

## Supplementary material, Chapter 35b: The Immanuel Lifestyle

As the reader may remember, the second-to-last section in Chapter 3 describes the move from the Immanuel Approach for *emotional healing* to the Immanuel Approach for *life*. The first piece of this expansion is expanding the agenda for Immanuel Approach sessions to include many additional aspects of life, such as capacity building, maturity-skill mentoring, and spending time with Jesus as a friend, as opposed to restricting the agenda to just emotional healing. And the second piece of this expansion is expanding the context for Immanuel Approach interactive connections to every-day life, as opposed to just establishing these interactive connections in the context of special Immanuel Approach sessions. Starting with the Immanuel Approach for *emotional healing* and then adding these two expansions is an adequate initial/beginner's definition of the Immanuel Approach for *life*. And since I consider the Immanuel Approach for life to be the same thing as the Immanuel lifestyle, this is also an adequate *initial/beginner's* way to embrace the Immanuel lifestyle.

However, as you continue on your Immanuel Approach journey, I encourage you to increasingly embrace a more rigorous version of the Immanuel Approach for life, or Immanuel lifestyle. Throughout this book, I have talked about recalling past positive experiences and deliberately stirring up appreciation as a way to get our relational circuits on-line and warmed up. I have talked about how getting our relational circuits on-line and warmed up prepares us to connect with God. I have talked about how reconnecting with memories for specific past positive experiences with God provides an especially good starting point for establishing a fresh, current interactive connection with the Lord. I have talked about how Jesus—*Immanuel*—God with us—is *always* with us and wanting to connect with us. I have talked about how we should *always* be able to connect with Jesus' living presence, as long as any hindrances have been identified and resolved. I have talked about many troubleshooting principles and tools for identifying and resolving hindrances. I have talked about how traumatic memories are an especially important source of hindrances. I have talked about how we can deliberately, systematically build faith that will help us establish good, interactive connections with the Lord. And, again, I have talked about expanding the agenda to include all aspects of life and expanding the setting to include everywhere. When we integrate these truths into our beliefs, when we are deliberate about practicing these skills, and when we build these behaviors into our *day-to-day lives* as *habits*, we get what I call the doctor-Lehman-obsessively-thorough-take-no-prisoners version of the Immanuel Approach for life/Immanuel lifestyle.<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate goal of the Immanuel Approach for life/Immanuel lifestyle is getting us to the place

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<sup>1</sup>There are others in the wider Immanuel approach community who talk about the Immanuel lifestyle. Every version of the Immanuel lifestyle I have seen includes the most central core of taking interactive connections with the Lord outside of special sessions and into the rest of life, regular times of deliberately establishing interactive connection with the Lord, and also learning to be more consciously aware of spontaneous interactive connection. Again, what I am presenting here is the doctor-Lehman-obsessively-thorough-take-no-prisoners version of the Immanuel lifestyle.

where we perceive the Lord's presence, and abide in an interactive connection with Jesus, as our usual, normal, baseline condition as we walk through life each day.

**I. Components of the Immanuel lifestyle:** In my journey with this Immanuel Approach for life, or Immanuel lifestyle, building these principles and tools into my day-to-day life has translated into the following skills and habits that one could even call spiritual/psychological *disciplines*:

- Learning to be more and more consciously aware of my relational circuits, and taking responsibility for getting my relational circuits back on-line when I notice that they are off.
- Deliberately pointing my relational circuits toward the Lord.
- Regular times of deliberately establishing interactive connection with the Lord.
- Learning to be more consciously aware of spontaneous connections, and deliberately making more space for spontaneous connections when I notice them.
- Regular, ongoing troubleshooting to remove hindrances.
- Regular, ongoing work to resolve trauma, as an especially important part of removing hindrances. And,
- Regular, ongoing work to accumulate faith-building experiences and stories.

These skills and habits are the components of my thorough version of the Immanuel lifestyle, and I will now discuss each of these components at more length.

**A. Learning to be more consciously aware of your relational circuits, and taking responsibility for keeping them on-line:** As described in the discussion of appreciation in Chapter 6, having your relational circuits on-line prepares your brain to connect with God. The more your relational circuits are on-line and strongly active, the more easily you will be able to connect with the Lord and the stronger your connection will be. Therefore, part of the Immanuel lifestyle is deliberately *practicing the skill* and *building the habit* of monitoring/observing/being consciously aware of your relational circuits – deliberately learning to be *mindful* of your relational circuits. And when you notice that they're off, take responsibility for getting them back on. This spiritual/psychological discipline will help you to spend more and more of your time in a place from which it is easy to perceive God's presence and connect with him.

My earlier book, *Outsmarting Yourself*,<sup>2</sup> has a list of questions that will indicate whether or

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2. Karl Lehman, *Outsmarting Yourself: Catching Your Past Invading the Present and What to Do about It* second edition (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014).

not your relational circuits are on-line. For example, “Do I feel connected to \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the name of the person you are interacting with or thinking about)?” “Do I *want* to be connected to \_\_\_\_\_ (again, fill in the name of the person you are interacting with or thinking about)?” “Do I experience her as a source of joy, or as a problem to be solved/resource to be used?” “Am I glad to be with her?” “Am I aware of her true heart?” “Do I feel compassionate concern regarding what she is thinking and feeling?” “Am I patient and tolerant, or am I impatient and irritable?” “Can I easily think of past positive experiences with this person, and do I feel the positive emotions that should be associated with these memories?” “Can I easily think of things I appreciate about this person?” “Do I *feel* gratitude as I think about these specifics that I particularly appreciate?” And, “Do I perceive the relationships involved to be more important than any problem I might be trying to solve?”

One of the best ways to develop the skill and build the habit of being more consciously aware of your relational circuits is to look over the complete list of questions,<sup>3</sup> pick the six or seven questions that resonate most with your own experience, write these out on a 3x5 card that you keep in your shirt pocket or purse, and then pull this card out and go over the questions whenever you feel particularly good or particularly bad.<sup>4</sup> If you do this regularly for even a few weeks, you will start to *recognize what it feels like* when your relational circuits are on and when they are off, and you will start to *become much more consciously aware* of whether your relational circuits are on or off.

When you notice that your relational circuits are off, you can take responsibility for getting them back on by employing one or more of the following interventions: receiving attunement, calming exercises, deliberate appreciation, and strategic humor. Deliberate appreciation has already been thoroughly discussed in Chapter 6 of this book, and Chapters 17 through 23 in *Outsmarting Yourself* provide detailed, practical discussions of the remaining three interventions. These interventions are simple enough that most people can begin to get results with a few weeks of practice.

