



## **An Introduction to the Immanuel Approach (Third Variation)<sup>1</sup>**

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So what is the Immanuel Approach? Let me start with a *really, really* short summary: first, we apply several simple-but-powerful biblical truths and brain-science principles 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. (He’s actually a very good 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.

Now let me circle back and provide a bit more detail regarding the first part of the Immanuel Approach – the part where we “apply several simple-but-powerful biblical truths and brain-science principles to help the recipient establish an interactive, two-way, back-and-forth connection with the Lord.”

**I. 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.<sup>2</sup>

**II. Simple-but-powerful brain-science principles:** The brain-science principles for the initial steps in the Immanuel Approach process are also simple, but require just a bit more explanation.

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<sup>1</sup>Chapters 2 and 3 in *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* provide two other options for an introduction to the Immanuel Approach.

<sup>2</sup>For a thorough discussion of the scriptural support for these biblical truths, see Chapter 35 in *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life*, see appendices 3 through 10 in *Immanuel: A Practicum* by Patti Velotta, see *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* by Dallas Willard, and see *4 Keys to Hearing God’s Voice* and *How to Hear God’s Voice* by Mark Virkler.

**A. Relational Circuits:** First, let me talk about relational circuits. God has created us to be relational beings – God has created us to be in relationship with himself and with each other – and to this purpose, 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.

**B. Positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation:** A related (and helpful) bit of brain science is that recalling a positive memory and deliberately stirring up appreciation will predictably, consistently, reliably activate our relational circuits. That is, our brains are wired in such a way that feeling appreciation will bring our relational circuits online if they are off, and it will increase the intensity of their activity if they are already on. So, to be very practical: if we recall and think about a positive memory – if we picture ourselves inside the memory and reenter the experience as much as possible – if we take the time to flesh out the details, and then focus on and connect with the details, we will increasingly feel appreciation as we increasingly connect with the memory, and this will activate our relational circuits. Putting these pieces together: 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.*

**C. Our relationships are memory-mapped:** Another piece of interesting, relevant, practical brain science is that 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 remember the first time I ever met my wife, Charlotte; I remember writing letters to her when I was in college; I remember talking to her on the phone every day during our long-distance courtship between Chicago and Portland (when our phone bill was the same size as our rent); I remember our wedding; I remember our honeymoon; I remember working together to fix up the different apartments we've lived in; I remember prayer times with her while driving on various long road trips; I remember hiking with her in Glacier national park; I remember planting flowers together in our front-yard garden; I have memories of washing dishes and working on a variety of other household tasks as she read aloud through *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Chronicles of Narnia*; I have memories of Charlotte and I spending time with family and friends, etc, etc, etc.

I have thousands of memories of experiences with 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.

Furthermore, when we reconnect with the *memory* for an earlier experience, we are recreating (at least to some extent), the conditions that were present in our brains and minds when we went through the original experience. So when we reconnect with the memory for an earlier experience of connecting with God, we are recreating (at least to some extent), the same conditions in our brains and minds that were present in the original experience. And we know

that the conditions in the original experience must have been *just right* for perceiving and connecting with the Lord, *since it happened*. Therefore, when we reconnect with, and re-enter, the memory for a previous experience of connecting with God, we are recreating (at least to some extent) the same brain and mind conditions that are *just right* for perceiving and connecting with the Lord.

My observation is that 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. It is a very small step from being inside a memory for a previous experience of connecting with the Lord, and *feeling appreciation*, to being inside of this same memory and experiencing God's presence become *living and interactive*.

**D. Our brains are designed to work best in community:** Yet another piece of interesting, relevant, practical brain science is that our brains are designed to work best in community. Actually, there are a number of ways in which our brains have been designed to work best in community, but the piece that is most relevant for the Immanuel Approach process 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*.

**II. The source of psychological trauma, the process for resolving psychological trauma, and Immanuel Approach emotional healing:** This content is presented in much more detail in *Outsmarting Yourself* and *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life*, but for the purposes of this introduction I want to briefly touch on the brain science with respect to the source of psychological trauma, the brain science with respect to resolving psychological trauma, and the Immanuel Approach process for resolving psychological trauma.

