



A LITTLE BRAIN SCIENCE

The more we know about the brain and how God created it the more we can deliberately set up the conditions that will maximize our relationship with Jesus Christ (and incidentally with other people too!) One of the unique aspects of Immanuel Prayer is that is based on brain science. So we will take a little time to explain some of the basics which have been applied in Immanuel Prayer.

1. Left and Right Brain Hemisphere

Scientists have discovered with brain scans that they can tell what part of the brain is lighting up under different circumstances. They can determine what areas of the brain are activated during different activities or thought processes.

We have a left and right hemisphere of the brain which handle different functions. The left side is filled with facts and knowledge and is where we reason things out. The right side is where our memories, relationships, experiences and emotions dwell. You could say it is the “colorful” side. It is the intuitive side, when we just “feel” something is right or wrong.

The right hemisphere reacts very quickly and without conscious thought, evaluating and making judgments before the left hemisphere has time to process what is happening and reason it out. We need BOTH sides of our brains!

To live balanced and beautifully, we need for our left hemisphere to have a factual, logical understanding of truth and theory so that mentally we are convinced that something is sound and reasonable. But the right hemisphere needs to have experience of truth. What this means in regards to our faith is that the most powerful, stable, usable faith is built by starting with both right-hemisphere experiential, intuitive “knowing” and left-hemisphere cognitive logical understanding, and then combining them in a synchronized, coherent final product. This is true in what you are learning today about Immanuel Prayer. It is most effective for our left hemisphere to have a factual, logical understanding of why and how Immanuel Prayer works, so that the plan “makes sense” and is convincing in our reasoning; and it is also important for our right hemisphere to have an intuitive, experiential “knowing” that the Lord’s heart is good, that His character is trustworthy, that He is always present, that people can perceive His presence, and that the Immanuel approach is consistently effective.

That means, you need to remember and see where the Lord has actually proved His character to you. And, you need to practice what you learn, because it will build your faith...in Immanuel Prayer, and in other areas of your Christian life where you apply these same principles. God has created us to need this balance of the two sides of our brain to move forward in our Christian lives to full maturity.

2. Relational Circuits—Neural Pathways

The whole Bible teaches about relationships. With people. With God. Actually, this is what most of life is about, our relationships with people and God.

Therefore a big chunk of the brain is devoted to relationships. When the brain is “turned on”, relationships work much more smoothly. There are neural pathways running through our brains which are our “relational circuits”. A lot of factors affect their ability to be on, or to be fully on.

The higher the stress—fear, anger, shame—the harder it is to keep relational circuits on. Pain can dim or turn off relational circuits .

If we become irritable, frustrated, when problems are more important than our relationships, we know our circuits are not firing correctly. When that happens I have no joy being with you, even if

normally I would. I don't feel compassion for you. We could even say that when our relational circuits are off, we are operating in what the Bible calls "flesh".

On the other side when our "RC's" are on, we enjoy people, enjoy being with them, actually 'see' them.

Isn't God's design interesting? Basically the brain does relationships the way God designed.

And the very good news is that there are ways to turn our relational circuits back on, so that we can connect more easily with people and with God. The one that we will spend the most time on is finding and focusing on positive memories and deliberately generating gratitude. It's **impossible** to feel gratitude and be non-relational.

Positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation will predictably and consistently and reliably activate our relational circuits. This process actually releases "feel good" chemicals in our body—serotonin, oxytocin, endorphins. Even just thinking about appreciation, when you don't want to—will begin to release these chemicals! And this process of appreciation will turn on the circuits if they are off. Or if they are on, it will increase the intensity of your ability to interact. So, if we take the time to pause and recall a positive memory, then take the time to focus on the details, we will increasingly feel appreciation as we increasingly connect with the memory, and this will activate the relational circuits. This prepares our brains to connect with God in the case of Immanuel Prayer. But the same process will also open our circuits to people. So, light up your circuits!

