



Let Jesus Drive **(with Respect to Non-process Aspects of the Session)**

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Comments regarding advanced topics: I want to address advanced topics for mental health professionals and experienced emotional healing ministers who are encountering more complicated situations, but I don't want to discourage or overwhelm part time lay ministers and beginners. So if you're a part time lay minister or beginner, you're already convinced regarding the need for the Immanuel approach structure, and you are already convinced regarding the importance of letting Jesus lead with respect to every non-process aspect of Immanuel approach sessions, then just skim over everything except the stories. You don't need the theoretical discussion regarding the importance of the facilitator providing the structure for the Immanuel approach process, you don't need the theoretical arguments for letting Jesus lead with respect to every other aspect of the session, and you don't need the caveats regarding exceptions for complicated situations. Just enjoy the stories, and let them encourage you regarding how effectively Jesus can lead when you constantly coach the recipient to focus on Him and ask Him for guidance and help. If you encounter a more complicated situation in which the basic Immanuel approach tools don't seem to be fully effective, you can just end the session with helping the person get back to her initial positive memory and interactive connection, and then read more/get a consultation/refer the person to a more experienced facilitator.

If you are *not* fully convinced about the importance of the Immanuel approach structure, and you have thoughts along the lines of "Why do we need all of this – why don't we just pray, 'Jesus, please come and heal me'?" then please read the first part of the discussion with special care.

If you are a mental health professional or experienced emotional healing minister, you already have other emotional healing tools and techniques which you mix in with the Immanuel approach process, and you frequently find yourself providing direction with respect to non-process aspects of Immanuel approach sessions, then please read the second part of the discussion with special care.

I frequently receive questions along the lines of, "When should I take responsibility for leading the session?" or "How much direction should I provide?," and I am constantly asking myself these same questions. One of the most important points with respect to these questions is differentiating between direction with respect to the Immanuel approach *process* and direction with respect to *non-process* aspects of the session (timing, pacing/intensity, specific content, and the details of the pain processing pathway).

It's important to provide direction with respect to the *process*: With respect to the Immanuel approach *process*, I occasionally hear someone comment, "It's all about Jesus – *I don't do anything.*" This is a very catchy sound byte, and "It's all about Jesus" is certainly true from a certain perspective, but this comment always makes me nervous.

The facilitator provides the overall structure/framework for the Immanuel approach by directing the recipient through the steps for establishing the initial interactive connection with Jesus, by coaching the person to focus on Jesus and ask Him for help at any point she needs guidance or other assistance, by repeatedly coaching the person to describe whatever comes into her awareness, by periodically checking the status of the recipient's connection with Jesus, by helping the person re-establish an interactive connection at any point this is lost, by employing troubleshooting tools when the recipient has difficulty connecting with Jesus, and by leading her back to the initial positive memory and interactive connection whenever this safety net is needed. If the facilitator doesn't recognize the importance of providing the structure for the Immanuel approach by providing direction with respect to the process, then she won't take responsibility for providing this structure carefully and competently.

Along the same lines as the "It's all about Jesus – I don't do anything" comments, some have asked, "Why do we have to provide any direction at all, even regarding the process? Why can't we just invite Jesus to be present, ask Him for emotional healing, and then let Him do the whole thing?" Actually, I asked this question myself, especially in light of the fact that this super simple approach occasionally works. I have read a number of case studies in which the person has made this kind of simple request for emotional healing – sometimes just in her private prayer time and sometimes in the context of a worship service, but not in an emotional healing session, and not with anyone providing direction with respect to the Immanuel approach (or any other approach to emotional healing). And even without any of this emotional healing process or structure, the person had a powerful encounter with Jesus that looked exactly like the core of a successful Immanuel approach session – the person perceived Jesus' tangible presence in some way, He led her to important root memories, she perceived Jesus' presence in the traumatic memories, He walked her through unfinished processing tasks to accomplish resolution of the trauma, and then the original emotional problem went away and never came back. I have even heard this exact same story from several people that I know personally. However, my observation is that this is rare. I have known hundreds of people who have tried this super simple approach, with nothing more than persistent "Jesus, please be with me and heal me" prayers, but only a handful have experienced a tangible healing encounter with Jesus that produced lasting fruit.¹

Furthermore, my assessment (from extensive reading, hundreds of conversations with colleagues, 25+ years of clinical experience, and my personal emotional healing journey), is that we have gotten progressively better results as we have developed approaches to emotional healing that applied increasingly complete understanding of the underlying psychological and spiritual phenomena. For example, we got better results than with the super simple approach when prayer ministers in the 1950's and 60's helped the person focus on the presenting problem, specifically asked God to reveal the underlying roots, and then explicitly invited Jesus to come with healing into the traumatic memories that came forward.² Positive results increased another notch in the 1970's and 80's when emotional healing ministries incorporated more understanding

¹ My assessment is that less than 1% get the kind of healing we see with the Immanuel approach when using only the super simple "Jesus, please be with me and heal me" prayer.

² See, for example, the approach to emotional healing described in chapter 11 ("The Healing of the Emotions") of Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light*, revised edition (St. Paul, MN: Macalester Park Publishing, 1972), pages 117-126, and in chapter 7 ("The Healing of the Memories") of Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1966), pages 109-123.

with respect to troubleshooting to remove blockages.³ We saw another increase in positive results when Dr. Ed Smith developed Theophostic, which incorporated more understanding regarding the importance of connecting with the emotions in traumatic memories, more understanding with respect to certain processing tasks (e.g., correctly interpreting the meaning of the experience), and another round of progress with respect to troubleshooting. And now the Immanuel approach, with new pieces such as starting with appreciation, establishing an interactive connection with Jesus at the beginning of the session, and making sure to maintain the interactive connection throughout the session is yielding yet another bump in positive results.

