couldn’t go anywhere or do anything about it. As Charlotte and I tried to help her work with this memory, it initially felt impossible to her that anybody could truly understand her or be with her in this place. And when I suggested that she let Jesus be with her in this memory her initial response was to feel that Jesus’ presence would just make things more overwhelming – another grownup trying to “help” would just make things worse.

Fortunately she was able to let us coach her to lift the whole situation up to the Lord, and she was able to ask him for help regarding her fear that allowing his presence would just make things worse. As soon as she did this she saw another baby in her memory – another newborn, just like herself, laying in her crib right next to her. She somehow knew that this other baby was Jesus, and as he lay on his side, looking quietly into her eyes, her immediate, spontaneous response was to realize that this was a good plan: “The way he came to me was exactly at the level I could handle, and what he gave me was exactly what I needed.” As she described the experience further, it was obvious that even as a baby Jesus’ presence was powerfully healing. Even as a baby, without saying a word and without doing anything other than look quietly into her eyes, Jesus was loving, attuning, joyful, and intensely life-giving:

“He came to me just as I was....He was totally *with* me, even in my pain – he was as small as

me, as vulnerable as me, as helpless as me – he was with me in all of this, sharing, knowing, and totally understanding my experience....I realized, ‘He’s been a baby. *He’s actually been here, as a baby.* He knows about this – He knows what this is – He knows what this is like, to be so little and vulnerable and helpless.’...He didn’t use any words, but as he was looking into my eyes I could feel him communicating directly with my spirit....I could feel good things coming into my spirit as he just kept looking into my eyes.”

Furthermore, just as with the other two examples, the whole scenario made complete sense. Coming to her as a baby was the Lord’s gentle, creative, brilliant, effective plan to care for the minimal capacity, intense vulnerability, and overwhelm that might otherwise have gotten in the way. Even so, some people might be uncomfortable with the risen, victorious Jesus presenting as a tiny helpless baby.

Yet another example of God presenting in unusual ways has occurred in sessions with people who are working with claustrophobic memories. I have facilitated a number of sessions for people who were working on memories of being locked in closets (or a variety of other claustrophobic situations), and in each of these situations the people have immediately responded with fearful resistance when I suggested that they invite Jesus to be with them in the memories. Each of these people have reacted with some variation of, “There’s no way I want anybody else in here with me – I can hardly move or breathe as it is!”

So we asked God for guidance and help, and the thought immediately came to me that we could ask Jesus to be very small. When I suggested this, all of the recipients responded that he would have to be very, very small – like one to two inches tall – and most of them felt a little awkward about asking Jesus to be so tiny. Nevertheless, I was eventually able to convince them to at least try inviting Jesus (with the explicit stipulation that he would be very, very small), and in every one of these situations the person promptly got a spontaneous image of Jesus in the memory with them.

He was usually about the size of a small mouse, but he was still joyful, attuning, wise, unconditionally loving, powerfully life-giving, and fully able to help them work through the traumatic memory to complete healing. And, once again, the whole scenario made total sense. Being really small was obviously God’s gentle, creative plan for getting around the whole claustrophobia problem. Even so, some people were initially a bit uncomfortable with such an itty, bitsy, teensy, weensy Jesus.

Again, the point here is that God can sometimes manifest with imagery that is unexpected or even unorthodox, and I want to encourage you to *not* dismiss images just because they are outside of your expectations. Go ahead and describe whatever comes into your awareness, even if it seems out side of the box, and discern together with your facilitator. You may be surprised by how flexible, creative, and unpredictable the Lord can be.

****Note to draft version readers:** I would like to include a few more stories of people who have experienced God’s presence in unusual/unorthodox ways. If you have a good story, and especially specific experiences that would provide variety in addition to what has already been presented, please e-mail me (drkarl@kclehman.com).

V. Spectacular, dramatic experiences: Actually, this material does not really fit in this chapter, since no one has problems with missing these. If there’s a marching band on your front porch

playing a message for you, it doesn't matter whether your listening for the phone or watching the TV – you become aware of their presence pretty easily, it's pretty easy to figure out what they're saying, and it's also pretty easy to figure out that it's important. But I thought I would throw in a couple of examples of spectacular, dramatic experiences of perceiving and connecting with God just for fun.

Subheading “Michael and Immanuel”¹¹

One of the most dramatic God encounters I have witnessed occurred during a session I was facilitating for one of our clients. During the first seventy-five minutes of the session Michael had remembered a number of painful experiences, and at the end of this series of memories he had a beautiful healing encounter with Jesus. His encounter with Jesus had been quiet, but the healing work seemed very real and significant, and Michael and I were both encouraged. With about fifteen minutes remaining, I suggested, “Why don't we ask the Lord if there's anything else he has for you today?” Michael thought this was a good idea, so he went ahead with this simple request and then sat quietly as he waited for God to respond.

Up to this point the session had been pretty routine. A few moments of intense emotions as Michael connected with the pain in each traumatic memory, and a few tears here and there, but a reasonably good connection with Jesus, adequate guidance, good healing, and full resolution by the end of the session. A nice, satisfying, beautiful but very routine experience of helping someone work with Jesus to receive healing. A good days work, but nothing to write home about. And then Michael started to cry.

Actually, he burst out sobbing, and he continued to sob, uncontrollably, with incredible intensity, for a long, long time. He had his face buried in his hands so I couldn't get any sense of the expression on his face, and I remember thinking, “This is either really good or really bad.” After maybe five minutes (which seems like a *very* long time when someone is sobbing, uncontrollably, with incredible intensity), he started trying to say something, but he was sobbing so hard he couldn't get enough breath to speak. After ten minutes (for real – ten minutes on the clock), his sobbing finally subsided and he was able to tell me what had happened.

