



Welcome to your Journey Group! We are glad to have you here! In this 4 week Journey Jumpstart Unit, we will talk about the elements that make Journey Groups unique, and how your Journey Group meetings will run.

Your Journey Group will last approximately an hour, and it will follow the same format each week. You will have Check In, Appreciation, Discussion, and Listening to Jesus. This Journey Jumpstart Unit will address Check In, Appreciation, Listening to Jesus and also the topic of staying relational.

Journey Group Guidelines

Our Guidelines for Journey Groups are designed to build community and ensure that we all feel welcome, safe, heard and connected. Journey Group Guidelines use the acronym “COCOA.”

Guidelines for the Journey

In Journey Groups, what we share is
Confidential, we
Observe time, we share as we are
Comfortable, we avoid
Overwhelm, and we skip the
Advice.

A little more about our guidelines: (1) What is shared in Journey Group is confidential to the group and is not to be shared outside the group. (2) We try to keep our sharing to about 2 minutes per person per question so that everyone has an opportunity to share their thoughts. Your Journey Group leader will gently let you know if you consistently exceed this time. (3) Our goal in Journey Groups is to give each person the freedom to share at their comfort level. Some people feel comfortable sharing on a personal level quickly, while others prefer to keep their answers less personal or in-depth. (4) Recognizing overwhelm in ourselves and others is a skill we will gain in Journey Groups. We can overwhelm ourselves and our group members if we use too much intensity in our sharing, so this is another area

where our leaders can gently guide us as we learn the skill. (5) In Journey Groups, we are learning to walk together while honoring God's individual guidance, so we offer encouragement to each other without advice.

CHECKING IN

We will begin each Journey Group meeting by Checking In. What is Checking In? We check in by choosing emotion words that describe our current feelings, and briefly describe what led to those emotions. SASHET (Sad, Angry, Scared, Happy, Excited, Tender) ¹ is a simple acrostic of emotion words that you might want to use if you are not in the habit of noticing and sharing your emotions. However, you may check in with any emotion word that fits. Here's an example of Checking In:

"Today I'm Checking In as peaceful but sad. My daughter and I are especially close, and we have lots of fun together. She's been home for the last week. I'm sad because she went back to college today and I miss her, but I'm peaceful because I spent time with Immanuel processing my sadness. I'm in."

We end our Check In with the phrase "I'm in" to signify we are finished Checking In, but also that we are "all in" for group time together.

Checking In is not just for Journey Groups, though! *Having a partner to check in with on a regular basis is a powerful way to grow your relational skills and connections.* You can check in by phone, in person, or by email. Your partner can be a person who is in your Journey Group, or a friend or family member you see frequently who would like to try Checking In. This week, be praying about who can be your partner for Checking In. It may be interesting and surprising to see who God highlights to you! We will discuss this further in your Journey Group meeting this week.

Checking In is a simple relational practice that reminds us that our core goal is to express our glad-to-be-together joy in our relationships with each other and with God. In Journey Groups, we check in at the beginning of every meeting. *Checking In is a way to identify and share where we are on the emotional map as we gather and a time to turn from distractions and set our hearts to be fully present with the group.*

Checking In originated with The LK10 Community at <https://lk10.com/> in their Church 101 course. In that course, John White tells us:

"One practice that helps us live out our glad-to-be-together joy is "Checking In" using

¹ SASHET was developed by John White at lk10.com

SASHET: Sad, Angry, Scared, Happy, Excited, Tender. We practice sharing how we are feeling in almost all of our gatherings. . . Even in our leadership meetings, we have found that with a simple Check In round, our hearts are connected and we become more relational even through difficult discussions.

By regularly listening and sharing our hearts, friends, couples, households and small groups are given a natural, yet transformational tool that helps them practice many relational skills such as: joy, quiet, appreciation, bonds for two, family bonds and recovering from complex emotions."

Below is an expanded version of SASHET:

S.A.S.H.E.T.

SAD • ANGRY • SCARED • HAPPY • EXCITED • TENDER

CHECKING IN... *One essential aspect of building vibrant families of Jesus (true church) is equipping people to connect with one another on the heart level, which allows people to "build joy". Joy means being glad to be together no matter what. One practice that helps us live out that value is "checking in" using SASHET: Sad, Angry, Scared, Happy, Excited, Tender. We practice sharing how we are feeling in almost all of our gatherings. From our daily CO2s, to our families gathered around dinner tables, to our weekly small group or simple church meetings, we check in. Even in our leadership meetings, we have found that with a simple check in round, our hearts are connected and we become more relational even through difficult discussions.*

Sad...

LOW ENERGY, beaten down, exhausted, tired, weak, listless, depressed, detached, withdrawn, indifferent, apathetic, lazy, bored

SAD, unhappy, crushed, dejected, depressed, desperate, hopeless, grieved, heavy, despairing, weepy

BETRAYED, deceived, fooled, duped, tricked, misled, skeptical

ASHAMED, guilty, mortified, humiliated, embarrassed, exposed, stupid

DISAPPOINTED, let down, disheartened, disillusioned, distrustful

INVISIBLE, forgotten, overlooked, unimportant, invisible, disregarded, lost

DESPISED, ridiculed, dumb, belittled, mocked, scorned, shamed, hated, detested

Angry...

ANGRY, annoyed, controlled, manipulated, furious, grouchy, grumpy, irritated, provoked, frustrated, hateful, cold, icy, bitter cynical

Scared...

ANXIOUS, afraid, uneasy, nauseated, nervous, restless, preoccupied, worried, scared, tense, fearful, terrified, insecure, indecisive, hyper-vigilant, cautious

OVERWHELMED, apprehensive, boxed in, burdened, confused, distressed, guarded, hard-pressed, paralyzed, panicky, tense, weighted down, edgy

TRAUMATIZED, shocked, disturbed, injured, damaged, unloved, unlovable, hated

CONFUSED, baffled, perplexed, mystified, bewildered, misunderstood, disoriented

Happy...

HAPPY, cheerful, delighted, elated, encouraged, glad, gratified, joyful, lighthearted, overjoyed, pleased, relieved, satisfied, thrilled, secure, optimistic

CONFIDENT, positive, secure, self-assured, assertive

PEACEFUL, relieved, at ease, calm, comforted, cool, relaxed, composed, protected

Excited...

HIGH ENERGY, energetic, enthusiastic, excited, playful, rejuvenated, talkative, pumped, motivated, driven, determined, obsessed, jittery

AMAZED, stunned, surprised, shocked, jolted, enlightened

Tender...

LOVING, affectionate, cozy, passionate, romantic, sexy, warm, tender, responsive, thankful, appreciative, refreshed, pleased, comforted, reassured

ALONE, avoidant, lonely, abandoned, deserted, isolated, cut off, detached, disconnected, unwanted

If you are interested in learning more about Checking In, you can read the following article. Otherwise, we will see you in Journey Group -- be ready to Check In and to discuss whether you have selected and asked someone to be your Check In Partner.

Optional Reading for More Thought:

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS I MAY SEE WHEN I BEGIN CHECKING IN ON A REGULAR BASIS?

LK10 describes some of the benefits of Check In below:

We gain the ability to “weep with those who weep”, and “rejoice with those who rejoice.” Romans 12:15.

Generally speaking, it's easier for us to share the joyful things and to rejoice with those who are in a good place. However, when a church of almost any size meets together, it's inevitable that there will be some who are sad. Some parent is hurting over one of their children. Someone has lost a job. Someone has experienced a death in the family. To live this life is to suffer loss. Dr. Wilder teaches that true joy is being glad to be together even in these more difficult emotions. God intends that the community called “church” is the place where we receive this kind of support.

But, often, church is the one place we have been trained not to weep. Many of us have found it unsafe. We either get unsolicited advice, or we are seen as not trusting God. The reality is that people are scared of the heavier emotions like anger, fear, shame, disgust, sadness, and hopelessness. They become uncomfortable when these emotions are shared and therefore try to fix the other person, change them, or shame them into not feeling that way anymore. Interestingly, the only way through these emotions is to know that someone is glad to be with us in them.

When we begin the meeting with SASHET (Sad, Angry, Scared, Happy, Excited, or Tender), we find out who is sad, angry or scared this week. Then, we can obey Scripture by listening deeply to them and even weeping with them. This is the very nature of a healthy body. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:26, “If one part of the body suffers, every part suffers with it.

Walter Brueggemann on embracing the “darkness” of life and the heavier Psalms says, “It's no wonder that the church has intuitively avoided these psalms (of disorientation). They lead us into dangerous acknowledgement of how life really is. They lead us into the presence of God where everything is not polite and civil... They lead us away from the comfortable religious claims of “modernity” in which everything is managed and controlled... The remarkable thing about Israel is that it did not banish or deny the darkness from its religious enterprise. It embraces the darkness as the very stuff of new life. Indeed, Israel seems to know that new life comes nowhere else.” *The Message of the Psalms* by Walter Brueggemann,

p. 53.

Examples of Psalms of disorientation and lament: 13, 22, 30, 35, 74, 79, 86, 88, 137.

Checking in gives the church a simple practice that not only nurtures emotional health but helps us obey scripture.

We learn how to “Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).

Imagine you are going to a small group or class for the first time. It can be awkward, especially if you are a little introverted to begin with. What do you talk about? You wonder how this kind of group works. What are the “rules”? And, do all of these other people already know each other? It’s easy to feel like an outsider.

By starting the meeting with a “check in”, visitors and regulars are placed on the same footing. The “rules” are very simple. After one or two people share, you can quickly see how it’s done. You can share at any level of vulnerability you are comfortable with so, you feel safe. Checking in moves the whole group beyond the level of “small talk”. It provides an easy starting place for lots of other follow-up conversations. In the course of one meeting, you are part of the community. No longer an “outsider”.

“Hospitality is a fundamental function of the Jewish home. This practice is also central in the Hebraic heritage of the Church. Schooled in a rich rabbinic background, Paul inculcates this teaching in his readers... The term used in rabbinic literature for hospitality is *hakhnasat orhim*, literally “the bringing in of guests” or “gathering in of travelers.”... The rabbis considered hospitality one of the most important functions of the home... Guests were to be received graciously and cheerfully.” Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 219-220.

Hospitality means opening our homes and, perhaps even more importantly, opening of our hearts to guests. Checking in gives us a pathway and safe structure to do just that.

Checking in helps me know what part of me is present.

How many times have we gone to church meetings without thinking deeply about where our own hearts are? We arrive task oriented, focused on what we need to do, teach, say. As a result, we end up merely “going through the motions” and engaging only with our more information-focused side of our brain! That causes us to relate on a superficial level. However, when I take time to think through how I am feeling (for example, Sad – Angry – Scared – Happy – Excited – Tender), I become relational with myself and others and can be authentic with my community. I present my “true self” and the result is meaningful relationships with both the community and with God.

Because Checking In is so simple (but profound), it has the potential to go viral.

Dr. Jim Wilder has mentioned that he desires to see self-propagating transformation in the body of Christ -- transformation that is easily passed on in any culture, without the need for a particular program. Checking in is so simple that it can be explained in ten minutes, and immediately put into practice, so it is a beautiful element of self-propagating transformation.

Checking in requires relational skills, and it also helps us acquire these skills. We acquire these skills to relate well with each other in groups of two or three through meaningful relationship, not through classes, books, sermons, or church services. Chris Coursey, author of *Transforming Fellowship*, states that "We now live in a time where relational resources are diminishing at a most alarming rate. There is no better time than the present to increase our relational capacity" (p 2). Checking in does just that: increases our relational capacity virally as we practice healthy relating with each other. It's a concrete expression of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pt. 2:5, 9).

Checking in is a "tool" that makes body life simple. Checking in is like baseball. It is simple enough that five-year olds can enjoy playing T- ball on their first day. Yet, it is so profound that grown-ups can devote their entire lives to mastering its subtleties. This tool is a simple practice to grow our skills of paying attention to our own hearts and the hearts of others. With this tool both adults and children can immediately participate in "Checking In." However, becoming skilled requires both coaching and practice.

Clearly, Checking In is not just for adults. In fact, children seem instinctively to want to talk about what is going on in their heart. They also want to know what is going on in the hearts of their parents. Checking in allows young people to feel part of the community of the people of God. It also deepens conversations around the family dinner table and helps families stay emotionally connected with each other.

Neil Cole made this important observation: "Only that which is simple can multiply rapidly."

That's exactly what we have seen when Checking In with each other. This powerful community-building tool is so simple that if a person experiences it once, they often begin teaching it to others right away. From what we have witnessed, Checking In has spread rapidly to the third and fourth generations of relationships. This practice of simply sharing our feelings with each other in a round helps create an environment where relational skills can grow naturally, bringing transformation that is easily passed on to those around us."

This week, begin to think about ways to bring the practice of Checking In into your relationships with family, friends, and our God who is with us.



*Give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*
1 Thess. 5:18

*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor
gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile
and their foolish hearts were darkened.*
Romans 1:21

What a contrast we see in these two verses – appreciation is God's will, while failing to give thanks leads to futile thinking and darkened hearts. Let's dive in to this obviously important topic of Appreciation!

Chris Coursey's short pdf book *The Lifeboat in My Brain*¹ outlines the 19 relational brain skills that build connection with God and people. One of the most life-changing of these skills is "Create Appreciation," and Chris writes as follows:

"Healthy minds are full of appreciation. Appreciation creates belonging and changes stress to contentment.

What are you thankful for today? What makes you smile? Pause for a moment and reflect on something you appreciate. What do you notice?

Appreciation is:

- Joy
- A gift we share with others.
- Created from unexpected acts of kindness.
- Born out of fond memories with loved ones.

Appreciation, when shared, activates our relational circuits², resettles our nervous system and releases a cocktail of bonding hormones so we feel connected and peaceful. The student of Scripture will discover frequent reminders to remember,

¹ Available for free at: <https://www.joystartshere.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Lifeboat-in-Your-Brain.pdf>

² We will discuss relational circuits in detail in Lesson 4 of the Journey Jumpstart.

appreciate, enjoy and meditate on the good stuff.

Appreciation results in:

- Positive emotions (strength, security)
- Positive emotions within others
- A sense of belonging

People who feel no appreciation:

- Spread pain, distrust, anger and bitterness
- Expect the worst-case scenario
- Feel rejection, depression and despair
- Fail to forgive others

Appreciation brings us together. When we create rejection, lovers, family, peers and strangers become commodities instead of comrades. When the non-relational parts of our brain run our relationship, trust erodes. The presence of Skill Four is a game-changer for relationships, a direct reflection of what a healthy and stable marriage, family and community looks like. When appreciation levels run low bitterness springs up.

Bobby's Story

Bobby spent much of his time at work isolated at his desk. All around him people busily and joyfully interacted with each other, but they did not include him. Without realizing it, Bobby's body language was pushing people away. He often appeared defensive and frustrated. His coworkers sensed something was wrong in Bobby but they respected his nonverbal signals that screamed, "Leave me alone! Quit talking! Get out of here!" People gave him space.

One day Bobby turned to a coworker and asked, "Why doesn't anyone talk to me? Everyone seems to interact, but they ignore me. What did I do wrong?" The coworker replied, "Bobby, to be honest, you give off signals that tell us you want to be left alone. You slam drawers. You grunt in frustration. You give us dirty looks. Your body language tells us to leave you alone, so we do." Bobby was surprised by his coworker's words but he decided to practice creating appreciation. Bobby began to reach out to his coworkers. "You look nice today Helen!" "Hey Curt, nice job on the project last week!" "Betty, I'm grabbing a cup of coffee, can I get you one?" Soon Bobby was fully engaged with his coworkers, interacting and building joy. Appreciation provided the opportunity for meaningful heart to heart connections.

Appreciation is a Learned Behavior

Being around people who use Skill Four provides a clear example of what appreciation looks and feels like. We enjoy interacting with individuals and groups who are well-versed in appreciation skills. With practice and effort, appreciation becomes effortless.

Appreciation is Worth the Effort

Appreciation keeps us focused on what is important to keep us free from regrets and guilt. We restore appreciation when we ask, "What am I thankful for today?" We share appreciation when we express our appreciation. Start and end your day with appreciation and you will notice more energy, a more positive outlook and an increase in stamina to navigate hardship. Your health and relationships will thank you."

The following is a blog post Journey Group Director Amy Brown wrote during the holiday season one year:

BUILD YOUR APPRECIATION LIBRARY

At the holidays, I love to unpack the beautiful Nativity set my mother hand painted for us years ago. Isn't it fun when you build something yourself that you and your family can use for years to come? One of the most important DIY projects that my husband and I have ever completed is our matching "appreciation libraries."

Identify "Appreciation Moments"

As my husband and I learned a few years ago about the importance of appreciation, we decided that this project was top priority for us. Appreciation is like WD-40™ for the brain – it keeps our relational circuits on and operating efficiently, enabling us to connect well with other people. It also keeps that "Red Alert!" part of our brain from taking over in relational situations, allowing the more creative, calm, problem-solving functions to control. Most important to us, appreciation keeps our minds open to our connection with God so that we hear His guidance. A life lived in appreciation goes so much more smoothly, and what could be more welcome at the holidays?

Write down what Immanuel says

Our first step in building an Appreciation Library was to spend some time with Immanuel, asking Him to bring to mind moments when we felt joyful, peaceful, and/or connected to Him and others. As each memory came up, we carefully "polished" it by focusing on who was with us, how we felt in both our emotions and bodies, what we smelled, heard, and saw in each memory. As we pondered each memory, we wrote down a short name for it, and a brief description. We did this on an index card so it would be easy to keep close at hand. I've carried a

Not every Appreciation Moment was a huge moment in our lives. One of mine is a time when I was sitting outside with some teenage boys, talking about life and God, and enjoying a cool breeze. Another is an afternoon kayaking trip with my children and their friends. Still another is sitting in an easy chair with my grandchild. But in each Appreciation moment, I was aware that life is good, that I love my life.

Write down why it matters

Next, we added to our Appreciation Moments by asking Immanuel what He wanted us to know about each memory. Sometimes we sensed His pleasure and joy, sometimes a Bible verse came to mind, and sometimes He would bring to mind yet another Appreciation Moment.

Share it!

The last step in this fun DIY project was to share our Appreciation moments with each other and with the people around us. It's no fun to spend time building or crafting, only to sit your carefully built project in the corner! We practiced sharing moments from our Appreciation Library with family members and friends at work and church.

When things get tense, we pull our Appreciation Library off the shelf and remember the moments. As we do so, we sense our relational circuits brightening and our connection to each other growing. We casually share Appreciation Moments throughout the day to keep relational connections working smoothly. We pray over our Appreciation moments, thanking God for the many ways He has put good things into our lives.

My husband and I encourage you to build an Appreciation Library to share with your own family and friends. It's a DIY project you can enjoy all year round!

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Start a list of Appreciation Moments on an index card or in a pocket-sized notebook. Here are some tips:
 - a. Use specific memories rather than general ones. For instance, if you appreciate a beautiful spot in nature, think of a specific time you visited this spot.
 - b. Journaling about the Appreciation Memory with the following prompts may be helpful:
 - i. Use "Who, What, Where and When" to develop your Appreciation Memory.
 1. Who was with me?
 2. What was happening?
 3. Where was I?
 4. When was this? What season? What age was I?
 - ii. Use your 5 senses to further expand your memory. What did I see, hear, smell, taste, and feel?
 - iii. Look for words to describe how you felt both in your emotions and in your body. (You can use the Expanded SASHET list for emotion words.)
 - c. Give your Appreciation Memory a short title and write that on your card.
 - d. Share your Appreciation Memory with 2 people.
 - e. Notice how you feel after you share your Appreciation Memory. How do your listeners seem to feel?
2. Be prepared to discuss with your Journey Group this quote from the *Lifeboat* book:

"Appreciation brings us together. When we create rejection, lovers, family, peers and strangers become commodities instead of comrades. When the non-relational parts of our brain run our relationship, trust erodes."

“TOGGLING” MEMORIES WITH IMMANUEL

by Amy Brown

Appreciation is an amazing catalyst for joy, and it can be used to help us more quickly return to joy from negative emotions. This exercise helps us “toggle” between a bothersome negative memory, appreciation, and an interaction with Immanuel. This can often diffuse some of the intensity of the negative emotion.

1. Check your relational circuits and use the Shalom My Body exercises to refresh them if needed. Monitor your breathing – we want to keep it deep and slow.

2. Go to a recent memory in which you felt a *mild* negative emotion, such as annoyance, irritation, or low level worry. For training purposes, we always use mild examples so that we keep our brain at “room temperature.” A room at high temperature (overwhelmed or upset) is not a trainable brain.

Example: A mild anger situation would be that I got to the library and realized I had forgotten the book I was returning. A low-level worry situation would be that I'm not sure if my sweater is heavy enough for the room in which I'm having a short meeting.

3. Fully enter into your mild negative memory and remember how you felt in your emotions and your body. Sit in this memory for about a minute. Notice your breathing and keep it deep and slow. If you feel your heart rate and breathing speed up, your memory is too intense for this exercise. Choose a milder memory.

4. Place both your hands palm up on your lap. Imagine that you are holding the negative memory in your left hand.

5. Go to an appreciation memory. Fully enter into it, remembering how you felt in your body and emotions. Remember how you felt in all your senses. Sit with this memory for approximately 3 minutes. Imagine that you are holding the appreciation memory in your right hand.

6. In your appreciation memory, ask Immanuel what He wants you to know about that memory. Next, ask Him how He feels about you right now. Next, “look” at your mild negative memory and ask Immanuel, “What do you want me to know about that? How do you feel about me?”

7. “Come back” to the group and discuss this experience. What did you notice about the intensity of your feelings when you returned to the negative memory?



Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.
Philippians 2:1-2

Philippians 2:1-2 paints a picture of believers who receive such encouragement, comfort, tenderness and compassion from being united with Christ that they are like-minded, one in spirit and in mind, and having a kindred love for one another. Paul says that knowing his friends are living this way will make his joy complete. That is powerful! We also often find this kind of bond difficult to achieve.

Deeper Walk author Deni Huttula writes about the importance AND difficulty of feeling the joy and love in relational interactions:

“If joy is the feeling that we get when someone is glad to be with us, how come so many of us don’t feel joy in situations with people who supposedly love us?”

When we learn all about this “joy” stuff, why do some of us start looking around and wondering where all the people are that can be glad to be with us so we can feel joy.

Many of us assume that no one is ever glad to be with us and that must be the reason we don’t feel joy.

But I think we might need to consider turning that finger and point it the other direction.

Instead of looking at what everyone around us is “not doing” . . . Let’s look at what our brain might be doing to BLOCK our ability to receive joy from those around us!

Without getting super technical here (you can read the “science” behind this discussion; I highly recommend getting *Outsmarting Yourself* by Dr. Karl Lehman), I’m going to tell you about a place in your brain that can be in three different

"positions": On, Off, or Dim.

Dr. Karl Lehman, Jim Wilder, Ed Khouri and the rest of the Life Model Works authors refer to these as "Relational Circuits" (RCs for short). These Relational Circuits are highly important for us to use in every relationship we have.

When RCs are On

Here are just a few things that your brain can do when these RCs are ON.

1. Use all your senses
2. Be flexible (instead of rigid) in your thinking
3. Be self-reflective
4. Attune
5. Use willpower
6. Be open and interested in what others think, feel and say
7. Regulate emotions
8. Work with others to reach understanding
9. Focus & shift attention

Let's stop here for a moment and consider life without the ability to do some of these things. Not a fun picture is it? If yours are set to "dim," each of those things would feel much more difficult than they should. Now here are a few more things your RCs are responsible for:

1. Distinguish between current and past events
2. Allow for creative solutions to be found
3. Help you to join with others to form groups
4. Explore new solutions
5. Process new data or input from others
6. Respond instead of react
7. Control cravings
8. Resolve conflicts
9. Access other brain and physical resources
10. Set goals, remember goals, and enjoy reaching them

Are you starting to see why having your RCs on might be important? Here are some more reasons you might want to keep your RCs on. Relational circuits are where your brain can:

1. Develop a consistent identity
2. Control or resolve fears
3. Maintain & nurture consistent supportive, relationships

4. Be resilient
5. Be mindful
6. Recognize what others are feeling & saying & why that might be important
7. Consider that we might be wrong about something
8. Access relational memories
9. Receive from others

Okay, so there's more than a "few" things that the RCs in our brain are responsible for controlling. Doesn't this list have a few things on it that you'd like to be able to do? Let's take a closer look at that last one: "Receive from others".

Overcoming Social Anxiety

If our RCs are dim, or Off, then our ability to receive from others is also turned off or dimmed.

I used to suffer from severe social anxiety. When invited to go to a party or other social gathering with my husband I would begin to panic internally. At times like this, my RCs didn't just "dim." They would shut off completely. I could not control my fears about what others might think if they saw me, I could not do anything on that list above.

When my husband would find me in the closet frantically trying on every piece of clothing I owned, I could not receive his love. Neither his support or concern even registered. I would send him away to go the party without me.

Then I would feel depressed because I was sure that I had no one in my life that cared about me.

I realize this is an extreme example, but it paints a clear picture of how life without my RCs on prevented me from getting the joy my brain needed.

Now, with my RCs on, if I get invited to a party and head into the closet to pick out my clothes, when my husband comes to check on me, I can see the smile in his eyes when he looks at me. I can feel his tender concern for my unease about the social gathering. I can be strengthened by the way that he loves me and knows me. I can do ALL the other things on that list above.

Without your RCs on, your ability to receive joy from others is turned off. We have learned a great deal about how our brain needs joy to thrive. Without joy, your brain will begin to look for substitutes that might "seem" to fix things temporarily, but as we all know now.... Those substitutes don't last long and they tend to hurt us in the long run.

Making RCs a Priority

For me, keeping my RCs on is a priority. I want to be able to do all the things in that list above.

Now, the tricky part is that when our RCs are off, we really don't care to recognize that they are off. We typically become more rigid in our thinking and fight hard against anyone telling us we might need to change our current path. It's like we're on a roller coaster with a broken section ahead but everything within us tells us that the gap up ahead is just part of the ride.

So, as a way of arming myself with tools for keeping my RCs on, I've come to recognize that certain things turn them off pretty quickly. Things like being overwhelmed with too much to do, drinking alcohol, unresolved emotional trauma, a critical spirit, and missing my "quiet time" with the Lord too many days in a row.

I've also learned to start checking myself throughout the day to see whether my RCs are on using the RC checklist from *Belonging* (which is a shorter, modified version of what Karl Lehman wrote about in his book). I would love for you to learn this skill too.