*Be deliberate about practicing these skills, and build these behaviors into your everyday life as habits.*

**B. Deliberately pointing your relational circuits toward the Lord:** A closely related part of the Immanuel lifestyle is *practicing the skills* and *building the habits* of pointing your relational circuits towards the Lord – practicing the skills and building the habits of deliberately reminding yourself that God is with you throughout each day and thinking about what that means, deliberately remembering past positive experiences with God, deliberately stirring up gratitude towards God, deliberately thanking God for the things you appreciate, and deliberately sending “I’m glad to be with you” messages to the Lord. Note that these little

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<sup>3</sup>The complete list of questions, presented in Chapter 15 of *Outsmarting Yourself*, includes those listed here plus a number of additional questions. Furthermore, Chapter 16 of *Outsmarting Yourself* provides explanations and examples to clarify each of the questions.

<sup>4</sup>An alternative is to set your smart phone to remind you every one to two hours, and then pull out the card and go over the questions whenever the reminder chime goes off.

pieces can be done in many brief moments throughout the day, without actually making the space and taking the time for all of the steps for establishing a full interactive connection.

In my own journey with the Immanuel lifestyle, I have noticed a fun and encouraging development as I have been practicing with this particular discipline. As I have steadily grown in these skills, as I have steadily built these habits, and as I have steadily eliminated more blockages, these little moments of pointing my relational circuits towards the Lord now often result in spontaneous perceptions of his presence and spontaneous moments of interactive connection. They are usually more subtle and brief than when I take more time and space to deliberately go through all of the steps, but I'm still thrilled to be experiencing an increasing frequency of spontaneous God connections.

*Again, be deliberate about practicing these skills, and build these behaviors into your everyday life as habits.*

**C. Regular times of establishing interactive connection with the Lord:** Another part of the Immanuel lifestyle is practicing the skill and building the habit of *regularly* establishing good, strong interactive connections with the Lord. Find a quiet space, take at least ten to fifteen minutes, go through the Immanuel approach steps for establishing an interactive connection, and then spend a few minutes just enjoying the Lord's tangible, living, loving, interactive, personal presence.<sup>5</sup> Also, in addition to using these tools in your personal quiet times, try to include regular times with a prayer partner so that you can benefit from the ways in which your brain works best in community.

**D. Learning to be more consciously aware of *spontaneous* connections, and deliberately making more space for spontaneous connections:** A closely related part of the Immanuel lifestyle is learning to be much more consciously aware of spontaneous perception and connection. As I just mentioned, practicing the skill and building the habit of keeping your relational circuits on and pointing them towards the Lord will increasingly result in spontaneous episodes of interactive connection with the Lord. My perception is that regularly taking the time and space to *deliberately* establish good, lasting connection will also contribute to these same *spontaneous* episodes. So as you practice the pieces that increasingly result in spontaneous perception and connection, you can also practice the skill and build the habit of watching/observing/noticing when you are experiencing spontaneous awareness of God's presence and interactive connection – practice the skill and build the habit of being more *mindful* of perceiving God's presence and having an interactive connection.

And when you do notice spontaneous awareness and connection, try to make more space for it. If you are engaged in a task that requires only a very small portion of your attention

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<sup>5</sup>The interactive journaling exercises described in *Joyful Journey* can be very helpful when using these first several steps in the Immanuel Approach process on your own. See Chapter 36 for additional comments regarding the use of these journaling exercises in this context. (E. James Wilder, Anna Kang, John Loppnow, and Sungshim Loppnow, *Joyful Journey: Listening to Immanuel* (East Peoria, IL: Shepherd's House Inc, 2015).)

bandwidth, then lean into the spontaneous interactive connection with God by deliberately focusing all the rest of your attention on it. (For example, if you are walking, while also listening to music on your smart phone and thinking about your grocery list, then take out your ear buds, stop thinking about your grocery list, and deliberately focus any attention not absolutely needed for walking on perceiving the Lord's presence, on deliberately appreciating the Lord's presence, and on participating in as much interaction as possible.) And if you are doing something that takes a lot more of your attention, like reading a book or preparing a presentation, pause for a moment or two to focus more attention on the spontaneous connection, to acknowledge it, and to appreciate it more deliberately. And then when you return the majority of your attention to your initial task, try to enjoy the Lord's presence in the background.

In my own journey with the Immanuel lifestyle, this last piece of becoming aware of a spontaneous connection even while I'm engaged in something that is already taking a lot of my attention is new. It just started happening in maybe the last six to eight months, and I'm still trying to get words for it. The best I have so far is that it's like Charlotte and I sitting in our livingroom together, each of us focused primarily on whatever it is that we're reading, but still also aware of each other's presence. I'm not actively engaging with her, but I am aware of her presence and there is a very subtle interactive connection. For example, if Charlotte looks up at me I notice the movement in my peripheral vision and then look up at her. Or if Charlotte chuckles, I say, "What? What was so funny? Let me in on the fun." (and it's nice).

*Once again, be deliberate about practicing these skills, and build these behaviors into your everyday life as habits.*

**E. Ongoing troubleshooting to remove hindrances:** All of us have blockages that hinder us from perceiving God's presence and from connecting with God. Therefore, part of an Immanuel lifestyle is regular, deliberate, persistent troubleshooting to find and remove blockages. One simple way to do this is to have regular Immanuel Approach sessions in which you ask, "Lord, please reveal to me any blockages that are hindering my ability to perceive your presence and connect with you." Report whatever comes into your awareness, and then ask your facilitator and the Lord to help you dismantle any blockages that are identified.

If you have trouble identifying blockages that need to be resolved, I can offer a few suggestions:

- Watch for and dismantle judgment:** Judgment is an amazingly common hindrance to connecting with the Lord. Whenever you slip into judging others, you are probably triggered, your relational circuits are definitely off (one-hundred percent, guaranteed), and it is definitely getting in the way of connecting with God. So be ruthless with respect to patterns of judgement in your life. Deliberately watch for them, and when you find them

ask the Lord to help you resolve them.<sup>6</sup>

- Watch for and dismantle patterns of self-protection: All of us have patterns of self-protection, where we feel some form of emotional discomfort, but then focus on making the pain stop instead of dealing with the underlying issues. As you watch for and ask the Lord to help you dismantle these patterns of self-protection, it will become easier and easier to find and resolve the underlying issues. Many (most? all?) “underlying issues” interfere with your ability to connect with Jesus in one way or another. So as you find and resolve the underlying issues, you will simultaneously resolve any associated hindrances. (See Chapter 35c for *many* examples of how “underlying issues” can interfere with one’s ability to connect with the Lord.)