Michael reported that he suddenly had a mental image of Jesus that was so clear, intense, and detailed that it was almost as if he were seeing Jesus, in the flesh, with his eyes open. At first, for a moment, Jesus was just standing in front of him. Then Jesus leaned forward until his face was about twelve inches from Michael's, he reached out and took Michael's face in his hands, looking intently into Michael's eyes he said “Michael, I love you!” with slow, deliberate emphasis, and with these words Michael felt incredible, overwhelming love flowing to him from Jesus. (This was the point at which Michael burst into uncontrollable sobbing.)

Not surprisingly, this encounter changed Michael's life. Among other things, it instantly transformed him from a nominal Christian who attended church only on Christmas and Easter into an enthusiastic believer who immediately set about learning how to engage with the Lord's living presence as a routine part of everyday life.

Subheading: “John and Jesus”

¹¹ This session actually occurred before we were using the Immanuel approach in it's current form (note the long block of going through painful memories before finally receiving healing from Jesus at the end). However, it still provides a good example of a dramatic perception and connection with God's tangible, living, attuning, interactive presence.

My friend and colleague, John Curlin, describes another dramatic Immanuel encounter. Several years ago he had been struggling with a familiar anxiety regarding, “Am I doing enough? Am I being a good steward? Am I using well the talent and time that God has given me?” etc. During the time he was struggling with this anxious insecurity, he invited the Lord to be with him during his personal quiet time one morning and then suddenly had a vivid, intense, detailed visual image of Jesus’ face, right in front of him. Jesus was less than a foot away, looking directly into his eyes, and Jesus spoke so clearly into his mind that it was almost as if he were hearing the Lord’s audible voice.

Jesus spoke a few simple words along the lines of, “There’s nothing you need to do to earn my love – it’s already been taken care of, and I am just so *thrilled* to be with you!” and John could somehow feel the Lord’s incredibly intense love for him as he spoke these words. John could also feel the passionate intensity with which Jesus enjoyed being with him, and when he described the experience to me several days later, he commented that “it almost seemed crazy,” and that “it was hard to fully comprehend or absorb.” John reported that he “felt totally overwhelmed (in a good way),” that he “felt like he was in another world,” and that he wept intensely as Jesus was speaking to him.

Subheading: “Multimedia experiences”

As described in some of the examples above, people sometimes have multimedia experiences. Like Ian feeling the tangible pressure of Jesus’ arm across his shoulders, along with the corresponding visual image. Or the woman who felt the softness of Jesus’ shirt against her cheek and smelled his personal fragrance, along with the corresponding visual image of leaning against his chest. Many people have described perceiving the clear physical sensation of Jesus’ hand holding theirs. And occasionally recipients will have particularly dramatic multimedia experiences, with vivid, intense, detailed visual imagery, thoughts from Jesus that are so clear and strong that they almost feel like hearing his audible voice, sensations of physical touch, sensations of tingling and warmth all over their bodies, smelling a beautiful fragrance associated with Jesus’ presence, and then also profound subjective perceptions of God’s overwhelming unconditional love.

Again, the stories in this section are very cool and very encouraging, and I just threw them in for fun. We don’t really need to discuss the details for the purposes of this chapter, since recipients tend not to miss these huge, dramatic, vivid, intense, powerful, multimedia encounters with God.

VI. God has a sense of humor with respect to how he connects with us:

Several years ago we got an e-mail about a fun and funny session in which Jesus used sign language to communicate with the recipient (Jesus’ explanation for why He was doing this was really funny). But now I can’t find contact information for this person. So if this is your story please contact me (first, I want to know if it’s okay to use the story, and if yes, then I would love to get more details). Or, if you know the person who belongs to this story and have contact information, please let me know so I can communicate with her directly.

VII. Practical thoughts:

Our brains work better in community: I have already talked about this one in a number of places earlier in the book, but I want to mention it again because it is so important. God truly

has designed our brains to work best in community, and we will consistently experience increased clarity, increased intensity, increased detail, increased perception of importance, and increased richness when we work with a group or facilitator so that we can describe, *out loud to another person*, the content that comes into our mental awareness. This is especially relevant for encounters with God that are unusual and/or unexpected and/or very subtle, like many of the examples described in this chapter. I have had a number of experiences in which I would have missed subtle, unusual, unexpected connections with God if I had not described everything that was coming into my awareness, and I have facilitated many sessions in which the recipients would have missed subtle, unusual, and unexpected encounters with God if I had not persistently coached them to describe everything.

Clearer, stronger perceptions and connections with more time (longer sessions): An interesting pattern I have just recently noticed is that encounters with God tend to become increasingly clear, strong, and rich as recipients persist for longer periods of time within a single session. For example, when I do my own Immanuel approach work I usually have sessions that go for an hour and a half, and in most cases every aspect of my perception and connection increases slowly but steadily as I move farther and farther into these long sessions. During the first half hour, my perceptions of Jesus' presence and connections with God tend to be particularly subtle, faint, and vague. As I continue between thirty and sixty minutes, it feels like my perceptions and connections warm up and gain momentum. (They are still subtle, faint, and vague, but they are *less* subtle faint and vague.) And I routinely experience the strongest, clearest, richest, most intense perceptions of Jesus' presence and connections with God towards the end of 90 minute sessions. (Even at the end of ninety minutes, my perceptions and connections are still usually subtle, faint, and vague; but my God encounters tend to be the *least* subtle, faint, and vague towards the end of these long sessions.)¹²

Variation with respect to initial interactive connection: As described in chapter eight, one very common variation with respect to perceiving and connecting with God has to do with the initial connection at the beginning of Immanuel sessions. Everybody starts with recalling a positive memory and deliberately stirring up gratitude, in order to make sure their relational circuits are strongly on; but after the positive memory recall and appreciation some people perceive God's living presence and establish the initial interactive connection in the context of the initial positive memory, whereas others perceive God and establish the initial connection in the context of their surroundings in the present.

Actually, now I usually coach recipients to establish connections in both places (as long as there is adequate time available). After the positive memory recall and appreciation I first direct the recipient to focus on the positive memory, and invite the Lord to be with her and help her to perceive his presence in that context. And then I do the same for the context of the session in the present. What I have been observing is that most recipients are easily able to establish connection in both contexts, and then as the session progresses the Lord initiates returning to the two different connections for different purposes. Also, the two connections provide a double safety net.