My consistent observation is that the Immanuel approach is easier and safer to use, easier and safer to teach, and more effective than any previous approach to emotional healing; and it is therefore important that we provide the structure/framework for the Immanuel approach by being adequately directive with respect to the details of the process.

Let Jesus drive with respect to *non-process* aspects of the session: In contrast to providing a lot of direction with respect to the Immanuel approach *process*, I try to let Jesus drive as much as possible with respect to everything else – I try to let Jesus choose when to address a particular memory or issue, I try to let Jesus guide with respect to how quickly/intensely we press into a memory/issue, I try to let Jesus choose which traumatic memories and/or other issues to bring forward, I try to let Jesus answer any questions that come up, and I try to let Jesus manage the details of working through the different tasks on the pain processing pathway. The most important reason to let Jesus drive as much possible is that He is the best therapist in the world. The judgment calls just mentioned, such as when to bring forward memories that are especially traumatic or how intensely to push into these memories, can be very tough; and making the wrong call can cause the recipient to tumble into varying degrees of decompensation, sometimes even ending up in the hospital. However, when we are able to let Jesus drive, He happily carries the responsibility for these tough decisions and always makes the right call. Furthermore, as limited human facilitators we periodically encounter problems that seem tangled, huge, and impossibly unsolvable; but when we let Jesus drive, He comes up with amazing, creative interventions that we never would have thought of (and they work!). When we let Jesus drive, facilitating sessions becomes much less stressful and the recipient receives the best possible care.

Another really important reason to let Jesus drive is that this keeps the Immanuel approach simple enough and safe enough that the average lay person can actually learn it and use it. If the facilitator is driving, she will need very high levels of technical skill and clinical discernment to make the tough judgment calls mentioned above, to navigate through sophisticated defenses, and to unravel complicated problems. However, a lay person with a small amount of training, minimal technical skills, and humble clinical discernment can provide the structure/framework for the Immanuel approach, and then let Jesus drive with respect to the non-process aspects of the session. If Jesus takes responsibility for all of the complicated, difficult, dangerous stuff, then the average lay person can quickly learn to safely facilitate emotional healing sessions. And this is HUGELY, strategically important as we are trying to make emotional healing accessible to every person on the planet.

Earlier I discussed the end of the spectrum where people ask, “Why do we need to provide any

³ The approach to emotional healing described in chapter 13 (“The Inner Healing of Our Emotional Problems”) of Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1974), pages 178-191, provides a good example.

direction at all? It's all about Jesus – let's just let Him do everything.” At the other end of the spectrum are people who feel most comfortable when they are driving, and therefore tend towards grabbing the wheel with respect to all aspects of the session. My observation is that many mental health professionals and experienced emotional healing ministers fall into this category. We have spent many years learning the principles and developing skill with the tools of emotional healing, we feel most secure with the familiar techniques that we have successfully applied in many prior situations, we have gotten to the point where we get reasonably consistent and robust positive results, and we feel most comfortable in the driver's seat when facilitating therapy/ministry sessions.

The first challenge for those of us who already have lots of training and experience with other approaches to emotional healing is to actually stick with the Immanuel approach process. We have no problem with the “provide direction” piece, but when stressed or unsure, the direction we provide leads back to whatever techniques and process we were using prior to trying the Immanuel approach.⁴ Especially at first, it takes a lot of deliberate effort to stay with the Immanuel approach process, instead of reverting to previous approaches to emotional healing that feel more familiar and comfortable.

The next challenge for those of us with lots of training and experience is to let Jesus lead with respect to the non-process aspects of the session. My own experience actually provides an excellent (but humbling) illustration. For example, I perceive a strategic issue that is clearly affecting the person's life. To my perspective, it's just sitting out in plain sight, the person seems to be deliberately ignoring it, and the Lord seems to be letting them just ignore it.⁵ Unless I'm consciously thinking about the importance of letting Jesus drive and therefore deliberately restraining myself, the next thing I know I'm in the driver's seat, trying to get the person to deal with what I perceive to be the elephant in the living room (or at least the donkey in the living room).

Or I spot subtle clues indicating an important unresolved trauma. I've spent thousands of hours over many years sharpening my ability to spot these clues and recognize what they mean, and it's very satisfying to use these hard earned skills. Unless I'm consciously thinking about the importance of letting Jesus drive and therefore deliberately restraining myself, the next thing I know I'm in the driver's seat, trying to steer the person towards the traumatic memory I know is there.⁶

Or the person is working with a memory and I recognize which unfinished processing tasks are causing the memory to linger as trauma. I've spent thousands of hours learning how to help people take memories through the different tasks in the processing pathway, and it's satisfying to use these hard earned skills. Unless I'm consciously thinking about the importance of letting Jesus drive and therefore deliberately restraining myself, the next thing I know I'm in the

⁴ I have been using the Immanuel approach for so long now that I no longer notice this pattern in my own practice, but I certainly struggled with this as I was first transitioning from Theophostic-based emotional healing and EMDR to the Immanuel approach.

⁵ In many situations, Jesus doesn't push as hard as I would. In my opinion, He often seems way too relaxed with respect to letting people wait until they're ready.

⁶ Note that even when I know there is an underlying traumatic memory, and steer the person towards it, I never make suggestions regarding the specific memory content.

driver's seat, guiding the person in the work of taking her memories through the unfinished processing tasks.

