



## **The Immanuel Approach/Theophostic®-based<sup>1</sup> Emotional Healing With Children**

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We have gotten a number of requests for advice, thoughts, consultation, etc. regarding doing Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic-based emotional healing work with children. We have worked with a number of parents and grandparents, coaching them as they work with their children/grandchildren, but we haven't worked directly with children (we don't have any specialty training with children, and in a large city where there are many child specialists, if we worked with a child and made any mistakes, we would be without defense with respect to liability). In this essay we offer thoughts from our own experience, and have also tried to collect useful material from parents, grandparents, ministers, and therapists who are using the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic®-based ministry with children.

Note: We have collected a lot of information regarding working with children during the seven years since we first posted this essay, but we would still appreciate receiving more input from those of you who are working regularly with children.

Note: As of July 2011, our experience (and what we hear from others) is that helping the child establish and interactive connection with the Lord at the beginning of the session, coaching them to focus on Jesus and to keep going back to Jesus throughout the session, and having the initial positive connection as a safe place they can go back to if they get stuck, *all contribute to making the Immanuel approach especially gentle and safe for doing emotional healing work with children*. For these reasons, we strongly encourage using the Immanuel approach when working with children. We especially encourage using the Immanuel approach, with generous initial time “just” being with Jesus, if the child has had difficulty in working with any other emotional healing tools.

### **I. General Comments Regarding emotional healing work with Children:**

- A. Emotional healing work usually goes well with children: The situations where we have been coaching parents have worked out very well. As far as we can tell, the basic principles and process work with children, except that they usually work more easily with children than with adults. Most of those who have tried the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic®-based ministry with children have had similar experiences. Our perception is that this is because:
1. The core/source memories for any given lie are easier to find because they are usually more recent and are buried in a smaller pile of life events,
  2. It is easier to find and connect emotionally with core/source memories because a child's

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “Theophostic®-based” to refer to therapies and/or ministries that are built around a core of Theophostic® principles and techniques, but that are not exactly identical to Theophostic® Prayer Ministry as taught by Dr. Ed Smith. ®Theophostic Ministry is a trademark of Dr. Ed Smith and Alathia Ministries, Inc., of Campbellsville, Kentucky. The Lehman's do not claim any endorsement of their ministry or of this article in particular by the trademark holder.

psychological defenses tend to be less complicated and less entrenched. Psychological defenses with effects that accumulate over time, such as repression, will especially be less problematic.

3. In general, children seem to perceive the spiritual realm more easily than adults. We have heard many stories about situations (emotional healing sessions, worship services, life in general) in which the children present saw Jesus and/or angels and/or demonic spirits, but the adults saw nothing.

- B. The Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic<sup>®</sup>-based ministry provides a fantastic opportunity to teach children about the power and authority of the living Jesus Christ: One of the parents we have been coaching recently described how he taught his young son about the spiritual authority we carry as Christians. The child could see the demonic spirits that were trying to interfere with the emotional healing process, and was initially frightened and intimidated by them. His father responded simply, “You don’t need to be afraid. We have authority in the name of Jesus. Watch this,” and then spoke a simple command that the demonic spirits be bound and leave. The son could see that the large and scary-looking demonic spirits indeed submitted immediately to his father’s commands in the name of Jesus. What a wonderful experience – for a child to see his father demonstrate, so tangibly, the power and authority that we carry as representatives of the living Jesus Christ.

## II. Special Considerations:

- A. Cognitive development: It is important to tailor your instructions, explanations, and expectations to the developmental stage of the child with whom you are working. The more one knows about cognitive developmental stages, the better. One of the simplest rules to remember is that children develop abstract reasoning during their teen years. Avoid abstract concepts if you are working with an early teen or younger. The younger the child, the simpler and more concrete your instructions and explanations will need to be.

