



Emotionally-Connected Discipleship & New Wineskin Community

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Greetings in the name of Jesus! – not just from myself and my husband, Karl, whom you heard speak on Thursday, but from others in our close community back home. What I’m going to present to you here is the fruit of God working in many lives, and shaping and healing and enriching us through one another. A number of them even read my first draft of this presentation and gave very direct input into it, for which I’m very grateful. Know that they are also praying that God will accomplish great things through this conference, and in each of your lives, though they have not met you personally.

I’m also grateful to my very first community, my parents! I would not be here today if it weren’t for them, in many ways. I appreciate so many things about them, but today I’m thinking particularly about their never pretending that they, or our family, was perfect. They loved (and still love) my siblings and I, and they have nurtured and encouraged me and given me space to grow as a person and as a Christian. They honor me today by being here – and I really think this demonstrates their courage as well as their love! I mean, Karl and I are somewhat known for our openness and transparency about our own healing journeys... it could be a bit anxiety-producing for *any* parent wondering what their child might say in a lecture like this... “Don’t worry, it’s only in front of *a few* hundred people.” But they are here, and it really warms my heart.

And speaking of the heart, what I’m here to say today is: If you want to experience deep and wonderful transformation in *your heart*, and consequently, in your life, learn the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship. And if you want to experience even greater joy and power in that transformation, get several other trustworthy people around you to do the same thing, and a new wineskin community will form.

Well, now that I’ve given you that “bottom line” to hold onto, let me say a word about how I’m going to present it. If I succeed in this presentation in convincing you even just to explore further whether what I’ve said is correct, then it will be because the Holy Spirit has spoken to you at the heart level. So I’m going to address this presentation to your heart more than to your head. This means that those of you who prefer a more logic-oriented and linear presentation may find yourself frustrated at times! But if that’s you, I encourage you to not disengage – listen with your heart, and try to catch the vision and inspiration. If you do, then you’ll be motivated and ready to dig in to the resources I’ve listed on the handout you’ve been given. [*Note to readers of essay: The resource handout is included at the end of this document.*]

About six years ago, the Lord began to transform the small, ordinary psychiatric practice which my husband, Karl, who is a psychiatrist, and I ran together, into a much more effective ministry of emotional healing. As He equipped us with new tools, both secular and explicitly Christian,

for facilitating profound emotional healing, we began to see amazing transformations happening in people's lives. A phobia cured in one 90-minute session. A growing problem with panic healed at the roots, and then did not reappear, even without medication.

These healing victories were wonderful and we celebrated them with our clients. But then there were also those whose problems didn't get healed quickly – even after a whole lot of work and prayer. And the Lord used all of these situations – both the healing victories which illustrated certain principles of how God may do deep emotional healing, and the situations in which things didn't seem to be working – to do something we didn't anticipate. They exposed *our own* wounds.

At first we didn't recognize that that was what was happening. We just figured we were going through a hard time, or we were under spiritual attack. And both of those things were probably true as well, but if that's all we recognized, we would have missed welcoming the deeper transformation in our own lives through living emotionally-connected discipleship.

Here's an example. In October of 1998, just after we had returned from a training seminar in which we had witnessed powerful emotional healing time and time again, we were going through one of those stressful times as I've just described. It was close to midnight, and Karl was so stressed out that he couldn't sleep. Because of all the healings we had recently seen, both in our own clients, and at the seminar we had just attended, we were sensitized to the dynamic of "triggering" – something in the present which "triggers" feeling old pain stored in one's heart. Could it be that most or even some of this pain Karl is feeling is coming from an old unhealed wound in his heart? That the present stressful *external* situation is acting as a "trigger" to accessing that old *internal* pain? If Karl focuses on the pain he's feeling, and we ask Jesus to help him feel any connections to that old internal pain, will we get to the "root"? I wanted to try it, anyway, both because I had a growing faith from seeing people healed by God in this way, and also because I was desperate! I could tell this chronic stress was taking a heavy toll on Karl. And, to be honest, it was taking a heavy toll on me too – I needed my sleep, and I certainly didn't enjoy the anxious and discouraged mood that Karl would often get into during this time.

We asked the Lord to guide the process and Karl tried to just pay attention to the thoughts and feelings that came into his heart and mind, and then to report them as accurately as possible out loud to me. Karl remembers feeling that his thoughts were wandering all over the place, and he commented repeatedly "This doesn't make any sense, it's not working." I remember noting that all the thoughts and feelings he described were following a consistent theme, even though we didn't seem to be accomplishing any healing yet. After 45-60 minutes of what felt to him like fruitless wandering, he came to a series of memories with intense emotions attached.