Or the person asks a question. I love understanding how things work, I've spent twenty-four years in school, I've spent tens of thousands of hours studying the professional literature since finishing my formal training, I have twenty-five years of clinical experience, I've been deliberately pursuing my own growth and healing for 35+ years, and I've spent tens of thousands of hours deliberately pondering all of this data. All of this interest and work has resulted in having some pretty good answers to many of the questions that come up in emotional healing sessions, and I really enjoy teaching. On top of all of this, I also have triggered energy that contributes to the problem. As a child, I was skinny, short, slow, without any discernable artistic or musical talent, and I had a difficult time getting started academically due to having dyslexia. But I loved science and math. If I studied hard (and I always did), I usually knew the answers, so when the teacher asked a science or math question I felt like for once I had something to offer. I was the kid bouncing up and down in his seat, waving his hand frantically, and pleading earnestly, "Oh, oh, oh, oh! I know! I know! Pick me! Pick me! Pick me!" Not surprisingly, unless I'm consciously thinking about the importance of letting Jesus drive and therefore deliberately restraining myself, the next thing I know I'm in the driver's seat, sharing my really good answer to the question that has just been asked.

Another part of the humbling truth with respect to myself is that I usually underestimate the Lord's willingness to provide adequate leadership and help.⁷ I also often underestimate the recipient's ability to receive and cooperate with the Lord's guidance. At some deep level, I often feel like the session will move forward more quickly and produce better results if I do most of the driving. (I want the Lord to ride shotgun, I want Him to participate as a consultant at strategic points in the session, and I'm more than happy for Him to take the wheel when I get lost, but I still feel most comfortable when I spend the majority of the trip in the driver's seat).

Putting all of this together, I often grab the wheel when I should be coaching the person to focus on Jesus and ask Him for guidance and help. So I try to constantly, deliberately challenge myself to lean towards letting Jesus do more of the driving.⁸ In addition to this logical, left hemisphere discussion, I would like to provide a couple of stories that will help this point about letting Jesus drive sink deeply into your emotional, intuitive right hemisphere.

Eileen, "She's been sitting in Jesus' lap." At the end of the session presented in the *Eileen: Immanuel Interventions* DVD, Eileen was in a three-year-old memory in which she was sitting in Jesus' lap and listening to His heart beat as He spoke words of reassurance and blessing. At this point in the session it was obvious that Eileen had received some powerful, beautiful healing work, but it was also clear to me that there was a lot more that needed to be done, especially regarding trauma related to her mother. I didn't say this out loud, but I was thinking, "If we had more time, I would coach Eileen to press into this remaining trauma." As I was having this thought, and also thinking about how I might encourage Eileen to pursue this

⁷ Even though I realize that this erroneous underestimate regarding the Lord's willingness to provide adequate guidance and help is triggered implicit memory being transferred onto the Lord, and even though this is steadily decreasing as I work away at the underlying trauma, it still affects me.

⁸ I realize that I provide a particularly dramatic example, but I have noticed that there are quite a few others that share many of these same issues, and have similar struggles with grabbing the wheel when Jesus should be driving.

healing work in some other setting, she made a spontaneous comment along the lines of “Jesus is saying that for right now He wants me to just stay in His lap and enjoy being with Him, and then at some time in the future we need to do more healing work about my mother.” I thought, “Wow. That’s interesting. Jesus is obviously aware of the healing work that still needs to be done, but He also seems very clear that right now is not the time to do it.” So I let it go and closed the session.

Another part of this story is that in addition to her participation in one of our mentoring groups, Eileen would also come in for an occasional individual session. She did a lot of Immanuel healing work in personal prayer times with just herself and Jesus, but occasionally she would get really triggered, be unable to resolve the problem on her own, and then come in for a consultation session for help with getting unstuck. This happened every two to three months, and with each session we would start by helping her to establish an interactive connection with Jesus, ask Him to show us where to go and what to do for the rest of the session, and then just follow His lead. This seemed to be working very well so I wasn’t worrying about setting the agenda, and I had forgotten all about the comments from the end of the mentoring group session.

And then, in a session about a year-and-a-half after the healing work presented in the training DVD, Eileen established a good connection with Jesus, asked for guidance, and reported, “Jesus says that now it’s time to do the healing work about my mother.” Somehow the matter-of-fact way she stated this, and then looked at me with calm patience (as if she was waiting for me to take the next obvious, logical step), gave me the impression that she expected me to know exactly what she was talking about. It felt as if she were referring to something that had happened to both of us just a few minutes earlier, and that I should know what she meant by “...the healing work about my Mom.” I had no idea what she was talking about, and I’m sure I looked as clueless as I felt, because she eventually explained, “You know, the little girl – she’s been sitting on His lap, building capacity, learning to trust Him, and just enjoying being with Him – and He says that now it’s time to go and work on the painful memories.” I’m still totally lost. “Okay,...uhm,...ahh,...I’m not sure I’m exactly clear about which little girl and which memories we’re referring – I think somehow I missed something.” So she explained further, “You know, the three-year-old child part from the memory in the kitchen, where my Mom was doing dishes and I was trying to get her attention, but she was so depressed that she was just starring blankly out the window. And Jesus told the little girl that He wanted her to just sit in His lap for a while, but sometime later we would need to do more healing work about my mother.”

The lightbulb finally went on for me, “Oh! You mean from the session a couple years ago – the session on the DVD? You’re saying that the little girl child part from that session has been sitting on Jesus’ lap all this time? She’s been sitting on Jesus’ lap for the last couple years, building trust and capacity, and now Jesus is saying that it’s time to work on the traumatic memories regarding your mother He was referring to at the end of the session?” “Exactly!” says Eileen. “She’s been with Jesus all this time, and Jesus says she’s ready to do the healing work now.”

Oh, wow. Amazing. I had never seen this one before, but in light of the dramatic fruit in Eileen’s life after the earlier session (and also in light of the other things I had been seeing the

Lord do in Immanuel sessions), it all seemed quite possible. So making direct eye contact,⁹ I spoke directly to the three year old child part and asked if she would be willing to cooperate with whatever Jesus wanted to do regarding the painful memories with her mother. She promptly said “Yes,” and within minutes Jesus had taken her to some very intense memories in which she had been terrified that her mother would die. After this point, all I did was coach her to focus on Jesus and ask Him for help at every point in the healing work, and the memories were resolved in less than twenty minutes. As we finished working through the memories, I remember thinking that this was some of the smoothest, easiest work I had ever done, when working with such traumatic early childhood experiences, and I especially noted that Eileen did not have any problems with disconnection or inadequate capacity.