**A. The pain processing pathway:** When we encounter pain, our brain-mind-spirit system always tries to process the painful experience. There is a specific pathway that this processing attempt will follow, and there are specific processing tasks that we must complete as we travel along this pathway, such as maintaining organized attachment, staying connected to the event (that is, not dissociating), staying connected to God and others (that is, staying relational), navigating the situation in a satisfying way, and correctly interpreting the meaning of the

experience.<sup>3</sup>

When we *are* able to successfully complete this processing journey, we get through the painful experience without being traumatized – we emotionally and cognitively “metabolize” the experience in a healthy way, and instead of having any toxic power in our lives, the successfully processed painful experience contributes to our knowledge, skills, empathy, wisdom, and maturity. That is, when we successfully process a painful experience we don’t just stuff it down into our unconscious, or teach ourselves to think about other things. We actually come out the other side stronger and wiser, as opposed to wounded.

***B. The source of psychological Trauma:*** Unfortunately, various problems and/or limitations can block successful processing; and when we are *not* able to complete the processing journey, then the painful experience becomes a traumatic experience, and the memory for this traumatic experience will carry unresolved toxic content.

This has very practical implications for our day-to-day lives because every time something in the present activates, or “triggers,” a traumatic memory, the unresolved toxic content comes out of where it’s stored and becomes part of what the person thinks and feels in the present. And this coming forward of traumatic memory content into the present causes a wide variety of problems, such as addictions, mysterious physical symptoms, post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, impaired parenting, difficulty receiving new truth, impaired discernment, an endless variety of subtly dysfunctional behaviors, blocked peak performance, and every kind of relational conflict you can imagine.

Recognizing that psychological trauma comes from failure to successfully complete the journey through the pain-processing pathway leads to a very important point regarding what kind of experiences can end up being traumatic. This point is discussed in much greater detail in *Outsmarting Yourself*, but the short summary is: you don’t need the overwhelming negative emotions and physical pain of military combat or tsunami disasters to create psychological trauma. In fact, if you are a child without anyone in your community who can help make sure you get through the processing pathway successfully, and a painful experience presents a challenge where your personal processing skills are especially weak, *even a fairly minor painful experience can result in psychological trauma.*

Most of us can easily believe that a soldier might be traumatized by seeing his best friend get blown to bits by a hand grenade, and we can easily understand how this soldier might have panic attacks when Fourth-of-July fireworks trigger this combat trauma. But it is easy to *miss* the way in which small painful events (especially in childhood) can produce minor traumas that will affect us in much more subtle ways.

As you wrestle with whether or not to accept this very important point regarding how small painful events can produce minor psychological trauma, (and also the associated logical implication—that psychological trauma is therefore much more common than most people realize), make sure to note that our formulations of “trauma” and “traumatic” are

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<sup>3</sup>Just in case you’re concerned that you don’t know what I mean by “maintaining organized attachment,” all you really need to know for the purposes of this introduction essay is that there is a pathway for processing painful experiences, and that it includes a series of specific processing tasks.

fundamentally different from the ways most people use these terms. “Traumatic” is often used synonymously with “disastrous,” “life threatening,” “catastrophic,” and other terms you expect to see on the front page of the newspaper; and many definitions of trauma focus on the magnitude, and/or intensity, of the painful event.<sup>4</sup> However, *our* definitions are based solely on whether or not the person successfully processes the experience. A trauma is a painful experience that has not been successfully processed. Period. That’s it.

**C. Resolving psychological trauma:** The good news about the pain processing pathway and psychological trauma is that traumatic memories can be resolved. If I find a traumatic memory and connect with it, if I set up the right conditions so that the memory file can be modified, and if I complete the remedial processing tasks that I was not able to get through successfully at the time of the original painful experience, then the traumatic content will be *permanently* resolved, and the memory previously known as traumatic will be transformed into one of the experiences that contribute to my knowledge, skills, empathy, wisdom, and maturity.

**D. Immanuel Approach emotional healing:** The bad news is that this work to resolve traumatic memories can sometimes be complicated and difficult. However, more *good news* is that the Lord knows all about the pain processing pathway, He 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.<sup>5</sup>

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 finish the necessary processing tasks.

**III. Immanuel Approach safety nets:** Another new and important feature of the Immanuel Approach is that it has 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

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<sup>4</sup>For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, fifth edition (DSM V), the current standard reference for diagnosing mental illnesses in the United States, includes the following as the first diagnostic criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): “Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways....”