Karl remembered living through the tumultuous decade of the sixties as a small child, and being terrified by many things, including TV footage of children being hurt while participating in civil rights protests, and graphic pictures of the Viet Nam war in *Life* magazine. He also remembered being scared by sermons on various Bible texts, such as "If you do not hate your father and mother,...you are not worthy of me," or "If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out," or the story of God telling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

During this same time in his life, church meetings were sometimes held in the living room of his family's home, right next to his bedroom. His bed was right by the door, and he remembered hearing people talking about how God had taken away their jobs, boyfriends, or some other treasure so that they wouldn't have an idol – so that nothing would be before God in their lives.

Karl, as a little boy, had thought, “If I’m going to be a ‘real’ Christian, I should be living out these teachings.” He remembered thinking about what it would be like to be in a civil rights protest and get attacked by dogs and police, or to have to pluck out one of his eyes to keep from sinning. All of these thoughts and conclusions in his child heart were, of course, very confusing and frightening. He wanted to be a real Christian but didn’t have the courage to do any of these things, and so on top of everything else, he had a chronic sense of being a coward and a failure. He was afraid that although he was not courageous or obedient enough to volunteer, God would take away anything he treasured. He was afraid that God would make bad things happen to him “to purify him.”

Well, so there we are, somewhere between midnight and 1:30am, lying on our bed, as Karl remembers and feels all these things. He cried for a short time as he remembered what it felt like to be three to five years old and trying to deal with it all. In later years, Karl had heard about cult leader Charles Manson, who would tell his followers to burn the things they loved the most to prove that they loved him more than those things. Karl summarized the lies he had been confused into believing as a child by saying: “I felt that God was more like a psychotic cult leader than a loving father.”

Somewhere after Karl had laid all these memories, thoughts, and feelings out, I asked the Lord to bring His truth to replace the lies. Suddenly Karl seemed to pause, and his countenance changed. Then he said, “This isn’t true. That’s not what the Lord is like!”

The feeling that God is a psychotic cult leader has been completely gone from Karl since that time of healing prayer in October of 1998. Now he says that those negative thoughts just feel ridiculous and untrue. It was interesting that before that prayer time, Karl was in the habit of reading true stories about God’s answers to prayer, miraculous interventions and the like, quite frequently. He had a huge collection of books containing those kind of inspirational testimonies, and he’d find himself feeling like he *needed* to be reading them every week, if not every day, during particularly stressful times. After that prayer time, however, without trying to change his habits, Karl found he didn’t *need* to read those stories anymore in order to maintain a fundamental belief in God’s goodness. It’s still enjoyable to read testimonies of God’s goodness, but we rejoice that Karl no longer *has* to do so in an attempt to silence lies in his own heart that tell him otherwise. The lies just aren’t there any more. Karl was able to return to the difficult situations he was facing with much less stress. He wasn’t devoid of emotion; he still felt compassion and concern for his patients. But he wasn’t carried away with his *own* anxiety. In a very real sense, he was more able to be genuinely compassionate for the patient, because his heart was less divided, trying to manage the anxiety from his own pain as well. He was more able to do his best, and then trust God for the rest without the burden of the extremely distorted view of God’s character.

So we got a personal taste of the experience of deep emotional transformation, and we liked it. Why fight the lies and burdens in a cognitive way only – and have to keep doing it perpetually – when we could surrender the root lies and burdens to the Lord and be free of them forever? We were convinced of the value of this kind of healing for individuals, and we dedicated a lot of time and energy to learning how to do this kind of healing prayer.

And then, along the way, as we began to internalize more and more thoroughly the principles of healing that the Lord was teaching us, we began to notice more and more examples of them – that is, examples of people’s old wounds manifesting in their present lives – everywhere. It was as if we were wearing special germ-exposing glasses, and then looking around, aghast at the abundance of bacteria on everything. It wasn’t just when someone came to our offices seeking

healing ministry that we saw it... it was in church council meetings, waiting in line at the grocery store, at family reunions. But perhaps the most sobering part of this eye-opening experience was turning those glasses on ourselves! In the field of psychology, this would technically be called a narcissistically painful experience.

How mortifying! I mean, don't get me wrong – we had never thought of ourselves as perfect, but we just figured that most of the pain we experienced was because a) life is just difficult, including spiritual attacks as well, or b) other *people* can be difficult. And while it is true, life is difficult, the enemy is out to get us, and other people may choose to use their free will in ways that are difficult for us, there is also another huge source of pain of which we had been largely unaware. What we began to see more and more clearly, was that much of the pain or relational struggles we experienced, yes MUCH more than we would have guessed initially, were actually coming from the unhealed wounds inside of us. It wasn't just a rare few unhealed wounds inside of us that might get triggered once a year, and about which we'd seek prayer ministry. Once our eyes were opened, we couldn't help but see that we were triggered many times every day. Good heavens!