- Address persistent sin and/or sin that has not yet been confessed and forgiven: This one is a bit of a no-brainer. Persistent sin (or any sin that has not yet been confessed and forgiven) will hinder your connection with the Lord. The good news is that you don’t need to stand up in church and confess to the whole congregation in order to start moving forward. (The enemy will try to intimidate you with terrifying scenarios regarding what you need to do in order to move forward with respect to sin.) Rather, start with talking directly to Jesus about it. And I don’t mean repeating over and over and over how sorry you are, and promising to stop. Rather, invite Jesus to be with you, and just talk to him about your sin issue(s). Get words for everything that is in your heart regarding the sin you are struggling with – your deepest fears, your honest questions, your discouragement, your regret, your guilt, your shame, your hopes, your confusion – *everything* – and share all of this directly with Jesus. Most people are surprised by how helpful this is, and also surprised by how it is much less scary and much less painful than they were expecting.

**F. Ongoing work to resolve trauma, as an especially important source of hindrances:**

Many of our painful memories have at least some component that gets transferred onto God; and as this toxic content gets transferred onto God, it hinders our connections with him by distorting our perceptions of his character and heart. Furthermore, other hindrances and blockages, such as persistent guilt and tenacious bitterness, can also be anchored in underlying traumatic memories. Therefore, an important part of ongoing troubleshooting is ongoing, deliberate, persistent work to resolve these painful memories.

For example, as part of a social-justice family and social-justice church during my 1960's childhood, I was often exposed to angry activists. Often I just saw these people on TV, but we sometimes had angry activists preaching at our church on Sunday morning or speaking at other church meetings. There was even a movie of the life of Jesus in which he was portrayed as one of these angry activists – he always seemed to be angry, and it seemed like he spent

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<sup>6</sup>If you are feeling particularly courageous, you can ask your spouse and/or children and/or close friends to help spot your patterns of judgment.

most of his time stomping around Palestine judging and rebuking people.<sup>7</sup>

These social-justice activists were angry and non-relational, they often seemed to blame everything on middle-class Americans, and no matter what we were already doing and already giving, they never seemed to be satisfied – no matter what we were already doing and already giving, they would always demand more. Furthermore, they would often be holding a bible and quoting Jesus as part of their accusations and demands. They would read verses such as,

“Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons! For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me anything to drink. I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me no clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me...I assure you, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment....”<sup>8</sup>

And then they would clearly imply that the needy people cared for by their organization were “the least of these” referred to by the Lord. No matter what we were already doing and already giving, if we didn’t give *more* time and *more* money to support their particular project, we would be going to hell.

For the adults in the congregation, who could understand these verses in the context of Jesus’ wider message of love and relationship, it was appropriate to share Jesus’ challenge to care for “the least of these.” But this content was definitely toxic for me as a small child. (Even for the adults, it would have been much better if the social-justice activists had brought this message without the angry, non-relational judgements, accusations, and demands. And I concluded that God was like these angry activists, since they explicitly claimed to represent the Lord, and they were reading the *words of Jesus* from the *Bible*.) From my perspective as a small child, the piece I especially got stuck on was that there were always, *always, always* more needy people that we were not yet caring for. No matter how hard I worked or how much I gave, I could never take care of them all, and I would certainly, inevitably hear the King say, “...when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.” The whole package seemed chronically, painfully hopeless and frightening.

For many years, whenever I would read or hear a certain kind of angry-social-justice

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<sup>7</sup>When I tracked down this movie and researched details regarding it’s production, I discovered that the actor who portrayed Jesus was, in real life, an angry young activist! He was a communist activist who actually did judge and blame the middle class for most of the problems in the world! So it doesn’t surprise me that this message came through in the film. (Wikipedia entry, “The Gospel According to St. Matthew (film),” accessed June 23, 2017.)

<sup>8</sup>Matt 26:41-43.

message, these memories would get activated and negative, distorted perceptions about God's character and heart would come forward. It would feel true that God was angry and non-relational (just like the angry activists); it would feel true that he was blaming me for all of the problems in the world because I was a white middle-class American (just like the angry activists); it would feel true that God was never satisfied, no matter what I was doing or how much I was giving (just like the angry activists); it would feel true that God was always demanding more (just like the angry activists); and it would feel true that God would eventually send me to eternal punishment, no matter how hard I worked and no matter how much I gave.

I don't think it's too hard to see how this kind of trauma and these kinds of distorted perceptions about God's character and heart would create hindrances between me and God.

The *good news* is that we have healing tools that work. These stuck, hopeless, frightened child places in my heart have been getting healed as I have been working with the Lord to resolve these traumatic memories. And as the underlying memories have been getting resolved, these negative, distorted perceptions regarding God's character and heart have been feeling less and less true.

This is just one example, but hindrances that are anchored in underlying traumatic memories are actually quite common. We *all* have them, they are *everywhere*, they are surprisingly difficult to spot, and they exert huge-but-sneaky negative effects on our relationships with God. In fact, these memory-anchored blockages are so common and so important that I have devoted an entire chapter to discussing them at greater length. (See chapter 35c for additional discussion, and more than twenty additional examples.)

Yet another reason for embracing a lifestyle of ongoing, persistent work to resolve traumatic memories is that this will improve your baseline relational circuit status. As you keep shoveling away – resolving more and more old wounds and bruises – you will spend less and less time subtly (or not so subtly) triggered, and you will therefore spend more and more time with your relational circuits on-line. And having your relational circuits on-line more and more of the time will make it easier and easier to be aware of and connect with the living presence of Immanuel.

**G. Deliberately accumulating faith-building experiences and stories:** Yet another part of the Immanuel lifestyle is to steadily build faith in God's character, heart, presence, and competence by deliberately accumulating experiences and stories that demonstrate God's trustworthiness.

***1. Your own positive experiences with interactive God-connections:*** The first contribution for this part of the plan is to deliberately accumulate a pile of your own positive experiences with interactive God connections. This can include interactive God-connections in the context of memories for past positive experiences, interactive God-connections in the context of positive experiences/gratitude in the present, interactive God-connections in the context of working with traumatic memories (many report especially profound God connections when the Lord meets them in traumatic memories),



and interactive God-connections when you're in pain and receive attunement from the Lord in the present.

In my personal journey with the Immanuel lifestyle, full Immanuel Approach sessions with someone facilitating for me have been the most important source of my own positive experiences with interactive God-connections. I have come to know Jesus' presence, voice, character, and heart in a whole new way as I have experienced the gentle, wise, creative, careful, beautiful, surprising, elegant, helpful, life-giving, effective, profound, amazing interventions he comes up with in these sessions.

At this point I would also like to include a detailed example of connecting with Jesus in the context of a positive memory. For those of you who have not yet had much experience with the Immanuel approach, this will give you a better picture of what positive-memory interactive connections can look like. And this story will also help your right hemispheres to *feel* how powerful the simple interactive-connection-in-the-context-of-a-positive-memory exercise can be.