When you start with making sure your RCs are on you can position yourself to receive joy when you experience it! Don't let some blown circuits keep you from what you need!¹

Restoring Your Relational Circuits with Shalom My Body

Here is a video demonstration of Dr. Jim Wilder doing the exercises that will help restore your relational circuits:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X87kwXYiMY0>

In Journey Group this week, we will discuss other ways to help restore relational connection when it seems to be lost.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. As you look at the three lists (page 2-3) of how Relational Circuits help us function relationally, which ones feel most important to you at this season of your life?
2. Journal or meditate on how your daily life might be different if these tasks or functions came naturally for you. What particular areas of your life might go more smoothly? Ask Jesus what He might want you to know about this, and journal any thoughts that come to mind.
3. Looking at the separate document entitled "RC Test," which signs that your Relational Circuits are off do you notice most often in yourself?
4. Spend 5 minutes focused on one or more Appreciation Memories. What do you think is the impact of appreciation on your relational circuits?

¹ <https://joystartshere.com/rcs-need-anyway/>



Relational Circuits Checklist

Belonging Module of Thriving Recovery

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Includes items from the *Lehman Relational Connection Circuit Checklist* by Karl Lehman M.D. Used by permission.

Beta Version 2.2

Overview

Our minds and brains are designed to live in a relational world where everything is in shalom. This Hebrew word means everything is in the right relationship, at the right time, in the right place, at the right strength and in the right amount for God and people. In the Life Model we call this being synchronized. At the center of this synchronization are our brain's relational circuits. If we lose our peace (particularly in relationships) these relational circuits can start to shut down. With our vital relational circuits partly or deeply off, problems get bigger, we can treat people like objects, our cravings become monsters, we can deeply hurt those we love, expressing feelings and opinions becomes a weapon, communication hurts others instead of making things shalom again.

When the best of our brain and spirit are in shalom we are open, interested, flexible, self-reflective and use all our senses. We work to have the other person collaborate with us to reach understanding. We receive, process, respond, explore, understand and join.[1] When we lose shalom our brain suspends the best brain and relational functions:[2]

Self reflection	*SUSPENDED* Now I don't see my part and what is possible for me.
Attunement	*SUSPENDED* Now I don't feel like anyone connects with me.
Mindsight	*SUSPENDED* Now I don't feel like I have a friend in the world.

To avoid hurt, tragedy, regret, relapse and loss, here is a basic checklist to see if your relational circuits are on - whether you are alone or in an intimate relationship. Of course, the best part is that there are some specific steps you can take to start your relational circuits going once again. These are taught in Connexus materials (www.thrivingrecovery.org) and ThriveToday training

(www.thrivetoday.org) as well as some material on www.kclehman.com. You will be amazed how much better you feel when your brain is running and not just your mouth or emotions.

Not everyone has the same experience with relational circuits. Some people will recognize that they rarely have these circuits on in their adult life. Those who need to start waking up their relational circuits will need lots of practice. You may also need focused ministry times for some blockages that are particularly resistant.

[1] Page 89 *Parenting From The Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell.

[2] Page 159 *Parenting From The Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell

Belonging Checklist for Relational Circuits (Long Form Beta 2.0)

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General signs that my relational circuits are OFF

- I just want to make a problem, person or feeling stop and go away. My mind is "locked onto" something upsetting.
- I think, say, repeat a word, phrase, cliché or thought that is negative, insulting or profane. I feel like screaming, name-calling or threatening (or I do).[3]
- I strongly want to retaliate.
- I determine the only acceptable response that someone else can give me. I just want to get away, or fight or I freeze.[4]
- I become aggressive in the way I interrogate, judge and fix others.[5]
 - Interrogate – I ask aggressive questions about my hunch or fear of what someone is thinking, doing or feeling while looking for a particular response.
 - Judge – I use my questions to expose the things I disapprove or will use to prove myself right or win.
 - Fix – I already know what I want them to do or say and use my questions (talking with them) to get my way or reach my goal.
- I feel like it is their fault if they get hurt. (They asked for it. They should just get out of my way. They should have thought of that!)
- I don't feel like listening to what others are feelings, saying or going to say.
- When others are talking, I am already figuring out what to say before they even finish. I don't want to make eye contact.
- I would rather just handle problems myself.
- People are a bother and/or get in my way.

If my answers are YES, then my relational circuits are OFF.

Additional questions to see if my relational circuits are ON when I am alone

- I see this moment as a new situation where I can learn something. (It does not feel like a bad place I have been before.)
- I can reflect on myself (not just my hurts).
- I think of others who would understand me well if they were here now. (I am not struggling with feeling isolated and alone.)
- I am eager to talk with God about this
- situation. I want to encourage others to be helpful.

If I cannot check YES then my relational connection circuits are OFF or weak.

Additional questions to see if my relational circuits are ON with people I do not know (well)

- I can be respectful.
- I am aware and interested in their point of view.
- I am open to understanding what they are feeling right now.
- I am aware of my own feelings and responses without having to blurt them out.
- I can join in give-and-take both verbally and nonverbally.
- I can help them make their points more clearly understandable. They will agree with my description because it does not make them look stupid.
- I can understand and accept it if they make a choice I do not like.

If I cannot check YES then my relational connection circuits are OFF or weak.

Additional questions to see if my relational circuits are ON with people I know well

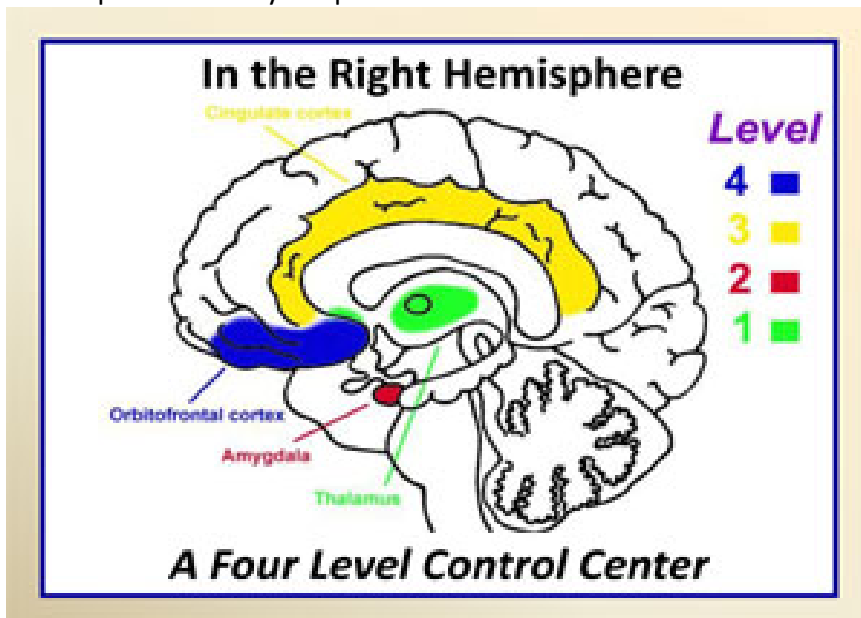
- Do my good memories of them seem important right now?
- Do I feel connected to _____ (someone I usually like)?
- Do I feel a desire to be connected to _____ (someone I usually like)?
- Do I experience him/her as a relational being?
- Am I aware of his/her care for me?
- Do I feel compassion about what he/she's thinking and feeling?
- Am I open to share their distressing feelings with them to help them return to joy?
- Do I perceive the presence of _____ (someone I usually like) as a resource?
- Am I experiencing joy in being with him/her?

If I cannot check YES then my relational connection circuits are OFF or weak.

EVERYTHING with respect to my relational conflicts, urges and cravings will turn out better once my relational circuits are back on.

Understanding Your Brain

- Right Hemisphere
 - The “Feeler” – stores every experience based on how it felt in body and emotions
 - Non-verbal:
 - Emotions
 - Images/Sounds
 - Tone of voice, body language
 - Synchronizes within our body and with our world
 - Relational skills are stored here
 - Executive Control Ctr
 - Operates at 6 cycles per second
- Left Hemisphere
 - The “Explainer” – the Library, the File Cabinet
 - Words/Logic/Stories
 - Describes what is going on; stores what happened, not how it felt
 - VERY resistant to change; only changes when the Right side has high emotion
 - Operates at 5 cycles per second



- Level 1:** Attachment Center (Who matters to me, produces dopamine)
- Level 2:** Amygdala (Fight or flight, produces adrenaline)
- Level 3:** Synchronization Center (Handles negative emotions, synchs to other people, produces serotonin)
- Level 4:** Identity Center (Captain – can override Level 2, knows my true identity, can predict consequences, can see my part in the problem)

“What fires together, wires together” – If a behavior or substance produces a good result in our brain, we will turn to that behavior or substance again later.

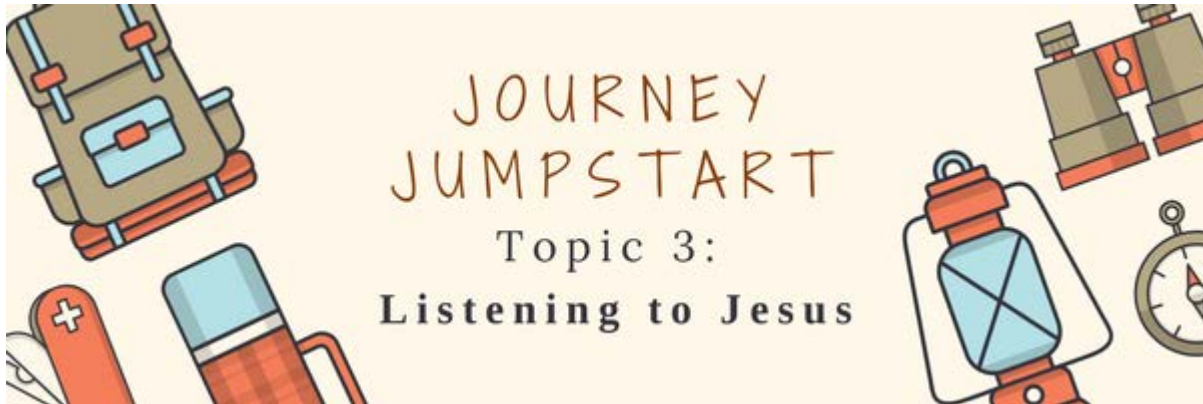
CAPACITY AND TRAUMA

Synchronization – when someone “matches” my emotions, when I feel like someone gets me

Capacity – my ability to handle stress, increases when people & God synchronize with me

Trauma – when a painful situation is greater than my capacity

Behaviors Events Experiences People Substances	When my capacity is overwhelmed and I do not have a lot of joy or strong relationships to help me get back to joy, I turn to BEEPS. At first, BEEPS seem to give me joy. Later, they hijack my attachment center. I attach to them at the expense of healthy relationships.
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Welcome to Lesson 3 - Listening to Jesus. Just as Check In deepens our bonds with our group members, making a regular practice of listening to Jesus deepens our connection with God. It's important to remember that hearing God is a skill, and like other skills, we improve with practice.

The book *Joyful Journey* describes how our pain often interferes with sensing God's voice:

“ME,’ my identity, is ultimately shaped by who I love and what pain I avoid. Love and the pain I avoid often compete within me to see whether my love or my fear of pain is stronger. As Christians we know “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18), but knowing this has little effect on our daily lives. . .

Even when Jesus came in the form of Immanuel (God with us), those closest to Him had difficulty seeing God in Him. Simon Peter, who went back to fishing, and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus after the resurrection (Luke 24). Jesus diagnosed them with *sluggish vision* (being *slow-of-heart*) as they were focused mainly on the pain in their lives.

We are like these disciples, We are *slow-of-heart* and have impaired vision of Jesus walking with us. Since we are all *slow-of-heart*, God has provided the Holy Spirit to empower us to experience Immanuel, the God who walks with us. . . .

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul uses the Greek word *poiema*, which literally means God's poetry. When *poiemia* is translated “handiwork” or “workmanship” it misses the following important point. Poetry in scripture does not rhyme sounds; it follows the Hebrew pattern and rhymes thoughts.

This means that as God's poetry, our thoughts can rhyme with our Heavenly Father's. That is amazing! How can it work? We know that as we become intimate with someone, we begin to finish each other's sentences and thoughts. In a deep, authentic, mutual-mind state¹, we actually don't know where our thoughts stop and the other person's thoughts begin. This is exactly what can happen between God and us too. ***A mutual-mind state with God results in an emulation of His character and heart; we are showing the world the poet behind the poetry.*** As our mutual-mind state becomes stronger, we are able to live out our purpose of being created for good works."²

How Do We Achieve This Mutual-Mind State with God?

Just as there are things that may hinder reaching a mutual-mind state with God, there are ways to facilitate achieving a mutual mind state with Him. The helpful booklet *Share Immanuel*³ describes two "seats" where our awareness of God with us is enhanced, and one seat where awareness of God is very difficult. Below is a link to the very helpful illustration of the 3 chairs described in Share Immanuel. It will be helpful to you to look at or print out this model as you read the next few paragraphs.

https://www.lifemodel.org/download/Immanuel_Healing_Diagram.pdf

Share Immanuel says:

"In all your ways acknowledge (God) and he will direct your paths," is part of the wisdom literature. The word translated as "acknowledge" means "to detect" that God is there. This is what our hearts see when we look for God's presence. God is with us and directs us. This is the heart of Immanuel. "My sheep know my voice," is recognition that we remember our times with God. We certainly do not mean that we only remember facts about God! We mean remember "times with God." Moses told his people to remember when they received food and water in the desert and were led across the sea on dry ground. These were actual times and places in their lives. Both *appreciation memories* and *interactive memories* need to be real times and places in our lives. . . .

The *interactive memories* seat is the best place to stay for Immanuel experiences [listening to Jesus]. These memories take us back to times when we could sense God's thoughts and feelings toward us. These times are filled with *God peace*. They will feel like we are relating to someone we know. We will have a sense that both God and I are there. We may not be clear about which thoughts were His and which were ours - that

¹ Joyful Journey, p. 72

² Joyful Journey, Loppnow, Kang, Wilder, p. 2-3

³ Share Immanuel, Jim Wilder, Chris Coursey

is fine. What is important is that when we go back and remember the moment we will find God is still there. Now we can interact again in the present. . . .

Many people (and most Christians) only have a sort of historical sense of God's presence, rather than an interactive sense of God. If we have no *interactive memories* of a secure interaction with God there is a second seat available! We do not have to sit in thorny *pain memories* or climb the hill to find God. This second comfortable seat is produced by *appreciation memories*. Even when we could not interact, we can appreciate God's gifts or help in the past. In fact, we do not even have to believe the things we appreciate came from God. We only need to feel the appreciation once again.

Appreciation comes from the "ah!" moments: a baby's smile, a beautiful scene, kindness, warm blankets, cozy fires, recognition and special moments, whether we give them or receive them. We need to remember our appreciation times and take several minutes to let the feeling rebuild. The more of these *appreciation memories* we have, the more securely our seat will stay atop the hill. [SI, p. 4-6]⁴

You might enjoy the following blog post from Deni Huttula about 5 Steps to Talking with God.

<https://joystartshere.com/5-steps-to-talking-with-god-on-the-good-days/>

Here is a beautiful video from Carol Rugg of The Navigators, sharing her experience with listening prayer.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=w_Sxv-sdodU

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Practice moving from the Appreciation Seat to the Interactive Seat.
 - a. Think of a specific time when you felt joyful, peaceful, and/or connected.
 - b. Spend 3 minutes meditating on this memory, thinking of who was with you, what you saw, smelled, heard, felt, and/or tasted, what emotions you felt, and how you felt in your body.
 - c. After 3 minutes of focusing on your Appreciation Memory, see if you can sense God's presence in this memory. You may want to ask some questions:
 - i. What do you want me to know?
 - ii. How do you see me?
2. Compare this quote from *Joyful Journey* with Ephesians 2:10 (NLT):
 - a. "A mutual-mind state with God results in an emulation of His character and heart; we are showing the world the poet behind the poetry. As our mutual-mind state becomes stronger, we are able to live out our purpose of being created for good works."
 - b. "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."
 - c. What thoughts come to mind as you consider that your character reveals "the poet behind the poetry"? In what ways will you be more of God's masterpiece as you develop this mutual mind state with Him? Journal your thoughts.

⁴ Share Immanuel, Jim Wilder, Chris Coursey



Let's take a step back in time and place to Galilee in the 1st century. How would Jesus' followers have understood His statement to "go and make disciples of all nations"? The word "disciple" means a learner, particularly one who learns both by study, observation and imitation of the teacher's life. In the 1st century Jewish world, discipleship was defined by *relationship*. Mark 3:14 indicates that Jesus appointed the twelve "that they might be *with Him*," and Luke 6:40 states that the disciple who is fully trained "*will be like his teacher*." In Acts 4:13, after Peter and John spoke boldly to the rulers, elders, scribes and high priests, it says that "they recognized that they had been *with Jesus*."

In Dr. Marcus Warner's webinar, "Fixing the Broken Discipleship Factory," he examines the fact that the 21st century church isn't producing disciples whose lives make it obvious that they have "been with Jesus." Where did the church get off track and how can we restore relational discipleship?

In the first few centuries after Christ's death, Christianity passed from person to person, family to family, and town to town through relationship. Christians were persecuted for their faith and the church was largely a grassroots underground movement. Due to the relational nature of their faith and the effects of persecution, believers relied on each other for finances, housing, spiritual growth and emotional support.

It's not surprising that this relational faith is consistent with what we now know about attachment and belonging – we are created by God to be strongly motivated to live and believe like those to whom we have strong connection. God designed us to be in relationship with Him and with those who love Him.

In the 3rd century A.D., Roman emperor Constantine first allowed and then promoted Christianity in the empire, and within 50 years emperor Theodosius had made Christianity the state mandated religion. With this ruling, everyone born in the Roman Empire was considered a Christian, and the relational component began to fade.

As a state-mandated religion, Roman Christianity became an institution rather than a relational entity and began to spread by building more churches rather than relationships being formed around Jesus. Christendom as an institution largely replaced Christianity as relationship. Christendom was found to be an effective way to control citizens, as people were expected to conform to a code of beliefs and behavior set forth by the state.

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation broke with the Roman Catholic church but replaced Catholic Christendom with Protestant state-mandated religions and Christendom continued. If it were not for the invention of the printing press, this state of affairs might have continued for much longer than it did. The printing press brought the Bible to the laity as well as spreading new philosophical thoughts throughout Europe.

This spread of philosophical thought resulted in the Enlightenment – a time of questioning what is important, what is truth, and what defines us. Rene Descartes' famous phrase, "I think, therefore I am" infiltrated both ecclesiastical (church) and philosophical conversation, and truth moved to the center of the Christian faith. No longer was faith based on relationship (as in the early church) or on politics (as in Catholic and Protestant Christendom), but on the content of one's beliefs.

As a result of these changes, it was understood that Christian transformation came about from the combination of good Reason with good Choices.

Reason + Choices = Transformation

Discipleship became a matter of providing the right information and guiding disciples to the right choices. Intelligence and willpower were more important than relationship, and those who had high intelligence and strong willpower were successful disciples. This formula worked well for the strong in the church but left the weak feeling shamed and left out. Even the strong suffered shame when they slipped and made poor choices. Rather than building intimacy in relationships, this formula created a culture of perfectionism, hiding and judgment.

In *RARE Leadership*, Drs. Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder offer a new formula based on Scripture and neuroscience:

Identity + Belonging = Transformation

"*Who we are determines what we will do and identity* [the part of the brain that controls identity] operates faster and more powerfully than [the part of the brain that controls] choices."² (Brackets added)

² *RARE Leadership*, p. 46. Available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

In Journey Groups, we intentionally grow a place of belonging and identity so that transformation occurs naturally and relationally. We are helping one another grow in Freedom, Identity, walking in the Spirit, and Heart to heart community. In this way, we create an ever-expanding community of relationship in which we grow in Christlikeness together. Because the Life Model³ explains the components needed for full, healthy life and relationships (a place to belong, the opportunity to give and receive life, healing from trauma, maturity, and knowing our heart and God's heart), we will also examine these foundational concepts. Journey Groups provide a model of relational discipleship that you can easily incorporate into your daily life.

We will delve into the elements of discipleship in more detail in future lessons of this unit. For now, we will review these elements briefly:

Freedom: We have died with Christ (buried with Him) so we can be set free from the world, the flesh and the devil. It was for freedom He set us free (Gal. 5:1), so we will learn how to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles (Heb. 12:1). Helping one another walk in freedom means we are gentle with one another's weaknesses and learn to keep relationships bigger than problems.

Identity: Just as we died with Christ, we were also raised with Him (Col. 3:1). We have a new identity but learning to walk in this new identity can be a challenge. Not only do we have a new individual identity (child of God), we also have a new group identity (the body of Christ, the family of God). As our sense of identity and belonging grow, we will be transformed.

Walking in the Spirit: As children of God, our Father reveals His perspective on life to us and we no longer walk by our flesh (our own choices and reasoning), but by His Spirit (Gal. 5:16). His Word comes alive to us and His Spirit enables us to love one another sincerely (1 Pet. 1:22) and to walk in our identity as His children.

Heart to Heart Community: Returning to relational discipleship as Jesus modeled means that we practically show God's love to each other, that we model walking in the Spirit, in freedom and our identity in Christ, and we welcome both the weak and the strong into our fellowship. Our hearts are knit together in love and God will use us to bring His transformation to the world.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What forms of discipleship have you experienced? What were the strengths and what did you gain from the experience? What seemed to be missing, if anything?
2. What do you hope to gain from this relational discipleship experience?
3. Were there any phrases or thoughts that felt new or particularly important to you in this lesson? What were they? Highlight them or write them in your journal.

³ *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, Dr. Jim Wilder and others; available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>



Galatians 5:1 says, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

I recently watched a documentary about a man who was released from prison after a wrongful conviction. Although this man was free, his experiences in prison and his lack of experience with the outside world had a tremendous impact on his ability to live as a free man. Many Christians live in a similar conundrum – free in Christ but hindered by their life experiences.

At the cross, Christ redeemed us into freedom from sin, Satan’s schemes, and the entanglements of the world. These are now accomplished facts. However, Satan is the Father of lies, and he will do all he can to twist our life experiences and hinder our ability to live in freedom.

In *Understanding the Wounded Heart*¹, Marcus Warner lays out the progression of Satan’s common strategy for hindering freedom in our lives:

Problem	Source	Observation
Wounds	World	It is impossible to live in a fallen world without being wounded.
Lies	Devil	The impact of the past is not in the size of our wounds, but in the power of what they mean to us.
Vows	Flesh	A vow is an attempt by the flesh to take control of life and keep ourselves from further pain.
Strongholds	Wounds, lies and vows	Strongholds keep us from trusting God. They are barriers to God’s love and force us to live in our own strength.

Table from page 27 of *Understanding the Wounded Heart*

¹ Available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

In this lesson, we will discuss solutions to help us walk in freedom -- to overcome the effects of past wounds and to process future wounds so that we don't lose our freedom.

It is important to understand that *our brain experiences, stores, and processes the memories of our wounds in two very different ways and we need solutions for each of these ways*. Our brain stores the facts and narrative memories of our experiences on its slow track, while the emotions of "how it felt" and "was I alone" is stored in the fast track. The fast track is the "Control Center" for the brain.² In layman's terms, this means that our bonds and emotions drive our decisions more than the information we know. It is also good to understand that brain scans have revealed that the same part of our brain is active when we interact with God as when we interact with people. This means that the healing of our connections with people and God have a synergistic effect – what helps our interaction with people also helps our interaction with God!

This seemingly very "unspiritual" neuroscience information is key to understanding how to fully process wounds, lies and vows so that strongholds are removed and our relationship with God can bloom and prosper.

Wounds: When we are wounded, the "facts" of what happened and the verbal story we tell are stored in the slow track of the brain. However, our fast track stores how the experience felt in our body and emotions, whether it is considered good, bad, or scary, and whether we felt alone in the experience.

Three common types of wounds are:

- 1. "A" Trauma:** Absence of the good things we need like consistent love, laughter, physical affection, boundaries, food, shelter, clothing, and security.
- 2. "B" Trauma:** Bad things that happen to us, like physical, emotional or sexual abuse, war/refugee situation, divorce in the family, serious illness of self or family member, and abandonment.
- 3. Comparison/Perception:** Pain resulting from negative comparisons, whether by ourselves or important people in our life, and pain resulting from faulty perceptions of reality.

God is with us when the wound hits, ready to comfort us, strengthen us, and "work all things together for good³" in spite of the pain and negative consequences

² To learn more about the slow and fast tracks of the brain, read *RARE Leadership* by Drs. Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder, available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

³ Rom. 8:28

of the wound. Our ability to sense and trust His presence is affected by not only the truth we know, but also the experiences we have had in the past.

Lies: Satan stands by when we are wounded, ready to tell us lies about the meaning of the situation, the people involved, ourselves, the world, and God. We know that God is also near at hand, and our ability to receive God's comfort and love is affected by the previous lies we have believed, vows we have made, and strongholds which now exist. We will talk later in this lesson about "lie-proofing" our hearts and minds.

We may receive lies on the conscious, slow track from the words of those around us ("You will never amount to anything"), from teaching we have received ("God will punish your mistakes"), from the world ("If you aren't beautiful, athletic, or smart, you can't be happy"), and from our faulty understanding of God, His world, and His Word ("God must be angry at me; that's why I can't get a job.") On the fast track, lies arise from experiences and feelings from the past. For instance, if my mother is often anxious, I may have a pervasive fear that "the world is a very dangerous place." Satan can whisper lies to both the fast and slow track, whether it is through others, the world, or our own mind. We can receive freedom from lies in both tracks!

Vows: Lies which are not processed quickly often lead to vows of protection because we want to avoid future pain. God created our minds so that we can learn to relationally process the pain of our wounds, but when we don't have this skill, lies send down deep roots and create vows. We may consciously make vows on the slow track such as "I will never trust anyone again," or our fast track may have deeply ingrained feelings that act like vows, for instance, "My abuser was a jolly man, so I am intensely nervous or angry around jolly men." Vows feel as if they protect us from pain, but in reality they limit our ability to connect deeply with God, family and friends.

Strongholds: "A stronghold is an area of bondage in which we are not free to live with joy and peace. It is characterized by compulsion, restlessness, hopelessness, addiction, and self-deception."⁴ Because strongholds have formed over a period of time, they always involve both the fast and slow tracks of the brain; we have strong emotions like fear and anger (fast track) that drive us to make choices that violate our beliefs (slow track).

⁴ Understanding the Wounded Heart, Dr. Marcus Warner, p. 118

SOLUTIONS THAT BRING FREEDOM TO BOTH TRACKS:

There are solutions which bring relief to the slow track and others which help us on both tracks. It's interesting that other than interacting directly with God, most "fast track" solutions actually happen as a process over time. God sometimes brings clarity and truth to both tracks very quickly.