Some have noticed that children can have difficulty describing/explaining what they are “seeing”/experiencing, especially when dealing with clutter: “If we are at a lie in a memory, it is pretty straightforward, but if we are dealing with clutter it is pretty confusing for the child. In my experience with our children, it is very important to ask ‘What is this about?’ but it can be real hard to get them to tell me everything that they are experiencing.” It makes sense with respect to cognitive development that children would have more trouble with clutter, since describing memories and speaking lies are more concrete and straight forward, whereas dealing with clutter would be more complex and could involve abstract concepts.

- B. Should the child’s parents be present?: There are many questions related to “Should the child’s parents be present?” For example, “What about memories/lies where the parent has been the source of the trauma? Memories/lies where the child is afraid of his or her parents? Memories/lies where the child is angry at his or her parents?” “What about situations where the child is afraid that telling the truth will hurt the parent(s)?” “If the parent(s) are doing emotional healing work with their children, should they also make arrangements for the kids to occasionally work with someone else so the children will be free to work on memories/ lies with the above problems?” Several thoughts:

Possible guardian lies: Part of addressing these questions is to ask whether the blocking problems are guardian lies. If they are, identify them and then hold them up to Jesus with

“What do you want (child’s name) to know about this?” For example, you notice that the child is not saying anything, but is looking anxious/upset. Ask questions to focus the fear, such as: “Is there something you don’t want to talk about?”, “What are you afraid will happen if you talk about it?” etc. Often gentle questioning will help the child to focus one or more specific fears, such as “I don’t want to hurt Mommy” – “I’m afraid Mommy will be angry if I say this.” Once the fear(s) have been focused, help the child look right at the fear (“Imagine telling me about what you are thinking, and look right at what you are afraid will happen”), and then coach them to ask Jesus what He wants them to know about it. Note: On many occasions when working with internal child dissociated parts, I have found that the child parts don’t need to tell me any of the details about what they are afraid of. I am guessing this same technique would work with children. Once I identify that there is guardian lie fear in the way, I can coach them to look right at the fear that is in the way (without needing to tell me what it is), and then ask Jesus to come with His truth. This often works in simple situations, but if there is more complex clutter in the way, getting the details of the guardian lie fear may be necessary in order to sort out the clutter tangle.

Lay people vs mental health professionals: There will be different considerations for lay persons than for mental health professionals who are trained and licensed to work with children. I would *strongly* encourage lay facilitators to always have a parent present. If you suspect complicated situations, such as the possibility that one of the parents may be abusing the child, then refer to a qualified professional.

From a registered psychologist who regularly uses Theophostic<sup>®</sup>-based ministry with children: “I always have the mother present, but warn her that material critical of her may come up, etc. *I spend quite a lot of time on this before I agree to see the child.* I find it works best if the mother has experienced her own healing.”

- C. “Stirring up the darkness”<sup>2</sup>: Some have asked whether “stirring up the darkness” is safe and/or appropriate when working with children, since they are more fragile/vulnerable. Several thoughts:

Be more gentle with children: It does make sense to be more gentle with children in every aspect of emotional healing work.

“Stirring up the darkness” doesn’t seem to be a problem in actual practice: Our perception is that children don’t usually require much “stirring up the darkness.” The key is to help the child connect with the memories, lies, and painful emotions. Once this happens, there doesn’t usually seem to be much need to specifically increase the intensity (as opposed to adults, who are usually more defended, and therefore often require additional “stirring” to help get everything fully connected). The process seems to flow smoothly, with the Lord coming quickly with healing as soon as the memory, lie, and painful emotions come forward.

An interesting observation is that this question has been asked by people *thinking about* using the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic<sup>®</sup>-based ministry with children, but has never been expressed by anybody who is actually *doing* emotional healing work with

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<sup>2</sup> For those unfamiliar with Theophostic, “Stirring up the darkness” is an expression Dr. Smith uses for the process of helping the person focus on the things that are triggering them as a way to open up and connect with the underlying traumatic memories.

children. This is consistent with our perception that “stirring up the darkness” does not seem to be a problem in actual practice.

