

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Part II: The Immanuel Approach, Contributing Components

At this point I would like to return to the components that contribute to the Immanuel Approach. Refreshing our memories from chapter three, the contributing components include:

- Deliberate appreciation, in the context of remembering previous positive experiences with the Lord, to prepare for an interactive connection with Jesus
- Refreshed perception of the Lord's living presence, and establishment of an interactive connection with the Lord, *in the present*, as the starting foundation
- Engage directly with Jesus at every point in the session
- Immanuel approach troubleshooting (1. Ongoing coaching to engage directly with Jesus for connection, guidance, and assistance at every point in the session; 2. Immanuel Interventions at any point the person loses adequate interactive connection with the Lord)
- Formulate and tell the Immanuel story
- Describe whatever comes into your awareness (your brain works better in community)
- *Facilitator* establish interactive connection, and constantly ask for the Lord's guidance
- Faith (in the Lord's presence, in the Lord's goodness, in the Lord's guidance, and in the effectiveness of the Immanuel approach/Immanuel interventions)
- Understanding regarding capacity, understanding regarding attunement and relational connection circuits, and understanding regarding processing tasks at each of the brain levels
- Our modified version of Theophostic® theory, tools, and techniques

And our definition of the Immanuel approach is to take these components, organize them around the presence of Jesus as the central focus, and clearly identify connecting more intimately with Jesus as the primary objective (with resolution of trauma as a secondary objective).

I think it would also be good to refresh our memories regarding interactive connection. I am experiencing an *interactive* connection with the Lord when I perceive His presence in some way and it *feels* true that we are having a living, real time, mutual, contingent *interaction*. When I am experiencing an interactive connection, it feels true that the Lord sees, hears, and understands the emotions and thoughts I am experiencing and communicating, and it also *feels* true that he is offering contingent responses to my emotions and thoughts. And an *adequate* interactive connection is an interactive connection that is clear enough, strong enough, and functional enough to enable the person to accomplish the task immediately in front of her. An adequate interactive connection is an interactive connection in which the person perceives the Lord clearly enough, allows Him to come close enough, feels a strong enough emotional connection, achieves enough synchronization, and is able to receive enough *to enable to her to take the next step forward*.

With these pieces refreshed and clear in our memories, I would now like to embark on a detailed discussion of each of the contributing components.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 6: Positive Memories and Deliberate Appreciation

(©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 4/6/2013)

DRAFT

The first step in the Immanuel approach is to recall a previous experience of positive connection with the Lord, and then to deliberately stir up appreciation in this context. This simple intervention of remembering past positive connections with the Lord, and feeling appreciation in this context, prepares our brains, minds, and spirits to establish an interactive connection with the living presence of Jesus in the present.

A. Evidence supporting appreciation as connection preparation: Many will be happy to simply take my word for it on this point, and skip ahead to the practical “how to” section (see “practical considerations,” page **, below). However, others will be grateful for the evidence collected here in support of our claims about the value of appreciation in preparing us to connect with God.¹ Also, for those who like to start with “hands on” experience, and therefore initially skip ahead to the “how to” section, I encourage you to eventually come back and look at the explanation sections. As described below (**reference to appropriate location**), systematic research of optimal teaching methods shows that most people experience dramatically increased learning when they combine experience and cognitive explanation.

Our observations regarding relational connection circuits, fascinating research by Dr. John Gottman, discoveries regarding oxytocin, observations from cognitive therapy, work with our clients, and our own personal experience have all contributed to the discovery that *deliberately stirring up appreciation will consistently prepare your brain-mind-spirit for connecting with God.*

1) Relational connection Circuits: We have been created to be relational beings—we have been created to be in relationship with God and with each other. Our minds and spirits have been created to desire relationship and to function best in relationship, and the Lord has actually designed specific circuits in our biological brains to serve this longing and need for connection. When these brain circuits are functioning as designed, our spontaneous, normal experience will be to feel relationally connected and to feel the desire for connection. We will experience others as relational beings, we will be aware of others’ true hearts, we will feel compassionate concern regarding what others are thinking and feeling, we will perceive the presence of others as a source of joy, and we will be glad to be with them. These relational connection brain circuits are the biological hardware that cares for our relationships with God just as they are the biological hardware that cares for our relationships with other people. When these relational connection circuits are functioning as designed we are operating in *relational mode*, and our biological brains are prepared to connect with God.

Unfortunately, there are certain problems and conditions that can cause us to temporarily lose access to these brain circuits. When this happens we operate in *non-relational mode*. Our spontaneous experience in non-relational mode will include the *absence* of feeling relationally

¹ For example, Christian mental health professionals often find that secular colleagues doubt the credibility of any interventions that explicitly incorporate spirituality. When talking about something like the Immanuel approach, it is helpful to have supporting evidence from mainstream neurological and psychological research.

connected, and we won't even *want* to be connected. We will *not* perceive others as relational beings, we will *not* be aware of others' true hearts, we will *not* feel compassionate concern regarding what others are thinking and feeling, and we will *not* be glad to be with them or experience their presence as a source of joy. When we temporarily lose access to these relational connection circuits we are operating in *non-relational mode*, and it is very difficult to connect with God.

This is all relevant to our discussion of appreciation because recalling positive memories and deliberately stirring up appreciation causes our relational circuits to come back on line if they have been off, and to become more intensely active if they are already on but only weakly so. I am not aware of any research directly proving this conclusion, but thousands of hours of observing therapy clients, hundreds of hours of observing people participating in Immanuel approach exercises, and thousands of hours of observing myself and Charlotte as we have deliberately experimented with these phenomena have convinced me that appreciation does indeed activate and/or strengthen the activity of our relational circuits. As described in detail in chapters twelve and sixteen in *Outsmarting Yourself*,² there is a long list of specific indicators that tell us whether our relational circuits are off line, weakly active, or strongly active. The simple, clear data point that I have observed over and over and over again is that people will start with all indicators clearly showing that their relational circuits are entirely off line (or only weakly active), but then when they recall positive memories and deliberately stir up appreciation, all indicators show that their circuits come back on line (and/or become more intensely active).

To summarize, recalling positive memories and deliberately stirring up appreciation brings our relational circuits on line (and/or strengthens their activity), and this prepares our biological brains to connect with God.

2) John Gottman, observable behavior, and “bottom line” sociological outcome: Some of the most original, intriguing research regarding marriage relationships has been carried out by John M. Gottman, Ph.D.. He set up an apartment wired with video cameras and microphones, recorded randomly selected couples spending weekends together,³ and then followed these couples for years into the future, monitoring bottom-line sociological outcome, such as whether a given couple reported being happily married ten years later or whether they were divorced. Dr. Gottman then subjected this large pile of carefully gathered information to rigorous statistical analysis, and thereby identified which observable behaviors corresponded to which bottom line sociological outcomes. For example, did the couples who spent time watching Walt Disney movies together have a better chance of staying happily married? Or were the couples who never washed the dishes more likely to end up in divorce court?

Since 1986 Dr. Gottman has filmed thousands of couples, he has recorded tens of thousands of hours of observable behavior, he has followed some of these couples for as many as fourteen years, and he has taken the resulting mountain of data and run it through a vast array of high powered statistical analyses. One of the clearest conclusions from all of this research is that

² Karl Lehman, *Outsmarting Yourself: Catching Your Past Invading the Present and What to Do about It* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2011), pages 101-107 and 121-149.

³ Of course the couples were aware of being filmed and were willing to be a part of the study. Also, to preserve a certain necessary level of privacy, the couples were monitored only from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and never in the bathroom.

appreciation is good for relationships – the observable behavior of deliberately focusing on things you appreciate about your spouse leads to the bottom line good sociological outcome of staying married, *and being happy with your marriage*. Couples that were already doing this did very well, and deliberately learning to do this proved to be a powerful positive force in salvaging even deeply troubled marriages.⁴

3) Neurobiology: One study has directly demonstrated that, at least in some people, appreciation releases oxytocin;⁵ and a variety of other studies provide a growing pile of indirect evidence indicating that positive social interactions (such as appreciation) stimulate the release of oxytocin.⁶ Furthermore, an extensive body of research demonstrates that oxytocin prepares your brain for emotional bonding and positive relational connection.⁷

4) Cognitive therapy: Both empirical research with cognitive therapy and cognitive therapy case studies demonstrate that our thoughts powerfully and predictably influence our emotions.⁸ For example, deliberately focusing our attention on things we appreciate will consistently generate the corresponding positive emotion of gratitude. Furthermore, cognitive therapy research and case studies demonstrate that learning to think more positively with respect to another person, and the corresponding increased positive emotions towards the person, produce observable benefits for the relationship.⁹

⁴ For additional discussion of Dr. Gottman's research, see Gottman, John M. & Silver, Nan, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press) 1999; and Gottman, John M., & Notarius, Clifford I., "Decade review: Observing marital interaction." *Journal of Marriage & the Family*. November 2000, Vol. 62, No. 3, pages 927-947. The Gottman Institute website, www.Gottman.com, also provides a vast array of additional information regarding Dr. Gottman and his research work with marriages and relationships.

⁵ Turner, Rebecca A.; Altemus, Mararet; Enos, Teresa; Cooper, Bruce; McGuinness, Teresa, "Preliminary research on plasma oxytocin levels in healthy, normal cycling women: Investigating emotional states and interpersonal distress." *Psychiatry*, summer 1999, Vol. 62, No. 2, pages 97-113.

⁶ For a summary discussion of this point, see Uvnas-Moberg, Kerstin, "Oxytocin may mediate the benefits of positive social interaction and emotions." *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 1998, Vol. 23, No. 8, pages 819-835.

⁷ See, for example: Insel, Thomas R., Winslow, James T., Wang, Zouxin, Young, Larry J., "Oxytocin, vasopressin, and the neuroendocrine basis of pair bond formation," *Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology*, 1998, Vol. 449, pages 215-24; Keverne, E.B., Kendrick, K.M., "Oxytocin facilitation of maternal behavior in sheep." *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*. 1997, Vol. 652, pages 83-101; and Carter, C. Sue, "Biological Perspectives on Social Attachment and Bonding," Chap. 5 (pages 85-100) in C.S. Carter, L. Ahnert, K.E. Grossmann, S.B. Hrdy, M.E. Lamb, S.W. Porges, and N. Sachsher (Eds) *Attachment and Bonding*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 2005.

⁸ For recent, careful summaries of the extensive research evidence supporting these foundational principles of cognitive therapy, see David A. Clark and Aaron T. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), especially chapters 3 & 4; and Aaron T. Beck, and Brad A. Alford, *Depression: Causes and Treatment, Second Edition*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), especially chapter 16.

⁹ For a recent, thorough discussion of the use of cognitive therapy for relationship difficulties, including discussion of research and case study evidence supporting the validity of these basic principles of cognitive therapy in the context of relationships, see Frank M. Dattilio, *Cognitive-behavioral Therapy with Couples and Families: A Comprehensive Guide for Clinicians* (New York: The Guilford Press,

5) Our own clinical observations and personal experience: As of May 2013, Charlotte and I have included deliberate appreciation in this way in hundreds of emotional healing sessions, we have applied deliberate appreciation in a number of other clinical and pastoral settings, and we have also spent hundreds of hours employing deliberate appreciation in our own lives. Our observations are that deliberate appreciation, even though it is so simple, consistently increases a person's ability to engage in positive relational connection.¹⁰

Each of these independent bodies of information are consistent with the conclusion that appreciation prepares your brain–mind–spirit system for positive relational connection. Dr. Gottman very deliberately uses this to help marriage partners increase their positive emotional bonding, and Dr. Wilder had the inspiration that this same information could be deliberately applied to our relationships with the Lord. The beginning of each Immanuel approach session therefore includes deliberate appreciation in order to prepare the person's brain-mind-spirit system for establishing a living, interactive connection with Jesus.