- **Listening prayer:** Interaction with God will be our bookends; when we are wounded, we start by telling God how we feel about this wound and asking Him what He wants us to know. Then we notice what thoughts come into our mind. In this process, we may realize that we have believed a lie related to the wound. God is able to connect with us on both the slow track and fast track, and as we move through the elements of relational discipleship, we will become more comfortable with recognizing which thoughts are God's and which thoughts come from us.

The next 4 C's are slow track solutions. This means that they accomplish the goal and store new information in our brains, but these solutions don't affect the fast track, where our emotional and body experience is stored. We may continue to struggle with emotional reactions and continued poor choices until we also get healing for the fast track.

- **Confess:** Once we realize we believe a lie related to our wound, we confess (agree with God) that we have believed the lie, and that it is indeed untrue. We may be unsure of the truth at this time, but we are willing to acknowledge the lie.
- **Cancel:** Believing a lie can open us up to influence from demonic spirits, so the next step is to cancel their right to influence us with a simple statement: "In the name of Jesus and by His blood, I cancel the right of any demonic spirit to influence my mind and life."
- **Command:** Now that demonic spirits have no right to remain, we simply command them to leave.
- **Commit:** We now choose to commit ourselves to God's truth and ways; we begin the process of rebuilding our thoughts and renewing our minds as stated in Romans 12:2⁵.

⁵ "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Now that we have “cleaned house,” aligned ourselves with God’s truth and updated our slow track, we begin the more involved process of updating our fast track. The deep-seated, very rapid thought processes that drive our behavior and can hinder our freedom take more deliberate effort to bring them into alignment with God’s truth. The follow 2 C’s are designed to work with the fast track.

- **Construct:** We must construct a new thought pattern and new choices. Our thought patterns are built by repetition of thought and experience, just as a path through the woods forms when we take the same route repeatedly. In time, the path is clear and can be traveled rapidly. When we have repeatedly followed a certain thought path over time, it becomes almost automatic. It would take effort to walk an untraveled path. In constructing new thought patterns and choices, we must first see an example or hear a story of a new pattern, then gradually begin to more regularly choose the new “path.” This is why Jesus told his disciples, “Follow Me.”
- **Connect with Community:** Some of you may have read *The Hunger Games* trilogy or seen the movies. After Peeta was brainwashed by the Capitol, he knew he could not trust his mind and turned to Catniss to help him. My heart both broke and sang when he would look at her and say, “True or not true?” God intended us to have friends who will help us know “true or not true.”

Spending time with people who live by the Spirit and with a renewed mind will make constructing a new thought pattern and choice much quicker and more natural. We learn from examples and stories, so sharing our stories in community is powerful – more powerful for change than more information. The combination of scriptural truth with loving community where there is transparency and gentleness with weakness will result in a full experience of the words of Jesus: “. . . *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,*⁶” and “*I am the way and the truth and the life...*”⁷”
- **Listening Prayer** together: Connection with God is always a good beginning and end to our “freedom work.” After each time we pass through the steps of Confess, Cancel, Command, Commit, Construct, and Community (an ongoing step), it is helpful to reconnect with God and ask Him again what He wants us to know. Sharing what thoughts come to mind with your community (small group, friends, family, Sunday school class, etc.) will help you learn to receive those thoughts which come from God and discard those that come from your wounded self or from the Enemy. True or not true?

⁶ John 8:32

⁷ John 14:6

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. In your own life, what are some issues that might qualify as strongholds? (We will not discuss this answer in our group, so feel free to be very honest.) [Examples of strongholds: performance, people pleasing, avoidance, criticism, appearance, over- or under-responsibility, procrastination, reliance on food/diet, co-dependency, any dependence on something other than relationship with God or healthy people to handle emotional pain]
2. What steps have you taken in the past to address these problems/strongholds? Have you found practical freedom? How might the idea of the slow track and fast track of the brain have affected the amount of freedom you have experienced?
3. Our Journey Group is a community where we will practice these steps. Begin asking God to bring to mind people in your local community who would be open to meeting occasionally for "freedom work." This can start with one safe friend with whom you meet every few weeks. Allow God to gently, relationally direct this process.



Freedom spreads as we grow our glad-to-be-together joy and learn to walk in forgiveness and maturity with our community.

Col. 3:12-14: Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

In Lesson 2, we spoke of individual freedom from wounds, lies, vows, and strongholds. Our freedom in Christ is most powerful as it is experienced relationally. In a heart-focused community, we learn to walk in the freedom that arises out of love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith¹. We are free to live in true joy and love each other transparently and honestly as we grow in relationship with God, learn to forgive from the heart and grow in spiritual and emotional maturity.

Let's unpack some of the aspects of Walking in Freedom Together:

- True **Joy** can be defined as "a relational experience in which 'someone's glad to be with me,'²" which is very different from happiness, which might be defined as "things are going well," "my relationship is running smoothly," "my team just won the championship." True joy is a fast-track emotion that gives us capacity to face the difficulties of life and relationships, whereas happiness fades at the first sign of a problem. The fast track of our brain is wired through relationships, while the slow track of the brain is wired with information.
- Our initial foundation of joy is laid in the first years of life as our family delights in our uniqueness. These interactions of joy begin to wire the fast track of our brain. Throughout life, God provides opportunities to repair and build on this foundation as we meet people who have the capacity to love us in our current condition. God is constantly glad to be with us and as we

¹ 1 Tim. 1:15

² *Joy Starts Here*, Wilder, Khouri, Coursey, Sutton, p. 4. Available at: <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

recognize His joy in us, our foundation becomes more solid and our capacity grows. Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. We gain strength as we experience this joy. As we internalize this “glad to be with you” joy of the Lord, we experience Hebrews 4:16; we approach His throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- **Relationship with God** grows as we approach Him with confidence to receive His mercy and grace. Not only do we study the Word in order to know Him, but the Hebrew word often translated “know” is “yada,” which in relation to God is defined as “to have an intimate experiential knowledge of Him³.” Our study of Scripture intertwines with our experiential knowledge of God to provide a rich relationship, far beyond what either study or experience alone could give. You’ll notice that this beautiful mix of Scripture and relational experience with God is providing healthy wiring for both of fast and slow tracks.
- **Forgiveness** is both received and given in a community where “glad to be with you” joy is the norm. From this secure foundation, we learn to restore joy by asking for forgiveness when we are in the wrong and offering forgiveness when we have been wronged. More mature believers model and guide us through the process of forgiveness. Consider Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 2:7-11:

“Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Paul knew that sin could not be ignored, but he also knew that Satan could use unforgiveness of the sin just as he used the sin to bring trouble to the body at Corinth. Paul’s mature guidance allowed the believers to address the sin among them while still walking in the freedom of forgiving and being forgiven.

Learning the facts about forgiveness and its necessity is important for the slow track, while adding the relational capacity to walk out the reality of forgiveness is a fast track skill.

- **Maturity** grows best in heart-focused community where we have models of love, joy, forgiveness, intimacy with God and other relational skills that

³ Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary, p. 131

enable us to walk in freedom. Notice the community aspect of these verses about maturity:

Ephesians 4:13: “. . . **we all** reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Philippians 3:15: “**All of us, then, who are mature** should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.”

Colossians 1:28: “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone fully mature** in Christ.”

We see that Jesus was establishing a body, a family, a building, a Kingdom in which each person is integral to the growth of the whole. Our freedom in Him is both individual and corporate – our ability to walk in freedom is deeply impacted by our neighbor’s freedom. We belong to each other.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Which of these aspects of freedom in community have you experienced: joy, relationship with God, forgiveness, and maturity? How did your community help each other grow in each of these?
2. What difference do you think it would make to a family or community when there is a focus on growing relational capacity and skills as well as acquiring information about living a life of freedom together?
3. Did this lesson bring up any new thoughts or perspectives about joy, relationship with God, forgiveness, or maturity?



Lesson 4 IDENTITY in Christ

Heart-focused community grows as we know our identity in Christ and remind each other that this identity is the most true thing about us.
(2 Cor. 5:17)

Many of us grew up with an identity that came from our family or friends:

Black sheep	Goody goody
Shy and quiet	Suzy Sunshine
Brainy	Chubby
Super Christian	Loudmouth

While these identities may have seemed to fit our personality or actions, they are not what is “most true” about us. We all have a tendency to identify each other based on performance, appearance, temperament or malfunctions. *God designed us to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and our personal identity (perception of ourselves) is built on the faces we see looking at us and the messages on those faces.* With this thought in mind, consider the blessing God gave the high priests to speak over His people:

“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD *make His face shine on you* and be gracious to you; The LORD *lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*” Numbers 6:24-26

Matthew Henry’s Commentary on this verse says that for God’s face to shine upon us means “To be under the almighty protection of God our Saviour; to enjoy his favour as the smile of a loving Father, or as the cheering beams of the sun.¹” ***God desires for us to receive His smiling face as a foundation of our identity.***

In Christ, we received a new identity. It is important for us to know the “legal” truths of this new identity. Here are some aspects of this new, true identity as compiled by Neil Anderson of Freedom in Christ Ministries:

¹ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/numbers/6-25.htm>

I AM ACCEPTED...

<i>John 1:12</i>	I am God's child.
<i>John 15:15</i>	As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.
<i>Romans 5:1</i>	I have been justified (declared righteous).
<i>1 Corinthians 6:17</i>	I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.
<i>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</i>	I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.
<i>1 Corinthians 12:27</i>	I am a member of Christ's body.
<i>Ephesians 1:3-8</i>	I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.
<i>Colossians 1:13-14</i>	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
<i>Colossians 2:9-10</i>	I am complete in Christ.
<i>Hebrews 4:14-16</i>	I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.

I AM SECURE...

<i>Romans 8:1-2</i>	I am free from condemnation.
<i>Romans 8:28</i>	I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.
<i>Romans 8:31-39</i>	I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.
<i>2 Corinthians 1:21-22</i>	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
<i>Colossians 3:1-4</i>	I am hidden with Christ in God.
<i>Philippians 1:6</i>	I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.
<i>Philippians 3:20</i>	I am a citizen of heaven.
<i>2 Timothy 1:7</i>	I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.
<i>1 John 5:18</i>	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

I AM SIGNIFICANT...

<i>John 15:5</i>	I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life.
<i>John 15:16</i>	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
<i>1 Corinthians 3:16</i>	I am God's temple.
<i>2 Corinthians 5:17-21</i>	I am a minister of reconciliation for God.
<i>Ephesians 2:6</i>	I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.
<i>Ephesians 2:10</i>	I am God's workmanship.
<i>Ephesians 3:12</i>	I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
<i>Philippians 4:13</i>	I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

As we interact with those people who see us with the eyes of God, who remind us that this new identity is the truest thing about us, we build our new identity as the person God created us to be. As members of a heart-focused

community, it is our job to look for the true identity of our family and friends and point it out to them.

How does this work in the nitty gritty of everyday life? As mentioned in our last lesson, experiences of relational joy with family and friends build our capacity to face the difficulties of life and relationships. As our capacity grows, we are more able to receive and live from the reality of our new identity in Christ. We also gain an increased ability to see others as their new creation selves and maintain our “glad to be together” joy even when they are acting out of their old identity.

Looking back at our lessons about Freedom, it is interesting and important to know that wounds, lies, vows and strongholds have an impact on our ability to live from our identity in Christ. This is why we recommend doing “freedom work” with a few friends on a consistent basis. There may be many issues to address in early freedom sessions, but as time passes and we consistently and promptly deal with our wounds, freedom work will become more like maintenance rather than deep overhaul. The freedom gained will add to our capacity to live from our God-given identity.

The elements of Relational Heart-Focused Discipleship are Freedom, Identity, Walking in the Spirit, and Heart to Heart Community. Rather than viewing these elements as linear steps or building blocks, it might be helpful to view them as points on a spiral –we will engage with these elements over and over as our walk grows deeper with God and our community. Over time, we will learn how to live from our true identity in a growing variety of increasingly complex situations.

Ephesians 4:13: “. . . **we all** reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What are some of the identities you have experienced in your life, whether at home, church, school, work or with friends? How have these identities worked to your benefit? To your detriment? Did these identities come from your performance, appearance, temperament, malfunctions or something else? Prayerfully consider: Are there lies you have believed based on these identities?
2. Prayerfully read through the “Who I Am in Christ” statements and see what statements are highlighted to you. Journal: What feels important about this particular statement? God, is there something you want me to know about this statement? Write a prayer of appreciation for how this statement applies to you.
3. Are there times when you do see yourself as your new creation self? What characterizes these times? Do you still find yourself basing your identity on performance, appearance, temperament or malfunctions? Write a few words to would describe a life where you remembered your own identity in Christ and also saw other people as their true identity.

Freedom and Identity Exercise

1. Read the following identity statements out loud.

I AM ACCEPTED...

<i>John 1:12</i>	I am God's child.
<i>John 15:15</i>	As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.
<i>Romans 5:1</i>	I have been justified (declared righteous).
<i>1 Corinthians 6:17</i>	I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.
<i>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</i>	I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.
<i>1 Corinthians 12:27</i>	I am a member of Christ's body.
<i>Ephesians 1:3-8</i>	I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.
<i>Colossians 1:13-14</i>	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
<i>Colossians 2:9-10</i>	I am complete in Christ.
<i>Hebrews 4:14-16</i>	I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.

I AM SECURE...

<i>Romans 8:1-2</i>	I am free from condemnation.
<i>Romans 8:28</i>	I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.
<i>Romans 8:31-39</i>	I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.
<i>2 Corinthians 1:21-22</i>	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
<i>Colossians 3:1-4</i>	I am hidden with Christ in God.
<i>Philippians 1:6</i>	I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.
<i>Philippians 3:20</i>	I am a citizen of heaven.
<i>2 Timothy 1:7</i>	I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.
<i>1 John 5:18</i>	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

I AM SIGNIFICANT...

<i>John 15:5</i>	I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life.
<i>John 15:16</i>	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
<i>1 Corinthians 3:16</i>	I am God's temple.
<i>2 Corinthians 5:17-21</i>	I am a minister of reconciliation for God.
<i>Ephesians 2:6</i>	I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.
<i>Ephesians 2:10</i>	I am God's workmanship.
<i>Ephesians 3:12</i>	I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
<i>Philippians 4:13</i>	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

2. Note which statements feel true to you and which do not.
3. Taking one statement which feels untrue, ask God to reveal any wounds you have suffered or lies you may have believed that would cause this statement to feel untrue to you.
3. As thoughts come to you, make a note of them and share them with the group.
4. Take turns following the freedom sequence of "Confess, Cancel, Command, Commit, and Construct" together. (Refer to Lesson 2 to refresh your memory of this sequence.)
5. Spend some time speaking the identity statements to each other, particularly emphasizing those that felt untrue.
6. Over the next weeks, notice when thoughts occur to you that are not in alignment with the identity statements and spend time with God, asking Him to confirm your identity in Him.
7. Call a group member when troubling thoughts occur Remember, God created us to build our identities in community!



Lesson 5 Growing into my IDENTITY

**As we experience Jesus together,
our way of life begins to match our identity. (2 Cor. 4:17)
We grow in Christlikeness.**

Growing into our identity in Christ is a community effort – God designed us to grow the identity that is reflected to us by Him and “our people,” those whose see us from His perspective as new creations growing into maturity. This brings to mind the Scripture 1 Cor. 13:12-13: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” The more we see ourselves reflected in the mirror of God’s face and His mature people, the more fully we will exhibit Christlikeness.

Our part in this beautiful dance of growing identity is twofold: giving and receiving. We receive God’s truth from His word and from time spent with Him; we receive from our brothers and sisters in Christ who see us from His perspective; we give by sharing His truth with others and by letting them know we see them as He does. As we are fully known for our true identity in Him, we are enabled to see others in this same way – believers on a path to see God and themselves ever more clearly. What a difference it makes when we see each other this way.

It’s helpful to notice that Jesus had a closer relationship with the Twelve than with His other followers and didn’t rely on the synagogue to be His place of deep fellowship. We can follow His example by looking for a few brothers or sisters in Christ with whom to develop this deeper relationship of heart-focused discipleship. As we grow in our ability to see each other through God’s eyes and to encourage each other in our true identity, it’s possible that others from our church or community will want to join us. Don’t be afraid to start with just one other person to grow in freedom and identity!

One way to combine freedom and identity work is to meet with one or two friends and review the “Who I Am in Christ” list from Lesson 4 together. Note which statements feel “true” to you and which do not. Together, pray and ask God to reveal to you any wounds you may have suffered or lies you may have believed that have affected your ability to believe and receive these identity statements. As thoughts come to you, make a note of them and share them with the group. Take turns following the freedom sequence of “Confess, Cancel, Command, Commit, and Construct” together. Finally, spend some time speaking the identity statements to each other, particularly emphasizing those that felt untrue. Over the next weeks, notice when thoughts occur to you that are not in alignment with the identity statements and spend time with God, asking Him to confirm your identity in Him. It’s also a good idea to call a group member when troubling thoughts occur so that you have help with the “Construct” and “Connect/Community” freedom components. An outline of this process is attached as an Addendum to this lesson.

As we all grow into the freedom of living from our true identity in Christ, we will notice that God has gifted us each with different aspects of His personality in order to equip us for the particular situations He knows we will face. Look at Ephesians 2:10 from the Amplified Bible:

“For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us].¹”

Discovering our individual identity in Christ is another ongoing task of discipleship. Not only have we been restored to relationship with God and become joint heirs with Christ, we are also now part of God’s plan to expand His Kingdom on the earth. We are His work of art (or poetry, as the word “workmanship” is sometimes translated), and we express His personality, thoughts and plans to the world around us.

As we come to know one another deeply we begin to notice these particular heart characteristics and gifts that God has placed within us and others. All God’s people are called to be loving, for instance, but some of us express His love through hospitality, others through affection, including the forgotten, welcoming newcomers, working towards social justice, or many other creative expressions of

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=eph+2%3A10&version=AMP>

God's love. In the same way, there are many expressions of justice, mercy, kindness, faithfulness, patience or the other myriad characteristics of our Father. We will talk more about this in later lessons but begin to look for and comment on the ways in which you and other express God's characteristics in everyday life. We each have a special "flavor" of God to express to our world and recognizing this "flavor" in each other builds joy between us and gratitude toward our creative God.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What have you noticed about the difference in your "head knowledge" (slow track) of your identity in Christ and your "heart knowledge" or experience (fast track)? When life is difficult, which of these tends to rule your thinking? When we notice that our immediate response to a situation is aligned with our identity in Christ, it means that both our slow and fast tracks have received and believed the message!

2. What experiences have you had of "receiving" (paragraph 2 of page 1) your identity in Christ from other believers? What about "giving" – telling others their identity in Him?

3. As you think of yourself as God's work of art to express His personality to the world, what characteristics come to mind? If this question is difficult for you, another way of approaching this concept is to think of which characteristics of God are especially meaningful to you. Write down a few of the characteristics you appreciate about God, and any of His characteristics you see in yourself.

4. See if you can schedule a time to go through the Freedom and Identity Exercise with a friend or two and notice what you learn about yourself.



Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and advocate. (John 14:26)
Walking by the Spirit means listening to Jesus as a way of life.

Just as our freedom and identity in Christ are established at salvation but take some time and effort to understand and experience in our daily lives, walking in the Spirit is a way of life that is available to us immediately as Christians but often seems elusive or inaccessible.

What are the “brass tacks” of walking by the Spirit? Are there practical steps to take for such a heavenly activity? In his book *Toward a Deeper Walk*,¹ Dr. Marcus Warner provides some guidance that comes from his own time of wrestling with this issue.

In order to walk by the Spirit, we must SLOW down our daily pace, so it’s appropriate that the key ideas of walking by the Spirit spell this word:

Seek God
Listen to God
Obey God
Watch God and the enemy

Seek God. God can be intimately known and we must seek Him in order to build that relationship. In Lesson 2 of the Journey Jumpstart, we learned that **appreciation** prepares our brains for relational interactions, and this is particularly true of our relationship with God. Psalm 95:2 tells us we can “. . . come into his presence with thanksgiving.” As we focus on what we appreciate about God and His gifts to us, we can become more aware of His presence with us. Begin your time with God with several minutes of focused attention on specific appreciation memories – times when you knew He was with you, or when you felt peaceful or joyful. This time of appreciation will help warm up your mind to enter His presence.

¹ *Toward a Deeper Walk*, Dr. Marcus Warner, available at [Deeper Walk website](#)

We can seek God through **reading the Word** and asking for His perspective on what we are reading, noticing what thoughts bubble to the surface. For centuries believers with an intimate relationship with God have made it their habit to spend time in Scripture accompanied by journaling their thoughts. Humbly sharing our journaling with friends who walk with God provides a safety net to ensure what we are sensing is congruent with the heart and Word of God.

Music is another powerful tool to use in seeking God. Because our sense of hearing is so closely tied to bonding, it's helpful to listen to and sing music that has been part of our experiences with God in the past. Our mind and emotions return to that place of connection, and we can more easily sense Him again. The more frequently we listen to music that brings a sense of peace and joy, the wider our "library" of God-connection music becomes.

Setting aside time to notice God's **creation** is often an open door into God's presence. Whether we go hiking in a remote location full of grandeur or simply stop to look closely at a flower growing next to the sidewalk, these moments of noticing what has been created by God bring us back to Him. Consider placing a live plant in your office or taking a walk at lunch – whatever it takes, connect with the creation and you will find connection with the Creator.

Listen to God. Because God speaks in the still small voice² which is most often heard in our own thoughts, listening to God has been the source of much confusion through the years. Adding to the differences in ability and desire to hear from God individually are family and church teachings, relational styles, personality types and life experiences.

As we combine the tools of appreciation, reading the Word, music, and spending time in nature with building humble, transparent, heart-focused community, our recognition of God's voice will begin to grow. God's voice will increase our appreciation, peace, and love for people, and it will always be consistent with Scripture.

Listening to God will lead into joyful **Obedience**. Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." As we seek God and listen to Him, our minds and desires begin to align with His thoughts. Obedience becomes a joy as we walk in step our Savior and Friend, and even in those times when our obedience is less than joyful, we can trust that our thoughts and actions will begin to rhyme with His as we continually delight ourselves in Him.

Enjoy again this quote from Joyful Journey which was first introduced in our Listening to Jesus lesson:

² 1 Kings 19:2

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul uses the Greek word *poiema*, which literally means God's poetry. When *poiemia* is translated "handiwork" or "workmanship" it misses the following important point. Poetry in scripture does not rhyme sounds; it follows the Hebrew pattern and rhymes thoughts. This means that as God's poetry, our thoughts can rhyme with our Heavenly Father's. That is amazing! How can it work? We know that as we become intimate with someone, we begin to finish each other's sentences and thoughts. In a deep, authentic, mutual-mind state, we actually don't know where our thoughts stop and the other person's thoughts begin. This is exactly what can happen between God and us too. ***A mutual-mind state with God results in an emulation of His character and heart; we are showing the world the poet behind the poetry.*** As our mutual-mind state becomes stronger, we are able to live out our purpose of being created for good works."³

Watching God is an extension of our joyful obedience. We see this in the life of Joshua, who learned to seek and listen to God in the tent of meeting with Moses. Exodus 33:11 tells us that even when Moses left the tent after his times of listening to God, Joshua stayed behind. Joshua went into the land of Canaan to spy out what God had given Israel, and only Joshua and Caleb were ready to trust and watch God give them the land. Moses passed leadership of the Israelites to Joshua, and in *Toward A Deeper Walk*, Marcus Warner points out how Joshua learned that seeking, listening, obeying and watching was the formula for success, and moving without this relational connection to God brought failure and disaster.

Another command to watch was given to us by Jesus in Matthew 26:41, "watch and pray so you do not fall into temptation." Much like the Israelites in Joshua's time, when we lose sight of our relational connection to the Father, our enemy steps in to create trouble. Strangely enough, keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus enables us also to see and avoid the traps of the enemy.

Toward a Deeper Walk tells us,

"'Watch and pray' Jesus said, 'so you do not fall into temptation' (Matthew 26:41). 'Be alert and sober-minded,' wrote Peter 'for your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to destroy' (1 Peter 5:8). Peter knew something about this. He had not listened to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was told to watch and pray, thus he was not ready for the enemy attack. . . Satan had been granted special permission to attack Peter as a means of testing him. Peter failed the test, but that is not the end of the story. Satan wanted to sift Peter in order to destroy him. God allowed the sifting because He knew He could use it in Peter's life and overcome it in the end. God's sovereignty is such that by the time He was done with Peter, all Satan had accomplished by his attack was to help God make Peter into an

³ *Joyful Journey*, p. 3, available at [Deeper Walk website](#)

even more formidable opponent. . . Peter learned the importance of being alert and sober minded. He learned to watch and pray.”⁴

Ponder, Journal, and Discuss:

1. As you meditate on the elements **Seek, Listen, Obey** and **Watch**, which of these seems to come most easily to you in your daily walk with God? Ask Him what has made this element easier for you. Ask Him what He would have you do to grow in the other elements.
2. As you read the quote about having a mutual mind state from *Joyful Journey*, can you think of a person or two with whom you have this mutual mind? How did this occur – how much time have you spent with this person, what type of conversations have you had, what interests do you share? How could you apply these ideas to your relationship with God so that your thoughts begin to “rhyme” more with His thoughts?
3. Can you think of times in your life where your relational connection with God enabled you to see and avoid the temptations and traps of Satan? Write out an appreciation memory about one of these times and add it to your appreciation list.

⁴ *Toward a Deeper Walk*, p. 143-144, available at [Deeper Walk website](#)



The Holy Spirit enables us to discern truth from counterfeit. Walking by the Spirit gives us comfort, guidance and courage, as well as authority and power as He chooses.

Reading through the New Testament references to the Holy Spirit makes it clear that it is in and through the Spirit that we discern God's truth from the many counterfeits of the world. The Spirit is our Helper, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of love, joy, peace, glory and hope who is contrasted to law, flesh, death, fear, evil, deceit, error, human tradition, dead works and divisions¹.

Lesson 6 encouraged us to Seek, Listen, Obey and Watch as a guide to walking in the Spirit. The component of *watching* referred to watching both God and the enemy. When we hear of all the counterfeits that are offered by the world and the enemy, we realize how important it is to truly know our Father through His Spirit.

An incident from my brother's life illustrates the importance of intimately knowing our Father's voice. My brother Bruce wore a thick beard for many years – neither his wife nor his children had ever seen him without it. Without telling his family of his plans, Bruce shaved off his beard one morning and went to work. After work, he pulled into the parking lot at the local grocery store and realized his wife Ellen and their children were parked next to him and getting out of their car. Bruce stepped out of his car and looked his wife in the eyes and said, "Hey there, good looking!" Ellen gave him a haughty look of disdain and quickly reached for the children. However, the children were facing away from Bruce when he spoke and knew this was the voice of their much-loved father. As Ellen attempted to hustle them away from this strange, flirtatious man, she was horrified to see them running to him and jumping into his arms! Regardless of appearances, they knew their father's voice! We, too, can learn to recognize our Father's voice even in confusing and distressing situations.