<sup>5</sup>When the recipient has difficulty establishing and maintaining a connection with the Lord, the facilitator will need to apply a variety of intermediate and advanced troubleshooting principles and tools. My short summary regarding this aspect of the Immanuel-Approach is: “You can learn the basics in a weekend, and you can spend the rest of your life mastering the intermediate and advanced material.”

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.

Furthermore, the home base that gets set up at the beginning of each session provides a safe, comfortable place to which the recipient can go back to if they encounter trauma content that is too intense, or if they just need to take a respite break at any point in the session. And an additional safety net for beginners and groups is: “If the recipient does not get a good connection with Jesus in her positive memory, then she does not do trauma work.”

These safety nets dramatically reduce the risk of recipients being re-traumatized by getting stuck in unresolved trauma, and they especially make it possible for lay-people to safely facilitate emotional healing sessions.

**IV. 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, the Lord is present with us now, and the Lord will be present with us at every moment in the future. 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 – *the Lord always wants to establish an interactive connection with us.*

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.

**V. The most important goal, and the Immanuel Approach lifestyle:** Finally, I want to talk about the primary objective – the most important goal – for the whole Immanuel Approach endeavor, which is increased intimacy with Jesus. And I want to talk about the Immanuel Approach lifestyle.

As described in much more detail in Chapter 3 of *The Immanuel Approach: to Emotional Healing and to Life*, 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.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, when we work these components of the Immanuel Approach into our lifestyles, 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. As I was talking with a young missionary about her experience with the Immanuel Approach, she spontaneously commented: “I started using the Immanuel Approach to get healing, but what I found was intimacy.” I have heard essentially this same comment from many others who have embraced the Immanuel Approach as a lifestyle, and this has also been my own experience. I believe that this is the predictable result of the many ways in which the Immanuel Approach inherently prioritizes intimacy with Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

**VI. What is unique/new/different about the Immanuel Approach?** People often ask me, “What is unique, or new, or different about the Immanuel Approach, as compared to all of the other approaches to emotional healing?” Another form of this question is something along the lines of, “Isn’t the Immanuel Approach just the same as \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)?”

The first point I want to make in addressing this question 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. For example, all other approaches I am aware of understand that many problems in the present are caused by underlying trauma, and the primary resource for healing is to help the person get to the traumatic memories, and then from inside the traumatic memories ask the Lord to come with healing. And all of these approaches are at least somewhat effective in finding and resolving traumatic memories. 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.

***A. Starting with a positive memory and appreciation:*** As far as I am aware, the Immanuel

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<sup>6</sup>See Supplementary Chapter 18b, on the “Getting Started” page of our Immanuel Approach website, [www.immanuelapproach.com](http://www.immanuelapproach.com), for a detailed description of how many of the components of the Immanuel Approach inherently prioritize our connection and intimacy with God.

<sup>7</sup>See Supplementary Chapter 35b, on the “Getting Started” page of [www.immanuelapproach.com](http://www.immanuelapproach.com) for additional discussion of the Immanuel Approach lifestyle.

Approach is the only approach to emotional healing that starts with positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation to get the recipient's relational circuits on – to prepare the brain, mind, and spirit to connect with God. This is a very gentle, easy on-ramp.

***B. Starting with memories for past positive experiences with God:*** As described above, for those who have memories of previous positive experiences with God, starting with a positive God- memory further prepares the brain, mind, and spirit for connecting with the Lord. To some extent this creates the “just right” conditions that worked the first time, and it also takes advantage of the way in which relationships are memory-mapped. As far as I am aware, the Immanuel Approach is the only approach to emotional healing that includes this piece of applied brain science.

***C. Starting with connection with Jesus, letting Jesus drive from the beginning:*** With many other approaches to emotional healing, the facilitator and recipient go through much of the session with the facilitator providing most/all of the leadership, and with the recipient not yet perceiving the presence of Jesus. For example, with many approaches to emotional healing, the facilitator will lead the process of focusing the issue to be worked on, the facilitator will lead the process of finding the underlying traumatic memories, the facilitator will lead the process of working in the traumatic memories to identify specific healing targets (such as distorted perceptions/core lies that are anchored in the trauma), the facilitator will lead the process of focusing these healing targets and preparing them for resolution, and the facilitator will lead the process of identifying other issues that might need to be addressed (for example, bitterness or demonic interference). And then, *only after all of these pieces are in place*, they will invite Jesus into the memory and into the process. Furthermore (with some ministries), even after all of the pieces are in place, much of the healing intervention comes from prophetic words, guidance, truth, etc that the facilitator receives from God on behalf of the recipient.