B. Deliberate appreciation is very biblical:¹¹ Deliberate appreciation is not just good brain science and good clinical practice, it is also very biblical. The Old Testament contains many passages encouraging us to deliberately remember, and be grateful for, what the Lord has done for us. For example, “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.” (Deut 8:10) The Psalms are especially full of exhortations to deliberately remember and appreciate the Lord's goodness. For example, “Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts....Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.” (Ps 105:1-5) And many of the Psalms *model* deliberately remembering and appreciating the Lord's goodness. For example, I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High....(ten more verses of specific appreciations). (Ps 9:1–18) The apostle Paul repeatedly encourages us to be grateful and to thank the Lord for his goodness. For example, “...be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5:18–20) And Jesus models appreciation and gratitude, as he thanks the Father for many things. For example, “Then Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me....’” (Jn 11:41)

For MANY more specific versus illustrating each of these points, see chapter 19 in *Outsmarting Yourself*.¹²

2010).

¹⁰ Many of our colleagues, such as Jim and Kitty Wilder, Chris and Jen Coursey, and Ed and Maritza Khouri, are also noticing these same things in their personal lives and in their work with others.

¹¹ As a side note, I perceive that this information regarding appreciation has two implications with respect to worship: 1) intentional, deliberate appreciation exercises can prepare our brain–mind–spirit systems for positive relational connection with the Lord in the context of worship; and 2) to the extent that worship includes appreciation, it prepares our brain–mind–spirit systems for positive relational connection with the Lord.

¹² Karl Lehman, *Outsmarting Yourself: Catching Your Past Invading the Present and What to Do about It* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2011), pages 194-7.

C. Specific memories are the ideal context for deliberate appreciation: Both our observation of others, and our own, personal experiences with the Immanuel approach reveal that memories for specific past positive events are the ideal context for deliberate appreciation, and this also makes sense neurologically.

1) Greater emotional impact: When we use deliberate appreciation to prepare our brains, minds, and spirits for an interactive connection with God, the size/intensity of the positive effect will usually be much larger if we think about things we appreciate in the context of specific memories and relationships, as opposed to thinking about things we appreciate only as abstract, theoretical concepts. For example, when I present this material as a seminar, I demonstrate this difference by doing two different versions of deliberate appreciation for emergency room security officers. When I appreciate emergency room security personnel in the context of abstract, theoretical information, I take thirty to forty seconds to make the following statements:

- I appreciate that security officers take on the awkward (and sometimes very tense) task of searching patients as they come into the emergency room.
- I appreciate that they work all hours of the day and night;
- I appreciate that emergency room security officers intervene when patients become dangerous, risking their personal safety to protect others.
- I appreciate that their job can be very messy and unpleasant, sometimes requiring exposure to blood, saliva, vomit, urine, and feces.

I truly believe each of these statements, but when I simply summarize them as abstract, theoretical concepts I feel only a very slight sense of subjective gratitude.¹³

In contrast, when I appreciate security officers in the context of specific memories, I start by telling stories about my experiences with security officers during my psychiatric training. When I was working as a psychiatric resident I served in two different emergency rooms. At the VA (Veteran's Administration) hospital, the special security room for evaluating potentially dangerous patients had been converted into a part time office, so that we had to work with aggressive, agitated, belligerent, mentally ill, and often intoxicated combat veterans in a room fully equipped with potential weapons, such as light weight steel chairs and heavy metal lamps. But even more important than the inadequate physical facilities were the inadequate security personnel.

The security personnel were mostly older men, who were overweight, out of shape, and inadequately trained. The security officers were also all veterans themselves, and therefore had understandable loyalty and sympathy towards the veteran patients. Unfortunately, their loyalty and sympathy towards other veterans was sometimes stronger than their concern for the safety of the psychiatric residents. For example, the official policy was that all psychiatric patients must be searched before being evaluated, but the security officers felt that it would be offensive

¹³ This first part of the demonstration has occasionally generated more intense gratitude, but when I observed myself carefully I noticed that this only happened when the "abstract, theoretical" statements start prompting brief flashes of specific memory examples.

to insist, and they therefore skipped the search if the patient was unhappy with the idea. The officers also wanted to avoid confronting their veteran colleagues in any way that might escalate to the point of needing to use physical restraints, so they would sometimes back down instead of stepping forward when patients would cross physical safety boundaries.

Furthermore, there were usually only two security officers on duty for the whole, huge, seven story hospital, so there were often no officers in the emergency room. At these times we would have to send out a page for security staff if we felt a patient might be dangerous, and sometimes there would be long delays before anyone would arrive. The intense work flow pressure would usually push towards just going ahead without them. And there were also times when they would make an independent assessment that their presence was no longer needed, and then walk away in the middle of an evaluation without asking for my input.

Together, all of these factors lead to some pretty scary situations. For example, there was the summer afternoon during my first year when I was sent in to see an extremely intoxicated Vietnam veteran with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The security staff were not present, but I was busy and tired, and decided to go ahead and get started instead of taking the time to page them and wait for them to get to the ER. I have often thought about and prayed for this veteran, and I understand why he had PTSD. He had been deployed in an area where the Vietcong would get children to wear hand grenades under their clothing, and then walk up to groups of soldiers as suicide bombers. After a number of these disastrous encounters, my patient's commanding officer had ordered him to go into a village they were approaching and shoot all the children. Needless to say, these memories haunted him terribly.

Nevertheless, it was still frightening to work with an agitated, aggressive, belligerent, thoroughly intoxicated soldier who was transferring all of his anger about these experiences onto me. After I had entered the room and shut the door, he came to within six inches of my face and proceeded to yell at me, with LOTS of swearing and spit spraying onto my glasses, for five minutes (that felt like two hours). Nobody even knocked on the door to check whether I was okay. At the time he was actually yelling at me I was mostly in shock, but afterwards I realized that I would have been in serious trouble if he had decided to physically attack me. If the patient had really wanted to hurt me, he could easily have busted my lip (or beaten me to death with one of the heavy metal lamps) before effective intervention had come to my aid. Even if the security officers had been in the room their intervention would probably have been very conservative, such as asking him to sit down – if he had actually wanted to hurt me, their reluctance to precipitate confrontation would have resulted in intervention that was too tentative and too slow.¹⁴

On another occasion, an extremely angry and agitated veteran came into the emergency room asking for psychiatric care. He was six feet four inches tall and extremely muscular, probably weighing 270 pounds, and as he told the lady at the front desk that he needed to see a psychiatrist he also mentioned that he would kill any police officers that he ran into. He was wearing combat fatigues, with large cargo pockets bulging with unknown contents, and he was carrying a large back pack, also bulging with unknown contents. Two security staff were in the emergency room, but they decided that it would be a bad idea to ask him to submit to being

¹⁴ This is not just an ungenerous speculation, since one of my colleagues had his nose broken by a patient before security stopped the assault, and on another occasion a patient attacked one of my colleagues and broke several of his ribs before the security officers intervened.

searched. They also decided that it might upset him if he mistook them for police officers, so they went into another office where they would not be visible. I was sent into the non-security room, alone, to do the psychiatric evaluation.

As I entered the room I knew that he had not been searched, and realized that he could be carrying any number of weapons in his bulging pockets and back pack. But then I also realized that he could easily attack me with the steel chair he was sitting on or the lamp on my desk, and if this weren't enough, I realized that a 270 pound extremely muscular combat veteran trained to kill enemy soldiers in hand to hand combat probably wouldn't need any weapons in order to inflict serious bodily damage.

It did not take long for things to get worse. After responding to my first several questions with angry outbursts, he jumped up from his chair and rushed across the room toward me. Fortunately, instead of attacking me he decided to barge out of the office, barge out of the emergency room, and commandeer the public transportation bus that had just stopped in front of the hospital. I think he was so upset that he didn't even know what he wanted, but his threats to kill anyone who didn't cooperate resulted in frantic calls to the police. Minutes later, a fully equipped SWAT team arrived.

It took the SWAT team several hours to get him off the bus, and when they did finally get him off the bus it took six men to restrain him. Physically out of control psychiatric patients can usually be safely restrained by securing their wrists and ankles, but this patient was thrashing and lunging so violently that he required additional straps across his chest and forehead. Once he was in restraints it was my job to finish the admission evaluation, and as I did this he continued thrashing violently and yelling at the top of his lungs (swearing and threatening to kill me), with his eyes wild, his face purple-red, and the bulging veins across his forehead and along his neck looking as if they were about to burst.

I felt physically unsafe so consistently in the VA emergency room that I just tried not to think about it, so that fear would not get in the way of my efficiency.

My experience working in the university emergency room, on the other hand, was completely different. First of all, the special security room reserved for psychiatric evaluation had *not* been converted into a part-time office, and contained nothing that could possibly be used as a weapon.¹⁵ But more important than the security *room* was the security *staff*, and especially one particular security officer. His name was Andre, and he was an African American man who had briefly played professional football for the Seattle Seahawks. When wearing his thick-soled uniform shoes he was almost seven feet tall, and he probably weighed 280 pounds *before* putting on the body armor that he wore whenever he was on duty. I called him Andre the Giant, and I felt safe whenever he was on duty.

If there was a psychiatric patient to be evaluated, I never had to worry about finding the security guard. The nurses would page me to come and see the patient, and Andre would always already be there, waiting for me, when I arrived. And there was never tension regarding whether he would decide that his presence was no longer necessary, and therefore walk away in the middle of the evaluation. In fact, even when I told him that I didn't think I needed security protection for a particular patient, he would stay in the area and keep an eye on me.

¹⁵ The *only* thing in the security room was a large cushioned chair that was bolted to the floor.

In contrast to the security officers at the VA, Andre never neglected to search patients, and he would not allow anything that could *possibly* be used as a weapon. Not pocket knives, not box openers, not nail files. He would even ask people to put their pencils and car keys in the security box.

Andre would escort the person to the security room, and then stand in the doorway as I began the evaluation. If he sensed the *slightest hint* of danger, he would come into the room and stand beside me. And if he sensed more than the slightest hint of danger, he would step forward and motion me toward the door, so that he could easily block any attempt the patient might make to attack me. In contrast to the security officers at the VA, Andre had zero tolerance for threatening, or even marginally intimidating behavior. If an angry patient even got out of the chair, Andre would quickly step into the room and give quiet but firm directions: "Sir, you need to go back to the chair and sit down. Now." If someone made a threatening gesture, or even an angry statement directed toward me, Andre would lean into the room and ask, "Dr. Lehman, is there a problem?" And even these quiet, simple interventions were amazingly effective when coming from a six-foot-ten-inch 280-pound security officer wearing body armor.

Andre would never avoid necessary, appropriate physical contact. If someone was extremely intoxicated and/or psychotic, and needed physical redirection, Andre was right there. And if someone was totally out of control and/or assaultive, so that physical restraint was necessary to keep everyone safe, Andre was right there. This was dangerous, and could also be very messy and unpleasant (extremely intoxicated accident victims could come in covered in vomit, saliva, urine, feces, and blood), but Andre never showed even the least sign of hesitation when physical contact was needed in order to keep everybody safe.