¹² I should mention an important caveat with respect to capacity. When recipients become fatigued, or begin to reach the limits of their capacities in other ways, the connection with God will often start to deteriorate. Therefore, the ideal is to continue for as long as the strength and quality of the connection continue to grow, and then to bring the session to a close when the recipient feels like she is getting to the end of her capacity and the connection starts to deteriorate.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 29: Expect Steady Progress

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DRAFT

My goal for this chapter is to encourage you with the expectation of steady progress as you persist with regular Immanuel approach work. I have briefly mentioned this pattern of predictable, steady progress at many places earlier in the book, but at this point I would like to present this encouragement much more explicitly and thoroughly.¹

People's ability to perceive God's presence and connect with God usually progresses steadily as they deliberately troubleshoot to remove blockages, as they continue their healing work (which indirectly removes blockages by resolving trauma that contributes to blockages), and as they learn more about God's character and heart by spending time with Jesus. As they continue to remove blockages and to build faith, they become able to perceive God's tangible presence and connect with God more easily and more quickly, they perceive God's presence and connect with God more frequently and more predictably, they perceive God's tangible presence with more clarity, strength, and richness, they experience God's presence as increasingly personal, and they experience connections with God that are increasingly interactive and attuning.

Encounter in the Candy Store Memory: My own experience once again provides a good example. As described in chapter 28, for *many* years my experiences of God's presence consisted entirely of subtle, faint, and vague thoughts from God, occasional senses of direction that were subtle, faint, and vague, and healing experiences that did not include any perception of God as a tangible presence or any sense of connection with God as a personal presence.² And then came my experience with the candy store memory – the first time in my life that I perceived Jesus as a tangible, personal presence. I don't think it was a coincidence that this spontaneous perception and connection occurred after several years of resolving trauma (trauma that had been contributing to blockages), and at the end of a long session in which a number of very specific blockages had been identified and removed.³

Pernicious Blockage Breakthrough: Resolution of what I refer to as my pernicious blockage was the next step in my journey of steadily increasing perception and connection.⁴ This

¹ And I especially want to offer this encouragement to people who's perceptions of God and connections with God are currently very subtle, faint, and vague.

² In my earliest memories (memories of events at the age of maybe three years old), I had already decided to follow Jesus. So my estimate is that I had been a Christian for almost forty years at the time of the candy store memory experience in 2001.

³ For a detailed description of this session, and also additional thoughts regarding how persistently removing blockages over the course of several years finally opened the way for me to perceive Jesus' tangible, personal presence, see Karl Lehman, "Emotional Healing and Personal Spiritual Growth: A Case Study and Discussion," available as a free download from www.kclehman.com.

⁴ For this example I am actually only describing part of my pernicious blockage. The full pernicious tangle also included infant maturity and a sense of external locus of control from my two-year-old traumatic memories, all tangled in with the traumatic content described here. For the more complete discussion of my pernicious blockage, see Karl Lehman, "Immanuel, An Especially Pernicious Blockage,

pernicious blockage started when I was two years old. Mom had mononucleosis during her pregnancy with my younger sister. Between the pregnancy and the mono, she got to the point where she couldn't even get out of bed—Dad had to carry her across the hallway to the bathroom. She was certainly too ill to care for my four-year-old brother and myself, so we were sent to stay with friends in another city for three weeks while she was recovering. To put this in perspective: a two-year-old will experience a three-week separation from his parents in much the same way as he will experience his parents dying suddenly—they disappear suddenly, and stay away longer than any possible two-year-old ability to understand or cope with their absence. Furthermore, a two-year-old perceives his parents to be omnipotent—he believes nothing happens unless they allow it, and that nothing could make them do anything they don't want to do. This means he will believe he's separated from his parents because they *want* to be away from him, and he will believe that they can hear his calls and could come if they wanted to, but that they are *choosing* to ignore his cries for help.

An important part of trauma is that we come up with distorted interpretations regarding the meaning of the experience; and by the end of these three weeks of separation I had come up with many distorted interpretations, such as: “I’ve been abandoned and I’m on my own,” “It’s hopeless and I’m powerless—they aren’t coming, and nothing I can do will make them come,” “I can’t trust their hearts toward me because there’s no possible justification for allowing this to happen,” and “They won’t help me when I’m overwhelmed and need their help.” Along with these distorted, erroneous beliefs came a miserable morass of associated emotions—loneliness, rejection, hopelessness, powerlessness, feeling overwhelmed, and confusion. And I was also very angry that they had left me, that they were allowing me to suffer so intensely, and that they wouldn’t come when I called for them.

In the years that followed, this toxic content would often get activated and transferred onto the Lord. Any time I would become stuck in a situation that felt overwhelming, and call out to the Lord for help, but then not be able to perceive his presence or assistance, my interactions with the Lord in the present would match my interactions with my parents in the original memory closely enough to activate the beliefs and emotions from the two-year-old separation. The beliefs and emotions from the two-year-old separation trauma would then come forward as implicit memory and get transferred onto the Lord—it would feel intensely true that I couldn’t trust God’s heart toward me because he chooses to allow things for which there is no possible justification; it would feel intensely true that he’s not with me now, and won’t come even though I call and call for him; and it would feel intensely true that he won’t do anything when I’m overwhelmed and need his help. The loneliness, rejection, hopelessness, powerlessness, overwhelm, confusion, and anger would come forward as well, and since all of this would come forward as “invisible” implicit memory accompanied by “explanations” that were always focused on the triggers in the present, I would have no awareness or insight regarding “Oh, these thoughts and emotions are coming from traumatic childhood memories.” Instead, I would perceive that the thoughts and emotions were *about the Lord*, and that they were true, valid, and reasonable *in the present*.⁵

For example, our car got flooded so that the main wiring harness and the main circuit board for

and the Normal Belief Memory System,” available as a DVD set and/or a free download essay from www.kclehman.com.