These approaches required the facilitator to bring a lot of gifting, knowledge, and skill to the healing work, and they require the recipient to spend a lot of time in the traumatic memories without yet perceiving the presence of Jesus with them. These approaches are still effective, but they are less transferrable because many people do not have the necessary gifting, knowledge, and skill; and the recipient spends a lot more time in the trauma without Jesus, which is painful and draining and requires a lot of capacity.

In contrast, the Immanuel Approach *starts* the session with helping the recipient to establish an interactive connection with Jesus, and then coaches the recipient to focus on Jesus and interact with Jesus as the primary source of guidance for the rest of the session. Jesus brings most of the knowledge and skill to the healing endeavor, which makes the Immanuel Approach more transferrable and easily available because it is possible for lay-people with minimal knowledge and skill to facilitate emotional healing sessions. Also, starting with a positive memory and connection with Jesus is a much gentler on-ramp than jumping straight into trauma.

***D. Jesus in trauma ASAP:*** Furthermore, whenever the recipient is working inside of a traumatic memory, the first thing the facilitator does once the recipient enters the trauma is to help her connect with Jesus *inside* the traumatic memory. So the recipient starts the session by connecting with Jesus in the comfortable context of a positive memory, and spends very little time in the trauma without the presence of Jesus right there with her. This piece, in combination with letting Jesus drive right from the beginning, results in a process that is gentler, less intimidating, and less draining.



***E. An interactive connection with Jesus is necessary, central, and foundational:*** The whole Immanuel Approach process is organized around an interactive connection with Jesus. You help the recipient to establishing an interactive connection with Jesus at the beginning of the session, you monitor the interactive connection throughout the session, the first thing you do when the recipient connects with a traumatic memory is to help her establish an interactive connection with Jesus inside the memory, whenever the recipient loses her connection you troubleshoot to help her reestablish a connection, and you try to take the recipient back to an interactive connection at the end of each session. And even when complex blockages prevent perception and connection early in the process, troubleshooting so that the recipient can eventually perceive Jesus' tangible presence and experience a living, interactive connection is one of the most important priorities and objectives for the long term plan.

This deliberate, pervasive focus on the connection with Jesus is one of the clearest and most important differences between the Immanuel Approach and other approaches to emotional healing. In all forms of emotional healing, the recipient can receive healing for trauma and experience symptom relief without perceiving Jesus' tangible presence or establishing an interactive connection. For example, with Theophostic, the recipient can find underlying traumatic memories, identify the core lies, and receive truth from God that replaces core lies, all without perceiving Jesus' presence or establishing an interactive connection. With SOZO, the recipient can go through their various steps for resolving issues and can receive prophetic words from the facilitator, all without perceiving Jesus' presence or establishing an interactive connection. With deliverance ministries, demonic spirits can be identified, bound, and removed, all without perceiving Jesus' presence or establishing an interactive connection. With all of these other emotional healing ministries, perceiving Jesus' tangible presence and establishing an interactive connection is something that *sometimes* occurs. And it is welcomed when it does occur – it is always embraced as a wonderful bonus. But it is incidental, irregular, occasional, peripheral, unpredictable, and *optional*.

In contrast, with the Immanuel Approach, perceiving Jesus' tangible presence and establishing an interactive connection is a *necessary, central, foundational* component that we *deliberately, systematically, consistently facilitate* – a part of the *standard* process.

***F. Our brains are designed to work best in community:*** Compared to any other approaches I am aware of, the Immanuel Approach places more 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*. There are two whole chapters in *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* that discuss this in much more detail, but the very short summary is that this simple intervention helps pull mental content through the parts of the brain that enable us to feel whether or not the content is important and that enable us to recognize how it fits into our personal story. Without this important piece, many *subtle* manifestations of the Lord's presence, many *subtle* guiding clues, and much subtle content from the Lord are missed.

***G. Immanuel Interventions:*** Immanuel Interventions – an array of interventions very specifically focused on helping the recipient establish and/or re-establish an interactive connection with Jesus – are the most important troubleshooting interventions. As far as I am aware, this is unique with the Immanuel Approach.