As I pondered this session, it became increasingly clear that Jesus is an excellent therapist, with a very high level of skill and excellent clinical judgment. He had made a very good clinical judgment call at the end of the initial session in directing us to wait before trying to work with the traumatic mother memories, He had obviously been very skilled in building trust and capacity with the child part as she spent 18 months sitting in His lap, He obviously made the right call in saying that she was now ready to work on this material, and He did a beautiful, gentle, extremely effective job of leading us through the healing work when Eileen finally did go to the memories. Furthermore, I am convinced that this healing work would have been much more difficult if I had tried to get Eileen to go to these memories prematurely. I’m sure we would have encountered complicated problems with inadequate capacity, and it would have been slower, messier, and much more painful. In addition to the theoretical reasons for letting Jesus lead, this kind of practical experience has taught me to deliberately lean towards letting Jesus drive as much as possible (regarding non-process aspects of the healing work).

Rita: Let Jesus answer the questions: Another particularly dramatic experience teaching me to let Jesus drive happened this past spring (2012). I was facilitating a demonstration session in one of our mentoring groups, and about ten minutes into the session the recipient, Rita,¹⁰ asked a question. It was a good question, asking for both clarification regarding the personal meaning of the memories she was working with and explanation regarding a theoretical point, and after a few moments of thought I had a really good answer. Just before opening my mouth to share my ideas, the thought occurred to me, “I wonder what would happen if I coach her to focus on Jesus and ask Him, instead of just giving the answer myself?” To be painfully honest, my immediate internal response to this thought was something along the lines of, “Yeah, that’s a nice idea, but the Lord sometimes seems to take His time with respect to answering questions – He’s too relaxed, too willing to waste time, and not adequately concerned about making the best use of the session. Furthermore, He often seems to speak so quietly that it takes a bit of work to make sure we are accurately hearing and understanding His answer. I think we’ll get a usable answer a lot more quickly if I just take care of it myself.”

But then I had second thoughts, “You know, this is a training group, where trying new stuff and learning is more important than efficiency. So maybe I’ll coach her to ask Jesus, just to see what happens.” So I did, and sure enough, there was a long pause – we’re in this strategic training group, with a whole room full of busy people trying to learn stuff, and Jesus waits for

⁹ See “Direct Eye Contact (Technique for Making Contact with Internal Parts)” for discussion of this simple but powerful tool for working with internal child parts.

¹⁰ Yes, this is the Rita from several of our live session DVDs.

a couple minutes before answering the question. And then we had to take some more time for me to coach Rita to verbalize what she thought she was hearing from the Lord. But when Rita finally described what she perceived as the Lord's answer, I was amazed to realize that it was exactly what I would have said. Well, actually, not *exactly* what I would have said. The Lord's answer was actually more precise, more elegant, and more carefully nuanced than what I had been about to offer, and He didn't repeat Himself or get distracted by tangential digressions. But the core content was the same. And the Lord seemed to have a quiet but profound authority clearly beyond what I carry. I'm sure that if I had answered her question Rita would have listened to me, and she would have seriously considered the probability that my thoughts were valid, but subtle uncertainties would have lingered around the edges. In contrast, when she heard these same thoughts from the Lord she immediately had a deep, peaceful sense of confidence that they were true. It was done. No additional discussion was needed, and we moved on.

And then about fifteen minutes later it happened again. Rita asked a good question, requiring an answer that would both clarify the personal meaning of the memories she was working with and explain a theoretical point; after a few moments of thought I had a really good answer; just before opening my mouth to share my ideas, the thought occurred to me, "I wonder what would happen if I coach her to focus on Jesus and ask Him, instead of just giving the answer myself?"; I felt the same skeptical assessment that we would probably get a usable answer much more quickly if I just answered the question myself; and I had the thought, "You know, this is a training group, where trying new stuff and learning is more important than efficiency. So maybe I'll coach her to ask Jesus, just to see what happens." Once again, I went ahead and did this, there was a long pause before Jesus answered the question, and then we had to take more time for me to coach Rita to verbalize what she thought she was hearing from the Lord. Once again, I was amazed to realize that the Lord's answer was exactly what I would have said, except clearer, more elegant, more carefully nuanced, without repetitions or digressions, and carrying His special authority. And once again, when she heard the answer from Jesus she immediately had a deep, peaceful sense of confidence that it was true. It was done. No discussion was needed, and we moved on.

Ten minutes later Rita asked another question, and after a few moments of thought I had a really good answer, but this time I then jumped right to, "Okay Lord, I get the point. You want me to coach her to ask You." So I coached Rita to focus on Jesus and present her question to Him, but this time I was much more patient through the long pause as we waited for Jesus to answer and I had more positive expectation as I coached Rita to verbalize what she thought she was hearing from the Lord. And even though it had just happened twice in the last 35 minutes, I was still amazed that the Lord's answer was exactly what I would have said, except clearer, more elegant, more carefully nuanced, without repetitions or digressions, and carrying His special authority. Once again, when she heard the answer from Jesus she immediately had a deep, peaceful sense of confidence that it was true. No additional discussion was needed, and we moved on.