⁵ **?Should I include a footnote regarding “invisible” implicit memory, the Verbal Logical Explainer (VLE), and confabulated explanations that always focus on the triggers in the present? Or will the reader adequately understand the story without an explanatory footnote?*

all the computerized electronics were *under water* for *several weeks* while we were away on an extended business/vacation trip. Not surprisingly, when we returned from our trip we found that the car wouldn't start. When we had it towed to the dealer their head mechanic said we would have to have the entire electrical system replaced, and that it would cost *seven thousand dollars!* So we asked for a second opinion from the non-dealer mechanic who usually cared for our car—a very bright guy with thirty-five years of experience and a fully equipped garage at his disposal. He said that he had never had good results trying to repair this particular scenario in the VW Passat, *and told us that he wouldn't touch it!*

Oh. Wow. Not what we wanted to hear.

So I decided to try to fix it myself, and spent the next two weeks feeling constantly overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the project. I repeatedly asked the Lord for help as I struggled with this daunting scenario, but other old memory stuff was constantly getting triggered and getting in the way, and I was not yet using our current Immanuel approach tools for establishing a connection with the Lord. So I was never able to perceive God's presence, I usually felt like I was not getting enough assistance, and each time this would happen the unresolved toxic content from my two-year-old trauma would come forward as “invisible” implicit memory: it would feel intensely true that the Lord was not with me and that he wouldn't come even if I called and called, it would feel intensely true that he wouldn't do anything even though I was overwhelmed and needed his help, it would feel intensely true that I couldn't trust his heart toward me because he chooses to allow things for which there's no possible justification, and I would feel intensely powerless, discouraged, betrayed, abandoned, and angry. Furthermore, because of the way in which implicit memory works, it would feel intensely true that my pain and anger were really about the situation in the present, and especially about the Lord failing to respond to my calls for help.

In addition to all of this toxic content getting stirred up and transferred onto the Lord, there was another part of my pernicious blockage that I wasn't even aware of yet. I will provide more details in a minute, but the really short summary is that in the context of the two-year-old separation trauma I had made choices to push Jesus away, and these choices were still hindering me from perceiving his presence or receiving his help.

The real truth was that the Lord was with me, standing beside me, and offering to help; but with all of these blockages in the way I was unable to perceive or receive this truth. So instead of feeling hope, recognizing my thoughts and emotions as traumatic content coming forward as implicit memory, and then turning to the Lord for healing, I would perceive the distorted conclusions to be true, I would perceive the implicit memory negative emotions to be valid in the present, and I would focus my energy and attention on the triggers – I would focus on trying to fix the immediate practical problem in the present (in this example, the car's failure to start), and I would fight with the Lord, first trying make him manifest more clearly and provide more help, and then complaining with hopelessness and bitterness when nothing would change.

The good news is that this especially miserable incident with the car led to a breakthrough regarding my two-year-old separation trauma memories, enabling me to finally get healing for the toxic content that had so often gotten transferred onto the Lord and to finally recognize and reverse the choices to push the Lord away. Part of the breakthrough was that this whole ordeal with the car occurred as Charlotte and I were finishing with the first wave of developing our Immanuel teachings; and as part of developing this material I had become *profoundly* convinced that if we could not perceive the Lord's presence it was because there was something in the way,

and that the Lord always wanted to help us resolve these blockages. Another part of the breakthrough was that I had new information and insight regarding this particular triggered content and the time of separation from my parents. (I had never had any conscious memory of these events, since they occurred when I was so young; but shortly before the ordeal with the flooded car I learned about this history from conversations with my older brother and parents, and I was finally recognizing the connections between the two-year-old separation trauma and this particular toxic content that would get transferred onto the Lord). So even though it *felt intensely true* that these painful thoughts and emotions towards the Lord were valid, the opposing truth in my adult mind was even more powerful – even though the triggered thoughts and emotions felt so intensely true with respect to the Lord, my conviction that they were actually implicit memory from this unresolved trauma was even more powerful.

Therefore, as I sat in the car surrounded by tools, wires, and disassembled parts of the electrical system, I chose to surrender my bitter accusations that God was perversely withholding the help I needed, I chose to acknowledge that there must be something on my side that was in the way, and I chose to ask for help. I was still so angry that I could barely keep from screaming and swearing at the Lord, but I managed to choke out a prayer. (It is a testimony to God’s mercy and grace that he honored my true heart, even though it was mixed in with a lot of triggered confusion and anger.) My “humble,” “submitted,” “open-hearted” (sarcasm intended) prayer was something along the lines of:

Lord, I am *so* angry that you ’re not manifesting in some way that I can perceive and that you’re not providing more tangible help; and it feels *intensely, excruciatingly* true that this is all *your* fault, and that *you* should apologize and then fix the problem; but I know you ’re here with me, I know there must be something in the way, and I am *so* tired of being stuck in this triggered place of blaming you. Oh, man, *it infuriates me to say this!* Grrrrrr! (brief pause to fume silently). Okay: What am *I* doing that ’s hindering me from perceiving your presence? What choice do *I* need to make to take the next step forward?