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/>, search for "Spirit."

Having companions with us as we learn and practice the skills of seeking, listening, obeying and watching provides a safety net for those times when we are vulnerable to counterfeits due to wounds, lies, strongholds, lack of experience, inattention or fatigue. The Word + the Spirit + the Body is a powerful combination. A protective community provides an environment where we can practice listening together, humbly sharing what we receive and notice, clarifying what might be counterfeit and what is true, and learning how to reduce the effect of the counterfeit in our lives.

LEARNING ABOUT THE POWER AND AUTHORITY WE HAVE IN CHRIST WITH TRULY MATURE BELIEVERS MODELING THE GENTLENESS, JOY, PEACE AND HOPE THAT COMES FROM WALKING BY THE SPIRIT HELPS PREVENT MISUSE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY.

What does it mean to “reduce the effect of the counterfeit in our lives”? Our enemy is the Father of Lies, so he will continually seek to deceive us into accepting counterfeits of God’s gifts. We can’t prevent his counterfeits and deceit coming our way, but we can calmly deal with them and continue to live in joy and peace. Just as my niece and nephew immediately recognized their father by his voice and would not run to another man, we can learn to know our Father so well that we quickly recognize and renounce the counterfeits that will be offered to us in our lives.

Counteracting counterfeits in our lives will likely occur as both “event” and “process.” For instance, going through the *Steps to Freedom in Christ*² is a helpful tool for renouncing and removing counterfeits that may be impacting your ability to connect deeply with God. Other events might include REAL³ prayer or Immanuel Prayer⁴ sessions, breakthroughs from the Word, conversations with friends, or worship experiences. These are concrete times in which we recognize that we have made substantial progress or regained ground that had been surrendered to the enemy.

Because renewing the mind (rewiring the fast track of the brain) occurs over time and through repetition, much of our growth in recognizing the difference between God’s voice and the enemy’s counterfeits will happen as a process. Practicing community with both more and less experienced Christians provides the opportunity for us to learn from the more experienced believers, practice with our peers, and model for and teach those less experienced than us. Learning about the power and authority we have in Christ with truly mature believers modeling the gentleness, joy, peace and hope that comes from walking by the Spirit helps

² [Steps to Freedom](#) We recommend that you go through the Steps to Freedom in Christ during Unit 5, Living by the Spirit. Deeper Walk has a list of trained facilitators to whom we will refer you.

³ Understanding the Wounded Heart, p. 60-63, Dr. Marcus Warner, free download of REAL Prayer handout at [Deeper Walk bookstore](#)

⁴ Immanuel Prayer was developed by Dr. Karl Lehman, [Deeper Walk bookstore](#)

prevent misuse of power and authority. When emotional and spiritual maturity are included as goals, the community will produce protectors who use power and authority in Christlike ways.

What authority do we have as believers? In Christ, we have authority over the work of the enemy as it affects us and those who come to us for help. As Dr. Warner states in *What Every Believer Should Know About Spiritual Warfare*, "In Ephesians 2:6 we read that God raised us up together with Christ and seated us together with Him in heavenly places. From this position at the right hand of the father we have intimacy with God and authority over the enemy. We no longer struggle as victims, but we wage war as victors."⁵

Praying the Scriptures is a beautiful, powerful tool of authority, particularly when combined with listening prayer. As we read the Word, God may highlight certain phrases or verses that can be prayed for ourselves or others, and as we listen to God, we may sense His guidance toward other Scriptures. Intercession which combines the authority of Scripture with the intimacy of relationship has incredible depth and power, especially when practiced in community.

As we grow our intimacy with God and awareness of His constant presence with us, we listen closely to Him for guidance in how to exercise our authority as believers. We learn tools for spiritual warfare not so that we can strike out to fight Satan alone, but so that we recognize God's provision for each individual situation. Additionally, our community of practice provides support and guidance as we learn to walk in our authority.

Our next unit will examine ways to build this community of practice – a heart-focused community where we can create belonging, build secure relationships and listen to Jesus together as a way of life.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Can you think of some "events" in your life where you saw specific progress or breakthrough in your spiritual life? List as many of these as possible. These events would be excellent appreciation memories to add to your Appreciation Library.
2. What value can you see in having a "community of practice" in which there are Christians who are upstream from you in spiritual maturity, peers with you, and downstream from you? Sometimes such a community begins with two people who begin meeting to practice Check In and Listening to Jesus together. Ask God for such a partner and see what thoughts surface!
3. This week try an experiment in praying Scripture. Each day read Ephesians 1 and see what God highlights for you to pray for yourself and others. Journal these prayers.

⁵ Read more in *What Every Believer Should Know About Spiritual Warfare*, Dr. Marcus Warner, [Deeper Walk bookstore](#)



Let's take a step back in time and place to Galilee in the 1st century. How would Jesus' followers have understood His statement to "go and make disciples of all nations"? The word "disciple" means a learner, particularly one who learns both by study, observation and imitation of the teacher's life. In the 1st century Jewish world, discipleship was defined by *relationship*. Mark 3:14 indicates that Jesus appointed the twelve "that they might be *with Him*," and Luke 6:40 states that the disciple who is fully trained "*will be like his teacher*." In Acts 4:13, after Peter and John spoke boldly to the rulers, elders, scribes and high priests, it says that "they recognized that they had been *with Jesus*."

In Dr. Marcus Warner's webinar, "Fixing the Broken Discipleship Factory," he examines the fact that the 21st century church isn't producing disciples whose lives make it obvious that they have "been with Jesus." Where did the church get off track and how can we restore relational discipleship?

In the first few centuries after Christ's death, Christianity passed from person to person, family to family, and town to town through relationship. Christians were persecuted for their faith and the church was largely a grassroots underground movement. Due to the relational nature of their faith and the effects of persecution, believers relied on each other for finances, housing, spiritual growth and emotional support.

It's not surprising that this relational faith is consistent with what we now know about attachment and belonging – we are created by God to be strongly motivated to live and believe like those to whom we have strong connection. God designed us to be in relationship with Him and with those who love Him.

In the 3rd century A.D., Roman emperor Constantine first allowed and then promoted Christianity in the empire, and within 50 years emperor Theodosius had made Christianity the state mandated religion. With this ruling, everyone born in the Roman Empire was considered a Christian, and the relational component began to fade.

As a state-mandated religion, Roman Christianity became an institution rather than a relational entity and began to spread by building more churches rather than relationships being formed around Jesus. Christendom as an institution largely replaced Christianity as relationship. Christendom was found to be an effective way to control citizens, as people were expected to conform to a code of beliefs and behavior set forth by the state.

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation broke with the Roman Catholic church but replaced Catholic Christendom with Protestant state-mandated religions and Christendom continued. If it were not for the invention of the printing press, this state of affairs might have continued for much longer than it did. The printing press brought the Bible to the laity as well as spreading new philosophical thoughts throughout Europe.

This spread of philosophical thought resulted in the Enlightenment – a time of questioning what is important, what is truth, and what defines us. Rene Descartes' famous phrase, "I think, therefore I am" infiltrated both ecclesiastical (church) and philosophical conversation, and truth moved to the center of the Christian faith. No longer was faith based on relationship (as in the early church) or on politics (as in Catholic and Protestant Christendom), but on the content of one's beliefs.

As a result of these changes, it was understood that Christian transformation came about from the combination of good Reason with good Choices.

Reason + Choices = Transformation

Discipleship became a matter of providing the right information and guiding disciples to the right choices. Intelligence and willpower were more important than relationship, and those who had high intelligence and strong willpower were successful disciples. This formula worked well for the strong in the church but left the weak feeling shamed and left out. Even the strong suffered shame when they slipped and made poor choices. Rather than building intimacy in relationships, this formula created a culture of perfectionism, hiding and judgment.

In *RARE Leadership*, Drs. Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder offer a new formula based on Scripture and neuroscience:

Identity + Belonging = Transformation

"*Who we are determines what we will do and identity* [the part of the brain that controls identity] operates faster and more powerfully than [the part of the brain that controls] choices."² (Brackets added)

² *RARE Leadership*, p. 46. Available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

In Journey Groups, we intentionally grow a place of belonging and identity so that transformation occurs naturally and relationally. We are helping one another grow in Freedom, Identity, walking in the Spirit, and Heart to heart community. In this way, we create an ever-expanding community of relationship in which we grow in Christlikeness together. Because the Life Model³ explains the components needed for full, healthy life and relationships (a place to belong, the opportunity to give and receive life, healing from trauma, maturity, and knowing our heart and God's heart), we will also examine these foundational concepts. Journey Groups provide a model of relational discipleship that you can easily incorporate into your daily life.

We will delve into the elements of discipleship in more detail in future lessons of this unit. For now, we will review these elements briefly:

Freedom: We have died with Christ (buried with Him) so we can be set free from the world, the flesh and the devil. It was for freedom He set us free (Gal. 5:1), so we will learn how to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles (Heb. 12:1). Helping one another walk in freedom means we are gentle with one another's weaknesses and learn to keep relationships bigger than problems.

Identity: Just as we died with Christ, we were also raised with Him (Col. 3:1). We have a new identity but learning to walk in this new identity can be a challenge. Not only do we have a new individual identity (child of God), we also have a new group identity (the body of Christ, the family of God). As our sense of identity and belonging grow, we will be transformed.

Walking in the Spirit: As children of God, our Father reveals His perspective on life to us and we no longer walk by our flesh (our own choices and reasoning), but by His Spirit (Gal. 5:16). His Word comes alive to us and His Spirit enables us to love one another sincerely (1 Pet. 1:22) and to walk in our identity as His children.

Heart to Heart Community: Returning to relational discipleship as Jesus modeled means that we practically show God's love to each other, that we model walking in the Spirit, in freedom and our identity in Christ, and we welcome both the weak and the strong into our fellowship. Our hearts are knit together in love and God will use us to bring His transformation to the world.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What forms of discipleship have you experienced? What were the strengths and what did you gain from the experience? What seemed to be missing, if anything?
2. What do you hope to gain from this relational discipleship experience?
3. Were there any phrases or thoughts that felt new or particularly important to you in this lesson? What were they? Highlight them or write them in your journal.

³ *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, Dr. Jim Wilder and others; available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>



Galatians 5:1 says, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

I recently watched a documentary about a man who was released from prison after a wrongful conviction. Although this man was free, his experiences in prison and his lack of experience with the outside world had a tremendous impact on his ability to live as a free man. Many Christians live in a similar conundrum – free in Christ but hindered by their life experiences.

At the cross, Christ redeemed us into freedom from sin, Satan’s schemes, and the entanglements of the world. These are now accomplished facts. However, Satan is the Father of lies, and he will do all he can to twist our life experiences and hinder our ability to live in freedom.

In *Understanding the Wounded Heart*¹, Marcus Warner lays out the progression of Satan’s common strategy for hindering freedom in our lives:

Problem	Source	Observation
Wounds	World	It is impossible to live in a fallen world without being wounded.
Lies	Devil	The impact of the past is not in the size of our wounds, but in the power of what they mean to us.
Vows	Flesh	A vow is an attempt by the flesh to take control of life and keep ourselves from further pain.
Strongholds	Wounds, lies and vows	Strongholds keep us from trusting God. They are barriers to God’s love and force us to live in our own strength.

Table from page 27 of *Understanding the Wounded Heart*

¹ Available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

In this lesson, we will discuss solutions to help us walk in freedom -- to overcome the effects of past wounds and to process future wounds so that we don't lose our freedom.

It is important to understand that *our brain experiences, stores, and processes the memories of our wounds in two very different ways and we need solutions for each of these ways*. Our brain stores the facts and narrative memories of our experiences on its slow track, while the emotions of "how it felt" and "was I alone" is stored in the fast track. The fast track is the "Control Center" for the brain.² In layman's terms, this means that our bonds and emotions drive our decisions more than the information we know. It is also good to understand that brain scans have revealed that the same part of our brain is active when we interact with God as when we interact with people. This means that the healing of our connections with people and God have a synergistic effect – what helps our interaction with people also helps our interaction with God!

This seemingly very "unspiritual" neuroscience information is key to understanding how to fully process wounds, lies and vows so that strongholds are removed and our relationship with God can bloom and prosper.

Wounds: When we are wounded, the "facts" of what happened and the verbal story we tell are stored in the slow track of the brain. However, our fast track stores how the experience felt in our body and emotions, whether it is considered good, bad, or scary, and whether we felt alone in the experience.

Three common types of wounds are:

- 1. "A" Trauma:** Absence of the good things we need like consistent love, laughter, physical affection, boundaries, food, shelter, clothing, and security.
- 2. "B" Trauma:** Bad things that happen to us, like physical, emotional or sexual abuse, war/refugee situation, divorce in the family, serious illness of self or family member, and abandonment.
- 3. Comparison/Perception:** Pain resulting from negative comparisons, whether by ourselves or important people in our life, and pain resulting from faulty perceptions of reality.

God is with us when the wound hits, ready to comfort us, strengthen us, and "work all things together for good³" in spite of the pain and negative consequences

² To learn more about the slow and fast tracks of the brain, read *RARE Leadership* by Drs. Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder, available at <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

³ Rom. 8:28

of the wound. Our ability to sense and trust His presence is affected by not only the truth we know, but also the experiences we have had in the past.

Lies: Satan stands by when we are wounded, ready to tell us lies about the meaning of the situation, the people involved, ourselves, the world, and God. We know that God is also near at hand, and our ability to receive God's comfort and love is affected by the previous lies we have believed, vows we have made, and strongholds which now exist. We will talk later in this lesson about "lie-proofing" our hearts and minds.

We may receive lies on the conscious, slow track from the words of those around us ("You will never amount to anything"), from teaching we have received ("God will punish your mistakes"), from the world ("If you aren't beautiful, athletic, or smart, you can't be happy"), and from our faulty understanding of God, His world, and His Word ("God must be angry at me; that's why I can't get a job.") On the fast track, lies arise from experiences and feelings from the past. For instance, if my mother is often anxious, I may have a pervasive fear that "the world is a very dangerous place." Satan can whisper lies to both the fast and slow track, whether it is through others, the world, or our own mind. We can receive freedom from lies in both tracks!

Vows: Lies which are not processed quickly often lead to vows of protection because we want to avoid future pain. God created our minds so that we can learn to relationally process the pain of our wounds, but when we don't have this skill, lies send down deep roots and create vows. We may consciously make vows on the slow track such as "I will never trust anyone again," or our fast track may have deeply ingrained feelings that act like vows, for instance, "My abuser was a jolly man, so I am intensely nervous or angry around jolly men." Vows feel as if they protect us from pain, but in reality they limit our ability to connect deeply with God, family and friends.

Strongholds: "A stronghold is an area of bondage in which we are not free to live with joy and peace. It is characterized by compulsion, restlessness, hopelessness, addiction, and self-deception."⁴ Because strongholds have formed over a period of time, they always involve both the fast and slow tracks of the brain; we have strong emotions like fear and anger (fast track) that drive us to make choices that violate our beliefs (slow track).

⁴ Understanding the Wounded Heart, Dr. Marcus Warner, p. 118

SOLUTIONS THAT BRING FREEDOM TO BOTH TRACKS:

There are solutions which bring relief to the slow track and others which help us on both tracks. It's interesting that other than interacting directly with God, most "fast track" solutions actually happen as a process over time. God sometimes brings clarity and truth to both tracks very quickly.

- **Listening prayer:** Interaction with God will be our bookends; when we are wounded, we start by telling God how we feel about this wound and asking Him what He wants us to know. Then we notice what thoughts come into our mind. In this process, we may realize that we have believed a lie related to the wound. God is able to connect with us on both the slow track and fast track, and as we move through the elements of relational discipleship, we will become more comfortable with recognizing which thoughts are God's and which thoughts come from us.

The next 4 C's are slow track solutions. This means that they accomplish the goal and store new information in our brains, but these solutions don't affect the fast track, where our emotional and body experience is stored. We may continue to struggle with emotional reactions and continued poor choices until we also get healing for the fast track.

- **Confess:** Once we realize we believe a lie related to our wound, we confess (agree with God) that we have believed the lie, and that it is indeed untrue. We may be unsure of the truth at this time, but we are willing to acknowledge the lie.
- **Cancel:** Believing a lie can open us up to influence from demonic spirits, so the next step is to cancel their right to influence us with a simple statement: "In the name of Jesus and by His blood, I cancel the right of any demonic spirit to influence my mind and life."
- **Command:** Now that demonic spirits have no right to remain, we simply command them to leave.
- **Commit:** We now choose to commit ourselves to God's truth and ways; we begin the process of rebuilding our thoughts and renewing our minds as stated in Romans 12:2⁵.

⁵ "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Now that we have “cleaned house,” aligned ourselves with God’s truth and updated our slow track, we begin the more involved process of updating our fast track. The deep-seated, very rapid thought processes that drive our behavior and can hinder our freedom take more deliberate effort to bring them into alignment with God’s truth. The follow 2 C’s are designed to work with the fast track.

- **Construct:** We must construct a new thought pattern and new choices. Our thought patterns are built by repetition of thought and experience, just as a path through the woods forms when we take the same route repeatedly. In time, the path is clear and can be traveled rapidly. When we have repeatedly followed a certain thought path over time, it becomes almost automatic. It would take effort to walk an untraveled path. In constructing new thought patterns and choices, we must first see an example or hear a story of a new pattern, then gradually begin to more regularly choose the new “path.” This is why Jesus told his disciples, “Follow Me.”
- **Connect with Community:** Some of you may have read *The Hunger Games* trilogy or seen the movies. After Peeta was brainwashed by the Capitol, he knew he could not trust his mind and turned to Catniss to help him. My heart both broke and sang when he would look at her and say, “True or not true?” God intended us to have friends who will help us know “true or not true.”

Spending time with people who live by the Spirit and with a renewed mind will make constructing a new thought pattern and choice much quicker and more natural. We learn from examples and stories, so sharing our stories in community is powerful – more powerful for change than more information. The combination of scriptural truth with loving community where there is transparency and gentleness with weakness will result in a full experience of the words of Jesus: “. . . *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,*⁶” and “*I am the way and the truth and the life...*”⁷”
- **Listening Prayer** together: Connection with God is always a good beginning and end to our “freedom work.” After each time we pass through the steps of Confess, Cancel, Command, Commit, Construct, and Community (an ongoing step), it is helpful to reconnect with God and ask Him again what He wants us to know. Sharing what thoughts come to mind with your community (small group, friends, family, Sunday school class, etc.) will help you learn to receive those thoughts which come from God and discard those that come from your wounded self or from the Enemy. True or not true?

⁶ John 8:32

⁷ John 14:6

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. In your own life, what are some issues that might qualify as strongholds? (We will not discuss this answer in our group, so feel free to be very honest.) [Examples of strongholds: performance, people pleasing, avoidance, criticism, appearance, over- or under-responsibility, procrastination, reliance on food/diet, co-dependency, any dependence on something other than relationship with God or healthy people to handle emotional pain]
2. What steps have you taken in the past to address these problems/strongholds? Have you found practical freedom? How might the idea of the slow track and fast track of the brain have affected the amount of freedom you have experienced?
3. Our Journey Group is a community where we will practice these steps. Begin asking God to bring to mind people in your local community who would be open to meeting occasionally for "freedom work." This can start with one safe friend with whom you meet every few weeks. Allow God to gently, relationally direct this process.



Freedom spreads as we grow our glad-to-be-together joy and learn to walk in forgiveness and maturity with our community.

Col. 3:12-14: Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

In Lesson 2, we spoke of individual freedom from wounds, lies, vows, and strongholds. Our freedom in Christ is most powerful as it is experienced relationally. In a heart-focused community, we learn to walk in the freedom that arises out of love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith¹. We are free to live in true joy and love each other transparently and honestly as we grow in relationship with God, learn to forgive from the heart and grow in spiritual and emotional maturity.

Let's unpack some of the aspects of Walking in Freedom Together:

- True **Joy** can be defined as "a relational experience in which 'someone's glad to be with me,'²" which is very different from happiness, which might be defined as "things are going well," "my relationship is running smoothly," "my team just won the championship." True joy is a fast-track emotion that gives us capacity to face the difficulties of life and relationships, whereas happiness fades at the first sign of a problem. The fast track of our brain is wired through relationships, while the slow track of the brain is wired with information.
- Our initial foundation of joy is laid in the first years of life as our family delights in our uniqueness. These interactions of joy begin to wire the fast track of our brain. Throughout life, God provides opportunities to repair and build on this foundation as we meet people who have the capacity to love us in our current condition. God is constantly glad to be with us and as we

¹ 1 Tim. 1:15

² *Joy Starts Here*, Wilder, Khouri, Coursey, Sutton, p. 4. Available at: <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/>

recognize His joy in us, our foundation becomes more solid and our capacity grows. Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. We gain strength as we experience this joy. As we internalize this “glad to be with you” joy of the Lord, we experience Hebrews 4:16; we approach His throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- **Relationship with God** grows as we approach Him with confidence to receive His mercy and grace. Not only do we study the Word in order to know Him, but the Hebrew word often translated “know” is “yada,” which in relation to God is defined as “to have an intimate experiential knowledge of Him³.” Our study of Scripture intertwines with our experiential knowledge of God to provide a rich relationship, far beyond what either study or experience alone could give. You’ll notice that this beautiful mix of Scripture and relational experience with God is providing healthy wiring for both of fast and slow tracks.
- **Forgiveness** is both received and given in a community where “glad to be with you” joy is the norm. From this secure foundation, we learn to restore joy by asking for forgiveness when we are in the wrong and offering forgiveness when we have been wronged. More mature believers model and guide us through the process of forgiveness. Consider Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 2:7-11:

“Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Paul knew that sin could not be ignored, but he also knew that Satan could use unforgiveness of the sin just as he used the sin to bring trouble to the body at Corinth. Paul’s mature guidance allowed the believers to address the sin among them while still walking in the freedom of forgiving and being forgiven.

Learning the facts about forgiveness and its necessity is important for the slow track, while adding the relational capacity to walk out the reality of forgiveness is a fast track skill.

- **Maturity** grows best in heart-focused community where we have models of love, joy, forgiveness, intimacy with God and other relational skills that

³ Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary, p. 131

enable us to walk in freedom. Notice the community aspect of these verses about maturity:

Ephesians 4:13: “. . . **we all** reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Philippians 3:15: “**All of us, then, who are mature** should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.”

Colossians 1:28: “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone fully mature** in Christ.”

We see that Jesus was establishing a body, a family, a building, a Kingdom in which each person is integral to the growth of the whole. Our freedom in Him is both individual and corporate – our ability to walk in freedom is deeply impacted by our neighbor’s freedom. We belong to each other.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Which of these aspects of freedom in community have you experienced: joy, relationship with God, forgiveness, and maturity? How did your community help each other grow in each of these?
2. What difference do you think it would make to a family or community when there is a focus on growing relational capacity and skills as well as acquiring information about living a life of freedom together?
3. Did this lesson bring up any new thoughts or perspectives about joy, relationship with God, forgiveness, or maturity?



Lesson 4 IDENTITY in Christ

Heart-focused community grows as we know our identity in Christ and remind each other that this identity is the most true thing about us.
(2 Cor. 5:17)

Many of us grew up with an identity that came from our family or friends:

Black sheep	Goody goody
Shy and quiet	Suzy Sunshine
Brainy	Chubby
Super Christian	Loudmouth

While these identities may have seemed to fit our personality or actions, they are not what is “most true” about us. We all have a tendency to identify each other based on performance, appearance, temperament or malfunctions. *God designed us to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and our personal identity (perception of ourselves) is built on the faces we see looking at us and the messages on those faces.* With this thought in mind, consider the blessing God gave the high priests to speak over His people:

“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD *make His face shine on you* and be gracious to you; The LORD *lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*” Numbers 6:24-26

Matthew Henry’s Commentary on this verse says that for God’s face to shine upon us means “To be under the almighty protection of God our Saviour; to enjoy his favour as the smile of a loving Father, or as the cheering beams of the sun.¹” ***God desires for us to receive His smiling face as a foundation of our identity.***

In Christ, we received a new identity. It is important for us to know the “legal” truths of this new identity. Here are some aspects of this new, true identity as compiled by Neil Anderson of Freedom in Christ Ministries:

¹ <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/numbers/6-25.htm>

I AM ACCEPTED...

<i>John 1:12</i>	I am God's child.
<i>John 15:15</i>	As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.
<i>Romans 5:1</i>	I have been justified (declared righteous).
<i>1 Corinthians 6:17</i>	I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.
<i>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</i>	I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.
<i>1 Corinthians 12:27</i>	I am a member of Christ's body.
<i>Ephesians 1:3-8</i>	I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.
<i>Colossians 1:13-14</i>	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
<i>Colossians 2:9-10</i>	I am complete in Christ.
<i>Hebrews 4:14-16</i>	I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.

I AM SECURE...

<i>Romans 8:1-2</i>	I am free from condemnation.
<i>Romans 8:28</i>	I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.
<i>Romans 8:31-39</i>	I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.
<i>2 Corinthians 1:21-22</i>	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
<i>Colossians 3:1-4</i>	I am hidden with Christ in God.
<i>Philippians 1:6</i>	I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.
<i>Philippians 3:20</i>	I am a citizen of heaven.
<i>2 Timothy 1:7</i>	I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.
<i>1 John 5:18</i>	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

I AM SIGNIFICANT...

<i>John 15:5</i>	I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life.
<i>John 15:16</i>	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
<i>1 Corinthians 3:16</i>	I am God's temple.
<i>2 Corinthians 5:17-21</i>	I am a minister of reconciliation for God.
<i>Ephesians 2:6</i>	I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.
<i>Ephesians 2:10</i>	I am God's workmanship.
<i>Ephesians 3:12</i>	I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
<i>Philippians 4:13</i>	I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

As we interact with those people who see us with the eyes of God, who remind us that this new identity is the truest thing about us, we build our new identity as the person God created us to be. As members of a heart-focused

community, it is our job to look for the true identity of our family and friends and point it out to them.

How does this work in the nitty gritty of everyday life? As mentioned in our last lesson, experiences of relational joy with family and friends build our capacity to face the difficulties of life and relationships. As our capacity grows, we are more able to receive and live from the reality of our new identity in Christ. We also gain an increased ability to see others as their new creation selves and maintain our “glad to be together” joy even when they are acting out of their old identity.

Looking back at our lessons about Freedom, it is interesting and important to know that wounds, lies, vows and strongholds have an impact on our ability to live from our identity in Christ. This is why we recommend doing “freedom work” with a few friends on a consistent basis. There may be many issues to address in early freedom sessions, but as time passes and we consistently and promptly deal with our wounds, freedom work will become more like maintenance rather than deep overhaul. The freedom gained will add to our capacity to live from our God-given identity.