When Rita paused to ask another good question fifteen minutes later, I thought, "Wow. You're really making a point here Jesus." And even though I once again had a good answer that I wanted to share, I went right to coaching her to focus on Jesus and ask Him. There was the familiar long pause while we waited for Jesus to answer, I supplied the familiar coaching to help Rita verbalize what she thought she was hearing from the Lord, and then for the fourth time in less than an hour Jesus said just what I would have said, but better. On one hand, it was

encouraging to see that I was thinking along the same lines as Jesus. It was kind of like being able to check the answers at the back of the book – “Hey, I’m still on the right track! That’s nice to know.” But it was also humbling to see Jesus provide yet another answer that was clearer, more elegant, more carefully nuanced, more concise, and carrying more authority than what I had to offer. And, not surprisingly, when she heard the answer from Jesus she immediately had a deep, peaceful sense of confidence that it was true. No discussion was needed, and we moved on.

When Rita paused to ask yet another question ten minutes later, I immediately thought, “Okay Lord, I think we can all see that You are *really* trying to make a point here.” As usual, I had some good ideas about what needed to be said, but by this point in the session it was pretty obvious that I should just jump right to coaching her to engage directly with Jesus regarding her question. So I did. There was still a long pause while we waited for Jesus to answer, and I still had to coach Rita to verbalize what she thought she was hearing from the Lord, but this time I was waiting with eager anticipation to see if He would do it again. Sure enough, for the fifth time in little more than an hour Jesus brought truth that made the exact same core points I had wanted to make, but with more clarity, elegance, nuance, and efficiency. And, as always, His answer came with a special authority, so that Rita immediately had a deep, peaceful sense of confidence that it was true. She was thoroughly satisfied, no discussion was needed, and we moved on.

By this point in the session I was very impressed with the Lord’s thoroughness and cleverness with respect to the teaching point He had just made, and I also felt like I had a good sense of where the rest of the session was going to go. Rita was in the middle of working on an important unresolved issue, and the Lord had just taken her to what looked like the key root memory. It all looked fairly straight forward – she just needed to work through a few unfinished processing tasks, the key root trauma would then be resolved, and we would be home free. To be totally honest, I felt like I could handle the rest of the session by myself. I wasn’t planning on grabbing the wheel from Jesus, but I felt like I could have taken care of the situation if Jesus had gotten called away for an emergency.

And then Rita suddenly said something along the lines of, “I can’t do this. . . . This memory is too big – it’s too much – I don’t know how to handle this....I feel like I’m not able to work through this one – I can’t do it.” We only had about twenty minutes left before the end of the group, and Rita seemed to be completely stuck. Even after taking some time to think and listen for guidance, I couldn’t come up with a plan that would quickly deal with her apparent lack of the capacity and maturity skills needed to work through the traumatic memory that had somehow suddenly gotten bigger and more complicated. The lesson so far seemed to have been, “Coach the person to take her questions to Jesus, even when you think you have good answers yourself,” but at this point I didn’t feel like I had much choice. I had no idea what to do, and was more than happy to apply the “Coach the person to engage directly with Jesus at every point in the session” Immanuel approach principle. So I coached Rita to focus on Jesus, ask Him for guidance/help, and then describe whatever came into her awareness.

After a long pause (Jesus, don’t You realize how little time we have left?), Rita reported that she was now in a completely different memory. This new memory was clearly much less complicated and less intense, and Rita seemed ready and willing to work with it, but it also seemed to be completely unrelated to the strategic traumatic memory in which she had just been stuck. I was actually quite disappointed. I had hoped that the Lord would have some plan

for working through the larger memory that seemed to be so key to the issue we had been working with, instead of just saying, “I can’t help her get through that one either, so let’s just go find something smaller and easier.” I was a bit puzzled and disappointed, but I figured we might as well work with what we had, so I kept coaching her to ask Jesus for guidance and help regarding the new memory.

She worked through this new memory quickly and easily, and then with about five minutes left, she popped out with, “Oh, wow! Now Jesus is taking me back to the other memory, and I’m just realizing that the key issue in the little memory we just resolved is the exact same as the key issue in the other memory that felt like it was too big for me.” After pausing for a few moments to think about what she had just said, the rest of us were all able to see the connection; but none of us had caught this until she had pointed it out. Rita then went on to explain, “The main reason the bigger memory felt like too much for me was that I didn’t know how to go about working through the situation – I didn’t feel like I could handle such an intense memory when I had no idea regarding how to work with it. So Jesus took me to a smaller memory with the same issue, and then showed me what to do and helped me practice in the less intense memory.” Now that she had a clear battle plan for how to work through the traumatic pieces, she willingly went with Jesus back to the memory that had previously felt impossibly difficult and intense, and with His help she was able to resolve it within the remaining five minutes.

We were all in awe. This was one of the most effective, efficient, brilliant, elegant, creative therapy interventions that any of us had ever seen. Not to mention the fact that the rest of us wouldn’t have even known about the smaller, simpler parallel memory. Somewhere in the back of my mind, after the fifth round of Jesus bringing an answer that was essentially the same as what I had wanted to share, I was starting to feel pretty pleased with myself. I never would have said it out loud, due to the outrageous presumption, but if I gotten words for what was starting to feel true it might have been something like, “Well yeah, of course I know I’ll never be *fully* as good a therapist as Jesus. I mean, His answers and interventions are always a bit better than mine, *but I’m getting pretty close*. I mean – all false humility aside – I think I could take care of most of this by myself if I really needed to.” Now I was just in awe. “Jesus, You’re the man! I am definitely the humble student, and You are most assuredly still the master.” I think Jesus wants us to deliberately practice letting Him drive as much as possible, for reasons described earlier, but it’s especially nice to let Jesus drive when we’re completely lost.

These two stories are particularly striking, and I think the Lord deliberately orchestrated them to make sure I clearly understood this teaching point, but I have also had many similar experiences that have conveyed the same truth (just not quite so dramatically). The steadily growing pile of these experiences in my own practice, along with a steadily growing pile of similar stories from others who are using the Immanuel approach, has lead me to increasingly lean towards letting Jesus drive with respect all non-process aspects of Immanuel approach sessions.