Finally, this is another place at which the Immanuel approach is especially valuable. With the Immanuel approach, we help the child to establish an interactive connection with Jesus at the beginning of the session, and then we ask Jesus to lead every aspect of the session. If there is a point at which the child needs to connect more fully with a painful experience, in order to process it, Jesus will reveal this, and then we ask Jesus to help the child connect more fully (with the child’s agreement). We don’t need to worry about retraumatizing the child as long as Jesus is leading the process, especially with respect to timing and capacity issues. A significant data point is that we have not heard of anyone having difficulty with this issue when using the Immanuel approach.

**We would be happy to receive input regarding this question from those of you who are regularly using the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic®-based ministry with children.**

- D. Recent events can be original/source memories: The unresolved traumatic memories addressed in emotional healing sessions are usually childhood memories. It is important to realize that children are still *in* their childhood – they are still laying down childhood memories. You often don’t need to go back to “old” memories – original/source memories can be from this morning, last week, or three months ago.<sup>3</sup>
- E. Address the family system: One of the most important ways in which you can use the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic®-based ministry to benefit children is to use it with the key adults in their family system. *It is hard to overstate this point.* Removing lies from parents and/or other key adults in the children’s family system will cause the whole family system to become more balanced and healthy in many different ways. To give only a few examples: the family emotional environment will become safer and more supportive, both of which will make it easier for the child to get their own healing; the adults in the family system will be less likely to inflict new wounds and lies out of their own woundedness; the adults in the family system will be more able to protect the children from hurting each other; and the adults in the family will be more able to protect the children from external physical, emotional, and spiritual danger. See pages 381-386 in the question and answer section of the basic training manual for Dr. Smith’s excellent short summary of using Theophostic® ministry in the context of family systems counseling.<sup>4</sup>
- F. Other special considerations?

### III. Questions and Answers:

**How early can you begin healing work?:** We have had this general question from a number of people, and one person with the very specific question: “I want to be able to use Theophostic® ministry on my 3-year old grandchild who cried uncontrollably when her Mother was detained overnight in the hospital due to the birth of her second child.... To this day,

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<sup>3</sup> See Smith, Ed. *Beyond Tolerable Recovery* (Alathia Publishing: Campbellsville, KY. 2000) p.380 for Dr. Smith’s comments on this point.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, Ed. *Beyond Tolerable Recovery* (Alathia publishing: Campbellsville, KY. 2000) p 381-386.

whenever I baby-sit her, she continually cries out, “I miss my Mommy.”... Perhaps 3-years-old is too young to start TP. What do you think?” Since receiving this question, we received a note from someone who had good results working with a three year old grandchild. **Question to our readers:** Are there others who have had good results using the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic-based emotional healing with children age 3 or younger? Any special considerations for especially young children?

We received one note from someone having difficulty with children: “I tried it on two children and I knew they were faking it so that they could please me. The third one I worked with must have seen something and would not go on. I would like some help.” We have wondered about this question, since so many others have reported such consistently good experiences with children. **So, questions to our readers: 1. Are there others who are having difficulty working with children? 2. Do any of you who are having consistently good experiences have thoughts in response to this person’s difficulties?**

#### **IV. Other comments from emotional healing facilitators who have worked with children:**

“Yes, I have worked with children and as you mentioned, it is much easier. I have seen the Lord do such awesome things with them.”

“My wife has had great success with our children and another child. No clutter and it works at warp speed.”

From a registered Psychologist: “I work with adults and children (4 years old and older)... In using Theophostic<sup>®</sup>, I do not use your opening prayer in front of them but before they arrive. They seem quite able to tell me everything they ‘see, hear, feel and think.’ I then simply ask ‘Lord please take (child’s name) where You want him/her to go.’ From there on, I just watch for opportunities for forgiveness, lies, and inner vows. If one has their trust and co-operation, it goes surprisingly well.”