In addition to all of this, Andre knew more about physical safety in the emergency room than I did, and took measures to ensure my safety that I hadn't even thought of. For example, he would gently but firmly remind patients to remain seated, and to lean slightly back in the chair – a position that made it extremely difficult for the person to come at me suddenly. He would remind me regarding the safest way to position myself in the room, so that I could exit and close the door quickly and easily. And with especially agitated patients, he would remind me that we could offer appropriate medications, and then wait for them to produce calming benefit before continuing the evaluation.

After sharing these stories, I name specific things I especially appreciate about Andrea:

- I appreciate that Andre was willing to deal with the unpleasant reactions that might be caused by his insisting on a careful, thorough search before allowing the person into the assessment area;
- I appreciate that Andre never avoided necessary physical contact, even though it was dangerous, and sometimes also very messy and unpleasant;
- I appreciate that he was always present;
- I appreciate that he was well trained regarding the many details that would contribute to my safety, and that he consistently took the initiative in making sure that these were in place;
- I appreciate that he went out of his way, at the cost of personal risk, in order to make it *easy*

for me to be safe;

- I appreciate that he was HUGE, and that he was willing to wear heavy, uncomfortable body armor in order to be able to provide a physical presence that could actually handle dangerous, out of control patients;
- and I appreciate that *I actually felt safe* whenever Andre was on duty.

When I think about the abstract, theoretical reasons to appreciate security officers, I feel a mild, vague sense of appreciation; but when I think about Andrea the Giant, and how much it meant to me to be able to work without having to risk serious physical injury, I *feel* appreciation at an entirely different level.¹⁶

Doing deliberate appreciation regarding the Lord provides another example. When I appreciate the Lord in the context of abstract, theoretical information, such as the attributes of God found in scripture, I take thirty to forty seconds to make the following statements:

Lord, I appreciate that You are perfect.

I appreciate that You are omnipresent.

I appreciate that You are powerful.

I appreciate that You are just.

I appreciate that You are merciful.

I appreciate that You are righteous.

I appreciate that You heal.

I appreciate that You forgive.

I believe each of these statements, and I appreciate these truths about the Lord, but when I simply summarize them as abstract, theoretical concepts I feel only a very slight sense of subjective gratitude.

In contrast, when I appreciate the Lord in the context of specific memories, I start with taking several minutes to think about, reconnect with, and reenter specific memories of previous positive connections with the Lord. For example, I think about my experience of interacting with the Lord regarding Thomas and his heroic faithfulness. I picture myself carrying my exercise weights and walking towards the lake on Kedzie boulevard. I recreate the mental image of the Lord walking beside me as a friend, smiling and appearing to enjoy the weather. I repeat the comment, "Lord, I'm so glad that Thomas is with You now," and I recreate the

¹⁶ Note that the contrast between these two ways of doing the appreciation exercise is much more dramatic when I present this example live. Observable emotions come forward spontaneously when I do the exercise in the context of specific memories about Andrea the Giant, but the reader cannot perceive this, since the written text does not include my facial expressions, voice tones, and other non-verbal communication.

mental image of the Lord suddenly turning to me, with His big smile. I remember the sense that He heard me and understood me, and I remember the poignant specifics of His response: “So am I! He has fought the good fight, and has finished the race. He is here with Me now – his suffering has ended, and he is being rewarded for his heroic faithfulness.”

And then, after I have reconnected with the thoughts and emotions and re-entered the memory, I talk directly to the Lord about specifics that I especially appreciate:

“Lord, somehow many subtle things about the way You were walking beside me – Your smile, the way You were strolling, Your overall attitude – tell me that You were *enjoying* Yourself – that You *like* being with me – that You think of me as a *friend*. This means so much to me.”

“Lord, I feel like I can’t even get words to fully express the vibrancy and vitality of Your presence and smile. I appreciate how I knew that I was perceiving Your living presence by the way Your responses surprised me and felt so *alive* – so different from the internal perceptions that I initiate in my own mind.”

“Lord, You know that I sometimes struggle with the fear that there will never be true justice – that people like Thomas will never be adequately compensated. I feel such deep reassurance from Your striking, immediate, vivid, energized, detailed, emphatic response to my thought regarding Thomas. I appreciate that You recognize how hard his life was, that You’re aware of how faithfully he followed You through the difficulties he lived with every day, and that You honor his quiet heroism. I appreciate that the magnitude of his struggle, of his obedience, and of his courage have not been lost on You; and that, even as we speak, he is in Your presence, receiving His reward.”

When I think about the abstract, theoretical reasons to appreciate the Lord, I feel a mild, vague sense of appreciation. In contrast, when I think about my experience of interacting with Jesus regarding Thomas, reconnect with the thoughts and emotions, reenter the memory, and then talk to the Lord about specific aspects of the experience I especially appreciated, I *feel* gratitude at a whole different level.¹⁷

(alternate text for seminar presentation) As you can see, doing the appreciation exercise in the context of this specific memory has a much larger effect on my emotions and oxytocin than appreciating the abstract, theoretical attributes of God. ****look at parallel text from book****

2) Reconnecting with a Positive Memory Reactivates Original Appreciation. Part of the reason specific memories are especially effective as the context for deliberate appreciation is that reconnecting with the memory for a previous positive experience will reactivate the original appreciation. As far as the internal states of our brains, minds, and spirits are concerned, reconnecting with/reentering the memory of an autobiographical event will re-create, to some extent, the conditions present in the original experience. For example, when I reconnect with the memory for a painful experience in which I felt sadness, such as when my pet squirrel died from thirst because the water dispenser broke while we were away on

¹⁷ Again, the contrast between these two ways of doing the deliberate appreciation exercise is much more noticeable when I present this material live, where my facial expressions, voice tones, and other forms of non-verbal communication help to convey the dramatic difference in emotional intensity.

vacation, I reactivate the neurological circuits associated with the sadness from the original events, and to some degree I re-experience this sadness. Similarly, when I reenter the memory for a positive experience in which I felt appreciation, such as when the Lord spoke to me about Thomas, I reactivate the neurological circuits associated with the appreciation from the original events, and to some degree I re-experience this appreciation.

3) More John Gottman, observable behavior, and “bottom line” sociological outcome: In Gottman’s research, thinking and talking about past positive experiences of being together with your spouse was another strong predictor of positive sociological outcome, and also a deliberate intervention that could be used to improve marriages in distress. Just as with appreciation and marriage, these principles that apply to your relationship with your spouse also apply to your relationship with the Lord: thinking and talking about past positive experiences of being together with the Lord will benefit your relationship with the Lord. **“Stories of us” **does Jim have a separate source for the value of “telling stories of us”?*****

Advanced topics warning: Feel free to skip (or skim) the next paragraph if you are not particularly interested in neuropsychology.

4) Working with the Right Hemisphere Increases Emotional Intensity. Another factor that contributes to the increased effect when we do deliberate appreciation in the context of specific memories has to do with the difference between the right and left hemispheres. The right hemisphere is the primary location for emotional processing, so that processing through the right hemisphere will generally produce a more intense emotional response. The right hemisphere is also the primary location for *experiential* knowing anchored in specific autobiographical memories, so that doing deliberate appreciation in the context of specific autobiographical memories will cause the right hemisphere to be much more involved. Therefore, doing the appreciation exercise in the context of specific autobiographical memories will cause the material to be processed through the right hemisphere, and will thereby produce the increased emotional intensity associated with right-hemisphere involvement.

D. Putting it All Together: So, combining these pieces regarding appreciation and specific memories, the practical application with respect to the Immanuel approach is that the person starts each session with returning to a memory of a previous positive experience with God; and then, in the context of this memory, she engages in deliberate appreciation. Stirring up appreciation in the context of a specific positive memory prepares her brain, mind, and spirit for the next step of establishing a living, interactive connection with Jesus in the present.

Advanced topics warning: The remainder of this chapter discusses practical considerations and presents practical tips relevant to those who are wanting to start actually experimenting with the Immanuel approach process. If you are still trying to get the big picture overview, feel free to skip/skim this practical material for now, and then come back for it when you are wanting to start practicing with the actual process.

E. Practical Considerations: I have spent a lot of time over the last five-plus years

experimenting/practicing with the positive memory-deliberate appreciation step in the Immanuel approach process, and I have also spent a lot of time coaching others through this same step. I would like to offer a number of observations from my experience. Hopefully these practical pointers from my many hours of beta testing will be helpful for others.

1) Finding/choosing the memory: With respect to “recalling a memory of a previous interactive connection,” an obvious question is “How do I find/choose the memory?” One approach is to ask the Lord to bring forward the memory he wants you to work with, and then wait for a minute or two, paying careful attention to whatever comes into your awareness. Another approach is to make a list of the times you have had interactive connections with the Lord that have been especially clear and meaningful, and then experiment with using each of these memories for the purpose of the “deliberate appreciation in the context of remembering previous positive experiences with the Lord” step of the Immanuel approach process. After a bit of experimentation and practice you should be able to find one to several memories that are consistently effective, and once this has been established you can quickly go to one of these memories whenever you need to stir up appreciation at the beginning of an Immanuel approach session.

2) Deliberate appreciation should also include *reentering* the memory: You may already be assuming this after reading the “reconnecting with a positive memory reactivates original appreciation” section, above; but just in case it’s not already clear, deliberate appreciation in the context of a specific positive experience should include *reentering* the memory for the experience. Recalling the experience, thinking about it, deliberately naming and focusing on specific things you appreciate, and especially focusing on gratitude for the Lord’s presence and care are all good, but sometimes we can do all of this from an external, left hemisphere, analytical perspective. This left-hemisphere perspective is beneficial, and it does contribute to appreciation, but it often lacks emotional power. It is therefore important to deliberately reconnect with/reenter the memory.¹⁸ In fact, reentering the memory should be the primary mode, with the option to also include the left-hemisphere perspective as a complimentary component that can augment the emotional power of reconnecting/reentering. As mentioned above, reentering the memory of a previous positive experience will automatically reproduce (to some degree) the gratitude you felt at the time of the original events.

Many people spontaneously include reentering the memory when they recall a previous positive experience, and these folks probably think this point is silly and unnecessary. However, this point is not so obvious to everybody. When I first began experimenting with deliberate appreciation as part of the Immanuel approach, I came at it almost exclusively from the external, left hemisphere, analytical perspective. I had to *learn* to deliberately include reconnecting with/reentering the memories when I recalled experiences of previous positive connection with the Lord.¹⁹

3) You can streamline things for people who are familiar with the process: With people who are new to the Immanuel approach, I lead them through this process carefully and slowly –

¹⁸ The goal is to *reenter* the memory – to re-create, as much as possible, the brain-mind-spirit state of being in the original events.

¹⁹ Another point that may seem obvious to some, but be helpful to others: when I reenter memories as part of deliberate appreciation, I go in with the clear objective of stirring up gratitude. I find that this helps me avoid wandering and/or getting distracted as I reconnect with the memory.

we identify a memory of a previous positive experience with the Lord, I ask the person to describe this experience (in detail), I coach the person to describe specific things she especially appreciates about the Lord in the memory experience, and then I coach her to reenter/reconnect with the memory so that she can feel the appreciation associated with the original experience from inside the memory. In contrast, people who are familiar with the process usually go through an abbreviated version (identifying a past positive experience, thinking about/reentering the memory for the positive experience, and deliberately appreciating the Lord in the context of the positive memory), without the need for coaching from me. In fact, this often happens smoothly and quietly during the opening prayer.²⁰

4) Deliberate appreciation becomes easier and more effective with practice: Deliberate appreciation is a skill that we can learn. As Charlotte and I persist in practicing with deliberate appreciation we are definitely getting better at it—the whole process is flowing more and more easily, subjective feelings of gratitude are coming more and more quickly, and the end result is getting more and more robust.