Persist with the Immanuel approach, and let Jesus drive even when it’s bumpy and slow:

As just described, there have been times when I was tempted to just lead the healing work myself, instead of applying the Immanuel approach *process* and then letting Jesus drive with respect to everything else. I worried that Jesus would not provide adequate guidance and help, and I worried that the recipient would not be able to adequately understand and/or cooperate with the Lord’s guidance and help; but when I deliberately restrained myself, and coached the person to turn to Jesus instead of trying to do it myself, I was dramatically pleasantly surprised

by the Lord's competence. This has been tremendously faith-building with respect to the Lord's character, heart, and faithfulness, and it especially encourages me regarding the possibilities for widespread lay ministry with the Immanuel approach to emotional healing.

However, there have also been situations in which the Immanuel approach was truly bumpy, cumbersome, and slow. When both I and the recipients were just getting started with these new tools, the initial steps of positive memory recall, deliberate appreciation, and establishing an interactive connection were particularly slow and cumbersome. It would also slow things down when beginner recipients didn't yet have skill with respect to the "describe *whatever* comes into your awareness" piece. Regarding these bumpy, cumbersome, slow situations, my assessment is that other tools and techniques have truly been more efficient than the Immanuel approach. For example, some of my clients have responded particularly well to certain other interventions, such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). When one of these patients has had trouble with the Immanuel approach, I have switched (at least temporarily) to EMDR, and my perception is that it was more efficient.

Furthermore, there have been situations in which the recipient's emotional healing actually did move more quickly when I provided a lot more direction. For example, when there have been a lot of blockages hindering the recipient's perception of the Lord's presence, she has only been able to receive a small portion of His guidance and help. In these sessions, I have had to provide more direction to make up for the recipient's impaired ability to receive guidance from Jesus.

Nevertheless, I encourage you to be persistent in practicing with the Immanuel approach, even when it is bumpy and cumbersome, and to keep leaning towards letting Jesus drive as much as possible, even when the recipient is having trouble perceiving His presence and receiving His guidance and help. As discussed in the "Caveats" section below, there are certain strategic clinical situations in which it is appropriate, and even necessary, to provide more direction and/or to use other tools and techniques; but *in general*, I want us to challenge ourselves to be persistent in practicing with the Immanuel approach, and to deliberately lean towards letting Jesus do more and more of the driving. First, we will often be pleasantly surprised – as illustrated by the true stories just described, we will often find the Immanuel approach to be less cumbersome and more effective than we had expected.¹¹

Second, people will often experience an initial phase of slow, cumbersome inefficiency, as they are first learning to use the Immanuel approach and as they first experiment with letting Jesus do more of the driving, but if they persist this will steadily resolve as they gain experience and as the recipient removes blockages. In my own experience, I initially often had sessions in which the Immanuel approach felt slow and cumbersome; but now it usually flows smoothly, produces elegant results, and is more efficient than any other technique I have ever used.¹² Athletic endeavors provide a good analogy. When an athlete changes some aspect of her technique, even if the new technique is clearly the better way to do things, she usually experiences an initial phase of frustration and her performance actually deteriorates. *Temporarily*. But then she begins to improve steadily as she makes the transition and gains expertise with the new form, and in the long run her performance with the new technique surpasses anything she had been able to do in

¹¹ I know I'm repeating this point, but it's really, really important. That is, I'm saying it over and over again to make sure that you get it. Just in case it didn't really sink in, I'm making the point repeatedly.

¹² Rita's session, described above, is a perfect example of smooth, elegant, and effective.

the past.¹³

Finally, using the simplest possible techniques, where we just provide the structure for the Immanuel approach process and then coach the person to engage directly with Jesus regarding every other aspect of the session, is strategic with respect to the long term big picture. In order to make a real dent in the trauma and dysfunction that is pervasive throughout the entire planet, we need to get hundreds of millions of lay people incorporating the Immanuel approach into their daily lives – as part of their personal healing and growth, and as part of caring for their families and friends. My hope is that using (and simultaneously *modeling*) the simplest Immanuel approach techniques, in every possible appropriate setting, can be part of this larger vision. With the process and interventions being so simple and safe, recipients and observers will often learn the Immanuel approach easily and naturally as they participate in sessions.¹⁴ We have already been observing this on a regular basis. Because the most basic form¹⁵ of the Immanuel approach is so simple and safe, the recipients (and also any supporting friends or family they bring with them) often learn it fairly quickly, and then feel safe enough and confident enough *that they actually begin to use it*. This does not happen with other techniques, such as EMDR,¹⁶ that require much more training and skill, and it also does not happen if we mix more complicated tools and techniques in with the Immanuel approach.

Caveats: As I look for ways to bring the Immanuel approach into every possible setting, and as I deliberately lean towards letting Jesus do more of the driving, I keep several caveats in mind.

Caveat #1: Some people are not yet able to use the Immanuel approach. The first, most obvious caveat is that some people are not yet able to use the Immanuel approach – they have blockages that are currently preventing them from perceiving the Lord’s tangible presence or establishing an interactive connection, and without these pieces the Immanuel approach

¹³ Note that this pattern is most pronounced with mental health professionals and experienced emotional healing ministers (like myself). We have spent many years learning the principles and developing skill with other emotional healing tools, and we have gotten to the point where we get reasonably consistent and robust positive results with these other tools. Initially, when we try to switch from these other tools to the Immanuel approach we feel frustrated, clumsy, and less effective. The temptation to return to the old familiar techniques, with consistent moderately good results, is intense. However, if we persist with the new tools we begin to get increasingly good results with the Immanuel approach, and we eventually get better results than with any previous techniques.

¹⁴ In addition to simply participating in Immanuel approach sessions, I offer brief explanations regarding the principles involved, and I ask the recipients and observers to do a moderate amount of reading regarding the Immanuel approach. But the bottom line is that most people doing emotional healing work with me eventually learn the Immanuel approach to the point that they actually start using it on their own.