The moment these words were out of my mouth I felt like I was inside the two-year-old separation memories, I had a spontaneous mental image of Jesus standing right beside me, I could feel his personal presence, and I had the sense that he was saying, “Karl, your mom isn ’t going to come back for a long time—let me comfort you.” Furthermore, I realized that the response I had made at the time of the original trauma, and that I had stubbornly held onto for forty years, was something along the lines of: “The only plans I ’m interested in are ones that include you producing my mother *right now*. I can’t believe you ’re even talking to me about some other plan. If you don’t have Mom with you, *then just get away from me—go jump off a cliff, and I hope there are rocks at the bottom!*”

Not surprisingly, telling the Lord to jump off a cliff had kind of gotten in the way of my being able to sense his presence or receive his help. However, thanks to a number of new factors, including the ones just mentioned, I was finally able to surrender my anger and my demand that the Lord make things different, and I reversed the choices to refuse his help and push him away. As soon as I chose to welcome Jesus instead of push him away I was able to connect with him inside the two-year-old memories, and being able to feel his comfort and receive his assistance inside the memories immediately lead to healing for some of the most important aspects of the separation trauma. From that point forward it no longer felt like God was refusing to be with me or help me as I continued to struggle with the car, and over the next several days (with some strategic guidance from God) I was able to completely restore the electrical system for a total cost of \$125. Furthermore, since this experience I have noticed that the (now healed) two-year-old

“traumatic memories” no longer hinder my ability to connect with Jesus when I struggle with something difficult, ask for help, but then do not initially perceive his presence.⁶

Since this is a long and complicated example, let me summarize regarding the points I would like to highlight. First, in more than forty years of Christian discipleship this was only the third time I had been able to perceive Jesus’ tangible, personal presence, and this happened spontaneously and immediately after I removed a major blockage by choosing to surrender my bitter accusations that God was perversely withholding the help I needed, by choosing to acknowledge that there must be something on my side that was in the way, and by choosing to ask for help. Second, I was able to connect with Jesus and feel his comforting presence inside the two year old memories as soon as I removed another major blockage by choosing to welcome him instead of pushing him away. Third, since the healing work at the end of the experience I no longer notice the two-year-old separation memories getting triggered forward and hindering me from connecting with the Lord.⁷

And I think there is yet another piece. I think that removing this whole pernicious blockage tangle opened the door for better results with Immanuel approach tools. The data point suggesting this conclusion is that shortly after resolving these blockages, I was able to use the Immanuel approach principles and tools to quickly go from perceiving and connecting with God’s tangible, personal presence three times in over forty years to enjoying this experience usually two to three times each week. We’ll never know for sure, since I didn’t start experimenting with the Immanuel approach tools in my own life until after this experience, but it’s hard to imagine that it wasn’t helpful to resolve this pernicious tangle of bitterness, despair, intense negative thoughts toward God, and explicit anti-Immanuel choices.⁸

Note: I realize that my encounter with Jesus in the candy store and my experience with resolving my pernicious blockage were not actually a part of my journey of steady progress with the Immanuel approach, since they occurred before I was using Immanuel approach tools in my own life. However, I have chosen to include them anyway since they are such good examples of how both troubleshooting specifically focused on removing blockages as well as resolving trauma that contributes to blockages result in progress with respect to perceiving God’s presence and establishing good connections. Furthermore, intermediate and advance Immanuel approach troubleshooting will routinely include working with the kinds of issues and memory-anchored blockages that are a part of both of these stories, so these examples could easily be a part of somebody’s Immanuel approach journey.⁹

⁶ For full disclosure regarding this story, another part of the breakthrough was that I was miserably triggered to this toxic content most of the time for two weeks, and the intensity and persistence of this pain helped me realize that I was ready to try something new.

⁷ Actually, I still occasionally notice lingering splinters of traumatic content getting triggered forward, but the frequency and intensity are greatly reduced and the overall interference with my ability to connect with Jesus is much less.

⁸ From a scientific perspective, this point would be much stronger if I had initially tried the Immanuel approach tools *before* resolving my pernicious blockage tangle, experienced less dramatic results with this initial attempt, and then observed much better results *after* resolving the pernicious blockage tangle.

⁹ One additional thought I would offer is that I think I would have made much more progress during the years in which these two stories took place if I had been applying Immanuel approach principles and tools, in complimentary combination with the troubleshooting and healing that were a part of these

?Subheading, like “My ongoing Immanuel Approach journey”?

My ongoing experience with the Immanuel approach provides another example.

As I have been faithful and persistent with ongoing Immanuel approach work over the past ten years, my ability to consistently perceive and connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence has progressively improved. When I first started using the Immanuel approach I would perceive God’s *tangible* presence, experience God to be present as a *person*, engage in communication with God that was *interactive*, and have the sense of *receiving attunement* from God maybe 80% of the time when I would use Immanuel approach tools in the context of working with my prayer partner. I would become aware of and connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence maybe 70% of the time when I would use Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God in my personal devotional time. I would connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence maybe 60% of the time when I would pause to briefly use Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God in the course of the average day. And I would be able to perceive and connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence maybe 50% of the time when I would use Immanuel approach tools in the context of getting triggered and then trying to get healing on my own.

On the one hand, you might think that this would have been good enough. After all, in comparison to perceiving God’s tangible, personal presence only three times in more than forty years, *this was wonderful!* None the less, it has gotten even better. As I have been faithful and persistent with ongoing Immanuel approach work over the past ten years, my ability to consistently perceive and connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence has progressively improved. Now I perceive and connect with God even more often and more easily. when I use Immanuel approach tools in the context of working with my prayer partner, I pretty much always (essentially 100%) perceive and connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence; when I use Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God in my personal devotional time, I almost always (maybe 95%) connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence; when I pause to briefly use Immanuel approach tools for connecting with God in the course of the average day, I almost always (90 to 95%) become aware of and connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence, and I usually (maybe 75%) connect with God’s tangible, personal, interactive, attuning presence when get triggered and use Immanuel approach tools to try to get healing on my own.

Furthermore, as I have continued to troubleshoot for blockages, as I have regularly received Immanuel approach healing, as I have grown in skill with respect to the Immanuel approach principles and tools, as my faith has increased, and as I have spent more and more time with Jesus, I have become able to perceive and connect with God more and more clearly, more and more intensely, and more and more richly. My visual images have slowly but steadily become more clear and more intense. My sense of God’s presence as a person has slowly but steadily become clearer and stronger. The perception that my communication with God is interactive has slowly but steadily increased. And my feeling that God is attuning to me has grown slowly but steadily stronger.

