

Title: "Triggers Regarding Small Groups"

July 20, 2026

Greetings all,

I recently got a fun Immanuel Approach story from someone in one of my mentoring groups. Thought an excerpt would bless the rest of you. (Shared with permission.)

"....I was working on the feeling I get that in small groups, it was of utmost importance to make sure people come and don't miss and to help the group be cohesive so that people could grow and not miss out on the things they needed spiritually. The sense that I was responsible, and this was a desperate situation that had to work out right.

I had already tried to work on this the day before, but hadn't really gotten to the core memory that seemed to be triggering the other.

This time, after describing those feelings out loud,...I had a picture of the small groups from my first church I went to till I was about 9. Then I had a memory come forward that I've thought of many times from when the pastor of that small church decided to leave for California.

At that time (I was maybe 7 or 8), I'd written him a story which I also illustrated. The story was about a wolf pack, and the leader was leaving. Without the leader, the wolf pack was going to be more susceptible to enemies, and was also going to flounder or scatter with no one to lead them. I pleaded with the pastor to please stay and not abandon us. He never responded to me or even acknowledged what I'd written and drawn for him.

I tried to invite Jesus in. I sensed that he was looking at me in the eyes and telling me that the pastor would not be able to "hear" or respond to what I was saying, and also that what I was communicating was spot on. (It was exactly true that without the pastor, the church didn't stick together, and in maybe a year or so it closed.)

It meant a lot that Jesus could see that I had an accurate sense of what would happen. He was validating my story. And he was warning me of the painful situation that the pastor would not be able to "hear."

But I was still struggling to let Jesus be with me in the whole situation. I thought he was going to try to tell me that all things work together for good. But I couldn't see how this had worked for good in any way. I don't notice anything overwhelmingly positive for myself—the other churches we went to were not any better than that one had been. And I hadn't seen anything overwhelmingly positive or redemptive for anyone else either.

I was actually mad at Jesus too, because not only had the pastor not listened and failed me and failed the church and abandoned us all, but, apparently, so had Jesus. He had also not done anything in response to my letter to fix the situation. I told him this, that I felt abandoned by the pastor, and also by him who really hadn't done any better than the pastor as far as responding to my request.

I didn't want to let Jesus be there because I couldn't see how he was going to work it for good and didn't want him to pretend he had when he hadn't.

Finally Jesus asked me if I'd let him be with me in the brokenness even if it was all still broken and messed up and not "redeemed." I decided that would be okay, and let him be with me even in the mess and brokenness that was still there. That's when he brought to mind another verse from Romans 8, "the whole creation groans in childbirth until now." He said to me as he held me in the brokenness, "This is a long and painful birth, [and right now all you see is the pain, which is basically all that's evident right now]. But if you watch with me long enough, you will see the birth completed and it will be worth it." I about started crying when he said this. He wasn't trying to say it had all turned out well. He was acknowledging the pain, the prolonged and agonizing pain and mess and destruction. And he was saying that in the end, which might still be a long time from now, the birth would happen, and that every one of these hard events was like a squeeze that produced more pain, but in the end, the "baby" would be born, and I would be able to see that the pain wasn't the end result.

He also told me that stories like the one I wrote about the wolf pack are part of the redemption. And that it's worth it to speak the truth, to speak the insights I share, because sometimes they will be heeded and sometimes they will bring about beauty when people listen."

And a very important part of the story is that by the end of these interactions with Jesus, the recipient reported that Jesus' words felt true, and that she was satisfied with His presence and response.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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