¹⁵ Part of why it is so important for the facilitator to provide only the structure for the process, and then lean heavily towards deferring to Jesus regarding every other aspect of the session, is that this is part of what makes the Immanuel approach so simple and safe for lay people and beginners.

¹⁶ In my observation, even techniques that are supposed to be open to lay ministers, such as Theophostic, Sozo, and various other approaches to emotional healing prayer, include too much complexity for the average lay person to use. Even in the context of ministry programs specifically designed to train lay people, we have noticed that many of the lay trainees never actually use these other approaches because they feel too complicated/intimidating.

process is not possible. With these people, I temporarily use other approaches, such as EMDR and Theophostic-based emotional healing, with an important part of the work being to find and resolve the hindrances that prevent them from using the Immanuel approach. And as we find and resolve traumatic memories (and other issues), I periodically check regarding their ability to perceive and connect with Jesus. I'm always working towards the Immanuel approach. My goal is for every person to eventually be able to embrace the Immanuel approach, as their primary way of receiving emotional healing and also as a lifestyle.

Caveat #2: Additional direction from the facilitator is needed to compensate for a poor connection with Jesus. As mentioned above, there are situations in which the recipient is able to use the Immanuel approach, but blockages hinder her connection with Jesus to the point that she is only able to receive a portion of His guidance and help. In these sessions, the facilitator has to provide more direction to make up for the recipient's impaired ability to receive guidance from Jesus. The good news is that Immanuel approach healing will always result in resolving traumatic memories (and other issues) that hinder the person's connection with Jesus, and as this happens her ability to receive the Lord's guidance and help will steadily improve. Therefore, both the facilitator and recipient should constantly press towards allowing Jesus to do more of the driving. One of the most straight-forward ways to do this is to periodically experiment with deliberately stepping outside of your comfort zone, as I did in the session with Rita. Deliberately withhold guidance and help that you usually provide, coach the person to engage directly with Jesus, and give Him plenty of time in which to work.¹⁷ If the recipient is not able to obtain the resources you are temporarily withholding through engaging directly with Jesus, you can easily step back in; however, if you discover that the person is able to receive more guidance and help than you had thought possible, her Immanuel healing work will take a big step forward.

Caveat #3: Short term strategic clinical considerations. As also described above, there are situations in which other techniques may be more efficient than the Immanuel approach. And while I strongly encourage people even in these situations to be moving towards the Immanuel approach as the foundation for *long term* plans, there are sometimes short term strategic clinical considerations that require the use of other techniques.

For example, if a person is in crisis because his new job is intensely triggering his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the Immanuel approach is slow and cumbersome in your hands as an inexperienced facilitator, this person has issues that hinder his ability to connect well with Jesus, you are experienced and efficient with EMDR, and this person responds particularly well to EMDR, then choosing to use EMDR for dealing with his immediate crisis could make the difference between whether or not he is able to keep his job. Or if a person is in crisis because her mother's unexpected death has precipitated an episode of intense, suicidal depression, and EMDR is again more efficient than the Immanuel approach for a variety of reasons, then choosing to use EMDR for this immediate crisis could even save her life by finding and resolving the roots of her depression before she is able to kill herself. Or if a person is in crisis because his addictive sexual behavior is destroying his relationship with his wife, and EMDR is more efficient than the Immanuel approach in the context of your current work with this particular person, then choosing to use EMDR for this immediate crisis could save his marriage.

¹⁷ It is usually best to let the recipient know what you are intending to do, so that she isn't frightened and/or confused when you suddenly begin to provide significantly less guidance and help.

I would still encourage you to move towards using the Immanuel approach as the foundation for *long term* care in each of these situations; but urgent, strategic, practical concerns require that we use whatever is *currently* the most efficient intervention for the short term crises.

Caveat #4: Counterfeit/contaminated guidance. Nobody is able to perceive the Lord's guidance with 100% accuracy or follow it with 100% obedience. Even when we are able to establish a good interactive connection with the Lord, unconscious avoidance, subtle self deception, the complexity of the neurological processes involved, physical trauma in our fallen biological brains, psychological trauma in our fallen minds, internal dissociated parts with complex agenda, and deliberate demonic interference can all get in the way of receiving and following the Lord's guidance. This is why both the recipient and facilitator need to be constantly watching for observable, lasting positive changes in the recipient's life, as one of the most reliable methods for discerning whether or not the "guidance and help" the person describes is truly from the Lord.

Fortunately, counterfeit and/or contaminated "guidance and help" is usually a minor problem with the Immanuel approach.¹⁸ However, in some situations a combination of dissociated internal parts and/or other unconscious aspects of the person's mind and/or demonic spirits will send forward content that the person mistakenly perceives to be coming from Jesus, and this counterfeit/contaminated "guidance" causes bigger problems. In some of these cases the counterfeit/contaminated "guidance from Jesus" is directly toxic. For example, the person might receive "guidance" reassuring him that it's okay to continue having an affair with one of his co-workers, as long as he really loves her. Or the person may hear "words from Jesus" that are angry, condemning, and non-relational. An important part of the facilitators role is to watch for this kind of toxic content that the recipient mistakenly perceives as coming from Jesus,¹⁹ and in these situations the facilitator will have to provide a lot more direction until the source of the counterfeit/contaminated "guidance and help" has been identified and resolved. Thankfully, once the source of counterfeit/contamination has been resolved, the facilitator can go back to letting Jesus do most of the driving. Again, our observation is that this kind of serious problem with toxic content is rare, but facilitators working with extreme trauma and other complicated problems will need to be aware of these phenomenon.