How can this be? We have graduate degrees! We both graduated at the top of our classes! We hold leadership positions in our local church. Lots of people turn to us for help, and actually get help! And we're trying *so hard*! Do we *really* have that many unhealed wounds that are causing us pain, and influencing us to behave in – dare I say it – *dysfunctional* ways?

Frankly, yes.

At least two significant shifts happened within us through this time.

The first was receiving a healthy dose of humility. We had to own up to our own woundedness, and the sin which always grows up with it, and grieve the death of our former images of ourselves as much better off than we were!

The second significant shift was a deep internal change in our attitudes toward emotional pain. Instead of running from it, we got in the habit of not only noticing when we had it, but pausing and looking in to it – or perhaps it is better said “feeling” in to it. We realized that much is to be gained from listening to what our emotions were telling us whenever they stirred up in painful ways. Time and time again we experienced the reality that emotions are often not a good measure of absolute truth (for example, I may feel unloved, although the truth is we are dearly loved by God, at least), but they are always a good measure of something going on inside of us (such as, the present situation is reminding me that sometime in my life I have felt unloved, and a part of my heart still accepts that as the ultimate truth). We began systematically *looking* for signs that emotional pain we felt in the present was being augmented by old pain, even slightly – because that old pain was curable. Why leave it there to keep coming up over and over, cause conflict, steal our joy, distort our discernment?

For example, it had long bothered Karl that many affirmative or complimentary things that he would say to me would seem to just bounce off of me without effect. I couldn't seem to receive them, and feel the love and affirmation and blessing he was trying to give me. We didn't set out to pray about that specifically, but having embraced the reality that triggered old pain was influencing us much of the time, we often didn't worry about what specific issue we were working on in a prayer time. We knew that if Jesus brought memories to mind that still had pain in them, then the resulting healing of that pain would benefit our present lives and functioning

somewhere. During a couple of different prayer ministry times for me, several different memories came up that we later realized were connected to my inability to receive affirmation. One whole set of memories had to do with being taunted and rejected because of being Japanese – or perhaps it would be more accurately described as not being Euro-American. A typical example would be on the bus to the junior high school, when one particular boy would call me every Asian-related racial slur name he could think of – and he'd pull on his eyes and make ugly faces, indicating that that is how I looked, that I was so different and ugly. I remembered other times, being out on some ordinary shopping trip with my mother and one of my siblings, and having kids we didn't know at all starting calling out racial slurs and making faces. From my perspective, we were just minding our own business, not doing anything to them, and out of nowhere this harassment could appear. What felt true was that I should assume that people I didn't know wouldn't like me.

Other memories involved people who weren't so hostile, but even so, I found their words and actions hurtful and rejecting at times. My middle name is the Japanese name Emiko. The little girl across the street, with whom I played regularly, said, in a contemptuous tone of voice, "That sounds like 'charcoal' – what kind of name is that?" All of my teachers at school had a hard time pronouncing my last name, Tsuyuki, and that made me feel like a misfit. And then there were memories of cultural messages, which seemed to clearly broadcast what kind of girl was considered beautiful or attractive and an asset to have around – and well, they didn't look like me. I was different and ugly and undesirable, like those kids in junior high said, and the culture reinforced over and over. (Perhaps that would have been different had I grown up in Hawaii, but that's not how it happened for me!)

As is typical for the way the Lord brings healing to me, at least so far, I didn't see any great visions of Jesus appearing in my memories or anything like that. But in the context of a prayer time, when I was able to really feel the pain in all of those memories, and face the lies I had learned about myself and the world because of them, and lay it all out before the Lord, something shifted inside of me. I sensed the Lord's acceptance and love. I sensed the love and acceptance of those praying with me right there. I could accept myself, and be glad to be just who God made me. Then I could receive at a deeper level my husband's expressions of love and affirmation. Now when he tells me I'm beautiful, I don't assume that he's just trying to be nice because he thinks a Christian ought to be nice. So that healing blessed our marriage and increased the joy we experience together. It also gave me more confidence in dealing with other people – not because I now assume everyone will like me. That's just not realistic in this life! But I don't assume other people won't like me. And then even if they don't, I don't get triggered to the child feelings of shame, fear, and rejection. I don't get thrown off balance. I can still think clearly, and even find myself wondering what might be triggering them, and how can I express Jesus' love to them.

Let me make it clearer. What is the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship? It is recognizing and taking responsibility for your own wounds when they show up in your present emotions, thoughts, responses. (You know, probably the majority of wounds we sustain in childhood are not our fault – we didn't ask for them, and in our position as children, couldn't do anything to prevent them – but, like it or not, getting healing is our responsibility. God will invite us, but we've got to choose it; no one can do it for us.) It is adopting the regular habit of *looking* for the signs of your own old pain manifesting in the present, and seeing that occurrence as an opportunity to surrender more of your heart to the Lord, receiving His love and light and truth in exchange for your lies and burdens. It includes setting aside time and energy to do that surrendering, whether by oneself if possible, or with the help of another believer.