**H. Brain-mind-spirit capacity:** Intermediate and advanced Immanuel Approach work explicitly recognizes the importance of brain-mind-spirit capacity. This is an important, strategic, large issue discussed in much more detail in the big lion book, but I will quickly summarize three of the most important points here: 1) if a recipient does not have enough brain-mind-spirit capacity to connect with a given traumatic memory, and to stay connected with the memory, they will not be able to accomplish the processing necessary for healing; 2) lack of capacity is a very common, often-unrecognized reason for emotional healing work to bog down; and 3) helping the recipient connect with Jesus and spend time with Jesus are two of the most powerful interventions to resolve problems with lack of capacity. As far as I know, there are only a few other emotional healing ministries explicitly recognize and directly address issues of capacity (for example, Heart Synch with Andrew Miller and Restoration in Christ Ministries with Diane Hawkins).

In addition to being one of the few emotional healing approaches that explicitly recognizes and directly addresses capacity issues, another new/unique/different piece with the Immanuel Approach is that the living, tangible, interactive presence of Jesus provides an *unusual, exceptional* resource for resolving problems with inadequate capacity. (See section \*\* below for additional discussion regarding this point.)

**I. The pain processing pathway, the source of trauma, and the mechanisms for healing:** Intermediate-advanced Immanuel Approach principles include an understanding of the pain processing pathway, an understanding that the source of psychological trauma = failure to complete all processing tasks, and an understanding that the mechanism for healing = helping the recipient with remedial work to resolve previously unfinished processing tasks. This can be very helpful with intermediate and advanced troubleshooting. As far as I am aware, the Immanuel Approach is the only Christian approach to emotional healing that includes this piece.

**J. Safety nets:** As described above, starting with a positive memory, appreciation, and connection with Jesus establishes a safe “home-base” to come back to, and this provides a safety net. If you run into difficulties you don’t know how to handle and need troubleshooting help from Jesus, if you are running out of time at the end of the session and the recipient is still in a bad place, if the recipient encounters trauma content that is too intense, or if the recipient just needs a respite break at any point in the session you can coach the recipient back to the initial positive memory, appreciation, and connection with Jesus. And an additional safety net for beginners and groups is: “If the recipient doesn’t get a good connection with Jesus in her positive memory, then she doesn’t do trauma work.” These safety nets dramatically reduce the risk of recipients being re-traumatized by getting stuck in unresolved trauma, and they especially make it possible for lay-people to safely facilitate emotional healing sessions.

As far as I am aware, the Immanuel Approach is the only Christian approach to emotional healing that includes these safety net pieces.

**K. Use of Immanuel Approach tools for trauma resolution “homework” between sessions:** For recipients who are able to establish a strong connection with Jesus, so that they are able to perceive Jesus’ guidance and receive Jesus’ help throughout the session, the facilitator can be a lay-person with only minimal to moderate knowledge, skill, and experience. This simplicity aspect of the Immanuel Approach, along with the safety nets, makes it possible for recipients to safely do trauma-resolution “homework” between sessions. The recipient can recruit a spouse,

friend, family member, or prayer partner to be the facilitator, and they can work through simpler, less intense traumatic memories between sessions. In fact, many recipients are eventually able to take care of some of the low hanging fruit by facilitating Immanuel Approach healing for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Once one or both of these pieces are in place, the therapist/ministry expert can increasingly focus on the more complex, more intense trauma, and leave the simpler, less intense “low hanging fruit” to the recipients and their lay-facilitator friends and family. This provides dramatic cost savings for the recipients and allows the expert facilitators to care for many more clients. As the reader will realize with a moment’s thought, this dramatic increase in efficiency is hugely strategically valuable for the many places in the world where the need for trauma resolution is overwhelming and the supply of therapists/expert ministers is desperately inadequate.<sup>2</sup>

Compared to either mainstream secular therapies for trauma or other explicitly Christian approaches for resolving trauma, this option for lay-facilitators, *with minimal to moderate knowledge, skill, and experience*, to safely and effectively provide trauma-healing homework between sessions, is unique to the Immanuel Approach.

***L. Intimacy with Jesus is the number one priority:*** To the best of my knowledge, all other approaches to emotional healing focus on healing trauma and relieving symptoms, and connection with Jesus is unpredictably, occasionally part of the picture. With the Immanuel Approach, connection with Jesus and intimacy with Jesus is the *primary* objective, and resolution of trauma with its associated symptom relief are wonderful secondary blessings. Furthermore, many of the components of the Immanuel Approach *inherently* prioritize connection with Jesus and intimacy with Jesus.