¹⁸ I have been consistently pleasantly surprised by how little this problem has prevented people from having life-giving interactions with Jesus in the context of Immanuel approach sessions. For additional discussion of counterfeit and/or contamination with respect to guidance and help that the recipient perceives to be coming from God, see part II, "Go back to the basics if you feel overwhelmed," in the "Where/how do I get training regarding the Immanuel approach?" essay (available as free download from www.immanuelapproach.com), section F, "Is it from the Lord?" – on discerning the source of Immanuel approach experiences," of Part III, "The Immanuel Approach, Additional Practical Considerations," in the "Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and the God Who Is with Us, Part V: The Immanuel Approach, Revisited" essay (available as free download from www.kelehman.com), "Internal Dissociated Parts Presenting as Jesus" (available as free download from www.kclehman.com), and "Unresolved Issues in the Therapist/Facilitator: One of the Most Important Hindrances to Emotional Healing" (available as free download from www.kclehman.com).

¹⁹ Having adequate discernment to be able to spot this kind of toxic counterfeit/contaminated "guidance" is an important qualification for anyone who wants to facilitate Immanuel approach sessions. For example, a facilitator should be sufficiently familiar with Biblical truth and the heart of God so that she can recognize when supposed "guidance from Jesus" is inconsistent with these two important reference points. For additional discussion of this aspect of the facilitators role, see the essays referenced in footnote 18.

In other cases the counterfeit/contaminated “guidance” is much more subtle, in that it leads to subtle, chronic avoidance of important issues (as opposed to introducing directly toxic content that is much more obvious). For example, if a person has internal dissociated parts that are very invested in avoiding certain particularly painful memories, they may deliberately fabricate thoughts, emotions, and images that the recipient will mistakenly perceive as Jesus’ presence leading away from the strategic memories.²⁰ In these situations the facilitator will have to provide a lot more direction until the source of the counterfeit/contaminated “guidance” has been identified and resolved, and once the source of the counterfeit/contaminated “guidance” has been resolved, the facilitator can go back to letting Jesus do most of the driving. As with directly toxic content, our observation is that this kind of serious problem with subtle avoidance is rare, but facilitators working with extreme trauma and other complicated problems will need to be aware of these phenomenon.²¹

Final thoughts:

Long term benefits of taking it home. As you are thinking about whether or not to use the Immanuel approach, and thinking about whether or not to let Jesus do most of the driving, it’s important to remember that it will be a HUGE long term, lasting benefit for the person to eventually be able to use the Immanuel approach on her own. In most situations where the Immanuel approach is less efficient in the short term, the benefit of eventually being able to use the simple Immanuel approach tools on her own, as an ongoing resource that she can take with her, will outweigh the short term loss of efficiency.²² Even in situations where the Immanuel approach is initially very bumpy and cumbersome, I encourage you to think about

²⁰ This is not the place for a thorough discussion of this advanced topic, but I will offer a few quick thoughts: 1) This phenomenon is actually easiest to spot when it is widespread, because the person will have session after session after session in which they appear to have many positive, pleasant, painless interactions with Jesus, but they never deal with any difficult issues or memories and there is no observable fruit in their lives. 2) This phenomena can sometime present in much more subtle ways, and the best resource for recognizing these more subtle presentations is logging in many hours of Immanuel approach sessions. As you become more and more familiar with how the Lord works in Immanuel sessions, you will start to notice subtle clues when counterfeit/contaminated “guidance” shows up. In a variety of subtle ways, it won’t look and feel like “the real thing.” 3) For extensive discussion regarding how to recognizing subtle counterfeit/contamination, see the essays referenced in footnotes 18 and 19.

²¹ This is not the place to provide a thorough discussion of this advanced topic, but I will offer one quick thought. In many situations where you see an important issue and/or memory that seems to be getting ignored, you can gently describe what you are observing, and then make the following invitation: “I’m not sure whether Jesus is deliberately waiting, or whether some kind of avoidance/resistance on your part may be hindering your ability to get this one on the table, but would you be willing to ask Him about it, and see what He says?” You may perceive that the person just takes her avoidance to the next level (for example, generating a counterfeit Jesus that says, “No, it’s fine, we don’t need to look at that.”). However, I have been pleasantly surprised by how often this simple, gentle intervention helps the person move forward. And in other situations, the true, genuine Jesus will clearly say, “Yes, this is important, but now is not the right time,” as He did in the initial session with Eileen.

²² In this discussion, the cost/benefit analysis is referring to the cost of the healing process slowing temporarily as you transition from other approaches to the Immanuel approach, with the Immanuel approach being bumpy and cumbersome at first. This cost/benefit discussion is *not* referring to situations with urgent, strategic clinical concerns, such as the cases with PTSD, depression, and addictive sexual behavior crises described in the “Caveat #3” section above.

moving toward using the Immanuel approach more and more over time. At the very least, include occasional sessions in which you very deliberately use the Immanuel approach, with only the simplest tools and techniques, explain the underlying principles as you apply the Immanuel approach tools and techniques, and explicitly name the goal of the recipient eventually being able to have these tools and techniques as a resource that she can take home with her.

Part time lay ministers and beginners: just focus on the stories and let them encourage you. I made this point at the beginning, in the “Advanced topics warning” section, and I want to make it again here. I don’t want the advanced/complex aspects of this discussion to discourage or overwhelm part time lay ministers or beginners. So if you’re a part time lay minister or beginner, you are already convinced regarding the need for the Immanuel approach structure/framework, and you are already convinced regarding the importance of letting Jesus lead with respect to every non-process aspect of Immanuel approach sessions, then just enjoy the stories and let them encourage you regarding how effectively Jesus can lead when you constantly coach the recipient to focus on Him and ask Him for guidance and help. If you encounter a more complicated situation in which the most basic Immanuel approach tools don’t seem to be fully effective, you can just help the person get back to her initial positive memory and interactive connection from the beginning of the session, and then read more/get a consultation/refer the person to a more experienced facilitator.