Somewhere during this season of our lives, I realized that I had a fantasy of going away on a retreat with someone who could minister to me, and working intensively on all of my unhealed stuff, so that it would be ALL gone. Maybe it would have to be several weeks... OK, maybe several months! Years? But then I'd come back into regular life and be, well, perfect! And nobody else would have to know just how messed up I *was*, since it would all be in the past. I'd never have to face that awful feeling of shame that happens when you realize that some bad situation has been caused by your "stuff."

I really did know that this was an unrealistic fantasy, but I have to tell you, it was really appealing anyway! It was in confessing this fantasy to the Lord, and listening to Him about it that God began to show me that the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship naturally leads to the vulnerability of emotional connection to other people. And when several individuals who are embracing the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship come together, something new and even more powerful happens. A new wineskin community is formed.

Before I say more about the "new wineskin community," I have to say something about how we've come to be experiencing such a fruitful journey of healing for ourselves and others. Part of me wishes I could tell you good things are happening because of great farsighted vision and careful, strategic planning on our part. But the rest of me is much happier to tell you the truth – that we were sincerely seeking God, but often feeling like we were stumbling around in our pain and efforts to find tools that worked for healing, our own as well as others. I'm happy that that's the way it happened, because that means that it's not human brilliance that brought it about, but God's mercy mixed with human surrender in specific areas. And since God's mercy is abundant, and human surrender in specific areas can be learned, this can be done elsewhere. I believe this is something God wants to do in many places.

If I could have gotten more deep healing, freedom from my lies and burdens, in the typical "professional" model, individualistic fashion, I would have chosen to do it that way. You know, make an appointment with a therapist or a pastor or a prayer minister and have a nice private, confidential, individual session. I like to deal with my vulnerability when I'm not feeling so, well, vulnerable. And that *is* sometimes the right and necessary thing to do, but at that particular season of my life, that healing context seemed to dry up. Rather than being a context for opening my heart to the Lord, and to whomever was ministering to me, it just became an exercise in seeing how inaccessible my heart was! I was frustrated. I tried many an individual prayer ministry session in which I could talk and talk about various childhood memories, events which were certainly painful at the times they happened, but I couldn't connect with the emotions from them. Was it because they were already healed? No, unfortunately not. The hurtful "lessons" I learned in those memories still felt true in my present life. I knew that I needed to be able to feel the vulnerable emotions, but try as I might during those prayer times, I couldn't do it. We've since learned a lot about how the brain works, and why that was happening, but suffice for now to say that I simply couldn't access by that means the places in my heart that needed healing. But God is too good to have left me there. To get more healing, and to continue to grow and mature in Him, I would need to recognize the "missing" emotions when they came up in my present life, and embrace the choice to be vulnerable then. I would need to recognize when I was tempted to hide myself from others around me and then choose to let myself be known more deeply. I would need to be willing to see and remove the layers of self-protection that surrounded my heart like impenetrable plastic wrap, keeping pain in and other people and healing out!

So I began a new sort of spiritual discipline of watching for those opportunities to show up. Not surprisingly, the opportunities would nearly always show up in community – when I'm with

other people who matter to me, not just in my quiet prayer time alone with the Lord. For some reason I don't seem to be able to see those sneaky layers of plastic except against the backdrop of real relationships in the present with other people. It's too easy, in the shifting screen of my own mind, inside my head, to simply not see what I'm in the habit of not seeing. But in the presence of other hearts and minds, and in the presence of the Spirit there, hidden things become visible and the window of opportunity to choose something different is open.

Not too long ago, Karl and I were at the public library. Karl was using the reference department for some of his research, and as I was waiting for him, I began to peruse the old books in the lobby, that the library was selling off for a dollar each. I came upon a book about cleaning. Yes, just cleaning – strategies for cleaning efficiently, how to assess how often to clean, tools of the trade, the whole nine yards – written by a “cleaning professional.” Now, to understand my thinking at this point, I have to fill you in on a bit of background. First of all, my friend Heather learned to swim by reading a book – really! Of course, she got in the pool too, but she says that what really made the difference was understanding certain concepts which she found clearly explained in a particular book. And now she's not an Olympic swimmer, but hey, she does triathlons, which is more than good enough for me. Second of all, my childhood home was full of many good things, like love and creativity, and nearly always eating dinner together (and that was happily, to my recollection!), but it was also full of clutter. Clutter, of course, is not evil (I confess I have always taken exception to the phrase “Cleanliness is next to godliness” – seems to me that there are a lot of things closer to godliness than that!). Clutter is, however, rather by definition, quite disorderly, and it does make cleaning very difficult. Some times it makes even finding a place to sit down difficult. So, anyway, I pick up this book on cleaning, and I think to myself, I've never really learned anything systematic about cleaning. How often should one vacuum, anyway? And, what *is* the most efficient way to clean? Well, if Heather can learn to swim by reading a book, surely I can learn to clean by reading one! I was a bit embarrassed as I paid for it at the library circulation desk, but I survived and took the book home.