The elements of Relational Heart-Focused Discipleship are Freedom, Identity, Walking in the Spirit, and Heart to Heart Community. Rather than viewing these elements as linear steps or building blocks, it might be helpful to view them as points on a spiral –we will engage with these elements over and over as our walk grows deeper with God and our community. Over time, we will learn how to live from our true identity in a growing variety of increasingly complex situations.

Ephesians 4:13: “. . . **we all** reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What are some of the identities you have experienced in your life, whether at home, church, school, work or with friends? How have these identities worked to your benefit? To your detriment? Did these identities come from your performance, appearance, temperament, malfunctions or something else? Prayerfully consider: Are there lies you have believed based on these identities?
2. Prayerfully read through the “Who I Am in Christ” statements and see what statements are highlighted to you. Journal: What feels important about this particular statement? God, is there something you want me to know about this statement? Write a prayer of appreciation for how this statement applies to you.
3. Are there times when you do see yourself as your new creation self? What characterizes these times? Do you still find yourself basing your identity on performance, appearance, temperament or malfunctions? Write a few words to would describe a life where you remembered your own identity in Christ and also saw other people as their true identity.

Freedom and Identity Exercise

1. Read the following identity statements out loud.

I AM ACCEPTED...

<i>John 1:12</i>	I am God's child.
<i>John 15:15</i>	As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.
<i>Romans 5:1</i>	I have been justified (declared righteous).
<i>1 Corinthians 6:17</i>	I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.
<i>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</i>	I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.
<i>1 Corinthians 12:27</i>	I am a member of Christ's body.
<i>Ephesians 1:3-8</i>	I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.
<i>Colossians 1:13-14</i>	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
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<i>Colossians 3:1-4</i>	I am hidden with Christ in God.
<i>Philippians 1:6</i>	I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.
<i>Philippians 3:20</i>	I am a citizen of heaven.
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<i>Ephesians 2:10</i>	I am God's workmanship.
<i>Ephesians 3:12</i>	I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
<i>Philippians 4:13</i>	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

2. Note which statements feel true to you and which do not.
3. Taking one statement which feels untrue, ask God to reveal any wounds you have suffered or lies you may have believed that would cause this statement to feel untrue to you.
3. As thoughts come to you, make a note of them and share them with the group.
4. Take turns following the freedom sequence of "Confess, Cancel, Command, Commit, and Construct" together. (Refer to Lesson 2 to refresh your memory of this sequence.)
5. Spend some time speaking the identity statements to each other, particularly emphasizing those that felt untrue.
6. Over the next weeks, notice when thoughts occur to you that are not in alignment with the identity statements and spend time with God, asking Him to confirm your identity in Him.
7. Call a group member when troubling thoughts occur Remember, God created us to build our identities in community!



Lesson 5 Growing into my IDENTITY

**As we experience Jesus together,
our way of life begins to match our identity. (2 Cor. 4:17)
We grow in Christlikeness.**

Growing into our identity in Christ is a community effort – God designed us to grow the identity that is reflected to us by Him and “our people,” those whose see us from His perspective as new creations growing into maturity. This brings to mind the Scripture 1 Cor. 13:12-13: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” The more we see ourselves reflected in the mirror of God’s face and His mature people, the more fully we will exhibit Christlikeness.

Our part in this beautiful dance of growing identity is twofold: giving and receiving. We receive God’s truth from His word and from time spent with Him; we receive from our brothers and sisters in Christ who see us from His perspective; we give by sharing His truth with others and by letting them know we see them as He does. As we are fully known for our true identity in Him, we are enabled to see others in this same way – believers on a path to see God and themselves ever more clearly. What a difference it makes when we see each other this way.

It’s helpful to notice that Jesus had a closer relationship with the Twelve than with His other followers and didn’t rely on the synagogue to be His place of deep fellowship. We can follow His example by looking for a few brothers or sisters in Christ with whom to develop this deeper relationship of heart-focused discipleship. As we grow in our ability to see each other through God’s eyes and to encourage each other in our true identity, it’s possible that others from our church or community will want to join us. Don’t be afraid to start with just one other person to grow in freedom and identity!

One way to combine freedom and identity work is to meet with one or two friends and review the “Who I Am in Christ” list from Lesson 4 together. Note which statements feel “true” to you and which do not. Together, pray and ask God to reveal to you any wounds you may have suffered or lies you may have believed that have affected your ability to believe and receive these identity statements. As thoughts come to you, make a note of them and share them with the group. Take turns following the freedom sequence of “Confess, Cancel, Command, Commit, and Construct” together. Finally, spend some time speaking the identity statements to each other, particularly emphasizing those that felt untrue. Over the next weeks, notice when thoughts occur to you that are not in alignment with the identity statements and spend time with God, asking Him to confirm your identity in Him. It’s also a good idea to call a group member when troubling thoughts occur so that you have help with the “Construct” and “Connect/Community” freedom components. An outline of this process is attached as an Addendum to this lesson.

As we all grow into the freedom of living from our true identity in Christ, we will notice that God has gifted us each with different aspects of His personality in order to equip us for the particular situations He knows we will face. Look at Ephesians 2:10 from the Amplified Bible:

“For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us].¹”

Discovering our individual identity in Christ is another ongoing task of discipleship. Not only have we been restored to relationship with God and become joint heirs with Christ, we are also now part of God’s plan to expand His Kingdom on the earth. We are His work of art (or poetry, as the word “workmanship” is sometimes translated), and we express His personality, thoughts and plans to the world around us.

As we come to know one another deeply we begin to notice these particular heart characteristics and gifts that God has placed within us and others. All God’s people are called to be loving, for instance, but some of us express His love through hospitality, others through affection, including the forgotten, welcoming newcomers, working towards social justice, or many other creative expressions of

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=eph+2%3A10&version=AMP>

God's love. In the same way, there are many expressions of justice, mercy, kindness, faithfulness, patience or the other myriad characteristics of our Father. We will talk more about this in later lessons but begin to look for and comment on the ways in which you and other express God's characteristics in everyday life. We each have a special "flavor" of God to express to our world and recognizing this "flavor" in each other builds joy between us and gratitude toward our creative God.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What have you noticed about the difference in your "head knowledge" (slow track) of your identity in Christ and your "heart knowledge" or experience (fast track)? When life is difficult, which of these tends to rule your thinking? When we notice that our immediate response to a situation is aligned with our identity in Christ, it means that both our slow and fast tracks have received and believed the message!

2. What experiences have you had of "receiving" (paragraph 2 of page 1) your identity in Christ from other believers? What about "giving" – telling others their identity in Him?

3. As you think of yourself as God's work of art to express His personality to the world, what characteristics come to mind? If this question is difficult for you, another way of approaching this concept is to think of which characteristics of God are especially meaningful to you. Write down a few of the characteristics you appreciate about God, and any of His characteristics you see in yourself.

4. See if you can schedule a time to go through the Freedom and Identity Exercise with a friend or two and notice what you learn about yourself.



**Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and advocate. (John 14:26)
Walking by the Spirit means listening to Jesus as a way of life.**

Just as our freedom and identity in Christ are established at salvation but take some time and effort to understand and experience in our daily lives, walking in the Spirit is a way of life that is available to us immediately as Christians but often seems elusive or inaccessible.

What are the “brass tacks” of walking by the Spirit? Are there practical steps to take for such a heavenly activity? In his book *Toward a Deeper Walk*,¹ Dr. Marcus Warner provides some guidance that comes from his own time of wrestling with this issue.

In order to walk by the Spirit, we must SLOW down our daily pace, so it’s appropriate that the key ideas of walking by the Spirit spell this word:

Seek God
Listen to God
Obey God
Watch God and the enemy

Seek God. God can be intimately known and we must seek Him in order to build that relationship. In Lesson 2 of the Journey Jumpstart, we learned that **appreciation** prepares our brains for relational interactions, and this is particularly true of our relationship with God. Psalm 95:2 tells us we can “. . . come into his presence with thanksgiving.” As we focus on what we appreciate about God and His gifts to us, we can become more aware of His presence with us. Begin your time with God with several minutes of focused attention on specific appreciation memories – times when you knew He was with you, or when you felt peaceful or joyful. This time of appreciation will help warm up your mind to enter His presence.

¹ *Toward a Deeper Walk*, Dr. Marcus Warner, available at [Deeper Walk website](#)

We can seek God through **reading the Word** and asking for His perspective on what we are reading, noticing what thoughts bubble to the surface. For centuries believers with an intimate relationship with God have made it their habit to spend time in Scripture accompanied by journaling their thoughts. Humbly sharing our journaling with friends who walk with God provides a safety net to ensure what we are sensing is congruent with the heart and Word of God.

Music is another powerful tool to use in seeking God. Because our sense of hearing is so closely tied to bonding, it's helpful to listen to and sing music that has been part of our experiences with God in the past. Our mind and emotions return to that place of connection, and we can more easily sense Him again. The more frequently we listen to music that brings a sense of peace and joy, the wider our "library" of God-connection music becomes.

Setting aside time to notice God's **creation** is often an open door into God's presence. Whether we go hiking in a remote location full of grandeur or simply stop to look closely at a flower growing next to the sidewalk, these moments of noticing what has been created by God bring us back to Him. Consider placing a live plant in your office or taking a walk at lunch – whatever it takes, connect with the creation and you will find connection with the Creator.

Listen to God. Because God speaks in the still small voice² which is most often heard in our own thoughts, listening to God has been the source of much confusion through the years. Adding to the differences in ability and desire to hear from God individually are family and church teachings, relational styles, personality types and life experiences.

As we combine the tools of appreciation, reading the Word, music, and spending time in nature with building humble, transparent, heart-focused community, our recognition of God's voice will begin to grow. God's voice will increase our appreciation, peace, and love for people, and it will always be consistent with Scripture.

Listening to God will lead into joyful **Obedience**. Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." As we seek God and listen to Him, our minds and desires begin to align with His thoughts. Obedience becomes a joy as we walk in step our Savior and Friend, and even in those times when our obedience is less than joyful, we can trust that our thoughts and actions will begin to rhyme with His as we continually delight ourselves in Him.

Enjoy again this quote from Joyful Journey which was first introduced in our Listening to Jesus lesson:

² 1 Kings 19:2

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul uses the Greek word *poiema*, which literally means God's poetry. When *poiemia* is translated "handiwork" or "workmanship" it misses the following important point. Poetry in scripture does not rhyme sounds; it follows the Hebrew pattern and rhymes thoughts. This means that as God's poetry, our thoughts can rhyme with our Heavenly Father's. That is amazing! How can it work? We know that as we become intimate with someone, we begin to finish each other's sentences and thoughts. In a deep, authentic, mutual-mind state, we actually don't know where our thoughts stop and the other person's thoughts begin. This is exactly what can happen between God and us too. ***A mutual-mind state with God results in an emulation of His character and heart; we are showing the world the poet behind the poetry.*** As our mutual-mind state becomes stronger, we are able to live out our purpose of being created for good works."³

Watching God is an extension of our joyful obedience. We see this in the life of Joshua, who learned to seek and listen to God in the tent of meeting with Moses. Exodus 33:11 tells us that even when Moses left the tent after his times of listening to God, Joshua stayed behind. Joshua went into the land of Canaan to spy out what God had given Israel, and only Joshua and Caleb were ready to trust and watch God give them the land. Moses passed leadership of the Israelites to Joshua, and in *Toward A Deeper Walk*, Marcus Warner points out how Joshua learned that seeking, listening, obeying and watching was the formula for success, and moving without this relational connection to God brought failure and disaster.

Another command to watch was given to us by Jesus in Matthew 26:41, "watch and pray so you do not fall into temptation." Much like the Israelites in Joshua's time, when we lose sight of our relational connection to the Father, our enemy steps in to create trouble. Strangely enough, keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus enables us also to see and avoid the traps of the enemy.

Toward a Deeper Walk tells us,

"'Watch and pray' Jesus said, 'so you do not fall into temptation' (Matthew 26:41). 'Be alert and sober-minded,' wrote Peter 'for your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to destroy' (1 Peter 5:8). Peter knew something about this. He had not listened to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was told to watch and pray, thus he was not ready for the enemy attack. . . Satan had been granted special permission to attack Peter as a means of testing him. Peter failed the test, but that is not the end of the story. Satan wanted to sift Peter in order to destroy him. God allowed the sifting because He knew He could use it in Peter's life and overcome it in the end. God's sovereignty is such that by the time He was done with Peter, all Satan had accomplished by his attack was to help God make Peter into an

³ *Joyful Journey*, p. 3, available at [Deeper Walk website](#)

even more formidable opponent. . . Peter learned the importance of being alert and sober minded. He learned to watch and pray.”⁴

Ponder, Journal, and Discuss:

1. As you meditate on the elements **Seek, Listen, Obey** and **Watch**, which of these seems to come most easily to you in your daily walk with God? Ask Him what has made this element easier for you. Ask Him what He would have you do to grow in the other elements.
2. As you read the quote about having a mutual mind state from *Joyful Journey*, can you think of a person or two with whom you have this mutual mind? How did this occur – how much time have you spent with this person, what type of conversations have you had, what interests do you share? How could you apply these ideas to your relationship with God so that your thoughts begin to “rhyme” more with His thoughts?
3. Can you think of times in your life where your relational connection with God enabled you to see and avoid the temptations and traps of Satan? Write out an appreciation memory about one of these times and add it to your appreciation list.

⁴ *Toward a Deeper Walk*, p. 143-144, available at [Deeper Walk website](#)



The Holy Spirit enables us to discern truth from counterfeit. Walking by the Spirit gives us comfort, guidance and courage, as well as authority and power as He chooses.

Reading through the New Testament references to the Holy Spirit makes it clear that it is in and through the Spirit that we discern God's truth from the many counterfeits of the world. The Spirit is our Helper, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of love, joy, peace, glory and hope who is contrasted to law, flesh, death, fear, evil, deceit, error, human tradition, dead works and divisions¹.

Lesson 6 encouraged us to Seek, Listen, Obey and Watch as a guide to walking in the Spirit. The component of *watching* referred to watching both God and the enemy. When we hear of all the counterfeits that are offered by the world and the enemy, we realize how important it is to truly know our Father through His Spirit.

An incident from my brother's life illustrates the importance of intimately knowing our Father's voice. My brother Bruce wore a thick beard for many years – neither his wife nor his children had ever seen him without it. Without telling his family of his plans, Bruce shaved off his beard one morning and went to work. After work, he pulled into the parking lot at the local grocery store and realized his wife Ellen and their children were parked next to him and getting out of their car. Bruce stepped out of his car and looked his wife in the eyes and said, "Hey there, good looking!" Ellen gave him a haughty look of disdain and quickly reached for the children. However, the children were facing away from Bruce when he spoke and knew this was the voice of their much-loved father. As Ellen attempted to hustle them away from this strange, flirtatious man, she was horrified to see them running to him and jumping into his arms! Regardless of appearances, they knew their father's voice! We, too, can learn to recognize our Father's voice even in confusing and distressing situations.

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/>, search for "Spirit."

Having companions with us as we learn and practice the skills of seeking, listening, obeying and watching provides a safety net for those times when we are vulnerable to counterfeits due to wounds, lies, strongholds, lack of experience, inattention or fatigue. The Word + the Spirit + the Body is a powerful combination. A protective community provides an environment where we can practice listening together, humbly sharing what we receive and notice, clarifying what might be counterfeit and what is true, and learning how to reduce the effect of the counterfeit in our lives.

LEARNING ABOUT THE POWER AND AUTHORITY WE HAVE IN CHRIST WITH TRULY MATURE BELIEVERS MODELING THE GENTLENESS, JOY, PEACE AND HOPE THAT COMES FROM WALKING BY THE SPIRIT HELPS PREVENT MISUSE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY.

What does it mean to “reduce the effect of the counterfeit in our lives”? Our enemy is the Father of Lies, so he will continually seek to deceive us into accepting counterfeits of God’s gifts. We can’t prevent his counterfeits and deceit coming our way, but we can calmly deal with them and continue to live in joy and peace. Just as my niece and nephew immediately recognized their father by his voice and would not run to another man, we can learn to know our Father so well that we quickly recognize and renounce the counterfeits that will be offered to us in our lives.

Counteracting counterfeits in our lives will likely occur as both “event” and “process.” For instance, going through the *Steps to Freedom in Christ*² is a helpful tool for renouncing and removing counterfeits that may be impacting your ability to connect deeply with God. Other events might include REAL³ prayer or Immanuel Prayer⁴ sessions, breakthroughs from the Word, conversations with friends, or worship experiences. These are concrete times in which we recognize that we have made substantial progress or regained ground that had been surrendered to the enemy.

Because renewing the mind (rewiring the fast track of the brain) occurs over time and through repetition, much of our growth in recognizing the difference between God’s voice and the enemy’s counterfeits will happen as a process. Practicing community with both more and less experienced Christians provides the opportunity for us to learn from the more experienced believers, practice with our peers, and model for and teach those less experienced than us. Learning about the power and authority we have in Christ with truly mature believers modeling the gentleness, joy, peace and hope that comes from walking by the Spirit helps

² [Steps to Freedom](#) We recommend that you go through the Steps to Freedom in Christ during Unit 5, Living by the Spirit. Deeper Walk has a list of trained facilitators to whom we will refer you.

³ Understanding the Wounded Heart, p. 60-63, Dr. Marcus Warner, free download of REAL Prayer handout at [Deeper Walk bookstore](#)

⁴ Immanuel Prayer was developed by Dr. Karl Lehman, [Deeper Walk bookstore](#)

prevent misuse of power and authority. When emotional and spiritual maturity are included as goals, the community will produce protectors who use power and authority in Christlike ways.

What authority do we have as believers? In Christ, we have authority over the work of the enemy as it affects us and those who come to us for help. As Dr. Warner states in *What Every Believer Should Know About Spiritual Warfare*, "In Ephesians 2:6 we read that God raised us up together with Christ and seated us together with Him in heavenly places. From this position at the right hand of the father we have intimacy with God and authority over the enemy. We no longer struggle as victims, but we wage war as victors."⁵

Praying the Scriptures is a beautiful, powerful tool of authority, particularly when combined with listening prayer. As we read the Word, God may highlight certain phrases or verses that can be prayed for ourselves or others, and as we listen to God, we may sense His guidance toward other Scriptures. Intercession which combines the authority of Scripture with the intimacy of relationship has incredible depth and power, especially when practiced in community.

As we grow our intimacy with God and awareness of His constant presence with us, we listen closely to Him for guidance in how to exercise our authority as believers. We learn tools for spiritual warfare not so that we can strike out to fight Satan alone, but so that we recognize God's provision for each individual situation. Additionally, our community of practice provides support and guidance as we learn to walk in our authority.

Our next unit will examine ways to build this community of practice – a heart-focused community where we can create belonging, build secure relationships and listen to Jesus together as a way of life.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Can you think of some "events" in your life where you saw specific progress or breakthrough in your spiritual life? List as many of these as possible. These events would be excellent appreciation memories to add to your Appreciation Library.
2. What value can you see in having a "community of practice" in which there are Christians who are upstream from you in spiritual maturity, peers with you, and downstream from you? Sometimes such a community begins with two people who begin meeting to practice Check In and Listening to Jesus together. Ask God for such a partner and see what thoughts surface!
3. This week try an experiment in praying Scripture. Each day read Ephesians 1 and see what God highlights for you to pray for yourself and others. Journal these prayers.

⁵ Read more in *What Every Believer Should Know About Spiritual Warfare*, Dr. Marcus Warner, [Deeper Walk bookstore](#)



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 1: Creating Belonging

God created us for connection and relationship– from the very beginning. In creation Adam recognized that connection and relationship with Eve was what was missing for him. And of course, God chose to enter in to the human story through relationship.

It is interesting that when neuroscientists began to study the brain, they discovered that the brain works best when it is securely connected with others in a state of joy, which the brain defines as “someone’s glad to be with me.”

Secure connection creates an optimal state of joy and peace in our brains which builds our capacity to handle the stresses of life.

Another amazing discovery is that we are designed to create connection for those around us – not just to search for others to create it for us, but for us to create it for others. From conception, we are wired to create a place for us to belong. Did you know that the fetus actually creates the placenta as it attaches to mom? The baby creates a place for itself first, and then the mom’s body responds. This is a very intricate and special picture of the fact that God creates us with an ability to create belonging. God designed the family to develop this incredible ability and to identify and call out our special manifestation of this gift.

Belonging is the joy we create around us, and because God is infinitely creative, there are infinite flavors of belonging –

- some of us create belonging by our warm smiles and hugs –
- some by the food we share
- some by being aware of the physical needs of those who join us
- some by creating beautiful art to enjoy visually
- others by their incredible gift of music

Belonging could be called hospitality, but in our culture, we have a very limited definition of hospitality. Belonging is the invitation we extend to others to join with us, to share the good gifts God has given us, especially that of relationship.

Some are especially gifted at creating belonging for children, or the elderly, or the disabled. All of us want to welcome new people, but some have a special knack for that. Others may have a way of reminding old friends that they are still a delight. The beautiful thing about our individual style of creating belonging is that when we live in community, we create belonging for everyone – each person’s style will resonate with certain others, and all feel an increase in joy and peace. We have a sense of God’s shalom – that things are as they should be, even if life is not perfect.

Belonging is whatever we do that says to others, “Come join me! I’m glad you are here!”

At the fall, the first thing to suffer was belonging – “That woman YOU gave to me!” Suddenly the fact that Eve was so much a part of Adam brought shame and anger to him.

The refusal to create belonging brought about the first murder – Cain was so angry at his brother, and perhaps had such a sense of rejection that he killed Abel, telling God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Can you think of other Bible stories in which there was a failure of belonging? What would it look like if belonging had been present?

- Abraham and Sarah with Ishmael and Hagar
- Jacob and Esau – instead of sharing with Esau, Jacob bartered with his hungry brother and took away his birthright
- David with Uriah
- Jonah’s refusal to preach to the Ninevites
- Peter quit eating with the Gentiles when other Jews came along
- Crucifixion

But God is a God of belonging, and we carry His image, so we see many examples of belonging in His Word as well.

- Abraham pleads with God on behalf of Sodom and Gommorah.
- Hagar hears God’s voice and calls Him “You are a God seeing. Truly I have seen him who looks after me.”
- Esau welcomes Jacob and his family when Jacob returns home.
- Joseph provides for his family in Egypt.
- The widow of Zarephath provides food for Elijah
- Hosea is faithful and loving to his unfaithful wife
- God tells Israel to create a place for the foreigner who wants to worship Him
- John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus
- JESUS – His mission was to create a way of belonging for all people of every nation!

- Created belonging for the outcasts, sinner, unclean, rejected
- Offered belonging to Pharisees when He continually corrected their thinking
- On the cross – created belonging for the thief and for John and His mother
- **He gave us each a shared mission to create belonging for others – to tell the story of Immanuel – the God Who is With Us – the God who creates belonging for each of us.**

When we are in pain, our ability to create belonging is affected, and we begin to look to others to make US feel welcome. Our world is full of people like this – and God intended the church to be the place that can restore people to their true identity – we are to be a life preserver that holds people upright until they regain their identity, until they reconnect with the lifeline – the true Vine.

Graham Cooke says that the church is the only institution that is created for the benefit of nonmembers. We are here not only to establish our own connection with God and people, to learn how to create belonging, but to restore this ability to the world. One of the most important things about doing the work of helping to restore belonging is like being on an airplane – those equipped to help must put on their oxygen mask first.

How do we put on our oxygen mask?

Appreciation connects us with God, with the self that He created us to be, and it helps us create belonging around us. We truly enter His gates with thanksgiving. Appreciation is our oxygen mask!

Shalom is a state of peace where things feel like they are in the right balance – and appreciation is a sign that you are in shalom.

Growing our capacity for shalom and appreciation and learning to notice when we are in feeling shalom and appreciation are important goals as we learn to practice creating belonging.

Appreciation is contagious – and it is spread through **STORIES**

- The more I think about the people and moments I appreciate, the more appreciation I experience.
- When I share my appreciation stories, our appreciation multiplies.
- Appreciation stories are always stories about God, because whenever we experience appreciation, we are enjoying one of God’s gifts.
- The more I focus my attention on appreciation, the more I tend to find and notice things I appreciate.
- As my focus changes, I have a new expectancy for good things in my life, and when they come, I notice them!

- Phil. 4:8, 9 - Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*
- How did the Philippians pass on what they learned and received and heard and saw in Paul? THEY TOLD STORIES!

As you practice telling Appreciation Stories in your daily life, you will create belonging!

How to tell your story:

- Keep it concise – don't need all the details.
- Briefly describe the situation
- Use body language, eye contact, and voice tone to convey the emotions.
- Use emotion words
- Tell how your body felt

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. What are some ways you create belonging in your daily life? Even if you aren't a very social person, God has given you some gifts of belonging. If you have a hard time identifying your style of creating belonging, ask God to reveal them to you.
2. What are some creative, practical ways you could implement more belonging in your life?
3. Have you started a list of Appreciation Memories? If not, start it this week using an index card, a document on the computer, a note on your phone, or a small notebook.



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 2: Protective Community

In Lesson 1, we saw that Heart-Focused Community is a place where each of us identifies and shares our particular flavor of creating belonging. This week we will look at two more aspects of Heart-Focused Community – Protection and Transformation.

In Isaiah 11, we see a description of the Kingdom rule of Jesus. Read slowly through this description of Jesus and His Kingdom:

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD... The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

It's clear from this passage that the Kingdom of God is meant to be not only a place of protection for the weak, but a place of transformation for both the prey and the predator¹. We see this truth in the book of Acts – who could be considered more of a predator than Saul, breathing threats and murder against the disciples? We've read this story so many times that we've lost the heart-stopping sense of suspense that must have gripped the disciples when they heard that Saul had become a believer – could this be true, or was it a clever ruse to infiltrate their ranks and drag them all off to Jerusalem in chains? Had the predator been transformed into a protector? God's plan was revealed; He would transform the wolf into a lamb and bring him into their midst as one who would give his life rather than betray them and their Savior.

Even if we discount Saul's transformation because of its supernatural genesis, we can see predatory behavior in the “circumcision party,” those who expected all new believers to become Jews. In 1 Corinthians, we also see Paul addressing jealousy, strife, boasting, divisions, and favoritism in the church, and then reminding the people to

¹ Portions of this lesson are taken from Dr. Jim Wilder's lecture on “Why We Shouldn't Create a Safe Space,” April, 2018
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forgive, comfort and reaffirm their love for the one who has sinned. A thorough reading of Acts and the Epistles makes it clear that the early church was confident in God's ability to use *them* to bring transformation to the weak and the strong.

Have we lost faith that the Kingdom of God here on earth is a place of transformation for all?