This story actually unfolds in three layers. The first layer was just a particularly beautiful positive memory, not yet including the awareness of God's presence. I was doing a medical school away-rotation in Charleston, South Carolina, and I went out very early one morning to walk the beach at sunrise. There was no-one else on the vast, wide beach, the glowing colors in the eastern sky were doubled as they were reflected off the glassy-calm surface of the water, and there wasn't a single footprint on the wide, wet sand that the receding tide had just washed and smoothed. As I walked along the beach I noticed something dark on the sand in the distance. As I got closer, I could see that the sand was covered with small, dark objects, evenly spaced maybe six inches apart, and extending maybe 100 feet in width and several hundred yards in length – about the area of three football fields. As I approached even more closely, I was amazed and excited to discover that I was seeing a huge flock of migrating tree swallows, sitting on the sand and chittering quietly to each other.

Now tree swallows are beautiful. They have undersides that are dazzlingly white, and the top half of their bodies are an intense, deep, beautiful iridescent blue. I had my binoculars with me, and by the time I got within thirty or forty feet of the nearest swallows, I could see their beautiful blue and white markings absolutely glowing in the light from the sun that had come up out of the ocean only a few minutes earlier. I paused for a few minutes to just take in the glory of the sunrise and the one-hundred to two-hundred thousand tree swallows sitting in front of me, and then I inched closer and closer. When I was maybe fifteen or twenty feet away, the whole flock rose into the air with an impressive whirring of wings, and I just kept walking.

They remained within ten feet of the ground, swooping and diving and chittering, often flying within inches of my face and at times gently disturbing my hair as they flew past. I was walking through the middle of a gigantic cloud of tree swallows, and it was one of the most amazing, wonderful nature experiences of my life. It was like being inside a National Geographic nature documentary.

The second layer of the story came when I used this memory as the positive memory for an Immanuel group exercise. I described the memory to the others in my small group, and after naming the aspects that I especially appreciated, I focused on the part of the memory where I was walking through the cloud of swallows, and then welcomed Jesus to be with me in the memory and asked Him to help me perceive His presence. Immediately, I had this mental image of Jesus walking beside me, looking this way and that with this huge grin and an expression of wonder and joy on his face. And then he turns to me, gesturing excitedly towards the thousands of swallows flying around us, and exclaims, “Karl, can you believe this?!” And we’re both just totally excited together, about being in the middle of one of the wonders of creation.

Finally, the third layer of the story unfolded at an Immanuel seminar that Charlotte and I were providing to a church group in Winnipeg. As part of the conference we broke the crowd into small groups and went through the first steps of the Immanuel approach – just the positive memory, appreciation, and connection with Jesus steps. After making sure that everybody else was getting started okay, I joined one of the groups and decided to use this memory (with Jesus included) as my initial positive memory. After describing the memory as I just described it above, I focused on the part where Jesus was walking beside me and asked, “Jesus, help me to perceive you in this memory as a living and interactive presence, as opposed to just a memory.”

I had used the Jesus-included version of this memory for my initial positive memory before, and usually at this point in the exercise I would just get a subtle sense of Jesus’ renewed living, interactive presence with me in the context of the familiar memory images. But this time I suddenly had an image of Jesus standing behind me, leaning over my shoulder and watching the memory with me. It was like I was sitting in my chair at the seminar and watching a video of Jesus and me walking through the cloud of swallows, and then the living, interactive presence of Jesus was looking over my shoulder, watching it with me. Like two close friends remembering a really special experience that they had shared together. It was like Jesus was looking over my shoulder and saying, “Yeah, that was really cool wasn’t it?” And I could somehow sense that he had really enjoyed being there with me and sharing the experience as friends.

One of the thematic pains throughout my childhood was having very few friends. So when Jesus shows up and acts like a friend – when he shows up and acts like he just enjoys being with me – it really does something wonderful deep in my heart.

**2. *Watching God/Jesus work in sessions you facilitate for others:*** Watching Jesus do cool, beautiful, amazing stuff in sessions you facilitate for others will also contribute to your steadily growing faith in God’s character, heart, presence, and competence.

In my own journey with the Immanuel lifestyle, watching Jesus work with others has been particularly significant because I facilitate so many sessions. I have come to know the Lord in a whole new way as I have encountered his presence in hundreds of my own Immanuel sessions, and as I have watched others encounter his presence in the thousands of sessions that I have facilitated – I have come to know Jesus’ presence, voice, character,

and heart in a whole new way as I have experienced and observed him working with so many different problems, as I have experienced and observed him responding to so many different situations, and as I have experienced and observed the gentle, wise, creative, careful, brilliant, beautiful, surprising, elegant, helpful, life-giving, effective, profound, amazing interventions he comes up with.

The story about my sessions with Eileen from Chapter 25 provides a good example of building faith in God's character, heart, presence, and competence by watching Jesus work with others. As you will remember,<sup>9</sup> Jesus demonstrated that he is a brilliant therapist, with a very high level of skill and excellent clinical judgment (not to mention supernatural knowledge). He already knew about the memories from when Eileen's mother was critically ill in the hospital, even though these events had never been mentioned; he made a very wise judgment call at the end of the initial session, in directing us to wait before trying to work with these particular memories; he was obviously very skilled in building trust and capacity with the child part as she spent 18 months sitting in His lap; he obviously made the right call with respect to how long Eileen should wait before working on this material; and he did a beautiful, gentle, extremely effective job of leading us through the healing work when Eileen finally did go to the memories. Again, I'm convinced that this healing work would have been much more difficult if I had tried to get Eileen to go to these memories prematurely. We would have encountered complicated problems with inadequate capacity and dissociative disconnection, and the whole process would have been slower, messier, and much more painful.

I'm sure you can understand how watching the Lord do this kind of work could increase your faith. Watching Jesus do this kind of work bolsters your confidence in his goodness, in his clinical judgment, in his competence, in his skill, in his trustworthiness, etc. And part of the deal with this kind of faith-building experience is that it doesn't just happen once. It happens over and over and over again. That's part of what contributes to the end result of trust and faith – when you see this kind of thing over and over and over again, you actually come to *expect* that God is going to be this way.

The story from Chapter 25 about one of my demonstration sessions with Rita provides another example of building faith in God's character, heart, presence, and competence by watching Jesus work with others. As you will remember,<sup>10</sup> Jesus displayed complete mastery as a teacher and therapist, demonstrating exceptional skill, supernatural knowledge, unique authority, and dazzling strategic genius. First of all, Rita asked a

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<sup>9</sup>If you are not remembering this story, please review it quickly (Chapter 25, pages 331-334). You will be able to *feel* the point being made here much more powerfully if you are remembering the details from this striking true-story example.