A few days later, Karl and I had our friends Heather and Dan over to our home, just for fun and fellowship. We began chatting about our weeks, and seeing Heather reminded me of getting that book on cleaning. So, in a light and jovial manner, I start telling them the story. It was fine until I got to saying that I wasn't sure, but that maybe I really did need better cleaning skills and habits, especially because we were wondering now whether Karl may be suffering from some allergies, and cleaning more might actually be a necessity for his health. Suddenly I realized that I didn't feel jovial anymore. A wave of anxiety swept over me, as all in a moment it seemed, I realized that I felt really vulnerable. What if one of the others said “Hooray! We were wondering whether you'd ever realize how dirty this place had gotten!” or “Well, the bathroom, for instance, is really pretty disgusting, why don't you start there?” or something like that. It felt like I would just die of shame if that happened.

Before God had worked in me, as an individual, to be living the lifestyle of emotionally connected discipleship – which He was making clear included being emotionally connected to other people, and choosing the vulnerable position of letting myself be known – I would have responded differently at that point. I probably would have paused to “collect myself” – which really means get a tighter grip on any emotions threatening to expose themselves, or me! – and then perhaps made a self-deprecating joke and changed the subject quickly and/or excused myself to the bathroom. And if God had not been working in the others in the group to be living the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship, which made us collectively into a new wineskin community, I don't think I would have gone any further than making a mental note of my feelings, so that I could try to recapture them sometime later when I had a chance to receive

some prayer ministry. But this was the container of the new wineskin community, and what actually happened was this: I paused, and after identifying all the feelings just mentioned, I realized “I don’t have to hide this. Karl and Dan and Heather will be OK with this. I can be real. Here’s a chance to choose to be known.” So then I said a bit haltingly, “Ah... hmm. I’m just realizing that I’m feeling really vulnerable right now. Wow, I really didn’t expect this when I started to tell this story. But just to let you know where I’m at, if you’re thinking ‘Wow, I’m so glad she’s finally going to really clean this place’ please don’t say it just yet. I think I’ll just burst into tears.” And then the anxiety and vulnerability felt even more intense for a moment, and a tear did escape one eye and roll down my cheek.

The others were all quiet, but not anxiously quiet. I could feel that they understood that I was feeling bad, and the fact that it was “irrational” as far as the present situation was concerned wasn’t bothering them. They all had the capacity to be with me as I felt this pain, and to care about me, but not get freaked out. Because we had all been working on living the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship, we all recognized the signs of something in the present – even something very trivial – poking on some old pain and creating a much bigger reaction. I said, “Wow, this is really triggering me.” Then Dan said, “May I ask a question?” I nodded and he asked “Do you think that’s the feeling from that time in junior high or high school when some guy saw your home and then said he was so shocked or something?” We know a lot of each other’s stories, and that was a pretty good guess on Dan’s part. I cried some as I described the feeling of shame that I felt. I realized and spoke out loud that when that particular humiliating incident and a similar one when I was younger had happened, I hadn’t let myself really feel the pain of them. But they had still lodged in my heart as a sense of shame and inadequacy. Now here, many years later, in the special container of the new wineskin community – a community formed by individuals living the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship – the Spirit stirred, and I was able to feel the long-deferred pain, and receive a healing touch from the Lord.

The whole transaction, from the time I started telling the story of getting the cleaning book, probably didn’t take longer than 20 or 25 minutes. We didn’t stop and do a prayer ministry session per se, but we deliberately tried to channel the natural flow of emotional currents to mix with the wine of the Spirit in the moment, and some healing happened. Another corner of my heart was released of a burden of shame and fear of rejection, and became free to know the joy of connecting with the Lord and others.

It’s important to note here that if I had not been aware that I was being triggered – the present situation accessing old pain in my heart – then the best I probably could have gotten would have been some momentary comfort by some kind and understanding friends. Perhaps they would have gone away benevolently thinking, “Wow, Charlotte is really sensitive about what we think of her home. I’ll have to be careful of what I say about it.” Certainly having a community of kind and understanding friends is wonderful, and not to be taken for granted! But part of what is different about the new wineskin community formed by individuals living the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship, is the foundational understanding of triggered emotions. In a matter of minutes, we all recognized it for what it was. Although at some point, I think Heather did say that she liked our house the way it was, neither she nor the others tried to “fix” my bad feeling with those reassurances. Once I said that I knew I was experiencing triggered old pain, they supported me in asking the Lord to heal the real underlying source of the pain. Because they all had a certain perspective and training about emotional pain, and they all had enough emotional capacity to be with me in this moment of pain, they applied their love for me in a very specific way – not in trying to convince me that I needn’t feel bad, but in putting aside other concerns or desires for a time, not cracking jokes (that’s often a sign that someone doesn’t have

the capacity to be with you in your pain!), but respecting and caring about what I was experiencing, and asking the Holy Spirit to speak to my heart.