In *Joy Starts Here*², the authors explain that we all notice the weaknesses in ourselves and others, but we have widely varying responses to those weaknesses. The 3 responses to weakness described in *Joy Starts Here* are Protector, Predator, and Possum.

Protector: A protector is one who helps others to grow their Christlike identities and maintain those identities under pressure. Protectors notice weakness and look for ways to protect the weak. A gentle protector will confront predatory behavior and its harmful impact on a community and will protect the group from predators until they are transformed into protectors.

Predator: Someone who monitors weaknesses looking for a way to gain a personal advantage is a predator. All of us have a predatory system inside our brains which will develop with little to no training. Without secure bonds and relational skills, our response to weakness will be predatory. In a protective community, our predatory ways begin to transform as we develop secure bonds and learn relational skills. Transformed predators become very strong protectors.

Possum: Someone who thinks like a predator ("Weaknesses will get you eaten"), does not want to be a predator, but lacks the skills to be a protector. Avoiding attack becomes a possum's central preoccupation, motivation and even identity. A possum plays dead or tries to hide so as to not be eaten. In a protective community, possums begin to model themselves after the protectors, picking up relational skills and growing secure bonds. Transformed possums become very compassionate protectors.

In *Joy Starts Here*, the authors identify the Transformation Zone as a place where there is multi-generational community, a tender response to weakness, and an awareness of God's presence. Transformation happens not in an environment where everything is ideal, but in an environment where everything can be *faced*, and is faced together. When we have the weak and strong together, facing their fears and weaknesses honestly and seeking God's perspective on everything, transformation is possible for all. The truly mature members of the group (protectors) guide all of us in building strong, secure bonds with God and each other. As our bonds strengthen, we learn protective ways of handling fear and weakness, rather than predator or possum

² Available from the Deeper Walk bookstore

methods.

This kind of protective community was exemplified in the New Testament in instances such as the time Paul opposed Peter in Antioch when Peter stopped eating with Gentiles after the conservative Jews arrived. Paul was calling out Peter's "possum" behavior, his fear of the conservative Jews, and addressing the predatory behavior of the Jews as well. Paul was reminding Peter of his identity as a protector of the Gentile believers and of their freedom from religious bondage. Can you take a moment to imagine the emotions of the Gentile Christians on this occasion? What were their feelings when Paul stood up for them in this way, when he refused to join in the religious and racial snobbery being practiced? Paul was standing firm for the Kingdom as a place where the lines between predator and prey were erased and the table was set for both leopard and lamb.

Ponder, Journal and Discuss:

1. What do you think would be some differences between a "safe space" and a "protective community" when it comes to sharing weaknesses?
2. Protector, Possum, Predator: Which one of these descriptions do you identify with the most? What about when you are in pain, such as anger, or fear? How can the various things you've learned in Journey Groups help you move more toward Protector on the continuum? [Check In, Appreciation, Listening to Jesus, Freedom, Identity, Walking in the Spirit, etc.?]
3. The Transformation Zone is described as (1) multigenerational community, (2) tender response to weakness, and (3) awareness of God's presence. Another way of saying this is that transformation happens when we have the strong and weak together, facing fears together, and getting God's perspective on everything. Have you experienced a group that is like this? Which parts are most present in your current fellowship? Which are most missing? What are some first steps to bringing these components to your family or church?



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 3: Quieting

*For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel,
"In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." Is. 30:15*

*But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

Ps. 131:2

What is Simple Quiet?

Quieting yourself is an important skill that God intended you to learn as an infant. It helps you to find shalom after strong emotions, both joyful and upsetting. Being able to quiet yourself is the strongest predictor of life-long mental health.

Can you think of a time when you had difficulty quieting yourself? Perhaps after an intense conversation with someone, or being triggered by something in the past? Sometimes your body and mind get wound up and don't know how to calm. Worries of the day spin through your thoughts as you lay down to sleep. Concerns over relationships, finances or health issues grip you and refuse to let go. You cannot find the OFF button and rest is elusive.

According to Chris Coursey in his book *Transforming Fellowship*, "Relationships require a rhythm of joy and rest... short moments of rest provide the strength and stamina for more joy.¹" Without rest, however, we become overwhelmed and soon become depressed and depleted. Resting actually releases serotonin to recharge your relational batteries.

When you are unable to get the rest that you need for your body, mind and spirit you might replace it with BEEPS (behaviors, experiences, events, people, and substances). Many of the things our culture uses as BEEPS may be socially acceptable, like busyness, work, sex, music, internet, television, and sugar. This can mask the lack of the skill to quiet yourself. Chris

¹ *Transforming Fellowship*, p. 58, available from Deeper Walk bookstore

Coursey says, “synthetically calming our emotions and ignoring rest signals creates strain and dysregulates the brain.²”

Learning to Quiet

Learning to quiet yourself can be a challenge after years or decades of teaching your brain to reach for something to soothe your strong emotions. In the book *Joy Starts Here*, the authors (Wilder, Khouri, Coursey, & Sutton) discuss using performance for approval and codependency as two additional BEEPS that your brain can use to regulate pain and stress. Christians are often appreciated for “exceptional service” when engaged in these patterns, thus giving your brain extra rewards for avoiding the strong emotions that are exacerbated by your inability to quiet.

Simple quiet is normally taught from mother to infant in the context of a lasting bond. When you have this skill, you will desire quiet moments and feel like something is missing when you have not rested. You can maintain inner peace and stay grounded during intense emotions and overwhelm. You remember to breathe and be connected to the cues from your body about what you need.

If you did not have the quieting skill transmitted to you through your infant interactions with adults, do not despair! As with all the other relational brain skills you are learning about through Journey Groups, they can be learned as an adult. The first step is to find a model of someone who knows how to rest.

Finding a Model

Let’s start with God in Genesis. God created the Sabbath to teach His people to rest. He even modeled it for them by resting on the seventh day of creation. Chris Coursey says, “honoring the Sabbath rest is one of the most mentioned commandments in all of scripture...rest is the reminder that the journey is too much for us and we have limitations that require us to pause from interacting. Rest means, ‘I need a breather.’” Positioning yourself in the place of need before your God is a great place to begin.

We can spend time with others who are good at quieting and resting. Not only are they able to calm themselves and stay connected to God and others through difficult things, they also exemplify an inner peace and contentment that is becoming less common in our age. I (Misa) remember talking to an elderly Christian woman who spent much of her day in her rocker praying and napping. She would doze off for a while, wake up and pick up her discourse with Jesus where she had left off before she fell asleep. “Where were we, Lord?” she would ask, and then continue her conversation about the people, needs, and heartaches around her that she wanted Jesus to intervene in. At the time, in my early twenties, I could hardly imagine having that kind of an unhurried life. Nor could I envision ever wanting to spend my time that

² *Transforming Fellowship*, p. 59

way! Now, at 56, I think fondly towards the time that I will be able to enter into that kind of rest.

Practicing the Skill

Practices that can help us learn to rest include relaxation techniques (such as breathing and muscle relaxation), centering prayer, and silent retreats. Learning to calm our minds and bodies takes training! It is a good idea to practice rest in cycles on daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms. You will know that you are learning to quiet when you begin to be more comfortable in your own skin and are becoming a “non-anxious presence” in your relationships. God promises to give us the “peace that passes all understanding” in Philippians 4:7 as He guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Our part is to turn off the noise, get alone, and be available to His good work.

Ponder, Journal, Discuss:

1. Read again this quote from Chris Coursey, “. . . rest is the reminder that the journey is too much for us and we have limitations that require us to pause from interacting. Rest means, ‘I need a breather.’” (from 1 Kings 19:7)
Did you learn any patterns of rest in your family of origin? Do you have opportunity for rest in your current living situation? What are some ways that you can make places for rest in your schedule?
2. Of the 19 relational brain skills identified by Dr. Wilder and the Courseys, rest or quiet (Skill 2) is best when alternated with joy (Skill 1). We need quiet and rest even from joyful interactions. This brings to mind the word “selah” in the Psalms. One interpretation of this word is to pause and notice what went before and what is coming³. Read through the verses at the beginning of this lesson and “selah” between them. Journal the thoughts that come to your mind.
3. This week, practice the following exercises and journal about the experience. Be prepared to discuss what you learn about yourself.

Quiet Comparison (Thrive Skill Guide, Joy & Rest, Ex. 2.2, by Chris and Jen Coursey)

This week you can practice quieting yourself by comparing different ways of quieting to discover which methods are most effective for you. Using your journal, write about your experience. What do you normally do when you want to quiet yourself and how well has it worked? Pick five of the following activities to try this week and take notes about how you feel after each one. How can you tell when you have successfully quieted yourself? Compare each of the experiences with the previous things on the list that you have tried. Once you have found the most effective method to quiet yourself, try practicing it for at least 15 minutes every other day.

- Eat your favorite comfort foods

³ Bullinger, E.W., *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 66.

- Watch 30 minutes of television or a movie, or read a chapter in a book
- Spend 15 minutes talking to a close friend (or your spouse) about your day
- Have a dog or cat cuddle on your lap for 20 minutes
- Have a close friend or spouse give you a back or hand massage for 15 minutes
- Cuddle with your spouse for 10 minutes
- Take a hot bath or soak in a hot tub (if you have access to one) for 15 minutes
- Fill in an activity that you notice you usually do when you want to rest or quiet
 - A
 - B
 - C

Body Quieting (Thrive Skill Guide, Joy & Rest, Ex. 2.3, by Chris and Jen Coursey)

The goal here is to give you practice intentionally relaxing specific muscles in your body. If you are trying to support some part of your body, it will remain tense; so make sure you are sinking into your chair, or better yet, get on the floor and let yourself sink into the carpet so your muscles do not have to support any of your body weight. Try this exercise daily this week.

- Find a chair or a carpeted area. Sit down in your chair and let your body sink into the chair or lie on the floor and let your body sink into the carpet.
- Take a deep breath and purposefully tense your whole body, then hold your breath for as long as you can, or until your muscles start to hurt. 1 minute
- Relax muscles, letting your breath out and breathing deeply. 1 minute
- Take a deep breath and purposefully tense your body muscles, starting with your feet, legs, buttocks, stomach, chest, arms, neck, and face, and hold your breath for as long as you can, or until your muscles start to hurt. 1 minute.
- Relax muscles, let out your breath and breathe deeply. 1 minute
- Take a deep breath and notice where your body still has tension and let the tension out of that part of your body when you breathe out. 1 minute
- Breathe deeply. 1 minute

The journey is too much for us without rest.



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 4: Relational Styles

What are Attachment (or Relational) Styles?

Author's Note: Attachment styles is a big and incredibly important subject! Everything we do in Life Model and Thrive training centers around learning to create secure attachments. It is the problem that lies behind every addiction, and the stuff that fuels every crime and suicide attempt. If there were no insecure attachments in the world, Life Model could close its doors. This document is long! You do not have to read it all and do all the exercises in the next week. I want to give you a helpful resource that you can return to over and over as you come back to these issues, as they are the root of our brokenness. Changing your attachment style takes much time and work. Do not overwhelm yourself with all this material. Read/do what you can now and save the rest for later.

According to Maribeth Poole, "All of us have an 'emotional stance and type of energy' from which we interact with our world." The goal is to create secure attachments where we can synchronize with each other, create joy bonds, and fulfill our purposes in life together. We are also created for securely attaching to God.

When we are living from secure attachments we keep our relationships more important than any problems that face us. We are also able to attune with one another and return to our joyful bonds when negative emotions arise. Secure attachments help us to live from our true identity, seeing ourselves and others as God sees us.

When we are unable to learn secure attachments from our caregivers early in life we can develop one of three insecure attachment styles. They are called:

- Dismissive Attachment Style
- Distracted (or Anxious) Attachment Style
- Disorganized Attachment Style

Being aware of our current attachment style is important so that we can be intentional about how we are connecting with others and what is working well and what is not. We can have more than one style but generally have a pattern of attachment with most of our intimate relationships.

If you find that you have some insecure attachment patterns, do not worry... most of us do! The good news is that you can change our attachment style when you realize that you need to grow in this area. As you come to understand what secure attachment looks like, find models of it in real life, and intentionally work and pray towards developing secure attachments in your own life, you will reap the fruit of sweet joy bonds! Growing in awareness of your own attachment style will enable you not to be driven by it, but increasingly in control of it. Practicing the skills that bring secure attachments is work but one that will bring great reward.

The Four Attachment Styles

Maribeth Poole*, in her video curriculum called [Attune to Attach](#), shares some accurate descriptions of the four attachment styles. Notice the attachment style you resonate the most strongly with as you read.

Secure Sally (Secure Attachment Style)

Due to knowing well that God is all He claims to be, Secure Sally has confidence as she goes through life. She is looking forward to the 'adventures' that are to come. Sally is not fearful of the mistakes she will make as she relates to her family, friends, co-workers, and others. She is not unnerved by the many things she must learn. She is a non-defensive and eager learner. At the times when interpersonal conflict arises, she does not withdraw in fear or become angry and demanding. Instead, she interacts with the person pursuing mutual care and respect if at all possible. When difficult situations occur, she is not reactive. She calmly takes the time needed to learn fully what the situation is before responding. In complex situations her response is often helpful to everyone involved and people feel comfortably supported when she is there. She is able to draw out the struggles another person is having reflectively showing her understanding as she joins them in the path that lies ahead.

Sally Secure grew up in an atmosphere on which her parents were finely tuned in to her physical and emotional needs, giving timely responses. Sally was encouraged to express her thoughts and opinions and talk about the hard times that come in growing up. Her parents stayed involved, helping her learn to voice her needs, receive help as needed, take care of herself, empathize and appropriately care for others. Sally is encouraged to try new things and can do so with confidence due the secure base in life provided by the family. The family environment set the stage for Sally to be able to return to joy form any situation or emotion. As she grew, Sally has opportunities provided in which she can learn of the power given to her by God to bring life to others.

Sally grows up with a sense of confidence and freedom to explore her world. She has enough inner certainty to tackle challenges in life in ways that are satisfactory to her.

When emotional challenges as well as joyful times arise, she is able to fully feel the emotions while continuing to live from a kindly and respectful relational stance. She knows how to relate empathetically with others and interact in ways that repair relationship when they 'rupture'. She is not as concerned with 'fairness' as she is with bringing about mutual care and the best interest of 'her people.'

Sally lives with an inner calm and joy in knowing God's heart towards her described in 1 Corinthians 13. He is characterized by being patient and kind. He does not get upset when she gets credit and praise, so she does not have to put herself down with false humility. She knows He is desiring for her to be honored and not shamed. He does not hold her sins and mistakes against her, but keeps a clean slate in His mind towards her. She senses how God believes in her and what she is about. His love is persevering and she experiences ways that His loving kindness, goodness and mercy follow her daily. As a result, Sally has an easy flow of engagement with God and the world. When hard times come, she is not overly despairing due to a knowing that it is not the end of the story and God is writing the final chapter as a remarkable good one. Being confident all will be ok, Sally is not afraid to risk and fail. She enjoys the reality of John 10:9 where Jesus exclaimed, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture."

Dismissive Danny (Dismissive Attachment Style)

Danny lives with a focus on following rules. Since he has not developed an inner confidence in handling hard situations, he feels a need to have clear guidelines to follow. This becomes more important to him than entering into the emotional pain or disturbances occurring with those he meets.

Danny's creativity and ability to problem solve are limited due to his main focus on following rules. It is fearful for him to let people have possible negative opinions of him. Thus, he is motivated and guided by a strong shame focus. He is defensive when problems occur and afraid he may be found 'wanting'. This inhibits his capability to learn. Due to his need to keep life seemingly in control, he is not able to enter fully into a difficult situation. To do this, he must dismiss or minimize the full significance of what he or others are experiencing.

Danny quickly learned the rule that 'children are to be seen and not heard'. Of course, he was just a child, so what did he know? He did not experience the faces of his parent's lighting up in the delight of who he was. His emotions were dismissed as being unimportant and 'incorrect'. The significance of his needs was not recognized and often went unmet. At times, he learned that his need presented an inconvenience to his parents and if he wanted to avoid the pain of being ignored or shamed, he must not let

it be known. Although he did want to be loved and given attention, he learned not to expect it or seek it. He knew that his needs, opinions, feelings and desires were unimportant.

In order to navigate in his world, he focused on being a good child. He appeared to be well adjusted since he did not voice complaints or appear to be a clingy child. This 'getting it right' added to the cycle of not receiving focused attention. There was no need to be met and no behavioral problems to be disciplined. This inflexible and non-spontaneous pattern led him into the path of a rigid relational style.

Danny grew up in an environment in which his needs, emotions, opinions and ideas were disregarded. His mind internalized the belief of being unimportant and later, he is not able to easily recognize his own value. Memories are 'recorded' through a process that includes emotional 'wiring'. Not getting the message that who he is what he thinks is of any importance, laid the groundwork for life's events not to be 'logged' well in his memory.

Thus, he has a limited view of himself. His life awareness is limited to 'non-emotional' domains. Spontaneous and creative thinking has been discouraged, resulting in his interpersonal relationships being stilted. His view of life is inflexible as he takes a restrictive approach to living in the world.

Danny has little awareness that God cares about how he is doing. He is certain that what matters to God is obedience and having a 'right attitude'. He experiences God as distant, mostly uninvolved and a task master. While knowing the theological truth of God's love being unconditional, his experience with God is characterized by a dryness and dissatisfaction.

Danny mistakes 'rules' for relationship and thus pursues obedience as a way to secure his standing with God.

Distracted David (Distracted Attachment Style)

David has a strong desire to relate well and care about those in his life. Whichever person or event is the most demanding is the one that grabs his attention. He lives with 'the squeaky wheel gets the oil syndrome'. People do know they are important to him when crises occurs, but if nothing urgent is being presented to David, they may not know his true response. Due to the crises of the moment, responsibilities often are not taken care of, which results in frustration with him by others.

When David has a need in his own life, he is distracted from his life responsibilities as he seeks someone to meet his need. When he has found someone, he tends to become

overly dependent for a period of time, being paralyzed and not functioning as he wishes. These adults often have a secret. Although David feels guilty and has tried repeatedly to stop, he continues to be drawn to pornography (or food, TV, alcohol, compulsive reading, drugs, nicotine...) He tries to remind himself that he will hate himself later, but the urge for the personal excitement, both physically and emotionally, is stronger than his self-discipline. The day's most barren of personal affirmation and tenderness are the ones that most often he gives in to his addiction. His life is governed by chaos more than by his values and goals.

David's parents truly desired to give their child the attention and love needed; yet they were often distracted from doing so by other issues in life that riveted their emotional attention. Whatever situation had the most emotional intensity determined their focus. This inconsistency in availability, sensitivity, perceptivity and effectiveness left David with a sense of uncertainty, giving him an urgent and constant need for comfort from external interactions. At times, his parents remembered their desire to love their child without tuning in to his specific needs at the time. This lack of sensitivity resulted in emotionally engulfing David. He felt overwhelmed and anxious regarding future interactions. Internally David was consumed with and driven by emotional doubts of one form or another. (Am I loved? Will the person leave me? Am I going to be rejected? Will their need to love me drown my needs for timely synchronization?) Along with this undercurrent, David was a very caring child who gravitated to the 'underdogs' and he received great appreciation from those he helped. He learned this was a great way to receive the attention he craved.

David recognized the importance of love and giving care and he was driven to be a 'caregiver'.

He had been conditioned as he grew to focus on the emotionally demanding situations in life and thus his mind tracked these types of situations. He learned to attach to emotional crises more than to people. This resulted in his being 'off and on' in relationships, depending on the emotional intensity of the moment. His preoccupation and demanding situations resulted in his being unreliable relationally as well as with day to day responsibilities. David's insecurity played out with him demanding the spotlight, being appreciated and respected. Even though he desired to gain security from his relationships, he gravitated toward relationships with people who were demanding or frustrated with him.

David lives with an undercurrent of anxiety and drivenness in pursuing emotional highs and circumstances being 'fixed' as evidence of God's love. David is more familiar with 'excitement' and 'joy' than with the internal shalom, inner calm and peace.

Disorganized Debbie (Disorganized Attachment Style)

At first, Debbie appears to be a stable, reliable and responsible colleague. The is the case until difficult situations arise and she emotionally disintegrates. As times goes on, Debbie's life is increasingly characterized by emotional outbursts and chaos. It seems like she has an internal magnet to fearful situations, as she is constantly in the middle of whatever crises is at hand. In situations that are threatening to her, she is unable to gain realistic perspective, bringing herself to a sense of calm. Instead, she is quite reactive. She is not easily able to receive the help she needs, and cannot relate in a way that is helpful to others. Verbal reassurance does her no good. She loses focus of her personal preferences and values during the times she is disoriented and internally disorganized.

Disorganized Debbie grew up in a home fraught with fear. The parents to whom she needed to go for security were the very ones who brought her fear. Her mother was a very anxious lady whose emotions flowed out to her children when she related to them. She was constantly certain that danger was lurking, their house would be broken into, Dad was hurt in an accident if he was late getting home from work, and the children would get hurt when they played and climbed. Debbie learned from her mother that the world is not a safe place to live. Debbie also lived in the terror of her father coming home at the end of each day. Would he fly into a rage? Was tonight the night that he would enter her bedroom and violate her? Would he again smash mom against the wall? Yes, it is certain to Debbie that the world is unsafe, not organized or reliable, and will not offer her love and protection.

Debbie, who grew up in a very chaotic and fearful environment has internalized the chaos and fear. From her mother, who lived with a constant sense of dread and anxiety, Debbi learned the world is not a safe place and something 'bad' is going to happen. Due to mother functioning in a disoriented manner, Debbie has no constancy to build a secure view of her world. Dad was 'scary' due to his outbursts of rage and abusiveness, which added to Debbie's internalized belief that the world is unsafe and unreliable. Her parents, a source of comfort, were also a source of danger and fear for her. This left Debbie frozen in a stance between avoidance and tracking all fear inducing situations. As life progressed, Debbie struggled with emotional, social and cognitive difficulties.

Her internal disorganization will impair her future interactions with others and inhibit her ability to function well. She will have a poor coping capacity and a marked inability to regulate emotional responses, stay focused, and 'on track' in life.

Debbie experiences her relationship with God as tumultuous and confusing. Internally, she lives with fear and certainty God is scrutinizing her. She wants His love and care while simultaneously afraid of getting close.

Attachment Pain and BEEPS

When attachments go awry, you will experience attachment pain, the most painful thing humans experience. It is sub-cortical, or below our conscious awareness. It is the result of living in insecure attachments. You have attachment pain when you don't know where you belong or who you belong to. Attachment pain affects every area of life and makes everything hurt! It is often unrecognized and usually the culprit under all kinds of addictions.

BEEPS (behaviors, events, experiences, people, and substances) are often used as the panacea for attachment pain. They are used to regulate emotions, increase pleasure, or decrease pain. Because this pain is unconscious it is not obvious that you are filling the empty attachment space inside with something else. BEEPS take the place of secure attachments to God and significant others. Ed Khouri says, "When BEEPS take over your attachment system they replace relationships as our source of joy."

More on attachment pain and BEEPS here: [What is Addiction?](#)

And here: [Attachment Pain Inventory](#)

And here: [Addictions: Calming Your Brain When Upset, Part 3](#)

And one more: [Why Addictions Actually Make Sense](#)

Learning to Create Secure Attachments

Most of us did not start out with secure attachments in life. Learning to create secure attachments takes self-awareness, reflection and a good model.

Each of the insecure attachment patterns will require a different set of things to be aware of:

Dismissive Attachment Pattern:

- Recognize that everything matters!
- Make mountains out of molehills (in your own life as well as in the lives of others)
- Use mindfulness practices
- Explore ways you can 'break the rules'
- Grow in your experience that relationships are more important than rules

Those who live out of a dismissive attachment benefit from people slowing down the conversation, bringing attention to something that is happening, having people ask them questions, and giving them the opportunity for reflection and awareness of how life matters and how they are impacted by that.

Distracted Attachment Pattern:

- It is important to learn how to get back to a place of internal calm when upset
- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness practices
- Settling self through experiencing appreciation

Those who live out of a distracted attachment benefit from people tuning into the inner turmoil they feel and then gently relate in ways that can help them move towards a sense of inner calm and confidence.

Disorganized Attachment Pattern:

- Need a stable, constant, mature person to walk life's journey with them for the long haul
- Develop relational brain skills, including-
 - Mindfulness
 - Regaining calm
 - Building joy instead of fear tracking

Those who live out of a disorganized attachment benefit from relationships that remain steady, consistent, calm and attentive while tuning into their inner turmoil, fear, chaos, and withdrawal. Sometimes they need validation that what they are going through is very important. Sometimes they need help in getting out of their internal chaos and back to a place of calm.

Practicing the Skill

Answer the following questions:

1. What type of pattern did your mother live from?
2. What type of pattern did your father live from?
3. Were there other significant care givers in your life? If so, what were their attachment patterns?
4. What is your overall pattern/stance in approaching life and relationships?
 - a. Does it change significantly in different environments?
 - b. When with people of the opposite gender?

- c. With people in authority?
- d. With older people?

If you have an insecure attachment pattern and desire to build a secure attachment in its place, the good news is that you have already taken the first step by recognizing it.

If you would like to do more in-depth work around insecure attachments:

Identifying your attachment style is the first step to repairing your insecure attachments and transform them into secure attachments. The goal is to use a secure system of reality rather than an insecure one. Because distracted and dismissive attachment styles have to do with mindsight issues and deal with the reality circuits within our brain, we need three-way bonds. Additionally, we need to be able to see what God sees and teach our left hemisphere to pay attention to what is going on. Check your relational circuits before you begin this exercise:

1. Choose a relationship in which you currently have an insecure attachment
2. For the next two weeks, start journaling every day about your interactions with that person, and write down times you recognize that you acted out of your insecure attachment.
 - a. For Distracted Attachments:
 - I. When might you have been overreacting?
 - II. Where might the additional intensity of your feelings come from?
 - III. Did it remind you of anything in your past?
 - IV. Use the Immanuel healing process* to find God's perspective on the day and where your feelings may be coming from as they relate to past experiences.
 - b. For Dismissive Attachments:
 - I. How do you feel about this person?
 - II. Did you express your feelings to him/her today?
 - III. In what ways did you show you cared?
 - IV. What interactions did you have where you may have discounted this person's feelings?
 - V. Ask God to show you when you may have discounted the emotional content of a situation.
 - VI. Ask Him to help you get in touch with your feelings and express them to others. Make a point to express your feelings to your loved one as soon as you can.

3. Find a person you trust who seems to have secure attachments with others and ask him or her to hold you accountable. Ask this person for feedback on situations where you and your loved one seem to disagree.
4. Pray every day that God will give you His perspective on the day and your interactions. Ask God to help you build a solid, secure attachment and to deal with the fears that drive the behavior.