5) Palpable gratitude is a good indicator of success: The subjective feeling of gratitude provides a simple indicator with respect to whether or not the positive memory-deliberate appreciation step is working. When deliberate appreciation is successful we feel palpable subjective gratitude, and the more effectively we succeed in deliberate appreciation the more robust our subjective feeling of gratitude will be.

6) “What if the recipient doesn’t have any memories of positive connections with God?”: Memories of past positive connections with God are ideal, but if the recipient has not yet had special interactive connections with the Lord, then she can use a memory of some other special event. For example, a memory of a particularly beautiful experience with one of her children, a favorite family Christmas memory, a memory of an especially positive vacation with friends, or a memory of thoroughly enjoying her favorite meal. She can practice deliberately reentering the positive memory, reconnecting with the positive emotions associated with the positive memory, and deliberately focusing on things she appreciates even if an interactive connection with God was not part of the original positive experience. Also, when it comes to establishing an interactive connection (**chapter **fill in**, below**), the recipient can experiment with asking the Lord to help her perceive his presence and establish an interactive connection in the context of this “non God” positive memory. Many people have had their first experience with perceiving the Lord’s presence in some tangible way, and then experiencing and interactive connection, when trying this experiment with “non-God” positive memories.

7) More than one positive memory: One positive memory is usually adequate, but it is ideal to have several, since appreciation momentum builds as one works with several positive memories in succession. Having several memories available will be helpful if the recipient gets stuck in particularly intense negative emotions when working with traumatic memories later in the emotional healing process, and therefore needs an especially strong positive memory and appreciation “safety net.” So if you are working with people who are more likely to need an especially strong safety net (for example, they have survived severe trauma, their support system is poor, and their coping skills are weak), we recommend repeating the positive memory–appreciation step several times, so that the recipient has a safety net that includes

²⁰ Several of the sessions portrayed in our live ministry DVDs illustrate this point well. See, for example, *Maggie #3: Labor & Delivery Trauma*, and *Rita #3: Jesus is Better than Candy*.

several positive memories.

8) Appreciation memories without splinters: Many people have positive connection with God memories that still include trauma splinters. For example, the person's appreciation memory may be for an Immanuel approach session in which she experienced Jesus' loving, healing presence powerfully *with* her in a traumatic memory of her intoxicated father emotionally, physically, and sexually abusing she and her siblings. However, in this kind of complicated trauma, it is common to have a number of distinct traumatic pieces, so that unresolved pieces (or "splinters") may remain, even while the parts of the memory that *have* been resolved *are* indeed now positive places where the person experiences the Lord's healing presence. And if the traumatic memory the person works on later in the emotional healing process resonates with the unresolved splinters, the initial appreciation parts of the memory can get blended together with the negative thoughts and emotions from the (now) activated splinters, so that the memory is no longer usable as a safety net. Therefore, if the people you are working with are describing appreciation memories that may have splinters (the positive memories being describe are about the Lord's presence in the midst of trauma), and especially if you are working with a group in which many of the people have similar traumas, so that each person's splinters could trigger other participants, it is important to coach the participants to deliberately find positive memories that are completely free of splinters – memories without any aspect of pain or trauma. For example, feeling God's presence while appreciating a beautiful sunset, seeing Jesus standing beside her as she holds her new baby, or experiencing a connection with Jesus in the context of a particularly beautiful worship service.

If a participant discovers that all her memories of positive God connections are memories of God's presence in the midst of trauma, she can try a simple exercise that is often successful in generating completely splinter-free memories of interactive connections with God. Start with a non-God positive appreciation memory, such as holding her baby, playing with a favorite pet, spending time with a best friend, or some beautiful nature experience, like looking out over the Grand Canyon at sunrise. Then, just as for those who don't yet have positive memories for interactions with God (above), she can go through the deliberate appreciation step with these non-God positive memories, and then use the same memories to go through the interactive connection step (**chapter **fill in****), below. With this simple exercise, many become able to perceive God's interactive presence in memories that had previously been non-God positive memories, and these new interactive connection positive memories are totally splinter-free (not associated with trauma in any way).

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 7: Healing, Freedom, and Joy for a Crack Addict

(©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 4/6/2013)

DRAFT

Initial testimony from 2011:

“My appreciation story is this. I have been addicted to the drug crack for 20 plus years. It has destroyed every relationship that I ever had....When I use any type of drug I cannot stop, and this includes alcohol. I've spent times on Skid row in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and have been through many, many programs, including the union rescue mission..., the los Angeles mission, Salvation Army, Teen Challenge, First Step, AA, NA, CA, and any other A program you can think of. My dad left when I was one and my mom tried to commit suicide shortly after this. She owned a bar and worked 18 hour days, so to say the first couple of years of my life were not a healthy developmental period would be an understatement. I started *Restarting*,¹ and at first it was just to save my marriage. I actually found you [note that the writer is referring to Ed Khouri] quite entertaining, and was just going through the motions.

The Immanuel process was when it started to change. God took me back to when I was one year old and my mom tried to commit suicide. He showed me that He was there, that He kept her alive, and that He allowed me to spend time with her. An especially cool, beautiful piece has to do with the end of my Mom's life. God not only showed me that I wasn't to blame for my Mom trying to commit suicide and that He was with me the whole time, He also fast forwarded to 40 years later (while I was still in disobedience to Him), and showed me that He was the one that led my Mom to ask me to be the person on her living will – the person who would make the final decisions about her health care. That showed me that I was loved and that I was not just an addict. So God showed me that not only was I not at fault for her trying to commit suicide, but that He had brought bring things full circle.

Through the Immanuel process, the appreciation stories, the quieting myself, and the relationships I've built, Joy has come into my life and my brain has been healed. I was suicidal and on antidepressant medications, but now...I want to live and am not on any medications. I have been joyfully sober for over 3 years now, which is by far the longest I have been #1 Joyful, and #2 sober.”

Additional follow up from May 2013:

“I just celebrated 5 years on January 11th, and I don't go to 12 step meetings anymore (I haven't for a couple of years)....My brain has been healed. I've learned over the past couple years that my identity has totally changed. I am no longer an addict, alcoholic, liar, thief or any of the other things I thought I was before. I am God's masterpiece. I am a child of the Most High, and that I am alive and serving God is just as powerful of a miracle as any I read about in the Bible. I've been facilitating *Restarting* for the last few years as well as a class on codependency, and starting this Monday me and my wife will be leading a *Search for Significance*² study group....I'm grateful to you, Ed, Jim, Brent and Peggie Harbaugh, and our Pastor, Dwain

¹ For more information regarding the *Restarting* module of the *Thriving: Recover Your Life* program, see www.thrivingrecovery.org.

² Robert S. McGee, *Search for Significance* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003).

Kitchens, and especially to my wife, Andrea, who through the Lord stuck by me and saw things in me I didn't see in myself. Most of all I'm grateful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Immanuel, who showed me that He has always been with me, even when I didn't realize it.”

For those of you who know anything about addictions, this Immanuel story is very encouraging. Being *five and a half years* joyful and sober after twenty years of crack addiction is HUGE.³

³ This testimony is excerpted from private communications from the author to Ed Khouri and myself. Used with permission.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 8: Refreshed Perception and Establishment of an Interactive Connection

(©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 5/22/2013)

DRAFT

The second step in the Immanuel approach process is to refresh perception of the Lord's presence, and to establish a living, interactive connection with the Lord *in the present* as the foundation for the rest of the session. This can happen in either the context of the positive memory, in the context of your surroundings in the present, or both.

A. Perception and connection in the context of the positive memory: For perceiving the Lord's presence and establishing a connection in the context of the positive memory, after stirring up appreciation in the context of recalling a previous positive experience you continue to deliberately reconnect with/reenter the memory. And then, after several more minutes of reconnecting/reentering, you transition from just a memory of the Lord's presence to a living, real time, interactive connection in the present.

1. Re-enter memory: Spend several minutes thinking about the memory and recalling the original experience as vividly as possible. The goal is to *re-enter* the memory – to recreate, as much as possible, the brain-mind-spirit state of being *inside* the original interactive connection with the Lord. For example, I often use the memory described earlier, in which I perceived the Lord walking beside me and talking to me about my friend, Thomas. When I re-enter this memory I try to recreate the whole situation in my mind – I picture myself (first person, from the *inside* of the experience) carrying my exercise weights and walking towards the lake on Kedzie Boulevard; I recreate the same mental image of the Lord walking beside me as a friend, smiling and appearing to enjoy the weather; I repeat the comment, “Lord, I’m so glad that Thomas is with you now;” I recreate the mental image of the Lord suddenly turning to me, with his big smile; I remember the sense that he heard me, that he understood me, and that he responded contingently to what I was thinking and feeling; and I remember his specific response, “So am I! He has fought the good fight, and has finished the race. He is here with me now – his suffering has ended, and he is being rewarded for his heroic faithfulness.”

The reason we re-enter the memory of a previous interactive connection is that this seems to provide an especially good context for establishing an interactive connection in the present. And this makes sense neurologically, psychologically, and spiritually. The brain, mind, spirit conditions in the original experience were obviously “just right” for establishing an interactive connection (since it happened), and re-entering the memory recreates, to a large extent, these “just right” brain, mind, spirit conditions.

2. Transition to living, real time, interactive connection in the present: From what Dr. Wilder and I have observed, it seems to be a very small step from being inside the *memory* of a previous interactive connection to establishing an interactive connection *in the present*. In fact, our observation is that when people re-enter memories of previous interactive connections, with the desire and intention of establishing an interactive connection in the present, they are always able to make the transition from their memories to living, real time,

interactive connections in the present unless there is a specific problem blocking the process.¹ Furthermore, this transition seems to take place spontaneously, without us having to do anything other than ask the Lord for help and shift the focus of our attention to our relationship with the Lord in the present.

For example, when I want to establish an interactive connection with the Lord, I can think about, appreciate, and re-enter the Thomas memory, as described earlier. When I get to the place where I'm inside the memory and have reconnected with the original experience, I ask the Lord to refresh my perception of His presence and establish an interactive connection; and then I stay with the mental images from the memory but change the focus of my attention to my relationship with the Lord in the present, specifically checking to see what feels true with respect to the Lord *in the present*. That is, I stay inside the mental imagery of walking towards the lake with the Lord walking beside me, but I ask "Does his presence in this imagery feel like it's only a memory, or does it feel like he's with me in the present, as a living presence?" And when I do this I almost always² discover that it feels true that the Lord is with me in the present, and that he has re-established an interactive connection – I perceive that the Lord's presence in the memory imagery comes alive, and that (still in the context of the memory imagery), His presence begins to engage with me interactively.