I still experience quite a bit of variability, from one day to the next and between one experience and the next, but over the past ten years the *average baseline* for every aspect of my ability to

experiences.

perceive God's presence and connect with God has steadily improved. Also, my perceptions of God's presence are still usually subtle, faint, and vague, but now they are just less subtle, less faint, and less vague. For example, the strength and clarity of my visual images will now often be a two (on a scale of zero to ten), instead of a one-half or a one, the sense that the connection is interactive will now often be a two or three instead of a one or two, the perception that God is with me as a person is now often a three or four instead of a one or two, and the feeling that God is attuning to me is now usually somewhere between three and five instead of a one or two.

Steady Progress for Stan: Stan, the man from our Thursday mentoring group who gets "lava lamp" visual imagery and feels warmth in his body, provides yet another example of how people's ability to perceive God's presence and to connect with God usually grows as they persist with regular Immanuel approach work. Prior to using Immanuel approach tools, Stan had experiences of perceiving God's presence and connecting with God, but these were rare and unpredictable. In contrast, as Stan has steadily identified and resolved blockages in Immanuel sessions over the years his experiences of God's presence have become increasingly predictable and regular. Now he pretty much perceives God's presence and receives thoughts from God any time he uses the Immanuel approach tools.¹⁰ Furthermore, his experiences of connecting with God have become increasingly interactive, he has become more and more able to feel God offering attunement, and he has felt increasingly secure in his connection with God. In one of Stan's most recent sessions he had a sense of God's presence *as a person* for the first time, and specifically had the sense that God was smiling at him.

From Shades of Grey to Technicolor: Peter, a friend of ours from the Chicago area, describes a simple but beautiful example of progress with respect to perceiving and connecting with God.

He had been working on the same painful school memory for a number of sessions, but something seemed to be stuck. In each session the Lord would take him back to the same memory of sitting in second grade. He had been in second grade for a couple of weeks, and then one day, in the middle of class, a teacher came into the room, took him by the hand, and walked him to a first grade classroom. Nobody warned him before it happened. Nobody talked about it after it happened. And he remembers sitting in the first grade classroom, red faced, shocked, and humiliated. "None of the other kids would talk to me. I remember just sitting there, alone, with my face red and feeling intense shame." At this point in each session he would perceive Jesus, standing in the corner by the door, but something was obviously stuck because nothing moved forward past this point and nothing seemed to resolve. This continued for a number of sessions, and all through these sessions everything in his mental imagery came only in shades of grey.

Peter doesn't remember the details regarding the blockages that were hindering the process, nor the details regarding how they were resolved; but after a number of Immanuel approach sessions of persistent troubleshooting, Peter was suddenly able to experience the Lord's presence in a much more interactive way. "Instead of just standing in the corner by the door, Jesus came over to my desk, stood beside me, and put his arm around me. That was the first big breakthrough."

Then, in the next session, Jesus came and stood right in front of Peter. "I was standing on the desk seat, so we were looking eye to eye, and that's when the technicolor came on. All of a sudden, Jesus and I were in color – everything else was still in shades of grey, but Jesus and I

¹⁰ And this includes one-on-one sessions with a facilitator, group exercises, and using the Immanuel approach on his own.

were in clear, bright, technicolor.” For a little while Peter just stood on his desk seat, looking at Jesus as Jesus looked quietly back at him, and then Jesus started combing Peter’s hair so that it looked just like his. First Jesus combed Peter’s hair so that their styles exactly matched, and as he kept combing Peter’s hair the coloring also changed to exactly match Jesus’ hair. (Peter reports that after Jesus finished, they both had hair with a really classy blue-grey tint, and that they had silver-white highlights on the sides that produced a totally cool accent effect.) Jesus also sprinkled something on Peter so that Peter shared the exact same personal fragrance as Jesus.

Although it was all non-verbal, Jesus was clearly communicating. To everybody else in the room: “Peter and I, we go together – we’re on the same team – we’re friends.” (As Peter commented regarding the hair, “If people see us, they’re gonna know immediately that we go together – nobody else has hair like that.”) And directly to Peter: “I’m glad to be with you, and I’m glad to be associated with you” (the exact opposite of what the other kids were communicating). After Jesus’ gentle, creative, encouraging, colorful interactions with Peter, the confusion, shock, and humiliation were totally gone. “After that session, this worst school memory of my life became my best school memory. Since that session I go to this memory as my good memory starting place.”

Again, after multiple sessions of persistent trouble shooting, Peter was suddenly able to experience Jesus as a much more interactive presence, his visual image of Jesus went from shades of grey to technicolor, and he became aware of Jesus’ personal fragrance. Furthermore, these upgrades have continued. Now, whenever Peter goes back to this memory he continues to experience Jesus as interactive, he continues to perceive Jesus in bright, clear, “technicolor,” and he continues to perceive Jesus’ personal fragrance.

Many More Examples: As I have already mentioned at several points earlier in the book, I have facilitated for many people who have become increasingly easy to work with over time. (Actually, this pattern of steady progress with persistent Immanuel approach work has been true for almost everybody I have ever worked with.)

At the beginning of their Immanuel approach journeys, these people had a wide variety of blockages – *conscious* negative associations with God, traumatic content being *unconsciously* transferred onto the Lord, low capacity, infant maturity coming forward as part of the traumatic memories, demonic interference, dissociated parts carrying very specific memory-anchored blockages, bitterness, self-pity, and complex tangles of various blockages mixed together. When I would first start working with the people with complex blockage tangles, it would often take thirty to forty-five minutes (and sometimes more than an hour) of advanced Immanuel intervention troubleshooting just to establish the initial connection with Jesus, and every step of the healing work would be slow and difficult and bumpy. However, Immanuel sessions have gotten progressively easier over time as these people have regularly, persistently engaged with God to resolve their blockages, and as they have regularly, persistently spent time with God building capacity and trust.