**Learn more about the Immanuel Healing process here: [Immanuel Healing, God with Us](#)
And here: [Share Immanuel](#)
And here: [Karl Lehman Immanuel Lifestyle](#)*

Finding a Model

Having a secure attachment pattern modeled for you is important. You cannot learn to do what you have never seen. Each attachment pattern benefits from a different kind of model:

1. If you have the tendency towards a dismissive attachment style, who comes to mind who can help you “make mountains out of the molehills?”
2. If you have the tendency towards a distracted pattern, who comes to mind who can help you learn to get back to a place of inner calm?
3. If you have traces of the disorganized pattern, who are some safe people you could begin to risk in inviting them more into your life journey?

If you cannot think of anyone who fits these descriptions, ask the Lord to send you someone! He likes to answer that prayer.

**Thank you, Maribeth, for giving us permission to use your very helpful material! If you would like to know more about Maribeth's work visit: <https://maribethpoole.com/> She writes a delightful blog, teaches courses, and sells her product, *Attune to Attach*.*



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 5: 2 Way Conversations with Jesus

"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God.

Those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it; yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive.

It is not pleasure which we ought to seek in this exercise; but let us do it from a principle of love, and because God would have us."

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Can We Hear from God?

Does God speak to His children? Dallas Willard, in his book, *Hearing God*, believes emphatically that He does. We were designed to interact with Jesus and we can actually learn how to do that! Willard says:

"I continue to believe that people are meant to live in an ongoing conversation with God, speaking and being spoken to. ... I believe that this can be abundantly verified in experience. God's visits to Adam and Eve in the Garden, Enoch's walks with God and the face-to-face conversations between Moses and Jehovah are all commonly regarded as highly exceptional moments in the religious history of humankind. Aside from their obviously unique historical role, however, they are not meant to be exceptional at all. Rather they are examples of the normal human life God intended for us: God's indwelling his people through personal presence and fellowship. Given who we are by basic nature, we live—really live—only through God's regular speaking in our souls and thus 'by every word that comes from of the mouth of God.'"

Living closely connected to God requires that we sense His voice within us. He speaks to each person very individually. The deepest desire of God's heart is to grow a joyful attachment with every one of us. Can you imagine being married to someone who can only hear you and not tell you of his/her love for you directly? We cannot become bonded to a God who is unable to speak to His Beloved.

In a blog, Chase Padusniak talks about prayer from the perspective of Simone Weil whom he considers a mystic and "saintly pauper." Padusniak says, "The goal of prayer— really of

life—is to have one’s heart turned always toward God, so that all outer actions are regulated by such focus. Or, as she puts it, ‘[the] faculty of attention [...when] directed toward God, is the very substance of prayer.’¹” Putting one’s full concentration on God is the challenge. In the world we live in, concentrating on anything for more than 3 minutes has become quite difficult! How do you learn to focus on God in a way that grows deep intimacy with Him?

How Does God Speak?

God’s voice can be a gentle whisper, a lightning strike, or a silent movement of the heart. It can come as thoughts, words, mental picture, a song, or a full-fledged video playing in your mind. God can speak to you through His written word, the words of a trusted friend, or the honest love of your pet dog. God’s Spirit has no limits to the ways He communicates with you. He is incredibly creative in how He speaks to and touches you. It may begin with a sunset or a meandering creek. He may alight upon you through a piece of piano music or a poem. As you learn to stay with His nudging, you can sense Him leading you further up and further in.

The first challenge to hearing or seeing God is to quiet yourself. Practice the quieting exercises in lesson two of this unit. Next, focus on what you appreciate about your life and about God in particular. Sit in the place of gratitude and notice how your body, mind, and spirit feel. Then, begin to notice what stirs. Even the bird’s song in the tree or the gentle air upon your skin may start to come alive. Stay connected to what you are sensing and feeling. Ask God to make His presence clear to you. Listen for what sounds like Him. Watch for the God that you know through scripture and your past experience to reveal Himself to you.

You may want to read David Takle’s book, *Whispers of My Abba*². In it, he writes about how to connect with God:

“Listening is a two-way conversation much like we would expect to have with a wise mentor...if we simply empty our mind and wait for something to strike us, we will probably be too disengaged to receive anything... if we try too hard to guess or figure out what God might say, we may be too preoccupied to see or hear what God is showing us. *Effective listening requires active reflection, a lot of curiosity, a willingness to be transparent, and seasoned discernment.* Discerning is not about preventing things from going wrong or keeping our conversation ‘safe.’ Rather, it is more about noticing what is going on in our conversation and making decisions about what to do with our observations.”

Don’t be concerned with “getting it right.” That is not your job. You do not have the power to prevent wrong thoughts or mistaken ideas from entering your mind. As Takle states,

¹ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jappersandjangers/2016/07/on-prayer-thoughts-from-simone-weil/>

² Available at Deeper Walk International bookstore. <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/collections/david-takle>

“we need to trust that God is able to call attention to the quality of our thoughts throughout a conversation and show us what is true and right.” Your job is to pay attention and be teachable so that anything you come up with can either be confirmed or revised.

After quieting (or focusing, as Takle describes the process), listening, and discerning, your last step is to respond. You can offer a prayer of thanksgiving, write out what you received from God, and share with Him your feelings and thoughts about what He showed you. You might want to ask for forgiveness or ask Him to show you other ways He would like you to respond.

The Blessings of Two-Way Communication with Jesus

Talking to Jesus enables you to share your heart with Him. Seeing Him and hearing His response to you helps you connect to His heart. The key to growing into maturity and healing from your wounds is to know that, in the midst of your difficulties, Jesus is there and He is taking care of you. Coming to see yourself, your experiences, and others in your life as He sees them is a game changer.

One of my journal entries captures God’s heart for me in my difficulties well:

“I know it is hard to sit with Me when you are in such pain. If you fill your stomach with food, your mind with plans, and your body with activity, you don’t have to feel the pain so much. But it also closes Me out. I want to be in the inner sanctum with you, My love. I long to look into your eyes and see what is inside you. I am gently knocking on your door. Please open it and let Me be with you in the difficult places. I will help you. I will give you the strength to go through this. Cling to Me, My love. I want to be with you, in whatever you are going through. Share your pain with Me... You are Mine, dear Misa. You belong to Me. I will care well for you. Trust Me.”

I had a pattern of avoiding being close to Jesus when I was experiencing deep emotional pain. That was because I did not have a true picture of His heart for me. I was afraid of feeling the pain so I would not want to talk to the One who knew my pain. In doing that, I cut myself off from being connected to the very One who could heal my pain. It really is a lie from the Enemy that we cannot trust God with our pain. He uses it to keep us from the healing that God so patiently waits to bestow upon us.

And another entry:

“It doesn’t matter what is going on inside or around you... I am glad to be here with you. Whatever the challenges are, I want to walk through them with you. You are so tired, My love. I want you to rest in My arms, knowing that My love for you will never fail. I am taking care of you. You can depend on Me. I know everything that is going on and I am involved in all of it. Keep talking to Me about it. Listen to My response. Know My heart. I will never, ever leave you or forsake you. You are My beloved child.”

Letting Jesus into your pain will give you what you need to get through it. Allowing Him

to attune to you takes the wind out of the pain's sails. Sharing your joys with Jesus deepens and multiplies them. Whatever the feelings, His heart for you is that of perfect love.

Approaching Jesus for the sole purpose of healing your pain falls short of what He wants to give you. You see, His deepest desire is just to be close to you. He longs for YOUR presence! Yes, the Creator of the universe wants to be near you. David Takle, in his book *Whispers of My Abba*³ says, "If we can experience God as He truly is, our fears will become a vapor and melt away."

We all have things that get in the way of staying next to the side of our sweet Lord. When the old tapes in your head lie to you and your fears invade your peace, what can you do to restore connection with Jesus? Takle says:

"While some people need little more than a nudge in the right direction in order to hear God speak to them, others seem to struggle a lot and can hardly sense God's voice at all. This can be quite disconcerting, and people may wonder if they are doing something wrong or if God is holding out on them for some reason... It might be reassuring to know that even those who find conversations with God to be fairly natural can experience difficulty hearing from time to time. No one has a consistently clear connection. Problems can vary from being uncertain about what we are receiving, to feeling lost, to sensing absolutely nothing at all. But none of these issues represent a moral failure on our part or any reluctance on God's part to engage with us. With a little help, most of us can reconnect with God and begin hearing from him again."

In chapter 9 of his book, David discusses several problems that can get in the way of connection with God, including:

- Being too passive
- Not recognizing God's Spirit
- Personal disbelief
- Anger at God
- Fear of God
- Shame and self-rejection
- Relational blocks

Finding a Model

As with all the relational brain skills you are learning in your Journey Group, finding someone to show you what the skill looks like with hands and feet is essential. Pray that God will bring someone into your life who hears Him well. Read books by people who chronicle their journeys into closer intimacy with Jesus.

Another book I highly recommend is *Back to Joy* by Toni M. Daniels. Toni shares her

³ Available in the Deeper Walk International bookstore. <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/collections/david-takle>

heart through her “intimate journey with Jesus into emotional health and maturity.” She writes of a time that she found herself on the beach with Jesus during prayer and encountered His heart intimately:

“Listen carefully to me...Eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food... Stop scraping for the scraps of acceptance and love, validation, and worth that fall at others’ feet. Instead, come, pull up a chair, and let Me delight in you. My enjoying you is right food, good and satisfying, and there is plenty to feast on. Sit down and have a meal. You are worth that and so much more to Me...

“Now that you are feasting on My love for you, My enjoyment of you, My deep affection for you, My validation of you, listen intently to Me so that you will live, truly live. Once you are here feasting on My love for you, then I will speak to you words that will change you. They will be so profound, I guarantee they will transform your heart so that you will walk into your world with joy, knowing I am so delighted to be with you no matter what. And I will lead you out in peace. Your thoughts will no longer be racing to and fro trying to find the crumbs left over from others. No, you will go in peace, quieted, knowing there is plenty here for you when you need it. Knowing I am here, waiting for you to come.”

I hope you begin to get the picture of what intimacy with Jesus can look like. It will always synchronize with scripture. It will have the ring of truth. It will remind you and others of the God that you know.

Practicing the Skill

If you would like to learn the practice of listening to God and journaling what He is saying to you, I recommend the book *Joyful Journey*⁴ by Wilder, Kang, Loppnow & Loppnow. Reviewers say: “I have begun practicing the journaling rhythm described in the book and it has brought me into a deeper and more intimate relationship with God,” and “A great way to connect with the heart of God and with yourself and people,” and one more, “Reading this book restored my hope in having a deep connection with my Savior. It gave me the tools to access & feel the love my Lord has for me whenever I feel myself drifting away from Him.”

Immanuel Prayer is another excellent practice to help you deepen your connection to Jesus and learning to hear His voice.

Ponder, Journal and Discuss:

1. Using God’s characteristics to initiate 2-way prayer: Meditate on one of the following characteristics of God; journal your thoughts and praise to Him; wait and journal what thoughts you sense back from Him.

⁴ Available in the Deeper Walk International bookstore. <https://deeper-walk-international.myshopify.com/collections/frontpage/products/joyful-journey-listening-to-immanuel>

- God is a restorer
- God is the One who looks after me
- God is my first love

2. Using Scripture to initiate 2-way prayer: Meditate on one of the following verses; journal your thoughts and praise to Him; wait and journal what thoughts you sense back from Him.

- Psalm 16:2 – “You are my Lord; apart from You I have no good thing.”
- Psalm 48:9 – “Within Your temple, O God, we meditate on Your unfailing love.”
- Psalm 138:8 – “The Lord will fulfill [His purpose] for me; Your love, O Lord, endures forever – You do not abandon the works of Your hands.”



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 6: Listening Prayer in Community

"The Key to following Jesus is hearing Him. Not only do we need to develop our spiritual ability to listen for Jesus to speak to us, we need to learn this also as friendship groups, families and marriages."

– *Christians Together*

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:3

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:27

The ability to hear your Lord's voice as an individual is a good and important thing. It is the first step to growing a community that is able to be connected to God together and discern what He wants to do in your midst. As you learn to discern His voice in your life, it is important to share with trusted, mature others what God seems to be saying. Not only can you ask one another whether you are hearing correctly, but also, what are you missing? God may give you pieces of His truth, but none of you will hear the whole picture.

Each of you has gifts, understanding, and experiences in specific areas. You also have limitations as a result of the particular sins, wounds, and lies that you grew up with and how you responded to those things.

As you listen to Jesus together it is important to remember that no single one of you can hear the entirety of God's voice. Each of you have areas in your lives that you experience blocks or simply a lack in experience and knowledge that limits you from receiving all aspects that God desires to share on a subject. This is why you need each other! A hand cannot know what an eye can and vice versa. You must be careful to live in humble community as you seek to know the mind and heart of God so that none of your weaknesses prevail. I love to sit with my friends and pray as we seek Him and listen to the parts of God's heart and mind flow from others as they hear things I would never even have thought to ask about.

How Do We Hear and Respond to the Voice of Jesus Together?

"My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 2:1-5 ESV

Jesus wants to be Lord of each of you and Lord of His Body, the church. How can the church put Him in the place of Lordship if they cannot discern His voice with fellow believers?

Here are eight steps to discerning God's thoughts about something as a community:

1. Quiet yourselves and open your hearts, minds, spirits and bodies to the influence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit to prepare you to hear Jesus.
 - a. Corporately do the Shalom My Body exercise
 - b. Listen and attune to one another using Check-ins
 - c. Share appreciations with each other and let your minds, bodies and spirits soak in gratitude for five minutes
 - d. Welcome and acknowledge Jesus' presence in your midst and ask Him to make Himself known to you today
2. Connect to your own feelings, becoming aware of your emotions and thoughts, and invite Jesus into those places
 - a. Ask "Lord, help me to know what I am feeling right now"
 - b. Pay attention to body feelings and emotions
 - c. Notice how and where you are experiencing your feelings physically and relationally
 - d. Pay attention to your thoughts and ask God to reveal to you anything that is happening underneath what you are sensing
3. Bring a question before the Lord that is of mutual concern to the individuals that are gathered together
4. Spend time in silence with each of you writing down what you hear God saying to you or see Him showing you
5. Share together what you are sensing from the Lord, receiving each other's thoughts with humility and respect while holding all of the information shared with open hands
6. Notice the commonalities among all of your impressions
 - a. This becomes the foundation of your future actions
7. Notice the complementarities among your thoughts
 - a. Be open to how God may be filling in something you may have missed
8. Notice if there are any conflicting thoughts
 - a. Bring those to the Lord and ask for clarification, sitting in silence again

- b. If you are still getting conflicting ideas, seek out some scriptures on that topic and read them together three times, sitting in a quiet, humble stance of listening between each reading
- c. Share what you each heard or saw

Practicing the Skill of *Listening in Community*

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Psalm 25:4-5 ESV

Spend time this week with a prayer partner and talk about your mutual concerns. Is there a question you are seeking God's wisdom on, or needing direction for your family or ministry? After you have agreed what the mutual question or concern is, walk through the above eight steps.

This can work even better with a group of people. Gather family or friends or co-laborers in ministry and invite Jesus to speak to you together.

Some guidelines to keep in mind are:

- Stay humble- everyone hears from God a little differently and everyone has something to offer to the conversation.
- ALWAYS keep the relationships bigger than the problem.
- If you can't come to consensus, sit on it for a time. You can come back to it after everyone has had time to simmer with it for a while.
- Don't assume that you are hearing 100% correctly, ever.
- Get confirmation from others who were not present.
- If the question concerns a decision someone else must make about his/her own life, trust God to lead them to His answer. It is never up to you to convince someone that what you think God is saying is the absolute truth. Differences of opinion happen. It is always the responsibility of the individual most affected to discern the truth for him/herself. After receiving the input of trusted, mature others, it is up to that person to decide how God is leading.
- If there is conflict, stay connected and stay relational. Notice when your RCs are down and take responsibility to turn them back on. Don't try to control the outcome, and don't abandon each other.
- Pay attention to when you or others are beginning to feel overwhelmed. Take a break.
- Be tender with your weaknesses and the weaknesses of one another. Practice more appreciation.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

Ponder, Journal and Discuss:

1. Take a moment to quiet and connect with Jesus. Ask Him to help you notice what feelings come up to you as you think about this idea of *Listening in Community* for the purpose of guidance. As you picture yourself entering this exercise, what feelings do you notice in your body? What positive or negative thoughts come into your mind? Ask God to shed light on source of these feelings and thoughts.
2. The *Listening in Community* exercise can also be done with the group listening to God about a special concern of one group member. What would you see as some benefits of having a small group to listen to God with you about a decision? What practices do you see listed in the lesson (or from your own experience) that would help make *Listening in Community* a safe, protective experience for all?
3. Imagine that you have a group that is practicing *Listening in Community*. What are some current situations or concerns you have that you'd find helpful to bring to such a group?



Heart-Focused Community

Lesson 7: Meeting Jesus in Our Pain

Facing Our Pain

Everyone has pain in their lives. What you do with and in that pain will come to dictate who you become. This culture tells you to avoid pain at all costs. This has become a world of numbed, addicted, dissociated people. Or angry people. Perhaps murderously so.

Let's be honest- pain stinks! God did not have pain in mind when He created us as the expression of His love. It was not His heart for us that we suffer. He knew that suffering would come and equipped us to be able to learn to suffer well, but suffering was not His original plan.

Sometimes you might think that a life without pain could be a good thing. Actually, God allowed our bodies and minds to feel pain for a reason. The pain lets your body know that something is wrong and needs to be fixed. There are a tiny number of people in the world who have a congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis, or CIPA — a rare genetic disorder that makes them unable to feel pain. They do not take their hands off a hot stove because they cannot feel the burns.

Have you ever seen pain as a gift? No one likes to have a migraine or welcomes the painful part of a complicated, risky surgery. No one jumps for joy over the thought of losing a loved one or facing the reality of an abuse memory. No, I am not suggesting that you become masochistic.

But pain, like all feelings, has a purpose. It provides a red flag that something is not right. Without it, you don't take your hand off the hot stove. Pain is God's provision to help us see correctly that we are in danger.

The Problem of Pain

CS Lewis wrote a book with that title and, in it, he discusses the human conflict many have with the suffering they see in the world and still believing in a good God. It goes like this: "If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness or power, or both." *The Problem of Pain*

Lewis goes on to explain that, though "with God all things are possible," God cannot, in fact

do all things. He cannot:

- Do things that are self-contradictory
- Do things that are “intrinsically impossible” (things that would go against the nature of His created order)
- Give you free will and withhold free will from you at the same time
- Create a society that is both free without it also being relatively independent and “inexorable” in nature (impossible to stop some things from happening)

Because it is more important to God that we have the choice to freely choose to love Him, we also must have the option to freely choose to reject Him. We have both of those options with one another, as well. Because of this, we can choose to hurt each other and bring pain to our Creator. He cannot remove those choices without also taking away our choice to love Him without coercion.

Psalm 91:9-11 says, “Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall be allowed to befall you, nor any plague come near your tent. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.” Doesn’t this mean that He will never let something bad happen to you? Some people may have come to believe that through a false teaching or misunderstanding of scripture and have been unable to reconcile that verse with the fact that bad things do happen to them. It then may feel like God is not keeping His promises and taking care of them. The natural question that comes to mind at that point is, “what have I done wrong to make this happen?” Have you failed to make the LORD your refuge sufficiently? That is possible, but it might also be a misinterpretation of these verses.

If you go on to read the rest of that Psalm, you will find this: “Because she has loved Me, therefore I will deliver her; I will protect her, because she knows My name. When she calls upon Me, I will answer her; I will be with her in trouble; I will deliver her and honor her,” (my gender changes). What we see here is that God meets us IN our pain and delivers us from it rather than keeping all pain away from us.

There is something we must do, however, to LET Him meet us there...“I must be willing to stand in the middle of my pain long enough to discover that God wants to meet me there and show me the sufficiency of His love.” Amy Brown

Carry Your Lament to God

David Takle writes in his *Forming* curriculum: “by fully embracing our distress and bringing it to God so we could receive His care, we experienced far more joy...”

Sometimes when people come to God, their pain keeps them from connecting to Him. One day a client came for Immanuel Prayer and was angry with God. Initially she was unable to hear or see her LORD because she felt shame for feeling that anger. As I encouraged her to

bring ALL she was thinking and feeling to Him, she was able to meet Him in the MIDST of those feelings, share them with Him, connect and then receive His comfort and healing.

Can you tell God about your pain? The psalmist did. These Psalms are called laments. Israel's King David was good at bringing all his emotions to God and that is one of the reasons he developed such an intimate relationship with Him. When you do not share your feelings with someone you will never grow close to them.

God invites us to speak to him with utter honesty and boldness. This is different from grumbling against him, as the Israelites did when they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land (Num. 11). The Israelites spoke about God behind his back—or so they thought. Conversely, the complaints of the psalmists are spoken directly *to* God. And whereas the wilderness generation had given up on God, the psalmists had not. Even though they often addressed God in anger, they spoke *to* him, asking for help and hoping that he would answer them in their distress." Tremper Longman III, from the article *Pouring Out Your Heart in Lament to God* on crosswalk.com.

After David tells God about his problems, He realigns his perspective. Realizing that he is speaking to the God of the universe, he allows that God to help him see his situation as He sees it. He finds God's presence within the pain and reaches his hand out and invites the LORD in. According to Michael D. Guinan in *Biblical Laments: Prayer Out of Pain*, our lament is really an act of faith.

Be honest with God. Tell Him how you feel. Pour your heart out to Him. And then remember who He is. Remember what He has done, in history and in your own life.

Practicing the Skill

Once you are ready to open your heart to God in your pain there are several ways you can practice connecting to His presence and allowing Him to attune with and comfort you.

Connecting with God while you are feeling strong difficult emotions can be hard sometimes. The Immanuel Prayer process can help you overcome that challenge. As you see in the attachment, Immanuel Healing, God with Us, it is hard to find Immanuel's presence when you are sitting in the "thorn-filled pain seat." In order to connect with God you may have an easier time starting with the "appreciation memories seat." Look through your growing library of appreciation memories and select one that evokes strong positive feelings for you. As you sit in that memory, reconnect with those feelings. Remember the good gifts and how God has helped you in the past. While you are experiencing appreciation for that memory, notice where Jesus was in it. Once you connected to Him, ask Him where He is with you now.

Even better yet, start in the "interactive memory seat" and recall a time that you sensed the LORD's presence with you and recreate that experience in your mind. Then notice where He is with you now. As you connect to His presence, you can walk with Him to the top of the hill and look back at your pain together. Ask Him what He wants you to see, know, or sense about

your current pain.

If you still have trouble finding a connection with God, consider seeking coaching for Immanuel Prayer. Having someone walk with you through this process and help you to notice where Jesus is can be a wonderful gift. It can take practice!

Another exercise to try is Immanuel Journaling. Through this journaling exercise, you write what you sense God is seeing, hearing, and attuning with you about. There is a basic outline with the writing prompts on the last page of this lesson.

Another way to get “unstuck” from something painful is to have a mature friend attune with you. Two warnings here, though: be careful not to overwhelm someone else, and do not lean into a person without also looking to God to provide attunement, perspective, and strength to process your pain properly.

Last, remember that “healing is not found in the absence of pain, but in the presence of Immanuel.”¹ The goal is not to make the pain stop, but to draw near to Immanuel in it. Ultimately, let the pain draw you near to your LORD and deepen your intimacy with Him as a result.

Ponder, Journal and Discuss:

1. Often it is helpful to have a reminder of our history with God before we begin to pour out our pain. Using Psalm 78 as an example, begin to write a history of the good things God has done in your family history, your church or other fellowship, your own spiritual milestones, etc. Just as Israel used Psalm 78, you will be able to re-read this historical narrative of God’s goodness when you are suffering. Focusing on appreciation will help you enter into a relational state so you can hear God’s voice and receive His comfort.
2. As is true with all Journey Group exercises, it is good to start with mild examples while we are learning. Taking a mild upset in your life, write out your own prayer of lament to God. Remember to include words of trust and faith that God will answer.
3. This is the last lesson in our Unit about Heart-Focused Community. Look over the following thoughts from this unit and ask God what He wants you to know and what next steps He might be preparing for you in this area of community.
 - Belonging is the joy we create around us, and because God is infinitely creative, there are infinite flavors of belonging. (Lesson 1, Creating Belonging)
 - Transformation happens not in an environment where everything is ideal, but in an environment where everything can be *faced*, and is faced together. When we have the weak and strong together, facing their fears and weaknesses honestly and seeking God’s perspective on

¹ Joyful Journey, Wilder, Kang, Loppnow, available from Deeper Walk bookstore (see Immanuel Journaling bookmark below)

everything, transformation is possible for all. (Lesson 2, Protective Community)

- . . . Rest is the reminder that the journey is too much for us and we have limitations that require us to pause from interacting. Rest means, 'I need a breather.'" (from 1 Kings 19:7) (Lesson 3, Quieting)
- "Effective listening requires active reflection, a lot of curiosity, a willingness to be transparent, and seasoned discernment." (Lesson 5, Two-Way Conversation with God)

Immanuel Journaling

Healing is found not in the absence of pain, but in the presence of Immanuel. Immanuel journaling is designed to help you intimately interact with God, who is glad to be with you and capable of helping you.

Take a moment to...

Take a few deep breaths to slow yourself down... Be fully present to the presence of Immanuel. Ask the Holy Spirit to ground your Spirit in the love of God.

A. Interactive Gratitude

Dear God,

Think of something you are grateful for and begin sharing your heart with God.

Dear child of mine,

Take a moment to listen to God's response and write down your impression of how God would respond to you

B. Thought Rhyming

1. I can see you...

Imagine God seeing your situation, environment, movement and inner experiences, etc.

Example: I can see you sitting at your dining table in the dark, breathing heavily. I can see your eyes beginning to fill with tears. I can see you crying inside.

2. I can hear you...

Imagine God hearing all your thoughts that are spoken and unspoken

Example: I can hear you say to yourself, "How will I ever get everything done?" "Why isn't my partner helping me and concerned as much as I am?" "Why do I keep messing up like this?" "I'm so frustrated with myself."

3. I understand how big this is for you...

Imagine God who knows you well, validating your experience with compassion

Example: I know that this is a pretty big deal for you. It feels all consuming for you. It looks like this is about to overtake you. This is as big of a deal as when your parents announced their divorce.

4. I am glad to be with you and I see your weakness tenderly...

Imagine God calling your name lovingly and simply enjoying being with you

Example: I am always glad to interact with you anytime including this moment of frustration / pain / sadness.

5. I can do something about what you are going through...

Imagine God assuring you that He has the power to help you and give you everything you need

Example: I am with you and for you. I will strengthen you with my grace. Remember how your friend encouraged you last week, I will continue in that way.