#### **V. Case reports/specific stories:**

A. A husband-wife pastoral couple who lead an emotional healing ministry team out of their church sent the following note: “We have not had a huge amount of experience with children, but we currently have three children that come weekly for Theophostic<sup>®</sup> ministry sessions:

“One is ADD, one is a victim of incest, and one is suffering with chronic depression. The child with ADD is grade-school age and has been coming for about 7 months. It was very difficult to get started with her. After approximately 6 sessions, we accessed a dissociated internal part and things have dramatically changed since then. We have seen God touch this little one powerfully in certain sessions where she has been bouncing off the walls, being distracted by everything in the room to being right in Jesus’ lap and calm within minutes. When I say we accessed an dissociated internal part, it was completely God’s doing. We had made no mention of dissociation or alters, and in one particular session she said ‘I keep seeing something strange. It’s a little baby head and it’s peeking over a wall every once in a while, and I hear a little sound like a tiny beep when it shows up.’ The details following were quite interesting. God asked the ‘baby’ to crawl over the wall to the other side and when she did, she found a big balloon and Jesus handed the baby a pin and asked her to break the balloon. She said she was afraid to because she felt there was something in the balloon that would frighten or hurt her. So I asked Jesus to explain to her what was in the balloon, and

within 3 seconds she said ‘a memory.’ So she broke the balloon and instantly had a childhood memory from approximately age one. The Lord revealed an abandonment lie and brought truth, and integration took place quite quickly. Since that time we have accessed another dissociated internal part (recently) which has been a bit tougher to deal with. The only difference from dealing with this girl in comparison to an adult is conversing in a level she can comprehend and of course being sensitive to her attention restrictions. Sometimes we just stop the session and take a break.

“The child who was a victim of incest is a preteen girl. In the very first session, she didn't really want to be there but agreed to come and just talk to the facilitators. Within 5 minutes God had her talking about her inability to trust or like men. Incidentally, there was a man and a woman in the session with her. Also, we had no idea of her situation. Jesus came quickly and took her to the abuse issue and the abreaction was extremely intense. He brought truth and then she ran over to the woman and asked for a hug. At the end of the session she hugged the man as well, and said how good that felt because she had always thought all men were bad. This was the first time since the incident that she was able to hug a male. We find with her that she asks quite often for physical touch (hugs) after her sessions. We were apprehensive at first as we have a hands off policy with all our clients, but with this child we felt directed to comply. It seems the Lord is doing a healing through this interaction as well. I don't quite understand that part yet. Currently we are dealing with anger issues still in her life, but she is an amazing little girl so willing to follow Jesus.

“The child with the depression is a grade-school age girl. She has only been coming for about 2 months. Very tough case. Lots of occult involvement in one set of grandparents. This girl is overcome with grief over the loss of a grandparent that she hardly knew. It has been 4 years and she still becomes extremely emotional when I go there. I am not feeling like we have made any real progress with this client yet.”

#### B. “A Theophostic<sup>®</sup> Session with My Seven Year-Old Daughter:”<sup>5</sup>

“Here's an example of how Theophostic<sup>®</sup> can be applied to everyday conflicts that children experience. My daughter Julianna became very upset one evening and seemingly could not calm down. Even after my wife Joni's usually successful attempts to get at the bottom of what's bothering our 7 year-old daughter, Julianna was wailing and getting more upset by the minute. As her pouting accelerated, I was about to impose some fatherly discipline when a novel idea suddenly entered my mind. “What if her feelings and behavior were being caused by lies?” As a licensed clinical counselor with recent training in Theophostic<sup>®</sup> ministry, I asked Julianna if she wanted to come into my office and talk about things, just as she sees me do with my clients. She agreed.

When she entered my office, connected to our home, she sat on the couch, squirming and very fidgety. I asked her to describe how she felt, using my “Feelings Word-Finder” chart. She rated her feeling “sad” at a 7 on a 0-10 scale, and “mad / hate” at a “9 to 10.” Why do you feel this way, Julianna?” I asked. She explained that Nancy (that's not her real name), a neighborhood playmate, and Nancy's mother came to visit earlier that day, and “took away my time from mommy.” I asked Julianna to close her eyes and look inward, and then asked “Julianna, may I pray that Jesus show you the real cause of your bad feelings.” She said “OK”

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from e-mails from Dr. Scott Lownsdale, Ed.D., LCPC, 8/28/2002 and 9/3/2002. Julianna has given Dr. Lownsdale permission to share this experience with others.

and closed her eyes as I prayed, “Jesus, what is really bothering Julianna?”