Some have asked for more explanation regarding how this works. The first comment I want to make along these lines is that this memory-based technique for establishing a living, real-time, in-the-present interactive connection with the Lord is *not* simply a combination of autobiographical memory and guided imagination. Thinking about interactions with one of your friends can be helpful in making this point. I think we can all see that actually talking to your friend is not the same as remembering a previous conversation, nor is it the same as thinking up an imaginary conversation. When you remember a past conversation you are simply replaying memory for known events that have already happened – the characters in your memory don't start coming up with new and unexpected responses. And when you think up an imaginary conversation, *you* are generating both sides of the interaction and you aren't surprised by anything your imaginary friend says or does. In contrast, when you are actually having a living, interactive connection with your friend in the present, *she* will come up with spontaneous, original, contingent responses that *you* don't anticipate and that are not under *your* control. Furthermore, no combination of re-entering memories for past conversations and thinking up imaginary new conversations will cause your friend to suddenly appear in front of you and establish an interactive connection in the present.

I have also come up with a second friendship analogy to help present what I think *is* happening with this memory-based technique for establishing interactive connection with the Lord. Let's say a close friend is waiting in your living room, wanting to connect with you.

¹ For example, I have worked with people who have dissociated internal parts that understand how this works, and realize that establishing an interactive connection often leads to working with painful memories. These parts therefore often allow the initial steps of recalling and re-entering the memory of previous interactive connection, but then shut things down when it comes to the step of transitioning to a living, interactive connection in the present. Another example is people who have such intense triggered fear about not being able to connect with the Lord that this derails the process at the point they would otherwise be transitioning to an interactive connection in the present.

² Occasionally there is some sort of blockage, such as triggered anxiety about not being able to perceive the Lord's presence, that hinders the transition.

Let's also say that you are in an emotional space where you would be happy to connect with your friend, but you enter the room blindfolded so that you are not initially aware of her presence. Finally, let's say that you spend several minutes thinking about and re-entering a memory for a previous positive interactive connection with this person, and then you take off your blindfold to discover that your friend is sitting in front of you. I think we can all see that unless some specific problem gets in the way, you will flow naturally into an interactive connection with your friend in the present.

Now let's apply this analogy to the Lord. In our Immanuel emotional healing sessions people regularly meet the Lord as a living presence, and establish contingent, interactive connections with Him, in the context of being "inside" of memories for past experiences. I also believe that the Lord can wait for you in your memories just as the friend in my hypothetical analogy can wait for you in your living room. Furthermore, we can assume that the Lord wants to connect with you as he waits for you in your memories, since he always wants to connect with you. So, the Lord wants to connect with you and is waiting for you in your memories for past experiences of interactive connection, and you go into one of these memories wanting to connect with him. After spending a minute or two thinking about and re-entering the memory, you stay with the content from the memory but change the focus of your attention from the historical connection in the memory to the question of whether the Lord is with you in the present. Changing the focus of your attention to the question of whether the Lord is with you as a living presence in the present is like taking off the blindfold. Unless there is some specific problem in the way, you will perceive the Lord's living presence and flow naturally into a living, contingent, interactive connection in the present.

Our observation is that the combination of recalling a previous good experience with the Lord, stirring up appreciation, and deliberately reentering the memory provides an especially effective doorway/bridge for re-establishing an interactive connection with the Lord.

B. Perception and connection in the context of your surroundings in the present: When Dr. Wilder and I were first developing this part of the Immanuel approach, where we help the recipient to establish an interactive connection right at the beginning of the session, pretty much everybody reported that they perceived the Lord's living presence and experienced an interactive connection *in the context of the initial positive memory*. However, one of my clients misunderstood my directions. When I said, "Now change the focus of your attention from just remembering the connection with Jesus to the question, 'Can I perceive Jesus now, as a living, interactive presence in the present?'" she thought I meant for her to do this in the context of her surroundings in the present (sitting in the Lazy-Boy chair, immediately across from me in my office). And when she changed the focus of her attention to the possibility that she might perceive Jesus in the room with us, she was immediately aware of His presence kneeling beside her chair, with His face right at the same level as her face. He was smiling, with a very kind, gentle expression, He was looking right at her, and she had the clear, strong sense that He was hearing and understanding everything she said. We both thought, "Great! We have a good initial interactive connection," and we went on with the session without pausing to clarify details. I assumed that she was talking about Jesus kneeling beside her in the context of her initial positive memory, and she assumed that I realized she was talking about Jesus kneeling beside her right in the room with us in the present.

This is humbling with respect to my lack of perception, but this actually went on for many sessions before I even realized what was happening. In each session, she would quickly and easily go through the positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation pieces, and then when I

encouraged her to welcome the living presence of Jesus and focus her attention on perceiving and connecting with Him in the present, she would immediately perceive and connect with Him as He knelt beside her chair in my office. In each session, I assumed she was describing Jesus kneeling beside her in the context of her positive memory, and in each session she assumed that I realized she was engaging with Jesus as He knelt beside her chair in my office. I can't remember the specifics, but eventually something she said and did as she was interacting with Jesus kneeling beside her in my office tipped me off, and I suddenly realized, "Oh my goodness! For all these months Jesus has been kneeling beside her chair, right here in front of me!" Fortunately, I had the wisdom to keep my new awareness to myself. It was obvious that this alternative way of doing things was working just fine, so I figured I'd just let her continue to perceive and connect with Jesus in this new, alternative way, and see what I could learn by keeping my mouth shut and my eyes and ears open.

I learned a lot. Not only did this person continue to quickly and easily establish an initial connection with Jesus in this new, alternative way (and then go on to receive powerful healing in practically every single session), but she also began to teach others to use this new, alternative way for connecting with Jesus at the beginning of the session. I still hadn't told her that she was doing this piece differently, so when she began training others to use the Immanuel approach, she coached them to do it the same way she had been doing it. And pretty much all the people she has trained have been having experiences much like hers, establishing their initial interactive connections with the Lord in the context of their immediate surroundings in the present.³ Furthermore, other recipients started to report spontaneous variability. When recipients were deliberately focusing their attention on the positive memory, in most cases they would perceive and connect with God in this context; and when recipients were deliberately focusing their attention on their surroundings in the present, in most cases they would perceive and connect with God in this context. However, I started to have an occasional session where the person would spontaneously report, "I know I'm supposed to be connecting with Jesus in the memory, but I've kinda lost the memory, and I'm sensing that He's standing right behind me, here in your office." Or the person would spontaneously comment, "I'm not sure if this is okay, but I just kinda went back to my positive memory. I can't find Jesus here in the room with us, but I'm seeing Him standing right beside me in the memory."⁴

As you can see, the Lord is clearly flexible, and willing to cooperate with different ways of helping the recipient to perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection. As far as I can tell, the two primary options are equally effective, and I have not yet been able to focus criteria for determining which variation to use in a given situation. If you have thoughts about reasons for preferring one or the other approach, I would be happy to hear them (please contact me: drkarl@kclehman.com)

³ Our initial expression was "in the room with them," but then people started using these Immanuel approach tools to connect with Jesus while sitting in their back yards, walking in parks, driving down highways, hiking in the mountains, and swimming in the ocean. So we have had to broaden our language to make space for this fun, wonderful, outside of the box reality.

⁴ There is actually even more spontaneous variability than this. Occasionally the recipient will perceive and connect with the Lord in the context of a memory other than the initial positive memory – a memory that comes forward spontaneously when we welcome the Lord and ask Him to help establish an interactive connection. I have had several sessions in which the recipient perceived the Lord's presence and established an interactive connection in the context of imagery that did not seem to be coming from any specific memories. And once in a while the recipient will perceive and connect with the Lord in two or more settings simultaneously.

C. Putting It All Together: So, putting these pieces together, the practical application with respect to the Immanuel approach is that after the person has identified one or more memories of past positive connection with the Lord, and has successfully engaged in deliberate appreciation so that she *feels* appreciation for His presence and care in these past experiences, we have three options for the next piece of helping her to establish an interactive connection with the Lord's living presence in the present.

1. Perception and connection in the context of the positive memory: After the recipient has successfully engaged in positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation to the point that she *feels* appreciation, I coach her to spend several additional minutes reentering/reconnecting with the memory, and then I coach her to focus especially on the Lord's presence in the memory, to explicitly welcome the Lord's *living* presence in the context of the memory, and to ask the question, "Is this still just memory, or has the Lord's presence become living and interactive?" As she does this, I ask the Lord to help her perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection, so that these are real and living in the present, and then I coach the person to describe whatever comes into her awareness. If the recipient doesn't spontaneously report an interactive connection with the Lord, I ask whether she can perceive His living, interactive presence. (This question prompts the person to again focus her attention on the Lord, and on the question of whether her perception of his presence is only memory, or whether she is experiencing a living, interactive connection in the present.) The person is usually able to transition smoothly and easily from positive memory recall and appreciation to a living, interactive connection with the Lord in the present (and if this doesn't happen, we trouble-shoot regarding what's in the way).

2. Perception and connection in the context of your surroundings in the present: After the recipient has successfully engaged in positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation to the point that she *feels* appreciation, I coach her to explicitly welcome the Lord's *living* presence in the context of her surroundings in the present, and to change the focus of her attention from the memory to the question, "Can I perceive Jesus now, as a living, interactive presence in the present?" And I clarify that she is asking this question as she focuses her attention on her surroundings in the present. As she does this, I ask the Lord to help her perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection, so that these are real and living in the present, and then I coach the person to describe whatever comes into her awareness. The person is usually able to transition smoothly and easily from positive memory recall and appreciation to a living, interactive connection with the Lord in the present (and if this doesn't happen, we trouble-shoot regarding what's in the way).

3. Both: Just recently I have been experimenting with both. When I am in a situation where plenty of time is available, I figure, "Why not have two channels working at the same time?" In these situations, I start with helping the recipient to establish an interactive connection in the context of the initial positive memory, and then when this is in place I coach her to shift the focus of her attention to her surroundings in the present, to ask the question, "Can I perceive Jesus now, as a living, interactive presence in the present?," and then to describe whatever comes into her awareness. So far, the people I have tried this with have been able to establish a connection in both contexts, and then through the rest of the session the Lord seems to prompt them to go back and forth between the two. For example, in one recent session, when the recipient would lose her connection with Jesus in the context of the traumatic memory we were working with, I just coached, "Go back to your initial connection and ask for help in that context," without specifying which connection she should go back to. In one of these moments she responded with, "He's right here, sitting beside me on the couch," and then promptly

turned to Him for guidance and help. In another of these moments, the Lord seemed to prompt her to go back to her connection with Him in the initial positive memory, and then it turned out that there were important connections between the positive memory and the traumatic memory we were working on.⁵

Advanced topics warning: The remainder of this chapter discusses practical considerations and presents practical tips relevant to those who are wanting to start actually experimenting with the Immanuel approach process. If you are still trying to get the big picture overview, feel free to skip/skim this practical material for now, and then come back for it when you are wanting to start practicing with the actual process.

D. Practical Considerations:

1) Detailed written account: If you are having trouble re-entering your memories for previous interactive connections, detailed written accounts can sometimes help you connect more powerfully. For example, I am very familiar with my story of talking to the Lord about Thomas, I have reviewed the written account many times, and I am able to re-enter this memory even without looking at the written account. But I experience a *stronger* connection when I take the time to read through the detailed account. Even though I am so familiar with the story, I still consistently leave out (or skim over) emotionally important details when I think about it without the benefit of my written notes. Putting together a detailed written account, and then reading it when you're triggered, do take a bit of time and effort, but I would encourage you to try this if you're having trouble re-entering your positive memories and re-establishing an interactive connection.