<sup>10</sup>Again, if you are not remembering this story, please review it quickly (Chapter 25, pages 334-338). You will be able to *feel* the point being made here much more powerfully if you are remembering the details.

number of good questions throughout the session, and Jesus answered each of her questions with exactly the same core insights I had been about to offer. But his answers were always more precise, more elegant, and more carefully nuanced than what I had been about to offer, and he didn't repeat Himself or get distracted by tangential digressions. Furthermore, Jesus' answers came with a unique authority, so that Rita immediately knew that they were true, accepted them as adequate, and was able to move on. We were all impressed with the content, with the delivery, and with the authority of Jesus' answers to Rita's questions.

Second, there was the larger point Jesus was making about facilitating – that we should let him drive with respect to all non-process aspects of Immanuel Approach sessions. He made the exact same point *six times* in the course of the session, which was both dramatic and humorous for those of us in the room with him. And in addition to making his point cognitively (we recognized the point he was making, and discussed the theory), the repeated demonstrations provided laboratory experience. (Jesus seems to be aware of the research showing that the combination of cognitive explanation and laboratory experience is 300% more effective than either alone.)<sup>11</sup> We were all impressed with his thoroughness and cleverness in making his “let Jesus drive” teaching point.

Finally, there was the strategic-genius maneuver right at the end of the session. As you will remember, Rita was in the middle of working on an important unresolved issue, and the Lord had just taken her to what looked like the key root memory. It all looked fairly straight forward – she just needed to work through a few unfinished processing tasks, the key root trauma would then be resolved, and we would be home free. But then Rita suddenly said, “I can't do this....This memory is too big – it's too much – I don't know how to handle this....I feel like I'm not able to work through this one – I can't do it.” We only had about twenty minutes left before the end of the training session, and Rita seemed to be completely stuck. Even after taking some time to think and listen for guidance, I had *zero* ideas for how we could quickly deal with her lack of the capacity and maturity skills needed to work through the traumatic memory that she was now perceiving to be impossible and overwhelming. Fortunately, we were using the Immanuel Approach, so I just coached Rita to focus on Jesus and ask Him for guidance and help.

After a long pause, Rita reported that she was now in a completely different memory. This new memory was clearly much less complicated and much less intense, and Rita seemed ready and willing to work with it, but it also seemed to be completely unrelated to the strategic traumatic memory in which she had just been stuck. I was a bit puzzled and disappointed. (I had hoped that the Lord would have some clever plan for working through the larger memory that seemed to be so key to the issue we had been working with, instead of just saying, “I can't help her get through that one either, so let's just go find something smaller and easier.”) But I figured we might as well work with what we had, so I kept coaching her to ask Jesus for guidance and help regarding the new memory.

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<sup>11</sup>See Chapter 21 (page 260) for a brief description of this fascinating research.

She worked through this new memory quickly and easily, and then with about five minutes left, she popped out with, “Oh, wow! Now Jesus is taking me back to the other memory, and I’m just realizing that the key issue in the little memory we just resolved is the exact same as the key issue in the other memory that felt like it was too big for me.” After pausing for a few moments to think about what she had just said, the rest of us were all able to see the connection; but none of us had caught this until she had pointed it out. Rita then went on to explain, “The main reason the bigger memory felt like too much for me was that I didn’t know how to go about working through the situation – I didn’t feel like I could handle such an intense memory when I had no idea regarding how to work with it. So Jesus took me to a smaller memory with the same issue, and then showed me what to do and helped me practice in the less intense memory.” Now that she had a clear battle plan for how to work through the particular issue in question, *and had even been able to practice* in the context of the smaller, simpler memory, she willingly went with Jesus back to the memory that had previously felt impossibly difficult and intense. And the Lord led her through the unfinished processing tasks, so that she fully resolved the key root memory and the core issue, all within the last five minutes of session time.

**\*\*Note alternative text in comment file\*\***

Un-Be-Lievable! Strategic genius!

All of us in the training group were looking at each other, and thinking, “We would never have been able to do that!” First of all, we had not even understood the details regarding why Rita was stuck. And we had not recognized what Jesus was doing or understood his plan, even as he was executing it right in front of us. We all knew we could never have come up with this plan on our own. Furthermore, even if we had come up with Jesus’ brilliant plan, we would not have known about the smaller, easier parallel memory with the exact same issue. (Remember, Rita and the rest of us didn’t even recognize that the smaller memory had the same core issue until *after* it had been resolved and Jesus had taken her back to the original memory.) When all the pieces fell into place, the core memory got resolved in the last five minutes of session time, and the dust settled so that we could finally realize what had happened, we were in awe. (Some of us were sitting there, with our mouths literally hanging open with amazement.) This was one of the most effective, efficient, brilliant, elegant, sophisticated, creative therapy interventions that any of us had ever seen.

I’m sure you can imagine how watching Jesus do this kind of work in hundreds, or even thousands of sessions, would really start to convince you that he is good, that he’s always present, that he is competent, that he is careful, that he is kind, that he is dependable, that he is trustworthy, that he has the authority and power needed to deal with any situation we might encounter, that he is wise, that he is smart, that he is skillful, etc, etc, etc.

**3. *Stories from others who are using the Immanuel approach:*** Stories from others who are using the Immanuel Approach just provide more of the same. More and more and more and more stories of Jesus being loving, always present, gentle, attuning, wise, creative, careful, kind, competent, beautiful, safe, surprising, elegant, helpful, dependable, alive, powerful, trustworthy, life-giving, effective, profound, and amazing. In my

experience, hearing so many of these stories tangibly affects my relationship with the Lord. These stories cause me to trust him more, to like him more, to feel more safe in his presence, and to have more desire to be with him. And these stories increase my desire to share Jesus with others.

Note that this is another reason why it's important and valuable to formulate an Immanuel story narrative after a good Immanuel experience, and then to be deliberate about sharing the story with others. This is one of the ways we can build each others' faith in the goodness of God's character and heart.

**II. Accumulating spiritual fruit:** Not surprisingly, persisting with an Immanuel lifestyle produces a steadily increasing pile of spiritual fruit. This has certainly been my experience over the past fifteen-plus years as I have been very deliberate and persistent in embracing an Immanuel lifestyle.

First and foremost, I have experienced a steadily increasing, progressing, maturing connection with the Lord. As mentioned above, I have become increasingly aware of God's presence and love as a background reality throughout the average day, even when I'm not doing anything deliberate. And when I make a deliberate effort to connect with the Lord: I have become able to perceive his tangible presence and connect with him more easily and more quickly; I have become able to perceive his presence and connect with him more frequently and more predictably; I have become able to perceive his tangible presence with more clarity, strength, and richness; the sense of God's presence as a person has slowly but steadily increased; the perception that my communication with God is interactive has slowly but steadily increased; and my feeling that God is attuning to me has grown slowly but steadily stronger.