For example, a number of these recipients had been betrayed and abused by men, and so had intense, memory-anchored fears about allowing Jesus to be present. These people especially had child places in their hearts that were afraid that Jesus would betray and abuse them just as most of the other important men in their lives had betrayed and abused them. However, this fearful resistance has progressively subsided as they persistently worked to resolve the underlying traumatic memories. Furthermore, each time we would finally get to the place at which the recipient would allow Jesus into one of her man-trauma memories, she would immediately

realize that Jesus was separate and different from the perpetrator – Jesus was a man, just like the perpetrator, but she could immediately see *and feel* that Jesus was good, safe, and on her side. As these positive experiences with Jesus accumulated, the transference of man-trauma onto Jesus has collapsed even though there were many memories of being abused by men that were not yet resolved.

Authority trauma provides another example. A number of these recipients had been traumatized by authority figures who blamed and punished them whenever anything went wrong. Their traumatic experiences always included something going wrong, so these people had intense, memory-anchored fears about allowing God into any of these memories. These recipients especially had child places in their hearts that were afraid that Jesus would blame and punish them just as most of the other important authority figures in their lives had blamed and punished them. However, this fearful resistance has progressively subsided as they persistently worked to resolve the underlying traumatic memories. Furthermore, each time we would finally get to the place at which the recipient would allow Jesus into one of her authority trauma memories, she would immediately realize that Jesus was separate and different from the perpetrator – Jesus definitely had authority, just like the perpetrator, but she could immediately see *and feel* that Jesus was good, safe, and on her side. As these positive experiences with Jesus accumulated, the transference of authority-trauma onto Jesus has collapsed even though there were many memories of being blamed and punished by authority figures that were not yet resolved.

Being ridiculed for faith provides yet another example. Several people I have worked with were traumatized by their parents and other family members for having religious beliefs, and especially for talking about their faith experiences. So these people had intense, memory-anchored fears about perceiving God’s tangible presence, about establishing an interactive connection with God, and especially about describing these experiences. These recipients especially had child places in their hearts that were afraid of being despised and ridiculed for experiencing God’s presence, and that were especially afraid of being despise and ridiculed for *talking about* perceiving and connecting with God. However, this fearful resistance to the whole Immanuel approach process has progressively subsided as they persistently worked to resolve the underlying traumatic memories. Furthermore, each time the recipient would finally be able to spend time with Jesus, her desire to spend *more* time with Jesus would grow, her loyalty to Jesus would grow, and her courage and capacity would grow. As these positive experiences with Jesus accumulated, the recipient would begin to respond with, “I will spend time with the Lord, *and talk about it*, regardless of the consequences!” even though there were still many despised-and-ridiculed-for-her-faith memories that were not yet resolved.

Now, after many hours of persistent Immanuel approach work, these people almost always connect with God quickly and easily at the beginning of each session, and the healing work almost always flows smoothly and easily. Furthermore, most of these recipients have also been experiencing increasingly easy, frequent, and rich connections with God outside of sessions. For example, one of the women in our Friday mentoring group, who initially had great difficulty with perceiving or connecting even in sessions, now reports, “Every morning, when I wake up, one of the first things I become aware of is Jesus next to me. I have an image of His face, right beside me, and I sense His presence. Even before I get out of bed I am aware of Jesus’ loving, friendship presence with me.”

**Note to draft version readers: I would like to include a few more stories of people who have experienced steady progress as they have been persistent with Immanuel approach work over time. If you have a good story, and especially specific experiences that would provide variety in

addition to what has already been presented (or slightly more detailed versions of the very brief examples at the end of the chapter), please e-mail me (drkarl@kclehman.com).

Summary:

Again, I want to encourage you with the expectation of steady progress as you persist with regular Immanuel approach work. Your ability to perceive God's presence and connect with God should progress steadily as you deliberately troubleshoot to remove blockages, as you indirectly remove blockages by resolving trauma that contributes to blockages, and as you learn more about God's character and heart by spending time with Jesus. As you continue to remove blockages and to build faith, I expect that you will become able to perceive God's tangible presence and connect with God more easily and more quickly, that you will perceive God's presence and connect with God more frequently and more predictably, that you will perceive God's tangible presence with more clarity, strength, and richness, that you will experience God's presence as increasingly personal, and that you will experience connections with God that are increasingly interactive and attuning.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 30: Rita, Attachment Trauma, and Immanuel

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DRAFT

Many people have asked whether the Immanuel approach is effective in working with attachment trauma. In short, our perception is that the Immanuel approach is the most effective intervention we are aware of for every form of attachment trauma we are aware of. Beginning sessions with appreciation and a positive connection with Jesus provides a very gentle start, and also gives the person a safe place to come back to. Allowing Jesus to lead the process takes care of many difficult judgment calls with respect to timing. Jesus can help the person build capacity at the points they don't initially have enough. And, finally, in the context of a person's childhood memories, the living presence of Jesus can actually fill the "holes" left by type A, or absence wound trauma.¹

I would like to make some additional comments about loss of primary attachment figures during infancy (for example, the person loses her birth parents through adoption, or one or more of her primary care givers dies or leaves). Most therapists agree that this is one of the most severe attachment traumas a person can experience. In fact, almost all mental health professionals studying attachment trauma believe that it is impossible to heal this particular wound. The widespread belief is that it can be managed and moderated, but never healed; and this belief is based on the observation that infants will not accept substitutes with respect to their primary attachment figures. If an infant is in significant distress and wants her mother, nothing else and nobody else will do. She can be temporarily distracted and/or soothed by babysitters, relatives, pets, toys, and candy, but she will not be fully satisfied with anything/anybody other than her mother. And if an infant is separated from her mother for an extended period, she can again be temporarily distracted and/or soothed by babysitters, relatives, pets, toys, and candy; but eventually she will experience increasingly intense distress, with corresponding increasingly severe attachment trauma. Furthermore, it appears that people who have lost a primary care giver in infancy will have an essentially parallel experience when trying to resolve these traumatic memories. In the context of being inside the infant memories, the person will once again have the intensely compelling perception that the only truly adequate solution is for her care giver to return. Unfortunately, it is impossible to change history so that the person did not lose her mother (or other primary care giver), and all therapeutic interventions are experienced as painfully disappointing substitutes.