**VII. The best news – it actually works!:** 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 *very* encouraging.

***A. My own, personal healing and growth:*** Closest to home, I have found this approach to be wonderfully effective for my own, personal healing and growth – it 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.

***B. Patients in my private practice and participants in my mentoring groups:*** I have also found this approach to be wonderfully effective for emotional healing work with the clients in my private practice, and people in my mentoring groups have consistently been experiencing powerful healing with the Immanuel Approach. Some of these mentoring group participants have even been willing to release recordings of their sessions to provide encouragement and

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter \*\* in the big lion book for a thorough discussion of facilitating Immanuel Approach healing work for oneself.

<sup>2</sup> In areas of desperate need, small teams of therapists/ministry experts can supervise much larger teams of lay-facilitators.

teaching resources for others.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a number of private practice clients and mentoring group participants who had previously been stuck for many, many sessions finally began moving forward with the Immanuel Approach.

***C. The Immanuel Approach with persecuted Christians:*** Our friends and colleagues who are using the Immanuel Approach are seeing dramatically positive results as well. For example, Kim Campbell, in his role as the medical director for a well-known ministry that serves the persecuted church, used 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, and Colombia. The following is one of the many amazing stories of healing that Kim has shared with us.

David<sup>2</sup> was born into a deeply religious Muslim family in a Muslim village in a Muslim country in southwest Asia, and his family members and neighbors became very upset when he and one of his uncles became Christians. Not surprisingly, his family and neighbors became even more upset when his uncle began openly telling others about his faith, when David began preaching, and when people were delivered and miraculously healed in response to David's prayers. David was twenty-six years old in July of 2006 when his uncle was abducted and executed by a group of enraged extremists, and a month and a half later two men with AK-47s came into the family sweet shop where David worked and emptied fifty rounds, leaving David lying in a pool of blood with eleven gunshot wounds. His survival is miraculous, since the doctors at the two nearby hospitals refused to treat him, and he therefore did not receive any medical care until he got to a hospital in a distant city eight hours later. But his left arm was so badly damaged that it had to be amputated.

The ministry mentioned earlier had helped David with the cost of his medications and with a prosthesis for his left arm, but since these initial interventions Kim had been learning about the Immanuel Approach, and he wanted to start providing care for psychological trauma as well as for physical trauma. So when Kim visited in October 2007 to provide medical follow-up, he also asked David about the psychological aspect of the trauma. David stated that he was "all right," but his face and voice looked and sounded depressed; and with further probing Kim discovered that he had full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks of the machine-gun fire during the attack. David commented, "If I close my eyes, I can see the gunmen across the counter barely a dozen feet away, right in front of me – I can see the fire coming out of their guns." So Kim led David through the Immanuel process, and Jesus showed David that he had always been with him, that he was with him throughout every moment of the attack, and that he would always be with him in the future.

At the end of the ministry time, when Kim asked him to go back to the memory of being shot, David sat quietly, with a surprised but peaceful look on his face, as he reported that he could still recall being startled by the shooting, and by the feeling of the bullets hitting him, but that he was now aware of Jesus' presence *with him, in the memory, even during the shooting*. And he reported that the memory was no longer distressing. He described, "Jesus is standing right in

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<sup>1</sup>As of Spring 2021, we have thirty live emotional-healing sessions available in both full-length and condensed versions. For detailed descriptions of these sessions, see the Store page of [www.immanuelapproach.com](http://www.immanuelapproach.com).

<sup>2</sup>This person's name and other identifying information have been changed/disguised in order to care for his safety.

front of me – His face is right here in front of me [gesturing to indicate 18 inches in front of his face], and His presence is so powerful that the rest of the memory doesn't bother me anymore.”

**D. 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. For example, when Charlotte and I provided an Immanuel Approach training seminar for a group in Panama in May of 2009, a non-Christian mental-health professional found one of the flyers for the seminar, and probably decided to attend because he thought that my lectures on psychological trauma would be valuable, regardless of my explicitly Christian perspective. However, even though he was not a Christian, he was still willing to participate in the Immanuel Approach group exercise that we included at the end of the seminar. And he was astonished by the results—he experienced God as a loving Father for the first time in his life, he went to several traumatic memories and received profound healing in each of them, and then he ended the exercise by deciding to follow the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

**E. 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. (See chapters 2, 5, 9, and 27 in *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* for a wide array of true-story examples.) Furthermore, we are now also receiving stories from parents who are incorporating the Immanuel Approach into day-to-day family life.