2) Connection in the present is often much more subtle than the original connection in the experience you are remembering: An important practical point with respect to the transition from memory to a living interactive connection in the present is that the connection in the present is often much more subtle than the original connection in the experience you are remembering. For example, when I'm upset and use the Thomas memory as the starting point for reestablishing a connection with Jesus, my perception of the Jesus' presence when I transition to the present is usually just a faint, single frame from the memory images of the Lord's face, accompanied by a subtle knowing that He's aware of my experience, that He's listening, that He understands, that He cares, that He's empathizing with me in my pain, and that He's not upset with me for being messy.⁶ I usually do *not* perceive the kind of dramatically spontaneous and contingent responses that were part of the interactions about Thomas, like when Jesus surprised me by suddenly turning towards me, flashing a big smile, and making

⁵ Our live session teaching DVD, *Bob: Safety Net Demonstration* (Live Ministry Series #29), provides a good example of a session in which the recipient establishes an interactive connection in both the context of the initial positive memory and the context of his immediate surroundings in the present.

⁶ I think it is valid to think about the Lord seeing us, hearing us, understanding us, caring for us, and empathizing with us in our pain *as subtle forms of contingent response*. Therefore, I am experiencing a subtle form of interactive connection with the Lord if I am talking to him about my pain (as described below), and it *feels* true that he sees, hears, and understands me, that he cares about me, and that he is empathizing with me in my pain.

comments that I had not been expecting (at least not initially). However, even though the interactive connection in the present is usually much more subtle, it still works as a foundation for the Immanuel approach.

3) Skills and faith that help you cooperate: As already mentioned, we don't have to do anything to *produce* the transition from memory to refreshed interactive connection in the present, but in my experience there are several things that have been helpful with respect to cooperating with the process. I have been learning to recognize what the refreshed connection in the present looks like for me, I have been learning to recognize that it is real even though it is often very subtle, and I have been growing in faith with respect to the whole process. Growing/learning with respect to these points has enabled me to spend less time and energy worrying about whether my interactive connection with the Lord is real, so that I can more easily move on to the next steps of the process.

4) You can streamline things for people who are familiar with the process: With people who are new to the Immanuel approach, I carefully coach them through this process; whereas people who are familiar with the process often recall a positive memory, reenter/reconnect with the memory, feel appreciation for the Lord, and then perceive the Lord's living presence and establish an interactive connection with Him without the need for coaching from me. As with the positive memory and appreciation steps, the whole initial process to the point of establishing an interactive connection often happens smoothly and quietly during the opening prayer.⁷

5) The most subtle form of interactive connection: I have noticed that recipients are often able to receive communication from God, in the most subtle form of interactive connection, even when they are not yet able to perceive His presence in any tangible way. If a person does not (yet) perceive God's presence in any tangible way, even with carefully going through the initial steps in the Immanuel approach and with persistent troubleshooting, I coach her to ask God for guidance, and then I coach her to simply describe whatever comes into her awareness. Even when the person does not perceive any tangible sense of God's presence, if she asks for God to speak, thoughts come. She can't tell/feel that the thoughts are from God – the thoughts feel like they may be coming from her own mind – but careful discernment (especially with the help of others) often reveals the Lord is quietly speaking. I consider this to be the most subtle form of an interactive connection with God, and with gentle, persistent coaching, even people with very complicated blockages can at least start at this point.

⁷ Several of the sessions portrayed in our live ministry DVDs illustrate this point well. See, for example, *Maggie #3: Labor & Delivery Trauma*, and *Rita #3: Jesus is Better than Candy*.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 9: Ian, Immanuel, and Routine Parenting

(©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 4/6/2013)

DRAFT

Dr. Ian M., a friend of ours and psychologist in Winnipeg, Canada, has been teaching his children about the Immanuel approach for life. He has talked to them about the truth that Jesus (Immanuel) is always with us, he has taught them how to perceive the Lord's presence and establish an interactive connection, he has taught them that they can turn to Jesus and engage with Him as a living person when they encounter difficulties in life, and they have discovered that the Lord can and does respond to them – in their hearts/to their spirits. With this foundation in place, he can easily use the Immanuel approach as part of day to day parenting interactions.

For example, he was at the stove one evening, frying hamburger for dinner, when his four year old daughter, Selah, came into the kitchen and informed him that she needed a drink of juice. When he told her that he would be glad to get her a drink, but that she would have to wait a few minutes until he was done with the hamburger, she responded with, “No, I need a drink of juice *right now!*” And when he repeated that she would have to wait a few minutes, she began to escalate into tantrum mode, with crying, tears, and increasingly intense demands of “I need a drink now! I need juice right now! I need juice *now, now, Now, NOW!*”

At this point Ian knelt down in front of his daughter, face to face, eyes to eyes, and said, in a gentle, soft voice, “Honey, would you be willing to ask Jesus what He wants to say to you?” Immediately her crying stopped, and Selah held up her hand towards Ian and said, “okay dad, be quiet.” Not in a harsh way, but more with an intended meaning along the lines of “It's Jesus' turn to talk now. Please be quiet so I can hear Him.” She paused, completely still and quiet for maybe ten seconds, and then said, “Jesus said that I need to be patient and I need to wait.” When Ian asked, “Okay, so what are you going to do?” She respond promptly with, “I'm gonna do what Jesus asked me to do, dad – I'm gonna be patient and wait.”

Selah then just stood beside Ian, smiling, watching, and waiting quietly and patiently for him to finish frying the hamburger. It seemed to Ian that Selah continued to perceive Jesus' lingering presence and feel connected to him as she was waiting, and she seemed quite pleased that she now had what she needed to be able to wait. Quite impressive, really, when you consider that she had to wait five to ten minutes before he was able to get her the juice, and this is a very long time for a four year old who was escalating to a tantrum with demands for immediate action only moments earlier.

When Ian shared this story with me, he finished with the comment: “I often ask myself, ‘Why is it so hard to remember to include Jesus into everything, since He's right there with us?’....As a family, we are working on it. Immanuel – God with us!”

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 10: Engage with Jesus at Every Point in the Session,

Regarding Everything that Comes Up

(©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 5/23/2013)

DRAFT

The third step in the Immanuel approach process is for the recipient to engage directly with Jesus at every point in the session, regarding everything that comes up. Once the person has established a living, interactive connection with Jesus in the present, coach her to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage with Him directly at every point in the session, regarding every issue that comes up, and regarding every difficulty that she encounters.¹

A. Enhances our personal, relational, heart connection with the Lord: As described in chapter three, the most important priority with the Immanuel approach is intimacy with God – symptom relief is a nice fringe benefits, but the primary objective of the Immanuel approach is to enhance our personal, relational, heart connection with the Lord. Along these lines, coaching the person to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage with Him directly at every point in the session is one of the most important Immanuel approach interventions for helping the person build her personal, friendship connection with the Lord.

B. Keeps the session moving: Repeatedly coaching the person to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage with Him directly is also very practical with respect to the Immanuel approach process. Often, this simple intervention is all that is needed to keep the session moving forward with respect to emotional healing, maturity mentoring, or anything else the Lord wants to accomplish. The person might engage with Jesus for guidance in choosing an initial target, for help with finding underlying traumatic memories, for assistance with resolving unfinished processing tasks, for capacity augmentation when dealing with inadequate capacity, or for help with any other questions, needs, or challenges that come up. If the person immediately turns to Jesus and engages with Him directly, *as soon as these questions, needs, or challenges come up*, the session often just keeps moving forward without the perception of being stuck or the need for troubleshooting.

C. Prevents potentially problematic issues from even coming up: Furthermore, this simple intervention can prevent potentially problematic issues from even coming up. For example, if you constantly coach the person to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage directly with Jesus, so that she perceives that He is with her and receives the benefits of a living interactive connection, the recipient will experience dramatically increased capacity throughout the session. With the benefit of this quiet, background capacity augmentation, the recipient might go through the whole session without the issue of limited capacity ever coming up. In contrast, without this quiet, background capacity augmentation, there might have been five places where you would have needed to explicitly address the need for additional capacity.

D. Coach the person to ask for the guidance/help/gifts the Lord has for her, coach her to ask for *more* of the guidance/help/gifts the Lord has for her: For some of you this point might have been obvious from the beginning, but I had to discover that the Lord sometimes likes

¹ In the language of Wilder and Coursey's *Share Immanuel* booklet, this simple, foundational intervention is "helping the person stay in the interactive seat."

us to explicitly ask for His guidance, assistance, and gifts. When I first began using the Immanuel approach, I somehow had this image, this idea, that *perceiving* and *receiving* were a one step deal, inherently merged together. I assumed that if a person could perceive the Lord's presence, and had established an interactive connection, then the Lord would automatically and immediately release everything He had for the person.

I was surprised to discover that *receiving* what the Lord has for you can be a separate process from *perceiving* his presence. There's certainly some overlap, of course. For example, perceiving the Lord's presence and establishing an interactive connection *inherently* resolves certain lies, such as "I'm all alone in this" (you can't believe you're all alone if you can perceive the Lord's presence with you); establishing an interactive connection inherently helps with respect to capacity, as with the child holding her Father's hand; and establishing an interactive connection with the Lord usually also immediately releases a variety of other blessings as well. However, I discovered that the Lord often (maybe always?) has *additional* blessings and resources that He wants us to *ask* for.

I learned this in a session where the person had been able to perceive the Lord's presence and establish a strong interactive connection early in the session, with dramatic benefit, but then became stuck again twenty minutes later:

As she became stuck at this later point in the session, I asked: "So, what happened to Jesus? Can you still perceive His presence?" expecting her to report that she'd somehow lost sight of Him in the midst of the horrible memories we were working on.

I was actually surprised when she responded with: "Oh, sure. He's right here beside me."

The first thought that came to me in response to this was: "How can she be getting stuck if she can still perceive Jesus "right there beside her?"

And then I think the Holy Spirit prompted a new thought, and I asked: "Since it *seems* like you're getting stuck again due to lack of capacity, I wonder if the Lord might have more resources for you. Why don't you focus on Jesus, and ask Him if He has more resources for you?"

She paused for a moment, and responded with: "Oh, yeah. He says He *does* have more resources for me."

Full of good ideas at this moment, I cleverly suggested: "Um..., why don't you ask Him what you need to do to receive these additional resources?"

Another pause, and then she comments: "He says I need to focus on Him, lean on Him, and ask Him for more strength."

Needless to say, this plan worked perfectly, and the healing process began to move forward again.

The humbling truth is that my initial attitude, when I first started experimenting with the Immanuel approach and Immanuel interventions, had been something along the lines of wanting Jesus to show up and deliver His goods as quickly as possible, and then get out of the way so that we could keep moving: "I mean, thank You very much for Your help and all that, but we have

important work to do here. We need to get these traumatic memories resolved, and these symptoms relieved, and we only have 30 minutes left before the end of the session. So – nothing personal – but I’m afraid we really don’t have time to stay and talk.” Jesus, on the other hand, seemed to want us to turn to Him and ask Him for help *on an ongoing basis*. His apparent policy of “I have more resources, but you have to ask Me for them at the point you need them” encouraged us to remember that He was there, and to be deliberate about periodically turning to Him and focusing on Him. He seemed to want to be *relational*, as opposed to just getting used as a resource, with as little interaction as possible.

