

Chapter 35d, “Him Looks Like He Loves Me!”

This particular afternoon was especially challenging for twenty-five-year-old Elise and the children she was helping to care for. Michaela, the mother of the family, had been struggling with persistent, puzzling medical problems and was returning to the States for three weeks to obtain urgently needed diagnostic work. With four adopted children and four of their own, Michaela and her husband, Cody, had quite a crew, and Elise was staying with the six remaining children as Cody took Michaela and their baby to the airport.¹ There were many miles of rough road between their home base in the capital and the airport in Entebbe, so Cody wouldn't be back for at least four hours (if the traffic was just bad), and the airport run could take as long as eight hours (if the traffic was horrific). The plan was for Elise to watch movies with the kids to distract them from the upsetting fact that their mom was leaving for three weeks, and then get them dinner and put them all to bed.

Unfortunately, the plan wasn't working very well for four-year-old Eliana. She was already missing her mom, the thought that mom would be gone for three weeks was overwhelming, and dad was also temporarily absent. Furthermore, I'm guessing that her child-radar told her that even the grown-ups were worried about her mom's illness, and I'm sure this frightened her. The bottom line is that she was in shambles. Before they even got started with the movies, Eliana was alternating back and forth between crying and sobbing, and could not be consoled with any of the usual interventions for quick comfort.

So as the older kids supervised starting one of the movies, Elise took Eliana up to her parent's bedroom, sat down in the big chair, and just held Eliana in her lap as she prayed silently. Eventually, Elise ventured, “You know, when I get really sad or scared, and when your Mommy and Daddy get really sad or scared, you know what helps?” “What?” “Praying. Would you like to pray?” But Eliana wasn't interested, and after a brief pause responded with a dubious, “No.” (I think maybe she had discovered that sometimes prayer did not immediately produce the results she was hoping for, and she didn't want to just pray and then be expected to be satisfied.)

Fortunately, Elise kept her relational circuits on, and responded with a patient, gentle, “Okay. Well, I'm going to pray over you for a bit.” And then prayed quietly, inviting Jesus to be present and thanking him for being there. As Elise continued to pray, Eliana stopped crying after a minute or two, she took a deep breath, and her tense little body began to relax. As Elise felt Eliana relaxing and settling against her chest, she facilitated a simple, beautiful, natural transition to Immanuel prayer. Let me share this part of the story in Elise's own words:

¹. Cody and Michaela's oldest was living stateside.

“So then I just started talking with her. I asked, ‘What do you like to do with your Mom? What’s your favorite thing to do with your Mom?’ And she says, ‘I like to play with mom.’ I said, ‘Yeah? Can you think of a time when you were playing with Mommy?’ and she replied, ‘Well, sometimes I play with Mommy on Mommy’s bed.’ So I just invited her to say more, ‘Yeah? Tell me about that,’ and she started telling me about playing with her mom on her bed, and described a specific time that she especially enjoyed, when her mom was tickling her and her baby sister was also there with them.

By this time she was grinning at me, as she was remembering this time of playing with her mom and her baby sister. And so I said – I said, ‘That’s pretty cool. Can we thank Jesus for that? Would you be willing to do that?’ And she said, ‘Yeah. But I need your help.’ So I had her repeat a simple prayer of thanks after me, and then coached her to go back to the memory: ‘Okay, now close your eyes and imagine that – imagine being with your mommy, and she’s right here, and you’re on the bed,....’ and I had her kind of explain the picture to me again. I kept coaching her, ‘What else do you see?’ and she was, like, “Well, the fan is there, and I see the mosquito net, and my baby sister is there on the bed, and the window is open,...etc.”

Then I coached her to invite Jesus: ‘Could you invite Jesus into that?’ At first she just looked at me like I was insane, like, ‘what do you mean?’ So I go, ‘I know. It seems kind of funny. But could you invite Jesus into that – into that picture you’re seeing in your imagination of playing with your mommy?’ But she still didn’t understand: ‘I don’t know how – I need you to help me some more.’ So I gave her a little more coaching: ‘You just say, ‘Jesus, where are you?’ And then she goes, ‘Jesus, where are you?’”

She sat there for a few moments, with her eyes closed and this intent look on her face, and then she broke into this big old smile and started exclaiming, ‘Him is there!...Him is there!...Him is really there!’ I spent a few more minutes coaching her to interact with Jesus and helping her to describe what was happening, and then she was fine.”

In fact, after connecting with Jesus, Eliana was fine for the rest of the night. She went through dinner and the rest of the evening with no problem, and then put herself to bed. According to Elise, this is a little girl who usually wails when she has to be alone and who never wants to sleep by herself; but on this particular evening she put herself to bed with no problem, even though she

was sleeping alone because her baby sister was going to the States with mom. After the Immanuel prayer time, she was completely fine with her mom being gone.

Not surprisingly, Eliana still hit occasional bumps during the weeks and months following this initial Immanuel prayer time; however, after the dramatically positive initial experience, Eliana always welcomed the suggestion that they try the prayer thing where Elise would help her to be with Jesus. Elise had to provide brief, simple troubleshooting on a couple of occasions, but Eliana was always eventually able to connect with Jesus, and the overall experience was always positive. After a number of these simple, beautiful Immanuel prayer experiences, Elise couldn't help but to become curious about the details of Eliana's internal experience as she was interacting with Jesus. So after one of their Immanuel prayer times, as she and Eliana were just talking, she asked, "Eliana, what does Jesus look like?"

Eliana's immediate, confidant declaration was, "Him looks like He loves me!"

Wow! What do you say to that? I have heard a lot of beautiful, amazing Immanuel Approach stories, and this is one of my absolute favorites. When you ask a four year old, "What does Jesus look like?" she looks at his face, she sees his welcoming joy, his smile, and the sparkle in his eyes, and she immediately reports what seems like the only important point: "Him looks like he loves me!"

More about Elise: Elise Heidy (Hull) is part of a small mission team working with the Karimojong people in remote rural Uganda, and she first learned about the Immanuel Approach when she received Skype sessions to help her deal with trauma from her own life that was being stirred up as she worked within a tribe where women and girls are often sexually abused. She had a sixty minute Skype session each week with Sharon, one of the women from my Friday mentoring group, and she experienced such a strong connection with Jesus and received so much healing in each session that she was essentially free of the symptoms that had initially led her to seek care by the end of eight months. At that point she asked Sharon, "So, can I learn to do this? Can you teach me to facilitate the Immanuel Approach for others?" Sharon and Elise agreed to transition their weekly Skype sessions from healing sessions to training sessions, and Elise quickly learned to facilitate.² Within a couple of months, she was facilitating basic Immanuel Approach sessions for her friends, for the other members of her mission team, for people on other mission teams in the area, and for the Karimojong villagers she was working

². They still occasionally use their Skype sessions for ongoing Immanuel healing work, but the severe symptoms that initially caused Elise to seek care were largely resolved after the first eight months.)

with. Facilitating Immanuel sessions and teaching others to use the Immanuel Approach are now a regular part of her work.