

Title: “**Very** Encouraging Christian Mental Health Think Tank”

April 21, 2025

Greetings all,

Charlotte and I want to thank you for your prayers and give you an update regarding the good results.

First, a quick refresher regarding this think-tank gathering. Chick-Fil-A tithes on their annual profits, which provides a very large amount of charitable funds. Chick-Fil-A has identified mental health as a special concern, and has established the WinShape Foundation to especially support and develop Christian mental health resources. And as part of their effort to support and develop Christian mental health resources, the WinShape Foundation has been gathering Christian mental health thought-leaders for a think-tank and networking conference each spring at their retreat center outside of Atlanta GA. This is the gathering that Charlotte and I participated in April 2 through April 4. Thank you for your prayers regarding strategic connections! We are profoundly grateful for how well things went:

- We had a good time reconnecting with friend and colleague Dr. Karl Benzio and his wife Martine. (Dr. Benzio is Medical Director for the American Association of Christian Counselors and a member of the Steering Committee for the WinShape mental health gatherings.) Dr. Benzio continues to be enthusiastic about the Immanuel Approach, got a copy of the second IA intro book, and is part of the conversation (described in more detail below) regarding possible state-of-the-art research studying the effectiveness of IA.
- We had a couple of good conversations with Dr. Matt Turvey (Matt is the psychologist in charge of WinShape charitable giving regarding Christian mental health, and also a member of the Steering Committee.) Dr. Turvey is very interested in possible research studying the effectiveness of the Immanuel Approach (more details below), and is currently in conversation with us about possible collaboration.
- We were able to reconnect with the couple we met last year, who have been working with the WinShape marriage care ministry for 20+ years and have been using the Immanuel Approach with the couples that they minister to for several years now. They mentioned that the WinShape marriage renewal ministry is now using our material regarding relational circuits (with appropriate acknowledgement of us as the source 😊).
- I had a really good conversation about the Immanuel Approach with a guy who provides executive coaching for Chick-fil-A and who is in the middle of planning and producing the think-tank gatherings. He seemed enthusiastic about the Immanuel Approach, he was happy to get a copy of the IA intro book, and he would like to talk further to follow-up on our conversation at the think-tank.

- We had a good conversation with the Pastor of Pastoral Care at Saddleback Church (across all 20 campuses), who also leads the churches Mental Health Initiative in collaboration with Saddleback Church Co-Founder Kay Warren. He seemed to really get the key points of the Immanuel Approach, and we are planning to schedule a zoom call to follow-up on our conversation at the think-tank.
- We had a good conversation with the CEO of Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries. (Sanctuary is an organization dedicated to developing resources that empower the church to support mental health and well-being. 300,000 people across 92 countries have used their course about mental health and the church.) He seemed to really get the key points of the Immanuel Approach, and he would like to talk further to follow-up on our conversation at the think-tank.
- We had a wonderful, long (several hours) conversation with Josh Spurlock and his wife. Josh is the founder of MyCounselor.Online, and together with his partner developed a two-year post-graduate residency in Neuroscience Informed Christian Counseling® (NICC). Josh has spent thousands of hours over the last several years putting together a very rigorous, well-thought-out program for research to document the efficacy of Christian mental health interventions. And the Immanuel Approach is a part of what he does, so much of his research will contribute to support for IA.

I facilitated initial connection between Josh, Dr. Turvey, and Dr. Benzio regarding the possibility of collaboration, and all parties are wanting to pursue further conversation. Especially Josh and Dr. Turvey (the psychologist with the WinShape Foundation) have research expertise and connections that I do not have. If this collaboration goes forward as I hope it might, we will eventually end up with strong research support for the Immanuel Approach. If our wild (but not totally unrealistic) hopes come together, we might even end up with fMRI studies of recipient's brains before, during, and after Immanuel Approach healing for trauma.

- I had a good conversation about IA with a couple who were missionaries for 12 years in Peru, who now both have mental health degrees, and who now oversee missionary care for Modern Day Missions and host Modern Day Missionaries podcast. I really had fun sharing stories I have heard from missionaries who are using IA, they were thrilled to get a copy of the IA intro book for MHPs, and I am going to be a guest on their podcast.
- We had a good conversation about IA with the co-authors of *The Journey of the Soul*, who also lead the Soul Shepherding Institute and host the weekly "Soul Talks" podcast. We left them with a copy of the IA intro for non mental health professionals.
- I had a good conversation about the Immanuel Approach with the Interim president of The King's College in New York City, who is also responsible for overseeing and hosting the annual Flourishing@Work Summit at Harvard. I left him with *An Introduction to the*

Immanuel Approach for Mental Health Professionals and hope to have a follow-up conversation.

- We had a good time reconnecting with friends who are a triple-doctor couple (Wife is MD, family practice. Husband is MD, PhD professor of Pediatrics, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and Adult Psychiatry at Washing University School of Medicine). They have been enthusiastic about IA since previous conversations, and are helping us make connections with Christian Medical and Dental Association (CMDA) leaders and podcast hosts.
- I was able to reconnect with Curt Thompson (author of *Anatomy of the Soul*, *The Soul of Shame*, and other books), who was one of the plenary speakers. We had a brief-but-good conversation, Curt shared about a friend who has had a *very* life-giving experience with the Immanuel Approach, and I gave him a copy of the IA intro for MHPs.
- I also had good conversations about the Immanuel Approach with three of the other plenary speakers, who all seemed very open and gladly accepted copies of the IA intro books.
- I had a brief-but-good conversation about the Immanuel Approach with Bubba Cathy, after which Bubba signaled for one of the Steering Committee members to come over and hear what I had to say. We also had a brief-but-good conversation with Bubba's secretary/personal assistant. (Again, Bubba oversees the Winshape foundation and is co-owner of Chic-Fil-A.)
- We also made good initial connections with a number of other Christian mental health professionals and ministry leaders.

So, like, "Wow!" We are grateful and amazed. Again, thank you for your prayers for our time at this gathering, and please pray that the Lord will bless all of the seeds that got planted during these three *extremely* full and fruitful days.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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