E. More examples of preventing potential problems: A common scenario in sessions I facilitate provides additional examples of how the simple intervention of coaching the person to keep engaging directly with Jesus can prevent potentially problematic issues from even coming up. If the person is able to establish a good interactive connection at the beginning of the session, I coach her to keep focusing on Jesus, to ask Him for guidance, to ask for any gifts/blessings He has prepared for her, to spend time “just” being with Him, and to periodically describe what’s happening (at appropriate pause points in her interactions with Jesus). The session might then go something like the following:

Person receiving: “We’re sitting together on a bench along one of my favorite trails at the campground where we vacation each summer. (Pause) It’s nice. I feel very safe, and I know that He’s glad to be with me....”

Dr. Lehman: Good. Just keep focusing on Jesus, spending time with Him, and cooperating with whatever He’s doing. And let me know what’s happening, when it’s possible to do so without interrupting your interactions with Jesus.”

Person receiving: (Pause) “Now He’s pointing out to me little things that are especially beautiful – a yellow lady’s slipper [an especially beautiful flower], an indigo bunting [an especially beautiful bird], and a little rock with sparkly crystals in it. We’re just enjoying His creation together....”

Dr. Lehman: Good. Just keep focusing on Jesus, ask Him for guidance, cooperate with whatever He does, and let me know what happens.

Person receiving: (Pause) “Now He’s standing up, and holding out His hand to me, like He wants to go somewhere. (Pause) He says He wants to do some more healing work – He wants to work on my fear of my boss’ anger. (Pause) We’re walking – I’m just following Him. (Pause) He’s leading me to the playground from when I was in first grade, and now I’m remembering....”

As the person keeps her focus on Jesus, asks for His gifts and guidance, cooperates with whatever He’s doing, and follows His lead, the “what should I do with this session?” question and the need for help with finding underlying traumatic memories never even come up.

F.) If the recipient goes to a traumatic memory: If the agenda for the session is to work with trauma, as soon as each traumatic memory comes forward, the first thing you do is to help the

recipient connect with Jesus in the context of the traumatic memory.² And then continue to coach her to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage with him directly at every point, regarding every issue, and regarding every difficulty.

² In most cases, the recipient will recall a traumatic memory from the perspective of being “inside” the memory. In these situations, help the person to become aware of Jesus’ presence and connect with Him inside the memory. However, in some cases the person will initially recall a traumatic memory from a distance – from the perspective of being an outside observer. In these situations, help the person to become aware of Jesus’ presence and connect with Him even as she is in the distant/outside observer perspective. Sometimes she will perceive Jesus in the memory as she looks at it from a distance, but she will still be able to connect with Him and engage with Him from her distant/outside observer perspective. Sometimes she will perceive Jesus to be with her in her place of distant/outside observation, and she will connect with Him and engage with Him as He shares her place of distant/outside observation. And sometimes she will experience both of these simultaneously.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)

Chapter 11: Bruce, Intense Pain, Tough Questions, and Immanuel

(©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 5/29/2013)

DRAFT

Bruce's five year old daughter was utterly exhausted, and whimpered weakly between bouts of retching. She had been vomiting for two days, and now it was 2:30 a.m. and she had started again. He held her, rocked her, tried to offer reassurances, and brushed the limp strands of hair off of her sweaty forehead, but she was still miserable and there wasn't much else he could do for her. It was painful to feel so helpless and powerless as he watched his child suffer. Eventually, Bruce cried out to the Lord with angry thoughts along the lines of, "Enough! Enough already! Why don't You just heal her, God?"

I was facilitating a demonstration session for one of our mentoring groups, and this is the memory that Jesus took Bruce back to after he had established an interactive connection with the Lord and then asked for guidance and direction. As he remembered watching his daughter suffer, and reconnected with the intense, painful feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, he also reconnected with his anger, and his specific frustration towards God, "Enough already! Why don't You just heal her?" At this point I invited Bruce to try the Immanuel intervention invitation, with the specific proposal that he would let Jesus be with him in this place, and then engage with Jesus directly regarding his pain, anger, and questions. Bruce made a simple invitation, "Lord, help me to perceive Your presence there," and then asked, "Just help me Lord, I don't understand why she has to go through that."

After a long pause, Bruce started sobbing, and was eventually able to choke out the following (through tears and sobs),

"I see Jesus...He's holding her...He's holding my daughter...He's holding her – He's kind of just rocking her – and He's telling me that He loves her. He loves her as much as I love her. He loves her more than I love her. He's gonna take care of her. He's just holding her. She's just laying there. But she's safe in His arms."

After another long pause, Bruce reported, "He's just asking me to trust Him. Just to trust Him. Trust that He loves her. That I just need to rest in that." And after a few more moments, he finished with, "He's gonna take care of her."

At this point I coached Bruce to scan through the memory, especially looking for any part of it that still felt bad in any way. But after taking a few minutes to carefully go through the memory, he responded with, "No, I just kinda picture myself going back to bed, and sleeping – just knowing that He's in there watching her....Just seeing her with Him makes me feel like I can go back to sleep – that it's gonna be okay." I also coached Bruce to check and see whether Jesus' words *felt* true, and he reassured me that they did. Finally, I coached him to go back through the memory (deliberately emphasizing the places where he had felt the most painfully powerless and the most frustrated with the Lord for not intervening more directly), and I asked him whether the Lord's response to his pain, anger, and questions felt truly and *fully* satisfying. After another pause, Bruce responded quietly with, "Yeah, it does. It does. Yeah."

During the two years following the session, Bruce experienced continued peace regarding the memory of his daughter's suffering, and when he came in for a follow up interview at the end of

these two years, I asked him to deliberately go back to the memory of his daughters illness to check again regarding any lingering pain, anger, or unresolved questions. After taking a couple of minutes to reconnect with the memory, Bruce reported that he still perceived Jesus with him in the memory, that the words from Jesus still felt true, that Jesus' response still felt satisfying, and that he could not find any fear, anger, powerlessness, helpless, or negative thoughts in any part of the memory.

This session provides an example of a powerful, beautiful phenomena I have observed repeatedly with the Immanuel approach. My observation is that as suffering becomes increasingly intense and prolonged, we struggle to hold onto the truth that God both loves us and is with us. "How can this be true? How can God be with me and love me, and still allow this suffering to continue even as I ask and ask and ask for healing/deliverance/relief?" As we all know, this is one of the toughest questions in this history of Christianity. My experience with this question is that the books and sermons, with explanations regarding free will, building our faith, sharing in the suffering of Christ, etc, are satisfying when we are talking about *someone else's suffering*, or when we are talking about our own suffering that is *long past and fully resolved*. But when we are in the middle of our own suffering, or thinking about past suffering that is not yet resolved, we have a hard time holding onto the truth about God's presence and goodness. And the difficulty of the struggle is directly proportional to the intensity and duration of the suffering.

However, I have experienced and observed one exception. When we let Jesus be *with* us in the place of suffering, and engage with Him directly regarding our suffering (and any tough questions associated with it), we consistently end up actually feeling satisfied with His answer. Sometimes the person has needed to yell at the Lord for 30 minutes, expressing intense rage and confusion before being able to receive His answer. And many times the Lord's answer has been something along the lines of, "Your brain is not able to understand why the Father and I allow this, but I am with you, and because of who I am, that is enough." But when the Immanuel approach recipients have been able to let Jesus be *with* them, and have truly been able to engage with Him directly regarding their struggle, they have always been satisfied with His response.

This has been the only intervention that has ever felt truly satisfying to me when I have been suffering intensely and struggling to hold onto the truth about God's presence and love, and this has been the only intervention that I have ever observed to be truly satisfying to others in response to this tough question. Furthermore, this intervention seems to be very consistently effective. Every person who has been able to perceive the Lord's presence and who has been willing to cooperate with this intervention has been satisfied with the Lord's response and come to a place of peace. As described above, Bruce's session provides a good example.

Note: the session and follow-up interview described here were recorded, and are available under the Live Ministry Session DVD title, *Bruce: Loss of Parents, Sibling Conflict, Daughter's Illness*.

The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)
**Chapter 12: Immanuel Approach Troubleshooting Part I: Engage with Jesus
at Every Point in the Session, Regarding Everything that Comes Up**

©Copyright 2013 K.D. Lehman MD, new 5/30/2013)

DRAFT

Many people are quickly able to establish an adequate interactive connection, they easily maintain this connection, and they receive enhanced friendship with the Lord, transformative emotional healing, and a variety of other beautiful, live-giving results, *all with only the minimal Immanuel approach interventions already described*. However, others initially experience confusing, disappointing, or frustrating results. Through tens of thousands of hours of working with EMDR, Theophostic-based emotional healing, and now the Immanuel approach, I have become totally convinced that the Lord is *always* present, that the Lord *always* wants to bless us with life-giving gifts, that the Lord is *always* able to accomplish this, and that the Immanuel approach will almost¹ always (eventually) release these gifts and blessings *if the facilitator can help the person identify and resolve blockages that are sometimes present*. This is very encouraging, and it has brought me to the place of being very persistent with respect to troubleshooting in situations where the person does not initially get good results. It has also convinced me of the importance of adequate troubleshooting.

A. Engage with Jesus at Every Point in the Session, Regarding Everything that Comes Up:

As mentioned above, repeatedly coaching the person to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and ask Jesus for guidance and help – coaching her to engage with Jesus directly at every point in the session, regarding every issue that comes up, and regarding every difficulty that arises – sometimes prevents potentially problematic issues from even coming up. As also mentioned above, when the person does encounter questions, needs, and challenges, if the person immediately turns to Jesus in these situations – as soon as the questions, needs, and challenges come up – the session often just keeps moving forward without the perception of being stuck or the need for troubleshooting. However, sometimes the person tries to figure it out/resolve it on her own, and then eventually becomes stuck and needs help with troubleshooting. In these situations, the first thing I do with respect to troubleshooting is check to see whether the recipient can still perceive the Lord’s presence and whether she still has an interactive connection; and if these two pieces are still in place,² I simply coach her to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage with Him directly regarding the difficulty in front of her.

When I first started working with the Immanuel approach, this first, most basic troubleshooting tool actually surprised and puzzled me. I had initially thought that a session would always move forward smoothly as long as the person was still able to perceive the Lord’s presence and still had an interactive connection. But then I had a very interesting experience in a session I was facilitating for Pastor Patti. It seemed like something wasn’t working quite right – it seemed like the process wasn’t moving forward as I sensed it should be – and I was just trying to figure out

¹ On very rare occasions, a person will persistently choose to indulge in bitterness and/or self-pity and/or rebellion. This will block the Immanuel approach process, and cannot be resolved with any of the usual troubleshooting tools.

² If she is not able to perceive the Lord’s presence, and has lost her interactive connection with Him, I use Immanuel interventions, as described below, to restore her ability to perceive the Lord’s presence and reestablish an adequate interactive connection.

what was going on. As part of this, I innocently asked “can you still perceive the Lord’s presence?” thinking that maybe Patti had lost her interactive connection, and that this was the reason things were bogging down. I was actually quite surprised when she responded with something along the lines of, “Oh, yeah, Jesus. I had forgotten all about Him. Actually, He’s still standing right here beside me. I guess I got so focused on ____ (fill in the blank with some intense aspect of the issue being addressed), and so overwhelmed by ____ (fill in the blank with some combination of negative thoughts and emotions) that I totally forgot about Jesus.”³

After encountering this same phenomena in a number of sessions, I realized that people often forget about the Lord and/or lose track of the Lord, *even when He is still standing right beside them*. As each of these people explained to me, they would get so focused on some aspect of the issue they were working on, and/or so overwhelmed by the negative thoughts and emotions they were experiencing, that they would totally forget about Jesus. The primary intervention in these scenarios is to recognize the problem, verify that the person can still perceive Jesus’ presence, and then coach her to deliberately direct her attention back to Him. And sometimes I might also need to provide a little additional coaching to help her engage directly with Jesus regarding the problematic issue she’s wrestling with. For example, I might need to help her focus the problem, I might need to help her talk to Jesus about it, and I might need to remind her to explicitly ask Him for help.