We have no doubt that the new wineskin community that God creates out of individuals who are each embracing the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship is an important part of God's plan to heal up His people, giving them more joy, and making them more effective in their Kingdom work. The joy that comes from being truly known – not the faces we can put on that we know people will like, but our true feelings and thoughts – and still loved and accepted and helped on the journey of discipleship is powerful.

But there is even more powerful transformation that God can do using the new wineskin community. What happens if conflict arises in our community?

Something over a year ago, I had a transformative experience with two friends of mine. With the first friend, I had been meeting and praying together for a long time. We were very close – we knew not only the basic happenings in each other's lives, but much of the intimate details of each other's hearts, for we regularly ministered to one another in our ongoing spiritual journeys of healing and growth. The second friend I had met more recently, but had soon felt a deep connection with her, and also had had some prayer times together, sharing deeply. After a time of getting to know this second friend, it occurred to me that she and my other friend had a lot in common, and would probably enjoy meeting one another. Also, the first friend and I seemed to be in a bit of a rut in our prayer work with one another, and we wondered whether inviting my second friend to join us once would help bring in a fresh connection to the Spirit's work. So we did invite the second friend to pray with us, and that began a deep and profound connection between my two friends. In fact, in a very short amount of time, the two of them had become extremely close friends – kindred spirit, bosom buddies – and definitely much closer to each other than either of them was to me.

I wish I could say that my reaction was to recognize the Spirit's hand at work and to bless them, but it wasn't. It took me a while to figure out that I was having a reaction. In fact, I didn't figure it out by myself at all. Rather, when I was talking to my first friend on the phone, and began to express anger about something she reported the other friend had said, she noticed and pointed out my reaction. I felt angry and humiliated. After a bit, I began to identify my places of pain. What about me? How dare they leave me out like that? How disloyal and unloving! I felt rejected, left out, betrayed, unwanted. Every time I'd talk to one or the other I'd realize that they had spent much more time talking to each other than to me; I was the last one to find anything out, the third wheel, it seemed.

Well this story could have ended there. I could have blamed one or the other of my friends for my pain. Or, I could have tried to accept it and let it go as part of the suffering that the Lord calls me to endure in this life. I could have earnestly sought the Lord's grace of repentance for any of my sins (such as jealousy, selfishness, pettiness) and the grace to forgive them of what I thought to be their sins (unkindness to me, selfishness, disloyalty, deception). And some of those steps would be good to take, and I did do them (trying to see any of my sins and confess them to the Lord). But there was so much more for me! Something new and transformative happened.

Believe it or not, the three of us went on a three day retreat together, and during that time, we allowed the pain I was feeling – and, in turn, the pain that each of them was feeling in reaction to my reaction! – to be the window of opportunity for deep emotional healing. It was so painful to go on that retreat. A deep place in my soul was crying out – why go where you're not wanted?

How humiliating and pathetic! We began at a restaurant for dinner. I was holding it together OK through most of the meal, until the first friend said, “Well, I think it would be a good idea for us to discuss our expectations and hopes for this retreat, so that we can make appropriate plans for our time.” She then began, and gave her thoughts. Next, the second friend spoke, but was so exhausted because of some very draining health issues in her life at the time, that she said she couldn’t really begin to answer that question until the next morning, after hopefully getting a good night’s sleep. Then it was my turn. I began to weep – not loudly, but uncontrollably. I couldn’t really speak. The waitress came back to the table to see if anyone wanted dessert. She discreetly didn’t notice my tears, nor notice that my napkin had become a handkerchief. I finally eked out a few words about hoping to have time to minister to one another, at least one time for each of us, and also needing to work on a presentation I was going to give at a Women’s retreat that coming weekend.

Well, we did minister to one another during that time, and the Lord used that situation, which had broken open a big wound of rejection and shame in me, (bigger and deeper than the other ones I’ve already described here) to allow His Spirit in to cleanse, mend, and restore with His truth and love, speaking acceptance and well-being into my soul. Note that in this case, we did deliberately sit down and do prayer ministry with one another – unlike in the “cleaning book” incident, where healing happened in the flow of our time together without a specific appointment. I doubt I could have received ministry effectively there in the restaurant when I was weeping! The uniqueness and “new wineskin” aspect of this healing was not a non-traditional setting, so much as it was the powerful effect of doing the healing work with the very ones about whom I felt present pain! It was the Spirit’s transformation of conflict into powerful healing and loving unity.