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

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

At this point Ian knelt down in front of his daughter, face-to-face, looking directly into her eyes, and said in a gentle, soft voice, “Honey, would you be willing to ask Jesus what he wants to say to you?” Immediately her crying stopped, and Selah held up her hand toward Ian and said, “Okay Dad, be quiet.” Not in a harsh way, but more with an intended meaning along the

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<sup>1</sup>See “Can the Immanuel Approach be Used with Non-Christians?” in Chapter 40 in *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* for additional discussion regarding the Immanuel Approach with non-Christians.

lines of “It’s Jesus’ turn to talk now. Please be quiet so I can hear him.” She paused, completely still and quiet for maybe ten seconds, and then said, “Jesus said that I need to be patient and I need to wait.” When Ian asked, “Okay, so what are you going to do?” she responded promptly with, “I’m gonna do what Jesus asked me to do, Dad—I’m gonna be patient and wait.”

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

When Ian shared this story with me, he finished with the comment, “I often ask myself, ‘Why is it so hard to remember to include Jesus into everything, since he’s right there with us?’ . . . As a family, we are working on it. Immanuel—God with us!”<sup>1</sup>

***F. 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. For example, Jennifer<sup>2</sup> and her colleagues have been working in a remote region with ancient, complex cultures. Furthermore, there is a lot of diversity in this area, so they have often needed to transition between three or four different ethnic groups in a single day, with each group presenting it’s own set of complex, subtle language and cultural challenges. No matter how hard they tried to be informed and sensitive with respect to the many language and cultural issues, Jennifer and her colleagues were constantly stumbling over misunderstandings. And sometimes the offenses caused by these misunderstandings could be quite costly.

The good news is that Jennifer and her colleagues discovered a fun fringe benefit of the Immanuel Approach when they brought it into this incredibly complicated, challenging situation. Once recipients established a strong interactive connection with Jesus, they could engage directly with Jesus regarding any and every issue without Jesus ever stepping on subtle, complicated language and cultural land mines. Jesus could do healing work, he could provide mentoring, he could talk to the recipients about pastoral issues—Jesus could engage with the local peoples regarding all manner of subjects—without ever making the kind of subtle language and cultural mistakes that the mission team had always had so much trouble with.

Jennifer and her colleagues have also noticed that people just seem to intuitively trust Jesus—even when local people are feeling guarded and suspicious toward the foreigner, they will still be trusting and receptive toward Jesus as they interact directly with him in the context of Immanuel prayer.

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<sup>1</sup>See “Can the Immanuel Approach be Used with Children?” in Chapter 40 in *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life* for additional discussion regarding the Immanuel Approach with Children.

<sup>2</sup>We are not using Jennifer’s real name due to security concerns.

Furthermore, having Jesus at the center (with the foreign missionary just facilitating the connection) shifts the system dynamics in a way that has been very helpful. I have just had a number of communications with Jennifer to make sure that I am correctly understanding the details for this story, and in one of these recent e-mail exchanges she commented, “I still marvel at God’s goodness in His interactions with cross-cultural situations. It really eases the miscommunications and fosters trust when people realize that the foreigner is not the center of attention, but rather God. And there is no cultural barrier with him!”

Of course the Immanuel Approach hasn’t solved the problem entirely, since the mission team still needs to engage with the local people in many situations outside of Immanuel sessions; but it has been tremendously helpful to have Jesus in the middle of everything, and it has been fun to watch him interact with people from so many different ethnic groups regarding so many different subjects without ever stumbling over language or cultural issues.<sup>1</sup>

**VIII. 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](http://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 very short (5-7 min) trailer/preview versions of live ministry sessions.
- The Store page offers a large collection of full-length recorded sessions, which present all of the details of actual, live, full-length Immanuel Approach ministry sessions; and also short (15-20 min) condensed versions of live 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 Getting Started page of our IA website: <https://www.immanuelapproach.com/getting-started/>, or our learning resource summary,

<https://www.immanuelapproach.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/IALearningResourceSummary.pdf>



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<sup>1</sup>As I ponder the implications of this story, one of my conclusions is that any person, ministry, or mission team working in any kind of cross-cultural situation should have the Immanuel Approach in the middle of what they are doing.

