

Introduction to the Immanuel Approach, Super Short

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So what is the Immanuel Approach? Here's the *really, really* short summary: first, we apply several simple-but-powerful biblical truths, together with some very practical brain-science, to help the recipient establish an interactive, two-way, back-and-forth connection with the Lord. And then once this interactive, two-way, back-and-forth connection has been established, we can pursue any one of a variety of options with respect to adventures that God and the recipient can engage in together.

For example, the recipient can just enjoy spending some additional time with Jesus. Or the recipient can ask Jesus a very simple follow-up question: "Is there anything else that You have for me today? Or that You want me to know today?" Or the recipient can receive comfort from the Lord, by talking directly with Jesus about anything that is distressing her, and then receiving attunement from Jesus (that is, perceiving and feeling the truth that He is *with* her in her distress, that He is hearing her and understanding her, and that He cares about her and is glad to be with her.) Or the recipient can engage in intercessory prayer in the context of the Immanuel-Approach interactive connection. (That is, she can focus on Jesus, and just talk to Him directly regarding her intercessory prayer concerns.) Or the recipient can do spiritual direction – she can focus on Jesus and engage with Him directly, as if He is a spiritual director. Or the recipient can do emotional healing work – she can go to a traumatic memory, and then work with Jesus to resolve the trauma. Or the recipient can pick an issue or question regarding which she would like some help, and then look at, and think about, the issue or question *with Jesus*. And sometimes the Lord comes up with ideas we haven't thought of.

Foundational biblical truths: The foundational biblical truths are particularly simple: God is always with us, God always wants to connect with us, and the average person can establish a two-way, interactive connection with God.

Simple, practical, powerful brain-science principles: And here's the *really, really* short summary regarding the brain-science principles that are applied in the Immanuel Approach process.

Relational Circuits: God has created a big chunk of our brains to serve as the neurological hardware for running relationships. I call this part of our brains our relational circuits. And we can connect with each other and with God much more easily when these relational circuits are online and strongly active.

Positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation: Recalling a positive memory and deliberately stirring up appreciation will predictably, consistently, reliably activate our relational circuits. So, to be very practical: we can deliberately, predictably generate appreciation and activate our relational circuits by recalling and reconnecting with a positive memory, and *this will prepare our brains to connect with God*.

Our relationships are memory-mapped: Our relationships are memory-mapped. That is, our relationships with other people are *carried in the memories* for our past experiences with them. For example, I have thousands of memories of experiences with my wife, Charlotte, and our relationship is carried in these memories. If I deliberately recall, think about, and reconnect with these memories, this will activate the neurological circuits in my brain that

carry my relationship with Charlotte, and thereby prepare my brain to connect with her in the present.

In the same way, our relationships with God are memory-mapped. Just as with other people, recalling, thinking about, and reconnecting with our memories for past positive experiences with God will activate the neurological circuits in our brains that carry our relationships with God, and thereby prepare our brains to connect with God in the present.

Putting these first three pieces together: the combination of recalling a previous good experience with the Lord, re-entering the memory, and then stirring up appreciation in this context, provides an especially effective doorway, or platform, or bridge for establishing a living, interactive connection with God in the present.

Our brains are designed to work best in community: Our brains are designed to work best in community, and one aspect of this relational-brain design is that our brains are more able to *feel the importance* and *understand the meaning* of our mental content when we describe it, out loud, to another person. These benefits will help us to perceive God's presence by helping us to feel the importance and recognize the meaning of *subtle* manifestations of His presence *that we might otherwise miss*. And these benefits will help us to connect with God by helping us to feel the importance and recognize the meaning of *subtle* interactive content coming from the Lord *that we might otherwise miss*.

Therefore, putting all of these biblical truths and brain-science principles together: if we coach recipients to re-enter the memory for a previous experience of connecting with God, if we coach them to deliberately stir up appreciation in the context of this positive memory, if we coach them to invite God to be with them and to help them establish a connection, and if we coach them to describe whatever comes into their awareness, *most recipients will reliably, predictably, consistently perceive God's presence and be able to establish an interactive, two-way, back-and-forth connection with Him*.

Immanuel Approach safety nets: The initial steps of recalling a positive memory, deliberately stirring up appreciation, and establishing an interactive connection with the Lord all come together to set up an especially reliable "home base" that we can use as a back-up, or "*safety-net*" troubleshooting resource. That is, if we encounter any difficulties that we are not able to handle with other troubleshooting resources, we can just coach the recipient to go back to the positive memory, appreciation, and interactive connection from the beginning of the session; and then in this safe, positive context, we can coach him to engage directly with Jesus and ask Jesus for guidance and help regarding the problem. Again, we can help the recipient get back to his "home base," and then coach him to get help directly from Jesus in this safe, positive context, at any point we encounter difficulties that we don't know how to handle.