I know something deep shifted in my soul, because immediately afterward I felt a new freedom and comfort level both with those two friends, and in connecting with other people. Only a day after that three-day retreat, I went to our church’s Women’s Retreat, and I experienced it differently than I had previous ones. I found that I was participating more spontaneously than before. A whole lot of second-guessing and emotional risk-assessment that I used to do was just gone. Whereas I previously might have thought, “If I volunteer for this role in the Fun Night activities, what will people think of me? Will I look stupid? ...or like a show-off? Etc, etc.” Now, I just thought “That looks like fun, I think I’ll join in.” I found myself volunteering to give others foot rubs or back rubs, also something I hadn’t done before. I was also just generally more huggy with folks. Oh, and I should say that each of my two friends also got wonderful healing during our small three-day retreat. My big emotional reaction had broken open different wounds in each of them, which were then accessible for the Spirit’s healing touch.

What could have cut me off from two wonderful friends became instead an avenue of redemption. How did that happen? I look back now, and I realize that before the conflict happened, God had already trained each of us in the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship, and a new wineskin community had formed. And in that container, the new wineskin community, something new can happen when pain and conflict are poured in.

Think of the implications of this! Surely the evil one would have liked to see us alienated from one another – I don’t doubt that he even contributed some of the thoughts that went through my mind, or a particularly painful bit of timing here and there to try to make the pain as bad as it could be. His scheme was completely foiled, turned back on his head! God took what might have been meant for evil, and in this new wineskin of a particular kind of community, He brought redemption. Our relationships became closer and stronger than before, God has been

glorified, and we each are more healed and free!

What if this became the common outcome of a “bomb” of conflict going off in say, a church or ministry leadership team? What if all the team members got some healing, and ended up trusting each other more, and God was glorified in the resulting unity? Could the Kingdom use more stories like this?! Surely we’ve all heard the other kind. Conflict arises. Irreconcilable differences. Relationships end because, in our pain, we are unable to discern the Spirit’s voice together. All manner of spiritual-sounding interpretations may be put on what people choose to do, but the evil one is still celebrating.

If you don’t allow the Lord to show you your unresolved issues – if you choose to blame your circumstances or other people for all your pain, rather than invite the Lord to show you what’s coming from inside of you – or if you turn a blind eye to them when He does show you – then those issues will become snares the enemy will use to try to take you out or bog you down into joylessness and ineffectiveness. If, on the other hand, you live the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship (you could say, “heart-connected discipleship”), in which you ask the Lord to deliberately expose your unresolved issues (talk about dangerous prayers!), and you embrace responsibility for them when they get exposed, inviting the Lord to bring healing at the root level – then those issues become avenues of redemption and experiencing more personally and more deeply, the love, mercy and grace of Jesus for you.

Let me tell you right now what you’ve probably already guessed: the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship is *not* easy. It takes courage and effort and support to do it. And even after you’re into it, there *will* be times when you or others are blind to the fact that you’re triggered, or where your capacity to feel your own pain or be with someone else in theirs is not big enough to meet the need of the moment. Even in a functioning new wineskin community, there likely will still be times when you need to use outside resources for healing work – especially when the issues are specialized, complex, intense, or there’s just a lot of work needing to be done for a season, more than a friendship “container” can sustain. But the joy in being really known in a new wineskin community is a tremendous resource even if someone needs to be working intensely in another setting on their healing work. And for people like me, practicing the vulnerability of emotionally-connected discipleship in the new wineskin community turned out to be essential for accessing the heavily-defended pain in my heart. Then I could sit down and work on it in a prayer ministry session.

Remember what I said earlier, about how eye-opening it was for us when we realized that there was another source of emotional pain in our lives besides 1) life and the presence of evil are difficult, and 2) other people can be difficult? Well, when you deal with that other source of pain, namely the unresolved pain in your own heart, you are much better able to deal with the other problems – life, the devil, and other people. When you’re caught up in your own triggered pain, you’re working from an underlying and usually unrecognized motivation of “make my pain go away as fast as possible – whatever it takes.” And that motivation promotes acting in ways you’ll regret later – rage, withdrawal, substance use, etc. When you’re not caught up in your own triggered pain, you can think more clearly, hear the Holy Spirit’s promptings more clearly, and respond from the new heart that Jesus gave you. It is believers who can respond in this way that will not fall in the face of conflicts, persecution, or confusion. They will be the light of Christ in dark places, and will take new ground for the Kingdom.

A time of prayerful reflection follows...