I have also experienced a steadily increasing faith in the goodness and trustworthiness of God's character and heart. In general, at baseline, it *feels* true that God is good, that God loves me, that God is smiling, that God is with me, that God is *glad* to be with me, that God is hearing me and understanding me, that God is attuning to me, that God has good plans for me, that God is patient and forgiving, etc. I used to know, cognitively-theoretically, that all of this was *supposed* to be true; but it didn't actually *feel* true. Now, on the average day, all of these truths about God's character and heart actually *feel* true. Furthermore, I have been increasingly able to hold onto these truths about God's character and heart even during times of difficulty and suffering: I have experienced a steady decrease in the frequency of triggered, distorted, negative reactions towards the Lord; it takes larger and larger triggers to activate these negative reactions; when they do get activated, the triggered, distorted content is not as intense or compelling as it used to be; and when these negative reactions do get triggered, I am able to subdue them more quickly and easily.

I have noticed an increasing ability to receive guidance from the Lord. I have observed steadily increasing, tangible progress with respect to areas of persistent sin. And I have experienced steadily increasing appreciation for scripture.

Furthermore, I have noticed a steady increase in the classic fruits of the Spirit described by Paul

in Galatians 5:22. You can ask Charlotte to see what she thinks, but my perception is that deliberately pursuing an Immanuel lifestyle over the past fifteen-plus years has resulted in steadily increasing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And, again, the most important spiritual fruit has been a steadily increasing, progressing, maturing connection with the living presence of Jesus. (If you are using this chapter as a stand-alone resource regarding the Immanuel lifestyle, please see Chapter 29, pages 395-408, for a detailed description of how my connection with the Lord has steadily grown as I have persisted with an increasingly rich Immanuel lifestyle. The many concrete specifics from my personal journey will help you get a better intuitive, emotional feel for this most important aspect of the spiritual fruit that comes with embracing the Immanuel Approach as a way of life.)

My expectation is that you will be blessed with spiritual benefits much like those I have experienced, as you embrace the Immanuel Approach as a way of life and as you persist with this lifestyle over time.

**III. Why *lifestyle* is important:** The more common human response is to only apply these principles, tools, and exercises on infrequent special occasions, such as summer camps, marriage retreats, or THRIVE conferences. Or to just apply these principles, tools, and exercises when in crisis. In contrast, the Immanuel *lifestyle* is deliberately practicing these skills and applying these principles and tools as part of everyday life. The Immanuel *lifestyle* is deliberately building the *habits* of practicing these skills and including these behaviors as regular parts of *every day life*.

**A. Healing and growth challenges that are too big to accomplish quickly:** There are some tasks that are simply too big to be finished quickly – really huge tasks that can only be accomplished with disciplines and lifestyle. No matter how motivated you are or how much grit you have, you can't just get up from years of sedentary life and run a marathon. The only way to run a marathon is to embrace the discipline of regular exercise, and to build the habit of regular exercise into a lifestyle that you maintain for many months. No matter how smart you are or how hard you work, you can't become a doctor by cramming for a week. The only way to become a doctor is to embrace the discipline of regular study, and to build the habit of regular study into a lifestyle that you maintain for many years. And no matter how gifted you are or how passionately you love music, you can't learn to play the piano in a week. The only way to become a pianist is to embrace the discipline of regular practice, and to build the habit of regular practice into a lifestyle that you maintain for years.

Similarly, there are healing and growth challenges that are simply too big to be accomplished quickly. This has certainly been true in my own experience. For example, I was only able to get to my current level of positive connection with the Lord by shoveling out many memory-anchored blockages over time and by accumulating many positive experiences over time, and this was only possible through embracing a lifestyle of regular healing work and regular times of positive Immanuel connection. Also, there have been thematic issues that have definitely needed the lifestyle approach. For example, my childhood was full of many hundreds of small traumas that contributed to my long-standing pattern of subtle anxiety always

smouldering in the background, and shoveling away at these memories through a lifestyle of ongoing healing has been the only way to make a real dent in the pile.

Furthermore, there are sometimes memories and/or issues that are so big, so difficult, and so intense that they can only be uncovered and resolved after practicing skills, nurturing connection, accumulating faith, building capacity, and dismantling self-protective defenses as part of disciplines and lifestyle-habits over time. This has also been true in my own experience. There have been particularly difficult memories and issues that I have only been able to deal with after *building* capacity and connection and faith and skill, and *dismantling* self-protective defenses, through years of Immanuel Approach disciplines and lifestyle habits.

**B. “Accidental” resolution of memory-anchored blockages:** As will be discussed at great length in the next chapter, blockages that are anchored in underlying traumatic memories are very common and very important. As will also be discussed in the next chapter, we seldom start with recognizing these memory-anchored blockages, and then going after them deliberately because we realize how they are hindering our connection with God. Rather, we usually resolve these strategic hindrances to our connection with the Lord *accidentally*, in the process of resolving traumatic memories that we are addressing for some other reason. Therefore, the best way to resolve the very common, very important blockages that are anchored in underlying traumatic memories is to embrace a *lifestyle* of ongoing Immanuel Approach emotional healing – a lifestyle of 1) deliberately watching for triggering in our lives; and 2) making space for regular Immanuel Approach healing work to address the underlying trauma. Then, as we regularly do healing work, we will occasionally stumble onto (and resolve) memory-anchored blockages.

**C. Maximizing *average* connection with the Lord:** One benefit of building these lifestyle habits into our everyday lives is that our *average* connection with the Lord will dramatically increase. Occasional mountain top experiences at summer camps, at THRIVE conferences, or when you have major healing breakthroughs are nice, but these don’t do much for our average level of connection if we come away from the mountain top and quickly sink back down to a baseline that includes a lot of time being subtly triggered, with our relational circuits mostly off and no awareness of the Lord’s presence. Our average level of connection will still be low, and this is our day-to-day reality, which means that most of our lives will still be spent with minimal perception of the Lord’s presence and minimal interactive connection.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, if we deliberately practice skills and build lifestyle habits that increase our connection with the Lord during our average, normal, day-to-day lives (when we’re *not* at summer camp, not at a THRIVE conference, and not having a major healing breakthrough), then our average level of connection will increase dramatically. Which means that we will spend a lot more of our time perceiving the Lord’s presence and enjoying an interactive connection with him.