This especially reliable home base that gets set up at the beginning of each session also provides a make-sure-the-person-is-okay safety-net for the end of emotional healing sessions. If we are approaching the end of an emotional healing session and the recipient is still connected to negative emotions from a traumatic memory – either because the process has gotten stuck and we have not yet been able to resolve the blockage, or because there's just a *lot* of healing work to do and we simply don't have enough time – we can just coach the recipient to go back to the positive memory, appreciation, and connection with the Lord that were all refreshed and put in place at the beginning of the session. The recipient may be disappointed that he was not able to

resolve the traumatic memory, but he at least ends up back at a safe place of relational connection and positive emotions.

Immanuel intervention troubleshooting: Careful study of scripture has totally convinced me that the Lord is *always* with us – the Lord has been present with us in every past experience, and the Lord is present with us now. And tens of thousands of hours of experience with the Immanuel Approach has convinced me that the Lord *always* wants us to be able to perceive his presence, connect with him, synchronize with him, interact with him, receive from him, and be *with* him. Therefore, if the recipient is not initially able to establish an interactive connection, it just means that there are blockages in the way. Furthermore, these blockages can almost always be identified and resolved. So we work very persistently to expose and resolve any blockages, and in almost every situation, persistent troubleshooting eventually enables the recipient to perceive God, and to experience a two-way, interactive connection with His tangible, personal, living presence.

Immanuel Approach emotional healing: Really good news with respect to psychological trauma is that the Lord knows all about how to work with traumatic memories, and He really, really wants to help us get healed. When we do Immanuel Approach emotional healing work, we help the recipient to establish the interactive connection with God that serves as the foundation for the session, and then we coach the recipient to *engage directly with God as the primary therapist*. When the recipient is able to establish and maintain a strong connection with the Lord, God does all of the heavy lifting and the whole process can be amazingly simple.

The most straightforward Immanuel Approach process for emotional healing is to first set up the safety net home-base and refresh the recipients connection with God by helping him to establish an interactive connection in the context of a positive memory, and then help the recipient to get inside one of his traumatic memories, help him to connect with God inside the traumatic memory, and then help him to work *with* God *inside* the traumatic memory to resolve the trauma.

The most important goal, and the Immanuel Approach lifestyle: I started my journey with the Immanuel Approach believing that the primary objective was to heal psychological trauma in order to relieve suffering. As also described in this same chapter, this initial perspective started to change when Jesus told one of my clients, “I love my children, and I am glad to free them from suffering; but the primary, most important purpose of all this emotional healing stuff is to remove the blockages that are between your heart and me. The primary, most important purpose of emotional healing is to remove the blockages that hinder your heart from coming to me.” When my client reported these words from Jesus, I immediately realized that this is an important truth with respect to emotional healing; and as I continued to ponder these words from the Lord, I increasingly realized that this intimacy-priority component of the Immanuel Approach applies to much more than just the ways in which emotional healing removes blockages that hinder our hearts from coming to Jesus. There is not space to describe the details in this introduction essay, but the short summary is that there are many components of the Immanuel Approach that *inherently* prioritize our connection and intimacy with God.

Furthermore, when we work these components of the Immanuel Approach into our lives as *skills that we regularly practice* and as behaviors that we build into our daily lives as *habits*, we will build an Immanuel Approach *lifestyle* that especially prioritizes and facilitates intimacy with the Lord.

What is unique/new/different about the Immanuel Approach, as compared to all of the other approaches to emotional healing? The first point I want to make is that there is a lot of overlap between the Immanuel Approach and other approaches to emotional healing. My assessment is that the Immanuel Approach shares many core principles with all of the other approaches to emotional healing that I am aware of. This being said, I think there are a number of pieces that are new with the Immanuel Approach, and that make it easier, gentler, safer, more transferrable, and more effective.

Due to the brevity of this introduction, I am simply listing the aspects/components of the Immanuel Approach that are unique, new, and different. See “An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach (Third Variation)” for a detailed discussion of each of these points.