Occasionally the person still perceives the Lord and has an interactive connection – she hasn’t even lost Him or forgotten about Him – but it just didn’t occur to her to turn to him, focus on Him, and ask Him for help. In these situations, all I need to do is provide the gentlest reminders to focus on Jesus and ask Him for help.⁴ Again, at every point in the session, regarding every issue that comes up, and regarding every difficulty that the recipient encounters, coach her to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, and engage with Him directly for guidance and help (there is no way to overemphasize this point).

Before leaving our discussion of coaching the person to engage directly with Jesus for connection, guidance, and assistance at every point in the session, I want to mention three variations that are common, subtle, and important.⁵

1) Notice that something important has come forward and then ask again: Sometimes the person does not perceive any response from Jesus when she focuses on Him and asks for help, but when I ask her to describe whatever is coming into her awareness she reports important new information and/or emotions coming forward. The person often does not perceive their

³ Used with permission.

⁴ This may seem silly, but you will be surprised by how often it happens. People are especially prone to this kind of problem with missing simple, obviously solutions when they are triggered to unresolved childhood trauma, so that their thinking and discernment are impaired (and this can sometimes be quite subtle).

⁵ At *any* point in the process where we ask the Lord for guidance/help, the first two of these variations can provide additional assistance with respect to recognizing and understanding whatever the Lord is sending forward. To put this another way: when we ask for guidance/help, *and we don’t receive the kind of response we’re expecting*, these two simple, basic variations can help the session keep moving forward.

meaning or importance until she describes them to me,⁶ and even after recognizing their significance, in most of these situations the person still does not *feel* that the new, important content is coming from the Lord. Even so, I encourage her to notice the meaning and importance of the new content, to consider the possibility that it is from the Lord (even though she can't feel the connection), and to continue focusing on the Lord, asking Him for help, and describing whatever comes into her awareness as long as important new information and/or emotions continue coming forward. In most of these situations, the different pieces coming forward eventually all fit together, and then we can see clearly that the Lord had indeed been leading the process.⁷

Therefore, one of the simple troubleshooting tools is to notice that this pattern is occurring, and then instead of engaging in other, more complicated troubleshooting interventions, simply continue to ask for guidance/help, and continue to coach the person to describe whatever comes into her awareness (as long as significant new information and/or emotions keep coming forward).

2) Help the person recognize what's in her heart, get words to describe it, and then share whatever she has formulated/articulated with Jesus: Occasionally I will be working with a person who perceives the Lord's presence, who appears to have an adequate interactive connection, and who seems to be focusing on Jesus and engaging directly with Jesus; but I don't see any movement regarding the question/need/challenge in front of us. In these situations, before trying anything more complicated I simply try a slower, more careful, more deliberate form of coaching the person to engage directly with Jesus. I coach her to carefully look through her internal awareness, and help her to notice, identify, and get words for whatever she finds there. Then I help her to present this content to Jesus as clearly, honestly, humbly, and vulnerably as possible. Usually we discover that there is some combination of fears, questions, concerns, and confusion that she had not even been fully aware of, and when I help her recognize this, get words for it, and then talk directly with Jesus about it the session begins to move forward again. Even if the person doesn't sense a clear, explicit answer from Jesus, *we almost always observe that something shifts and the session moves forward in some way* after the person gets words for what's in her heart and expresses them directly to Jesus.

For example, with careful, patient coaching the person might eventually recognize that she doesn't want the session to go forward because she's afraid of the shame she might feel – if she allows Jesus to move the session forward, she might find memories with unbearable shame. And when she is able to articulate these thoughts, and talk to the Lord about them, she discovers that this blocking fear subsides: “Jesus didn't say anything or do anything, but I just

⁶ See Chapter ****Fill in when this chapter is complete,**** “Describe everything that comes into your awareness,” for a careful discussion of this common, interesting, and important phenomena. ****This content is currently included in the “Describe everything that comes into your awareness” section of “The Immanuel Approach Revisited” essay.**

⁷ The *Charlie: “See this works!”* session provides a good example of this phenomena. At a number of points in the session we asked Jesus for specific guidance/help, and Charlie didn't perceive an answer, but when I coached him to describe “whatever” was coming into his awareness he reported new memories coming forward. Eventually the pieces all fit together, and we could then see that bringing the memories forward had been part of the Lord's guidance and help. More information regarding the *Charlie: “See this works!”* Live Ministry Series #27 training DVD can be obtained from the “Store” page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

don't feel so afraid about the shame any more. I think I'm okay with moving forward." Or careful, patient coaching might help the person recognize that she's ambivalent about cooperating because of what she might have to give up: "If I cooperate with Jesus, and let Him heal me, then I'll have to give up my [addictive] eating – I don't think I'm ready to do that." And when she's able to focus this ambivalence, get words for it, and talk to the Lord about it, she discovers that this blocking ambivalence loses its power: "I didn't hear any specific answer from Jesus, but the thought occurred to me that God won't take away my free will just because I get healed – I could still make my own choices with respect to eating. I don't know...(pause). It just seems true, and I feel more willing to cooperate."

One of these interventions might look something like this⁸:

Anna: "I'm focusing on Jesus and asking Him for help, but nothing's happening."

Dr. Lehman: "I want you to carefully scan through your internal awareness, and report whatever you notice – even if it doesn't seem to make sense or feel important. Notice any thoughts, emotions, images, or even physical sensations, and just describe them. They might be vague, they might not feel important, or they may seem like fragments that don't even fit together. Just describe whatever you notice."⁹

Anna: "Well,... (pause), maybe I feel a little anxious."

Dr. Lehman: "Try focusing on Jesus and asking for more clarity about the anxiety."

Anna: (long pause), "Actually...(pause), I think maybe I feel the anxiety *when* I focus on Jesus and ask for help."

Dr. Lehman: "If you're willing, lean into it. Focus on Jesus, ask Him for help, and let yourself feel the anxiety while you're doing it."

Anna: (long pause), "Well,...(pause), the thought comes to me that maybe there's part of me that doesn't want to do this – maybe I'm not sure I really want to do this?"

Dr. Lehman: "This might be difficult, and you can say 'no' if you want to, but if you're willing, keep focusing on Jesus, let yourself feel your ambivalence, and ask Him for more clarity."

Anna: (pause), "You know, as I'm talking about it, I'm realizing that I'm afraid Jesus is gonna ask me to do something I'm not able to do or that I don't want to do, and then He's gonna be disappointed with me."

⁸ This particular vignette has been constructed from many similar sessions, as a representative example.

⁹ Sometimes it takes several rounds of this kind of coaching before the person is finally able to observe and describe internal mental contents that *don't yet make sense or feel important*. See Chapter ****Fill in when this chapter is complete,**** "Describe everything that comes into your awareness," for additional discussion of this important phenomena. ****This content is currently included in the "Describe everything that comes into your awareness" section of "The Immanuel Approach Revisited" essay.**

Dr. Lehman: “Anna, what you just said – that’s really important! Would you be willing to focus on Jesus, talk directly to *Him* about what you just said to me, and then pay attention to how He responds?”

Anna: “Yeah. Okay. (Pause) Well, Lord. Like I just said. I’m afraid you’re gonna ask me to do impossible stuff – stuff I can’t do, and then You’re gonna be angry and disappointed with me.”

(pause, turning to Dr. Lehman), “You know, this reminds me of my parents, who were in ministry, and our church where everyone was always talking about missionaries...(goes on to describe many details).”

Dr. Lehman: “This is really important, and I’m glad you’re telling me about it, but would you be willing to focus on Jesus, tell Him about this stuff, and watch how He responds?”

Anna: “Yeah, okay... (pause). So, Jesus, there’s part of me that doesn’t want to follow You. I’m thinking about my parents, and the people in my church – they were always talking about missionaries who gave up everything, and martyrs who died for Jesus....(more details). I’m afraid You’re gonna tell me to do impossible stuff, and then be disappointed and angry when I can’t do it – if I talk to You, cooperate with You, or try to follow You, You’re just gonna make impossible demands, and then judge me and make me feel bad.”

Dr. Lehman: “So what’s Jesus doing? How’s He taking all this?”

Anna: “He’s just standing there, listening.”

Dr. Lehman: “Can you tell if He’s angry, or judgmental?”

Anna: “No, He’s not angry or judgmental – He’s just listening. Maybe He’s a little sad. It feels like He gets it. Like He understands.”

Dr. Lehman: “What about disappointment? Any sense that He’s disappointed with you?”

Anna: “No. No disappointment. Maybe now a little smile.”

Dr. Lehman: “So, where’s the fear and ambivalence? Where’re you at regarding ‘I don’t want to cooperate, I don’t want to hear what Jesus has to say?’”

Anna: “Well, He didn’t really give me an answer – He didn’t say anything – but somehow the fears don’t feel as big. I can still feel a little anxiety, but the fears about Him telling me to do hard, overwhelming stuff, and then being disappointed and angry – all that feels a lot less true. (Pause) I think I’m okay with trying some more of the Immanuel stuff – I think I feel more willing to cooperate.”

My current understanding regarding these situations is that the person is simply having trouble with recognizing/understanding her internal experience, getting words to describe it, and sharing it with Jesus. For people who are having trouble with recognizing and/or interpreting their internal experience (especially with respect to emotions), who are having trouble with finding words for their internal experience, and who feel very vulnerable with respect to letting anybody else know about their internal experience, this intervention is part of helping them

engage directly with Jesus.

3) Help the person share her heart with Jesus, even when things are flowing smoothly:

As just discussed, helping the person recognize what's in her heart, get words to describe it, and then talk directly to Jesus about it is a valuable basic troubleshooting tool. However, I have also found this simple intervention to be valuable even when nothing appears to be stuck.

When things are going well, the person is able to perceive the Lord's presence, she has a good interactive connection, and the session is moving forward, it's surprisingly easy to forget the "additional intimacy" step of deliberately sharing her heart with Him. So even when a session is going well I often find myself helping the person look into her heart, helping her to identify, name, and own what she finds there, and then helping her present it to Jesus as clearly, honestly, humbly, and vulnerably as possible. It's amazing how often we are with Jesus and forget to deliberately open our hearts to Him in this way, and taking this simple step will usually strengthen every aspect of the person's connection with the Lord.

There have been a number of times when I was facilitating a session and the person reported Jesus saying something along the lines of "Talk to me about everything," "I love it when you open your heart to me," "It blesses me when you tell me what's in your heart."

Before moving on to Immanuel interventions, I want to say this again: Coaching the person to turn to Jesus, focus on Jesus, engage with Jesus directly, and ask Jesus for guidance/help *at every point in the session, regarding every issue that comes up, and regarding every difficulty that arises*, is always the first step in troubleshooting with the Immanuel approach.