Therefore in Immanuel Prayer if we:

- Coach recipients to re-enter a memory from a previous experience of connecting with God,
- Coach them to deliberately stir up appreciation in this positive memory,
- Coach them to invite God to be with them and to help them establish a connection,
- Coach them to describe whatever comes into their awareness...

....Most recipients will be able to reliably, predictably, consistently perceive God's presence and establish an inter-active, two-way, back-and-forth connection with Him.

3. Memory Mapping

Our relationships are memory-mapped.

This means that all of our relationships are carried in our brain through memories. For example, you may have thousands of memories about your spouse, or your parents, and those all contribute to your relationship with them. If you recall some of those good memories, it will light up those relational circuits so that you can connect with someone in the present. Even if you do not consciously bring up good memories, they are working in the background and your right brain instinctively will give you good signals and your circuits will automatically be on.

If you are in a recent memory when you had conflict, you will have trouble with connecting. Your circuits are down! But if you purposefully pull up some good memories, you will be able to move forward and connect with that person. Yes, you may still have to deal with the difficulties, but you are in a good place to begin communicating.

This is true with our relationship with God. You will see people who, in their minds, only have bad memories about God—prayers not answered, hardships that they blame on God. So their relational circuits to God will be blocked. But if we recall, think about, and call up positive memories with God, this will activate our neurological circuits and make it possible to connect with God in the present.

So, if we have positive memories that include an experience of God's presence, then using these positive memories to stir up appreciation will help us be effective in preparing our brains to connect with God.

Some people may not have memories specifically connected to God, but other positive memories will still work. People will just need your help in moving those memories to perceiving God's presence there and then to appreciation for God.

4. Built for Community

Our brains are designed to work best in community. As Dr. Wilder worked with a lot of different people he found that when they verbally shared their "Jesus" experiences with others it was even more impactful for them. This observation reminded him of certain brain science principles, and he realized that the association he had been observing wasn't just an accident. This applies in several ways, but for Immanuel Prayer specifically, our brains are able to **feel the importance and understand the meaning of our mental content when we describe it out loud to another person**. This especially helps when people might miss very subtle manifestations of God's presence. Describing it out loud and interacting with a prayer partner or facilitator brings more clarity. It helps our brains process what is happening more clearly.

In addition, consciously putting into story form our experiences with God during Immanuel Prayer and then sharing these stories with others actually activates a part of our brains that helps us to learn from that experience, and then to incorporate new discoveries into behavioral changes that will enable us to navigate life more successfully in the future. In other words, we will become more mature.

Because of this information, both Dr. Jim and Dr Karl decided to take advantage of this particular piece of brain science by coaching recipients to formulate narratives about the Jesus encounters they experienced in their Immanuel Prayer sessions, and then to deliberately share these Immanuel stories with several other people.

There are many other areas where the brain science available today, from the secular world, supports what the Bible tells us about how to live. God has designed us incredibly, and understanding part of this design helps us see why we sometimes act the way we do, and more importantly how we can change our behavior so that we can relate better to the people around us, understand them better and what is happening in their minds, and most importantly, how we can have a stronger connection with our Creator God who designed us this way!

One last area we will touch on for your encouragement:

5. The Brain is "Plastic"

You can "change" your brain and its circuits and how they work. You can build new circuits. The brain also eventually "eliminates" information that has not been used. So it is in process.

The term "neuroplasticity" refers to the ability of the brain to "rewire" itself through practice of a desired skill. It is the combination of new cells and new learning that creates this wonder. When fresh nerve cells are well-stimulated (i.e., trained through specific learning exercises) they make new connections. Under normal healthy circumstances the brain maintains this elasticity throughout a lifetime.

One of the facts Dr. Wilder has noted and often refers to is that it takes 30 days to "rewire" the brain. This isn't instant, but when you are talking about building good habits, and especially spiritual habits, for a life time, what an investment!

So....let's learn!!