- Immanuel Approach sessions apply the brain science regarding relational circuits, positive memory recall, and appreciation by starting each session with coaching the recipient to connect with a positive memory and deliberately stir up appreciation.
- Whenever possible, Immanuel Approach sessions apply the brain science regarding how relationships are carried in memories by using positive memories that include positive experiences with God.
- Immanuel Approach sessions start with establishing a connection with Jesus, and then let Jesus drive from the beginning.
- With the Immanuel Approach, an interactive connection with Jesus is a *necessary, central, foundational component that we deliberately, systematically, consistently facilitate* – as part of the standard process (as opposed to an *optional bonus*, that occurs *occasionally* and *unpredictably*).
- The Immanuel Approach applies the brain science regarding how our brains are designed to work best in community by placing extra emphasis on coaching the recipient to describe everything that comes into her awareness, regardless of whether it makes sense, feels important, or is neatly packaged.
- The Immanuel Approach has safety nets.
- Intimacy with Jesus is the number one priority.
- Immanuel Interventions are the most important troubleshooting interventions.
- Intermediate and advanced troubleshooting applies brain science regarding brain-mind-spirit capacity.
- Intermediate and advanced troubleshooting applies brain science regarding the pain processing pathway, the source of trauma, and the mechanisms for healing.

The Immanuel Approach consistently, predictably produces dramatic healing and transformation: The best news with respect to the Immanuel Approach is that these principles and tools are more than just hopeful theory. I have been using the Immanuel Approach for almost twenty years now, and the results have been consistently and profoundly positive. For example:

- ***The Immanuel Approach for my own, personal healing and growth:*** In my own experience, the Immanuel Approach has been effective for resolving major issues, such as the attachment trauma I received from an extended separation from my parents when I was two years old; it has been effective for resolving trauma from much smaller painful events, such as my experiences of childhood injustice when the bullies on my grade-school playground cut in line during batting practice; and it has been profoundly effective in helping me to improve my connection with the Lord.
- ***The Immanuel Approach with clients in my practice, and people in my mentoring groups:*** Clients in my private practice and people in my mentoring groups have consistently been experiencing powerful healing with the Immanuel Approach. Furthermore, a number of clients and mentoring group participants who had previously been stuck for many, many sessions finally began moving forward with the Immanuel Approach.
- ***The Immanuel Approach with persecuted Christians:*** We have friends and colleagues who are seeing dramatically positive results as they use the Immanuel Approach to provide emotional healing for traumatized, persecuted Christians in countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Iraq, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, China, and Colombia.
- ***The Immanuel Approach with non-Christians:*** An encouraging, wonderful reality that I and my colleagues have observed with the Immanuel Approach is that it often works with non-Christians. And when it does, those who have thereby experienced Jesus' living, loving presence, and received healing from him, usually decide to follow him.
- ***The Immanuel Approach with children:*** Another encouraging, wonderful thing about the Immanuel Approach is that it provides an especially gentle, safe, and effective tool for doing emotional healing work with children. Furthermore, we are now also receiving stories from parents who are incorporating the Immanuel Approach into day-to-day family life.
- ***The Immanuel Approach in complicated, difficult cross-cultural situations:*** Yet another encouraging, wonderful thing about the Immanuel Approach is that it is particularly helpful for working in complicated, difficult cross-cultural situations. When Jesus is engaging directly with the recipient, He never stumbles over subtle language or cultural difficulties. Also, people just seem to trust Jesus, even when they are having trouble trusting the mission team. Furthermore, Jesus is the focus of the Immanuel Approach, and this provides a helpful shift in relational dynamics (shifting the focus away from the foreign mission team being the center of attention).

I have not included any specific examples, in order to keep this super short introduction super short, but I would encourage you to look at the many beautiful, poignant, encouraging true stories that illustrate each of the categories summarized here. (See the longer introduction mentioned below, and also *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* – especially the end of chapter two, and the many short story chapters scattered throughout the book.)

Resources for learning more: So how do I learn more about the Immanuel Approach? I'm glad you asked! More good news regarding the Immanuel Approach is that there is a generous buffet of resources for learning more. For example,

- Our Immanuel Approach website (www.immanuelapproach.com) offers thousands of pages of free-download essays, addressing a wide variety of Immanuel-Approach-related subjects.
- Our youtube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUIbLh-obXLkgGvWLhwcFQ>) offers a wide selection of free-download introductory videos, including a 20 minute introductory video, a variety of short “teaching nugget” videos, a number of very short (5-7 min) trailer/preview versions of live ministry sessions, and a number of short (15-20 min) condensed versions of live ministry sessions.
- The Store page also offers a large collection of full-length recorded sessions, which present all of the details of actual, live, full-length Immanuel Approach ministry sessions.
- One of the most substantial resources available from the Store page of our website is *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* (also known as the big lion book) - an excellent, thorough reference resource that I would recommend to anyone who is serious about the Immanuel Approach.
- As of December 2021, we have a new set of training videos which present a condensed version of our basic training seminar.

For more details regarding each of these resources, as well as a number of others, see the Immanuel Approach Learning Resource Summary, <https://www.immanuelapproach.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/IALearningResourceSummary.pdf>, or the Getting Started page on the IA website: <https://www.immanuelapproach.com/getting-started/>