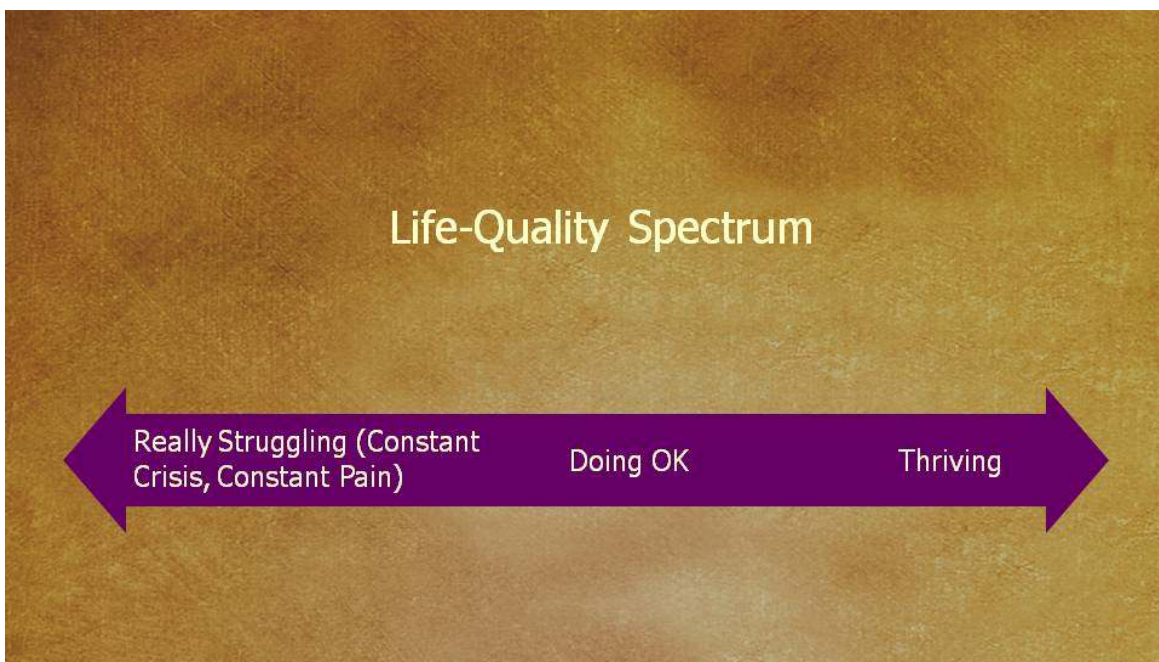
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<sup>12</sup>Mountain-top experiences will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 35e



**D. Move to thriving more reliably and more rapidly:** Another way to think about the benefits of an Immanuel lifestyle is that building these lifestyle habits into our everyday lives will help us to thrive.

As I have observed many people over time, I have noticed what I call the life-quality spectrum (see fig 38.1). At one end of the spectrum are people who are really struggling – these people are in constant crisis and constant pain. In the middle of the spectrum are people who are mostly okay. These folks encounter an occasional crisis with it’s associated pain, but mostly they are doing okay. And at the other end of the spectrum are people who are truly thriving. We don’t have space to discuss all of the components that contribute to these thriving lives, but one of the most important components is a good connection with the Lord.<sup>13</sup>



The ideal, obviously, would be for everybody to move to the thriving end of the spectrum. However, movement toward thriving is usually pretty slow and unpredictable. Those who live in the middle, “mostly okay” zone often become (marginally) comfortable resting in mediocrity. The intense pain of an occasional crisis or disaster will prompt occasional healing and growth work, and this healing and growth work will move them toward thriving, but this occasional work driven by the infrequent crisis is slow and unpredictable. Unfortunately, continuing with long-term growth and healing work is difficult. As soon as the crisis is over and the motivating pain has stopped, most folks take the easier option of just settling back into marginally comfortable mediocrity. In contrast to those in the mostly-okay zone, those

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<sup>13</sup>Note that thriving is *not* the absence of stress or pain. The people who are thriving encounter occasional crises (with the associated stress and pain) just like everybody else. But they continue to thrive even in spite of these occasional crises.

who live in the crisis zone have constant pain to motivate them. They are usually pretty open to plans that include *deliberate, regular* healing and growing work, since they are intensely motivated to stop the constant pain of the crisis zone. However, as soon as they get just enough benefit to crawl out of the crisis zone and into the mostly-okay zone, they usually stop deliberate, regular healing work (just like most of the rest of the people in the mostly-okay zone). The bottom line is that occasional healing and growth work driven by infrequent crises produces movement towards the “thriving” zone that is slow and unpredictable.

The good news is that embracing the Immanuel lifestyle – practicing skills and engaging in behaviors that strengthen our connection to God as deliberate, regular *lifestyle habits* – will help us move toward the “thriving” end of the life-quality spectrum much more reliably and much more rapidly.

**E. Critical skills and behaviors will be available when you need them most (and when they are hardest to find/use):** Yet another benefit of building the practice of these skills and the use of these behaviors into *lifestyle habits* is that they will actually be available when you need them the most.

White-water kayaking provides a good analogy. One of the most dangerous situations in white-water kayaking is when the kayak flips over, so that the person is underwater and upside down as he continues to fly down the rapids, with huge boulders rushing at his head. And the primary skill for surviving this extremely dangerous situation is the “roll” – that amazing trick where the person uses his paddle to flip himself and the boat back into an upright position. However, it is very difficult to remember and apply this maneuver when one is upside down, underwater, unable to breath, unable to see, still rushing down roaring rapids, and possibly a bit terrified in light of the reality that he is in immediate, extreme danger. Another way to say this is that when you need it the most, it’s the hardest to do. Therefore, white-water kayaking experts build a training *lifestyle* that includes practicing this roll maneuver over and over and over and over. They practice it and practice it and practice it until it becomes so deeply embedded that they can do it instantly, automatically, and correctly even when they are upside down, underwater, unable to breath, unable to see, rushing down roaring rapids, and terrified.

Similarly, when we are most in need of Immanuel Approach skills and behaviors, it will be the most difficult to remember and apply them. To put this another way: when we are in deep doo-doo relationally, and we desperately need to recognize that we are triggered, take responsibility for our triggering, get our relational circuits back online, take care of immediate relationship repair needs, and then connect with Jesus and resolve the underlying trauma, it will be the most difficult to remember and implement these life-giving skills and behaviors.<sup>14</sup> However, if we have been practicing Immanuel skills and using Immanuel

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<sup>14</sup>For a detailed explanation of how intense negative emotions and activation of your own triggers cause your capacity to go down, impair the functioning of your higher brain levels, and make it difficult to find and use your maturity skills, see Chapters 10 and 12 in *Outsmarting Yourself* and Part II of “Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and the God Who Is with Us.”

behaviors *every day, for years*, as part of Immanuel *lifestyle habits*, the critically important skills and behaviors will be available and usable when we need them the most. **\*\*Consider ending here, with no example\*\***

A particularly difficult triggering tangle between Charlotte and I provides a good example. In my childhood, there were a number of situations in which I did not receive the love and attention that I needed.<sup>15</sup> And, unfortunately, when lack of love and attention from Charlotte in my adult life triggered these traumatic memories, I would blend into the miserable child memory place instead of taking adult responsibility to name and care for the problem in a relational, constructive way. These triggers began to get especially stirred up when Charlotte became the pastor of our church. She would periodically hit several weeks in a row during which she was especially swamped, and in addition to often being absent because she was working until 9:00 at night (or sometimes 10:00, or 11:00, or even midnight), she would often be anxious and emotionally absent even when she was physically present.