- *Lord, what is the next step for me to embrace the lifestyle of emotionally-connected discip-*

ship?

- *Do I own responsibility for my own issues? Or do I turn a blind eye to them? Do I listen when others express concerns, or do I consciously or unconsciously blame my “stuff” on others?*
- *Am I willing to live connected to my own heart?*
 - *For those who feel nothing (or nothing but occasionally anger or depression, or desire to self-medicate and then perhaps feel unhappy with themselves) to be willing to feel, and for God’s provision of the support they need to begin to let themselves feel their undisguised emotions*
 - *For repentance of judgment and contempt of emotions, of vulnerability, of perceived “weakness”; For renunciation of vows not to feel, not to acknowledge hurt*
- *Asking God for vision of life and hope, and what life would look and feel like with His solutions to our pain, rather than our own*
- *Prayer of willingness to learn the emotional skills it takes to be in and help sustain a new wineskin community*
 - *For those who feel, but don’t know how to let God use those opportunities to pour in His new wine; that they’d be granted insight by the Holy Spirit into the roots of their pain, and receive His truth there*
- *Prayer of guidance for the Lord to make the connections between people*
 - *For those who have no one with whom they can be emotionally honest – for God to weave the tapestry of community*

Resources for Pursuing “Emotionally-Connected Discipleship & New Wineskin Community”

At present, we don't know of any *one* resource providing a complete package of detailed vision, education, and how-to type equipping for living the *lifestyle of emotionally-connected discipleship*, and forming *new wineskin communities*. The Bible is foundational, but many other contemporary resources help flesh out parts of the picture for this time and place. Except for resources we've written ourselves, we don't agree 100% with any particular resource (especially the two secular resources at the end); what we've listed here are resources that have been a helpful part of God speaking to and shaping us, and with whom we do find ourselves largely in agreement.

- www.immanuelapproach.com – This is our (Karl and Charlotte Lehman's) website, which is mostly made up of free downloadable documents about emotional healing ministry: Articles and FAQs, Ministry Aids, Case Studies, Other Resources. See particularly the following:
 - “Spiritual Disciplines and Emotional Healing Ministry: Choosing Healing” (in the [kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com) website archives section of the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page).
 - “How Long Will It Take For Me To Be Healed?” (In the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page)
- *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and For Life*, available from the Store page of www.immanuelapproach.com.
- *Outsmarting Yourself*, available from the Store page of www.immanuelapproach.com.
- *The Immanuel Lifestyle and Sustaining Joy for a Lifetime*, available from the Store page of www.immanuelapproach.com.
- Live Ministry Series (LMS) sessions by Karl and Charlotte Lehman. There are thirty-nine different videos currently in this series, which can all be purchased separately. Many people who are learning Immanuel Approach prayer ministry ask, “But what does it actually look like when you do it?” These videos help to fill that need for seeing actual prayer sessions. Available from the Store page of www.immanuelapproach.com.
- *The Life Model: Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You*, by the Shepherds House Group (James Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne Bierling, Rick Koepcke, Maribeth Poole) This short book may feel frustratingly brief, not giving enough examples of the principles it presents, but it has the best and most useful model of emotional maturity we've seen (much deeper and more developmentally sophisticated than that found in *The Emotionally Healthy Church*). It also presents a rich model of the life of living from the heart. Available at <https://lifemodelworks.org/>
- Thrive Today materials, available from Humble Shack <https://humble-shack.myshopify.com/collections/thrivetoday-chris-jen-coursey>.
- *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by pastor Peter Scazzero, published by Zondervan. Pastor Pete warmly and vulnerably shares much of his own story in this book – and shows how a strong, growing, multiracial network of churches is thriving on a vision of Christian discipleship that includes emotional maturity as inseparable from spiritual maturity. It's a good book to introduce people to the need for and benefits from living connected to their own hearts, and dealing with unresolved issues there. Pastor Pete also does a good job of giving Biblical foundations for his thesis.

- Two secular resources:
 - *Parenting From the Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel, M.D. and Mary Hartzell, M.Ed. The subtitle of this book describes its value well: “How a deeper self-understanding can help you raise children who thrive.” We recommend this book because it does a convincing job of illustrating how our own unresolved emotional issues impact our relationships with our children, and of course, all of our other relationships as well. It gives helpful coaching on handling one’s own difficult times, and describes both scientifically (lots of recent brain research) and practically the importance of emotional connection between people and how it is nurtured or hindered.
 - *Raising An Emotionally Intelligent Child* by John Gottman, Ph.D. We found this very readable book highly useful for illustrating how kids learn to understand and manage their own emotions. Parents will find it helpful, but we recommend everyone read it, with an eye to how one was raised in one’s family of origin – how did you learn what your emotions were? ... how to handle them? Chock full of examples, this book clearly describes several important concepts of emotional connection.