Immediately, Julianna reported “I see a real black guy, laughing with an evil laugh.” Without my prompting, she identified this “guy” as the devil, but did not seem afraid. “What do you want Julianna to know about the devil, Lord Jesus?” I asked. Julianna, a very gifted reader for her age, said she saw the letters of the words “Bad” and “Lie” form in her mind very clearly. “What is the lie Lord Jesus, that the bad devil wants Julianna to believe?” I asked. Julianna replied, “That Nancy and her mommy don’t like me, and that they meant to take mommy away from me. That they hate me. That nobody loves me!” “How strong is that lie, Julianna, that ‘Nobody loves me’ on the 0-10 scale?” “A 10!” “What else, Lord Jesus, do you want Julianna to know?” I asked. “I see a dark cave . . . bats all around . . . but now they are moving out of the way for me to see . . . a light!” said Julianna. “What else, Lord Jesus?” I asked. “Now I see Mrs. H (Julianna’s 2nd grade teacher) hugging me . . . But Mrs. H. is moving out of the way . . . Now I see the light forming into a big heart!” “What else, Lord Jesus, do you want Julianna to know?” I asked. “Now I see myself as a little lamb, and Jesus as my shepherd. He’s giving me a big hug, saying He loves me!” “How strong is the lie now, Julianna, that ‘No one loves me.’” “Just a little, a 3.” “And the bad feelings, how strong are they now?” “About 2 or 3.”

The next morning Julianna woke up in a very good mood, which is not typical for her. After breakfast, she thanked me for helping her, and excitedly reported that the bad feelings were a zero at bedtime and that the lie was a zero this morning.

#### Follow-up comments:

1. Several months after the emotional healing work just described, Scott had a follow-up conversation with Julianna to see whether the healing fruit had remained. He reminded her of the incident, which she seemed to remember clearly, and asked her to think about the lie and try to stir up bad feelings. She closed her eyes and tried to stir up negative emotions, but she could not make herself feel upset, and rated the lie “nobody loves me” at “ten thousand below zero.”
2. It is interesting to note that the lie and negative emotions were 2-3 by the end of the ministry session, but then later went to zero without Scott facilitating any additional emotional healing ministry. The fact that the lie was not a zero and that Julianna’s emotions were not totally peaceful and calm at the end of the ministry session clearly indicate that there were pieces of healing work that had not been completely finished. For example, there may have been lingering anger/bitterness towards Nancy and her mother that Julianna needed to release, there may have been “splinter” lies that had not been resolved (such as “Nancy and her Mommy meant to take Mommy away from me” which was not specifically checked at the end of the session), or there may have been demonic infection that no longer had anything to hang onto but that was quietly lingering – hoping that nobody would notice. The lie and negative emotions going from 2-3 to zero could have been due to Julianna disconnecting and/or burying this unresolved material, or Jesus could have worked directly with Julianna to take care of the unfinished pieces. In the follow-up session Scott asked Julianna about the lie and negative emotions going from 2-3 to zero, and she commented “Maybe Jesus was working through me some more.” This comment, in combination with the lie and negative emotions still being at zero at the follow-up session, would indicate that Jesus did work directly with Julianna in some way to finish the healing process.
3. A final comment from Scott: “This all went so well that you would think Julianna had

exposure to Theophostic® material, but I assure you that she had not.”

C. New stories that we haven't had time to write up: As of 7/2011, we have many stories of successful Immanuel approach emotional healing with children (we are getting a steady stream of very encouraging stories from people who are using the Immanuel approach with children), but just haven't had time to write them up yet.