I would like to address this point with a story that could be titled, "Enter: Jesus, the one exception." This story takes place in the context of one of our mentoring groups, in which I was facilitating a session for Rita, who was working on an early childhood memory of her primary care giver (grandma) leaving. Our story begins with Rita inside a memory in which she is 18 months old. Grandma has been gone for way too long, Rita is feeling intense attachment pain, and she is staring at the doorway that had framed her last view of Grandma, as she had waved goodbye. At this point I coached Rita to make a heart invitation for Jesus to be with her in this place, and to ask Jesus to help her perceive His presence.

As soon as we finished this prayer, Rita exclaimed, "Oh! I see Jesus now! He's in the doorway,

¹ Type A trauma, also known as absence wound trauma, is trauma caused by the *absence* of good things that the person should have received.

standing in exactly the same place where I last saw Grandma.” The rest of us in the group sat quietly as Rita focused on Jesus, asked Him for help, and received His comfort. Rita’s facial expression changed progressively from the initial distress of intense attachment pain to a quiet smile, and after several minutes she announces, “I’m done. All the pain is resolved.”

Now, during the several weeks prior to this session I had been learning about attachment trauma from Dr. Wilder, and he had been explaining (repeatedly, in detail) the information I summarized above. Having just learned about how it is impossible to fully resolve this kind of trauma due to the infant’s inability to accept any substitutes for her primary attachment figures, I thought I would take advantage of such a nice opportunity to teach the group about these important principles. So I responded to Rita’s announcement with something along the lines of, “It’s wonderful that you feel so much better, now that you can perceive Jesus in the memory with you, but what about the lingering attachment pain regarding your grandmother leaving?” Rita promptly replied with, “There isn’t any lingering attachment pain. It’s gone. I feel fine, now that I’m with Jesus.” I patiently explained to Rita and the group what Dr. Wilder had explained to me, ending with, “So, since we know that this kind of trauma can never be fully resolved, there must be lingering attachment pain somewhere. I think it will be a valuable learning example for all of us to see how the person can receive dramatic comfort from Jesus being with her in the pain, even though the pain is not fully resolved.”

At this point I turned to Rita, and asked her to scan carefully through the memory, please to find the lingering attachment pain so that we could all have our learning experience. We all sit quietly as Rita takes time to thoroughly scan through the memory, but when she opens her eyes she once again announces that there isn’t any lingering pain. Rita and I go back and forth several times, with me insisting that the memory can’t be fully healed – that there must be lingering attachment pain somewhere, and with Rita insisting that there is no lingering pain or distress of any kind, now that Jesus is with her in the memory. Finally, after another pause to scan through the memory, Rita opens her eyes and comments, “Jesus says to tell you that He’s not a substitute, and that’s why He can accomplish complete healing, even for this kind of early, primary attachment figure trauma.” It was pretty obvious that I had no idea what she was talking about, so she continued with additional clarification, “Jesus is showing me that all of Grandma’s love and goodness – everything good in Grandma that I had bonded to – all of these things had been coming from Him all along. Jesus is showing me an image in which he’s standing behind my grandma, and I can see all of the love and goodness coming from Him, passing through Grandma, and then coming to me – all of these good things had come to me *through* grandma, but Jesus had always been the ultimate source.” Finally, she finished with, “So when Jesus fills the place where Grandma used to be, it’s not like I’m accepting a substitute at all. I’m getting the exact same love and goodness I had been getting from Grandma, except that now it’s even stronger and purer, since it’s coming directly from Jesus, without passing through an imperfect human filter.”²

² Many months later, in a subsequent mentoring group meeting in which we were discussing the Lord’s healing work regarding her infancy attachment trauma, Rita filled in some additional fun details that she had forgotten to mention at the time of the original session. She said that when Jesus first appeared in the memory, he was standing in exactly the same place that Grandma had been standing when she had said goodbye, and that He was in the exact same body position that Grandma had been in as she was saying goodbye. Furthermore, Jesus had continued to deliberately remind Rita of her of Grandma throughout his interactions with her in the memory, perfectly imitating Grandma’s posture, body language, and even speech mannerisms. “In every possible way, Jesus was showing me that He had been present to me in and through my Grandma.”

After pausing to sit in amazed silence for a while (probably with my mouth hanging open), I blurted out something like, “Oh my goodness! This all makes complete sense! *Jesus is the one exception!*” Several weeks later, during one of our regular phone consultations, I described Rita’s session to Dr. Wilder and finished my narrative with, “So what do you think?” After a long pause, during which he was probably experiencing a stunned amazement very similar to my response during the group, he said, “Wow! I think you’re right. I think we’ve found the one exception.”

Since the session just described, I have facilitated a number of similar sessions in which Jesus has healed attachment wounds from the loss of a primary care giver in infancy.

An additional important point here is that the person (in the context of being inside the infant memories) must *allow* the Lord to comfort them, and *allow* the Lord to heal them by standing in the place of the lost care giver. Occasionally, as in Rita’s case, the person will quickly, gladly accept Jesus in the place of the primary attachment figure that has been lost. However, the much more common scenario is for the person to respond with something along the lines of, “I don’t want Jesus, I want my Mom!” I have found that the most challenging, strategic task for the Immanuel approach facilitator in these sessions has been to help the person get over this initial painful bump, and then chose to allow the Lord to comfort them, and to allow the Lord to heal them by standing in the place of the lost care giver. This was certainly the case for me, with respect to my attachment trauma of being separated from my mother for a month at two years of age. When I perceived Jesus’ presence in this memory, offering to comfort and care for me, my initial response was essentially, “I will be tremendously grateful if you actually bring my Mom, but I have no interest in accepting Your comfort and presence in her place.” In order to receive comfort and healing from the Lord, I had to accept the painful reality that my mother did not come back for a loooooong time, I had to surrender my angry, stubborn insistence on focusing all my attention on finding a way to make Mom come *now*, and I had to chose to allow Jesus to comfort me and be with me in her place.