There was obviously some truth-based lack of love and attention in the present situation with the church; but when I wasn't triggered, Charlotte and I could talk about this and work together to find solutions. Unfortunately, I would get increasingly triggered as these times of unusual intensity dragged on – for two weeks...and then three weeks...and sometimes even longer. It would feel incredibly, compellingly true that the full and only source of my pain was that bad Charlotte was not giving me enough love and attention in the present. It would feel incredibly, compellingly true that it was Charlotte's responsibility to fix the problem. It somehow felt true that I was helpless, and that the only possible solution was for her to choose to change. And I would get increasingly unpleasant as I would wait for her to repent, apologize, and then give me the love and attention that I needed.<sup>16</sup>

More unfortunately, since my triggering caused my relational circuits to be off, the behaviors for trying to make her change that came forward most easily and spontaneously included blaming, complaining, accusing, judging, and punishing. Even more unfortunately, these non-relational attempts to make Charlotte change would just trigger her and make the whole situation worse. Eventually I would withdraw into a tangle of discouragement, despair, bitterness, and self-pity. Furthermore, it was easy to get stuck and linger in this miserable

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<sup>15</sup>If you are paying attention with respect to our trauma theory, you will realize that just being in a situation with inadequate love and attention will not necessarily be traumatic. For example, a child will not be traumatized if the duration and depth of deprivation are mild to moderate, and if she gets help with processing the experience. Unfortunately for me, the details regarding some of my experiences of inadequate love and attention were such as to cause trauma.

<sup>16</sup>Note that my perceptions and behavioral reactions – so distorted and dysfunctional in the context of my adult situation – would be fairly normal and expected for a child who is being traumatized by lack of love and attention. For example, it is normal for a small child to feel helpless if his mother is sick and/or unavailable for some other reason. And this all makes complete sense, since my reactions were actually coming from underlying childhood memories that were being triggered.

relationship mire because, as just mentioned, when a person is triggered, miserable, and non-relational it's hard to remember or implement the skills and behaviors that could fix the problem.

Fortunately, I had been practicing Immanuel skills as part of my lifestyle for years, and Immanuel behaviors were deeply embedded into my lifestyle as habits. So even though it *felt* totally true that it was all Charlotte's fault, and that she just needed to stop being a bad, absent, negligent wife that didn't give me enough love and attention, I could also see the checklist warning signs that told me my relational circuits were totally off, and I realized that this meant I was intensely triggered. And even though I didn't feel like it (in fact, my natural desire was to punish Charlotte by staying angry and deliberately withholding my love and attention from her), I used the Immanuel tools for getting my relational circuits back on line, I connected with Jesus, I talked to him about my pain, I received His attunement, and I asked for help.

Over the course of several of these episodes of misery (and getting help from Jesus), I became increasingly aware of the reality that I was getting triggered to childhood memories of not getting enough love and attention. My pain was real and legitimate, but most of it was actually coming from memories, as opposed to being caused by Charlotte in the present. I went to memories of being at this same church in this same neighborhood, with my parents being in leadership and being gone a lot because they were intensely engaged in many crisis ministry situations. And when Charlotte would get particularly overwhelmed and exhausted, this would also trigger memories of my Mom being overwhelmed, exhausted, and emotionally unavailable after having an extended bout with mono, going through her third pregnancy, caring for three small children, and then developing low thyroid.

Each time I would connect with Jesus and go to the underlying memories I would get some healing, the crazy triggered distortions would drop off of Charlotte, and I could feel the truth that she was not really the source of my pain. The *really* good news is that after three or four of these episodes of miserable triggering (and then healing), it seems as if most of the underlying memories have been resolved. (We have not had any of these miserable episodes for at least several years.) Now, when Charlotte gets really busy and overwhelmed, *I actually help and support her*, instead of feeling like she is neglecting and abandoning me and then getting increasingly miserable, angry, hopeless, judgmental, withdrawn, and punitive.

We are both very grateful for these benefits of the Immanuel lifestyle.

**IV. Practical thoughts – dosage matters:** To put it simply, the amount of benefit you receive from your Immanuel Approach lifestyle will be proportional to the amount of time you spend actually practicing Immanuel lifestyle skills and engaging in Immanuel lifestyle behaviors.

Take nutrition and diet as an analogy. If you eat one apple, one carrot, and one serving of chicken each week, and then the rest of the time you eat chocolate, doughnuts, and Pepsi, you will still feel terrible *even though you are including fruits, vegetables, and lean protein in your diet*. In contrast, if you have fruits, vegetables, and lean protein at every meal, with just a little bit of

something sweet for dessert, you will feel much better. And the difference between these two scenarios is a difference in dosages. There are no new concepts or qualitative differences in the second scenario – just a difference in quantities (dosages).

Exercise provides another analogy. If you start each week with a walk around the block first thing on Monday morning, but then you spend the rest of the week sitting on the couch watching television, you will feel terrible *even though you are getting regular exercise*. In contrast, if you walk for thirty minutes each day, and also get up to stretch and move around for a minute or two every couple of hours during the day, you will feel much better. And again, the only difference between these two scenarios is a difference in dosages.

Similarly, the Immanuel lifestyle will produce significant benefits only when you spend sufficient amounts of time practicing Immanuel lifestyle skills and engaged in Immanuel lifestyle habit behaviors. If you are spending a lot of your time watching movies full of anger, fear, and violence – movies that consistently turn your relational circuits off; if you are spending a lot of your time playing video games in which the primary activity is to kill “bad guys” – video games that consistently turn your relational circuits off; and if you are spending a lot of your time surfing the internet in ways that very quietly turn your relational circuits off; but then you take only five minutes each day to try to feel grateful and connect with God, it will be like eating one carrot each week in combination with a pound of chocolate, two dozen doughnuts, and a case of Pepsi. It will be like walking around the block once each week in combination with sitting on the couch for eighty-four hours of television.

An *effective* Immanuel lifestyle requires practical, concrete choices that steadily move towards the right dosage balance. You need to be steadily decreasing the amount of time you spend engaged in behaviors that turn your relational circuits off, and you need to be steadily increasing the amount of time you spend engaged in Immanuel lifestyle habit behaviors that turn your relational circuits on and that facilitate connecting with the Lord.

The Immanuel lifestyle is not always simple or easy. And it takes persistent discipline over time. But the fruit is overwhelmingly worth it.

I invite you, I encourage you, and I *implore* you to join me in practicing the skills and building the habits of the Immanuel lifestyle.