C. Read your interaction with God out loud to someone you trust.

www.ImmanuelJournaling.com



Maturity Matters
Lesson 1
Intro to Maturity

“Maturity is about reaching one’s God-given potential. It means maximizing our skills and talents, and using them effectively, while growing into the full capability of our individual designs.”¹

Having sufficient joy strength lays the foundation for all other **maturity** and growth. People without sufficient joy strength, which means an underdeveloped “joy center” in the right side of the brain, can appear “just fine” for the first 20 or sometimes even 30 years of life, but eventually life’s wear and tear reveals the faulty construction, and the painful process of collapsing begins. A person without a firm joy foundation cannot withstand the stress of breakups or losses, nor survive the pressure of growth and **maturity**.

A person without sufficient joy strength may turn to BEEPS (behaviors, event, experiences, people and substances) to artificially regulate their emotions and create joy and quiet. Increased usage of BEEPS is frequently seen when a person with low joy strength (capacity) suffers losses or failure.

There is very good news, however, for those of us with serious maturity gaps!

While most of the brain stops growing at certain stages of development, the brain’s “joy center”, located in the right orbital prefrontal cortex, is the only section of the brain that never loses its capacity to grow! It grows in response to real, joy-filled relationships.²

For this week’s lesson, read Chapter 0 of Living with Men and review the Infant and Child Stages of Maturity checklist. In Chapter 0, note any words or phrases that seem important or surprising to you. Write down any questions that you want to ask in Journey Group. When you review the Infant and Child Stage Checklists, note both your strengths and any weaknesses or gaps you notice.

¹ From Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, p. 33

² p. 35

A Brief Description Of Maturity Stages

From *The Complete Guide to Living With Men* © 2004 E. James Wilder

Chapter Zero

The Goal

THE LIFE CYCLE FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

Both men and women need to understand these growth stages but for different reasons. There isn't any difference between the life cycle for boys and girls. They must pass through the same stages and transformations, but this book will use mostly male examples. We need to have clear pictures of what male maturity looks like at each stage. Perhaps because so few men mature, they need a clear trail to follow. Men need examples that aren't too bland. Women need to recognize maturity and the lack of it in men, or they will end up depending on men like Alfonse or Billy. Both men and women will need maps and supplies so they can raise their sons to be men, husbands, fathers and elders.

THE FIRST GOAL: BABY

In chapter one we will look extensively at the INFANT STAGE of the baby boy. The infant must experience strong, loving, caring bonds with his parents. These bonds must meet his needs without his having to ask. He must receive life, and learn to express the life that is in him, to everyone's delight. During infancy the baby learns to live joyfully in his mother's world.

The first four years are the baby years. Babies need to receive all good things and learn to express themselves. Each baby learns the value of "just being me" without having to earn anything. During this time his identity will either be built around joy or fear. The child whose "backpack" is filled with joy becomes strong. He will not fear the trails or mountains.

Keeping baby from beginning a life of fear requires breaking life into baby-sized pieces. Each effort leads to letting baby rest in a timely way. The baby years are synchronized to baby's needs. When life comes in his size, baby learns to synchronize and control his mind and emotions. He learns to quiet himself and soon is ready to synchronize himself with others. Relationships that are both joyful and peaceful result from getting his timing right.

These years of infancy prepare him for weaning. In our culture, weaning from the breast or bottle is rarely timed to coincide with when the child can take care of himself. We rush our children into independence as fast as possible. Weaning from infancy is the change from baby to boy. Once a baby has learned to take basic care of his needs, he can transform into a boy who can begin living in his father's world. He moves from life in his home toward life in both his home and community.

The goal for infancy is for babies to organize a strong, joyful, synchronized identity.

THE SECOND GOAL: BOY

The CHILD STAGE begins as the baby becomes a boy at about age four. We will explore the boy's world in chapter three. Once weaned, and able to begin taking care of himself, he will be called a boy and will get quite angry if called a baby.

A boy is more complex than a baby. Boys must learn to ask for the things they need. They must make themselves understandable to others. Boys must discover what satisfies them each day. To do this, each boy must learn to act exactly like himself--like the boy he is in his heart. Boys must develop their talents and resources. Their performance must be self-expression but not as a way to earn approval or love. Boys must learn to receive and give life freely. They must learn to do hard things, things that they don't feel like doing at the time, but which are important and satisfying later. Each boy learns how to pack and carry his own backpack, read a map, keep moving on the trail and enjoy the view.

In preparation for manhood, boys must learn the "big picture" of life. This overall picture of life and maturity becomes his "topo" map. He must also learn the history of his own family because his big picture of life must first apply to people he knows. Family history tells him where *he* is on *his* map.

The goal for childhood is to teach a boy to take care of one person--himself. Taking care of himself must be second nature before he can take care of two or more people at the same time, as men do.

THE THIRD GOAL: MAN

Ideally, the ADULT STAGE begins at age thirteen. The well prepared boy can take excellent care of one person, himself. Given the necessary guidance, the young man is now ready to satisfy the needs of more than one person at a time. Like the other transformations, this one is physical as well as mental and social. His identity will try to reorganize itself and without an older guide, he will end up in a disorganized state. We will look at this in chapter five.

It takes a while to climb the many peaks that separate a self-centered boy from a both-centered man. Adult terrain is where he learns to drive a hard bargain, fair for him and fair for the other. A man looks out for the needs of others as though they were as important as his own. When a man does business, the person he is dealing with gets equal, fair treatment. This stage of development usually takes men into their early twenties. By that time, a man should be able to bargain hard, get a fair deal, not be intimidated by other men, protect others from himself when necessary and take care of a small group to everyone's satisfaction.

A man wants his effects to reflect his personal character and style. Everything he does must meet

this heart-based standard. His adult identity finds its highest challenge in marriage. A man is ready for marriage near the end of the adult stage. By that time he is proficient in sharing life for mutual satisfaction. Because he and she are both adults, they can each take care of themselves and others simultaneously. This kind of partnership is characteristically adult. Sharing life in a way that creates a mutually satisfying story--or imprint on history--brings great joy to adults.

The goal for men is to become a satisfying part of history. A man knows that what he does impacts other people. Therefore he carefully insures that his impact on history (his story) is a good one.

THE FOURTH GOAL: FATHER

In the PARENT STAGE a man uses all he has learned in the first three stages to reach his highest peak--giving life. He already knows what he needs and feels. He is looking out for others like he does for himself. He now learns to give without receiving in return, as we will see in chapter eight. This makes him a father.

You know that you are a father when your child keeps you up all night, screaming in your ear, spitting up on your shirt, and then showing no appreciation for your efforts. You could have bargained hard, like a man, and said, "I'll stay up with you tonight but tomorrow night you must carry me around," but you didn't. Instead you gave without demanding in return. This is the mountain peak you have trained for all your life. As you start this ascent, you know you are a dad.

The father knows what he needs. He already reached his infant goals. No one stays up all night and says, "I never need to sleep." He can express his feelings about it as well, "I'm tired but I love my child." He can take care of himself in the morning using the skills he learned as a boy. When his wife takes over, both are satisfied with the baby's care. At work he drives a hard bargain, but at home he climbs above the tree line into unselfish giving. Only the man who has completed the first three stages can enjoy the climb.

Dad passes on the gift of grace by his unselfish giving. His child learns about having value without having to earn it. By staying up all night Dad says, "My child, you have great value to me. Even if you keep me up all night, spit up on my shirt, mess in your diapers and scream in my ear. Even if you do not care that I am here, you have more than enough value to lose sleep over." That is a dad's heart.

Dad represents God to his family. The chance to portray God is the greatest honor that anyone can have. The father becomes an example of God's heart and character through his unselfish giving.¹ This takes a while, and a father is getting the hang of it about the time his children

¹I know that some of you have forgotten already that fatherhood is *after* adult mutuality. Adults understand that representing God to children is a mutual task. Father and mother both represent God. Immaturity makes us think that it must be one or the other. It is both parents as

become teens. By that time, unselfishness should be second nature to Dad, he will need it.

To be a giver of life, a father must have received enough life that he can spare some. He must share a home where he can protect, serve and enjoy. He must have a share in finding the resources that allow his children to mature.

The goal of fatherhood is to give life joyfully. As a father gives life, his children grow strong.

THE FIFTH GOAL: ELDER

An elder is a father to his community. He is able to treat children who are not biologically his children with the same unselfish care he learned to give to his own. We will study the ELDER STAGE in chapter twelve.

After his children have become men and women, a truly *grand*-father becomes a guide. He helps those who are climbing for the first time. He rescues those who didn't bring maps, forgot their supplies, or even got lost. Elders give life to the "familyless"--the widows, orphans and strangers. They help their community to mature and reach its identity.

Trust is built by elders because they live transparent lives. They no longer hide what they feel so they can be "cool." They are real in ways they haven't been since they were children. They no longer need to protect themselves because they have learned to suffer well. Elders don't withdraw when things go wrong and people fail to live from their hearts. Through authentic involvement, elders resynchronize their community from its broken relationships, failures and failed trust. Elders may not do the work but they help others get their timing right. "This is not the time for that," they say and then again, "this is the time to do something else."

Many people could use an elder or a *grandfather*. In our society we expect older people to buy a Winnebago and drive into the sunset. We, therefore, have few elders, few spare fathers, few guides, and few people helping those in need. There is a great lack of elders in our churches and communities. We need men who have been to the mountain.

Old mountaineers die when they have no one to guide. Each elder must have a community of his own, a place where he is recognized and trusted as an elder. Elders must be given a proper place in the community structure for they would not use force to take it.

"I know just what you need," must echo again in the canyons.

Every elder prepares to face his greatest transformation--a plunge into Iceberg Lake. When elders die, it is a time of great blessing. This is the final decontamination process from all that may have gone wrong on his journey. Everything about him that received and gave life emerges beyond Iceberg Lake. Anything about him that gave death, stays in the lake forever.

well as either one.

The goal for elders is to help their community grow up. Elders raise communities the way parents raise children. Under elders, communities reach their full maturity.

Infant Stage

- I have experienced strong, loving, caring bonds with mother/a woman
- I have experienced strong, loving, caring bonds with father/a man
- Important needs were met until I learned to ask
- Others took the lead and synchronized with me and my feelings first
- Quiet together times helped me calm myself with people around
- Important people have seen me through the "eyes of heaven"
- I can both receive and give life
- I receive with joy and without guilt or shame
- I can now synchronize with others and their feelings
- I found people to imitate so that I now have a personality I like
- I learned to regulate and quiet the "big six" emotions
 - Anger
 - Fear
 - Sadness
 - Disgust
 - Shame
 - Hopeless/despair
- I can return to joy from every emotion and restore broken relationships
- I stay the same person over time
- I know how to rest

Child Stage

- I can do things I don't feel like doing
- I can do hard things (even if they cause me some pain)
- I can separate my feelings, my imagination and reality in my relationships
- I am comfortable with reasonable risks, attempts and failures
- I have received love I did not have to earn
- I know how my family came to be the way it is—family history
- I know how God's family came to be the way it is
- I know the "big picture" of life with the stages of maturity
- I can take care of myself
- I ask for what I need
- I enjoy self-expression
- I am growing in the things I am good at doing (personal resources and talents)
- I help other people to understand me better if they don't respond well to me
- I have learned to control my cravings
- I know what satisfies me
- I see myself through the "eyes of heaven"

E. James Wider
From *Living With Men*

See *Bringing the Life Model to Life* for a complete list of all stages of maturity.

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

THE INFANT STAGE: BIRTH THROUGH AGE 3

Newborns and toddlers are included here, up to the age where they can effectively say what their needs are.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Learning to receive.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in adult life when this task is not completed: **Weak or stormy relationships.**

If our primary dependency needs are not met, we will spend the rest of our lives trying to get others to take care of us.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Lives in joy: Expands capacity for joy, learns that joy is one's normal state, and builds joy strength.	Parents delight in the infant's wonderful and unique existence.	Weak identity; fear and coldness dominate bonds with others.
2. Develops trust.	Parents build strong, loving bonds with the infant — bonds of unconditional love.	Has difficulty bonding, which often leads to manipulative, self-centered, isolated, or discontented personality.
3. Learns how to receive.	Gives care that matches the infants needs without the infant asking.	Is withdrawn, disengaged, self-stimulating, and unresponsive.
4. Begins to organize self into a person through relationships.	Discovers true characteristics of the infant's unique identity through attention to the child's behavior and character.	Has an inability to regulate emotions.
5. Learns how to return to joy from every unpleasant emotion.	Provides enough safety and companionship during difficulties, so the infant can return to joy from any other emotion.	Has uncontrollable emotional outbursts, excessive worry and depression. Avoids or gets stuck in certain emotions.

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

Characteristics of “Adult infants”

Adult infants who have not received in these important areas as babies, will always be needy as adults.

- They will not be able to take care of themselves emotionally nor will they be able to appropriately receive important things from others.
- Adult infants will not ask for what they need because they believe if others really cared for them, they would figure out what they needed.
- Adult infants cannot handle criticism even if it is valid and constructive, because they see any negative feedback as a personal attack
- Adult infants are often possessive of relationships, territory, power and possessions.
- Adult infants use fear bonding to ensure others will stay bonded to them.
- Although “high functioning” adult infants can appear responsible in many areas, like handling personal finances and being punctual and reliable, emotionally they are severely crippled making it difficult for them to have successful and enduring relationships.

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

THE CHILD STAGE: AGE 4 THROUGH 12

Transition from infant stage to child stage is marked by the child being able to say what is needed. Age 12 is the earliest age this stage can be completed.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Taking care of self.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM in an adult life when this task is not completed: **Not taking responsibility for self.**

“Child adults” can take care of themselves but they can only take care of themselves often at the expense of others.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Asks for what is needed; can say what one thinks and feels	Teaches and allows child to appropriately articulate needs.	Experiences continual frustration/disappointment because needs are not met. Often passive aggressive.
2. Learns what brings personal satisfaction.	Helps child to evaluate consequences of own behaviors and to identify what satisfies self.	Is obsessed with or addicted to food, drugs, sex, money, and power in a desperate chase to find satisfaction.
3. Develops enough persistence to do hard things.	Challenges and encourages child to do difficult tasks child does not feel like doing.	Experiences failure, remains stuck and undependable, is consumed with comfort and fantasy life.
4. Develops personal resources and talents.	Provides opportunities to develop child's unique talents and interests.	Fills life with unproductive activities despite God given abilities.
5. Knows self and takes responsibility to make self understandable to others.	Guides in discovering the unique characteristics of the child's heart.	Fails to develop true identity; conforms to outside influences that misshape identity.
6. Understands how he or she fits into history as well as the “big picture” of what life is about.	Educates the child about the family history as well as the history of the family of God.	Feels disconnected from history and is unable to protect self from family lies or dysfunctions that are handed down.

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

- “Child adults” who have adult bodies but are emotionally at the child level of maturity, will always appear ego-centric.
- Taking care of self includes the ability to push through on difficult tasks. This requires developing patience and persistence and takes some guidance. Unfortunately for all, there is a current “entitlement” trend in America. It erroneously suggests that if you are worthwhile, you will not have to do hard things. *This misconception goes against all conventional wisdom and severely limits the development of maturity.*

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

THE ADULT STAGE: AGE 13 TO BIRTH OF 1ST CHILD - Age 13 is about the earliest age at which adult-level tasks may be accomplished

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Taking care of two people simultaneously.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not completed: **Lacks the capacity to be in mutually satisfying relationships.**

You will know when a person has graduated from the child level of maturity to the adult level because he will shift from being a self-centered child to a both-centered adult. While a child needs to learn me-centered fairness (how do I make it fair for me), an adult learns we-centered fairness (how do I make it fair for us). Mutuality is the trademark of an adult because he can take care of two people at the same time.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Cares for self and others simultaneously in mutually satisfying relationships.	Provides the chance to participate in group life.	Is self-centered, leaves others dissatisfied and frustrated.
2. Remains stable in difficult situations and knows how to return self and others to joy.	Affirms that the young adult will make it through difficult times.	Conforms to peer pressure and participates in negative and destructive group activities.
3. Bonds with peers; develops group identity.	Provides positive environment/activities where peers can bond	A loner with tendencies to isolate; excessive self importance.
4. Takes responsibility for how personal actions affect others including protecting others from self.	Teaches young adults that their behaviors impact others and impact history.	Is controlling, harmful, blaming, and unprotective to others.
5. Contributes to the community; articulates “who we are” as part of belonging to the community.	Provides opportunities to be involved in important community tasks.	Does not become a life-giving contributor to the community; is self-absorbed and uses others — drains society.
6. Expresses the characteristics of his or her heart in a deepening personal style.	Holds the person accountable while still accepting and affirming the aspects of his or her true self.	Is driven to ‘play roles”, prove self to the world, get results, and seek approval.

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The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

- When people with adult bodies are functioning below the adult level of maturity, you will know because in the end your interactions with them will never feel mutual. You will go away feeling like in order to maintain a relationship with them you will always need to give more, listen more or tolerate more than they would ever be willing to do for you.
- Adults know how to remain stable in difficult situations and can return self and others to joy. People who cannot do this will either avoid, escape or get stuck in certain emotions, crippling many of their endeavors and relationships. EX. If I avoid all anger, it eventually explodes into rage. If I get stuck in shame and failure, I may become depressed or even suicidal. And if I escape pain and rejection by doing drugs or having a sordid affair, I've only increased my misery and suffering.

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The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

THE PARENT STAGE: BIRTH OF 1ST CHILD UNTIL YOUNGEST CHILD HAS BECOME AN ADULT

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Sacrificially taking care of children.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not completed: **Distant or conflicted family relationships.**

You know you are at the parent stage when you can sacrificially care for your children without resenting the sacrifice or expecting to receive anything for your efforts. You may feel exhausted or overwhelmed at times, but you still will be able to appreciate, not begrudge, your sacrifice.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Protects, serves, and enjoys one's family.	The community gives the opportunity for both parents to sacrificially contribute to their family.	Family members are (1) at risk, (2) deprived, and (3) feel worthless or unimportant.
2. Is devoted to taking care of children without expecting to be taken care of by the children in return.	The community promotes devoted parenting.	Children have to care for parents which is impossible and leads to child abuse/neglect and/or "parentified" children which blocks instead of facilitating their maturity.
3. Allows and provides spiritual parents and siblings for their children.	The community encourages relationships between children and extended spiritual family members.	Children are vulnerable to peer pressure, to cults, to any misfortune, and are less likely to succeed in life's goals. Parents get overwhelmed without extended family support.
4. Learns how to bring children through difficult times and return to joy from other emotions.	The community supports parents by giving them encouragement, guidance, breaks, and opportunities to recharge.	Hopeless, depressed, disintegrating family units develop.

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The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

- \Σ ÷ Entitlement philosophy pervades modern parenting. “I’m entitled to do all the things I was doing as an adult, and I should not have to make any sacrifices of time, money or social activities.” Do not misunderstand. Parenting does involve sacrifice, but it is not about giving up who you are, but about becoming who you are!
- It is vitally important for parents to learn how to **protect, serve** and **enjoy** their families for all members to be fulfilled. Balancing all three requires community support and elder guidance.
 - Mature parents are aware that they cannot provide everything their children will need and allow opportunities for others to come alongside the child.
 - In the end, mature parenting is about representing God to one’s family. When you accomplish that, you are ready to graduate to the final level of maturity.

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

THE ELDER STAGE: BEGINNING WHEN YOUNGEST CHILD HAS BECOME AN ADULT.

PRIMARY TASK to be completed during this stage: **Sacrificially taking care of the community.**

PRIMARY RESULTING PROBLEM when this task is not completed: **The overall maturity of the community declines.**

Most in our culture never make it to this level of maturity. This is unfortunate because the success of any country, community, school or church body will have a direct correlation to the presence of true elders who are guiding and advising.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Establishes an accurate community identity and acts like self in the midst of difficulty.	The community recognizes elders in the community.	There is meaninglessness, disorder, loss of direction, and disintegration of all social structures from government to family.
2. Prizes each community member and enjoys the true self in each individual looking past their flaws and facades to see the persons they have been designed to be.	The community provides opportunities for elders to be involved with those in all of the other maturity stages.	Life-giving interactions diminish along with life giving interdependence stunting the community's growth. Fragile, at-risk people fail to heal or survive.
3. Parents and matures the community.	The community creates a structure to help the elders do their job which allows people at every stage of maturity to interact properly with those in other stages and to listen to the wisdom of maturity.	When elders do not lead, unqualified people do, resulting in immature interactions at every level of the community.
4. Gives life to those without a family through spiritual adoption.	Places a high value on being a spiritual family to those with no family.	When the "familyless" are not individually taken care of, poverty, violence, crisis, crime, and mental disorders increase.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True elders establish an accurate community identity by finding out what their community has been designed by God to be, rather than imposing what they would like it to be. • True elders can act like themselves in the midst of difficulty. • True elders can handle criticism and rejection, speak the truth in love even when it is not easy or popular, serve without being appreciated, encourage needed growth and change, delight in younger people's skill and power, and place what is best for the community over personal fairness or preference 		

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MATURITY MATTERS, LESSON 2 Infant, Child and Transitions

INFANT AND CHILD MATURITY GROWTH AND TRANSITION

All of us will likely find gaps in our maturity in the Infant and Child Maturity levels. No parent or community is perfect, and our society has become more mobile, busy, and neighbors are unlikely to know each other closely. This prevents the village from raising the children – providing a wide range of brain skills for a child to learn from a variety of family members and friends. Fortunately, our brain’s chemistry retains the ability to grow and change throughout life.

In *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, it is observed that as we move through the maturity stages, transitions can be difficult in a predictable way. As we enter a maturity stage, we are clunky and awkward at the skills, and we often turn to others for help. Over time, the skills become more automatic (less conscious) and we fluidly walk through our day, utilizing the skills with ease. Over time, tension builds as we begin to feel a natural desire to move forward into the next stage of maturity. This may be most easily seen in the transition between the child and adult phases – one moment an 11 year old girl is happily playing with dolls, and later the same day she is offering to help her mother cook dinner, mixing up biscuits with surprising skill. If her identity has been formed around joy, her family will enjoy her childlikeness as well as her new maturity.¹

This transformation cycle can take place periodically throughout life, and is often accompanied by anxiety, depression or other new feelings. Transformations can follow healing or can take place during the completion of a normal maturity stage. Transformation gives a person a new identity when the old one is broken or too small. As the cycle is completed, a more fully developed self emerges, life skills increase, and so does joy. However, if our awkward transitions are not welcomed with joy and encouragement, we may “stall” our maturity and miss out on important skills. As we seek to replace these skills, it is important that we build our joy strength and capacity by spending time with people who are glad to be with us as we fill our gaps and move on to new maturity.

¹ P. 43-47

Ponder, Journal, and Discuss

1. An infant's primary need is to receive, and if this need is not met, "we spend the rest of our lives trying to get others to take care of us" What does this look like in adults who did not learn how to receive? (Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, p. 36-39; Living with Men, p. 277-283)

2. What are some examples of the behaviors of "child adults" who can only take care of themselves, often at the expense of others? (Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, p. 36-39)

3. Asking people who are above us in maturity to help identify the maturity tasks that we have not yet completed can propel us to our next level. Who can you ask to help you with this? (Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, p. 43-44)



MATURITY MATTERS, LESSON 3 Adult Maturity: RARE

Lesson 3: Adult Maturity Remain Relational, Act Like Yourself, Return to Joy, Endure Suffering

As we've looked at the Maturity Indicators Chart, we see that maturation requires two elements: 1) the individual completes the maturity tasks (the first column) and 2) the family and community provide whatever is necessary for maturation (the middle column) The chart illustrates quite dramatically just how interdependent people are in the maturation process. When family and community fail, a deficit will show up in the middle column, and a "Type A" trauma (the absence of something necessary for growth) is the direct result. The chart clarifies how trauma recovery is related to maturity, and how it is dependent on particular kinds of input from family and community. Persons cannot become prepared to give life unless they first receive it.

People have a God-given, inner desire to increase their maturity so they will be able to live from their hearts. Maturity is often blocked, however, and the blocks usually come from absences in the other two areas--from unfinished trauma recovery, and from the lack of life-giving relationships.

Focusing on our gaps in maturity can lead to depression and discouragement. However, the book *RARE Leadership* by Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder¹ provides a positive picture of healthy adult maturity, using the acronym "RARE."

Remain relational
Act like your Christ self
Return to joy in negative emotions
Endure hardship well

What do these short statements mean, and how on earth do we do them? Remember that Life Model Works has created a MODEL of how life works when we are fully mature, fully able to live as the person God created

¹ Available at the Deeper Walk International online bookstore

us to be.

Growing into these statements is a lifelong task, not something that we accomplish with an afternoon of prayer and Bible study, or an inner healing prayer appointment. What do these statements mean, and how can we accelerate our growth in these areas?

Remain relational -- This is JOB ONE! Keep yourself in relational mode, so that you are able to stay connected and concerned about the people involved in your situation. Relational circuits on = relational mode.

Act like your Christ self – Who did God create me to be? How do I behave as that person in this situation? In John 5:19, Jesus provided us a model when he said, “I only do what I see the Father doing”. Staying in intimate contact with Immanuel² is the pathway to acting like your Christ self.

Return to joy in negative emotions. Return to my relational self when I experience negative emotion, and also remain relational when I’m with someone who is in the midst of negative emotions.

Endure hardship well. Stay relational while in difficult situations, so that I have access to the most creative, problem solving, peaceful part of my brain. Having the maturity to remain stable in ongoing difficulties is important.

RARE Leadership sets forth three practices that will enable you and your people to live out the RARE practices, which will create an emotionally mature community.

3 PRACTICES TO BUILD A *RARE COMMUNITY* (A COMMUNITY WHERE THE RARE SKILLS ARE NOT SO RARE)

Identity Group (“My People”)

- Your practice field for RARE skills
- Not necessarily a formal group
- A group that develops a healthy atmosphere of failure
 - It’s okay to fail here
 - We are still glad to be with you!
 - Failure is the first step to success
- Who help you *discover* who God created you to be
- Who help you *remember* who God created you to be
- Who will call out God’s best in you by reminding you when you forget who God created you to be
- An atmosphere of growing transparency/tender response to weakness

² This was discussed in more detail in Lessons 5, 6, and 7 of the Heart-Focused Community Unit.

- Learn to take off your masks
- Learn to share your weaknesses
- Practice a tender response to weakness
- Practice your RARE skills
- Process life's hurts together
- What do we do in an Identity Group?
 - Checking in and listening to Immanuel as close to daily as possible
 - Listening to Jesus may mean listening together, or simply sharing what we've sensed from Him recently
 - Check in and listen when you are together as a group
 - Share stories from your week
 - If I handled it in RARE fashion, here's what I did
 - I didn't handle it so well, here's what it would have been like me to do
 - Help each other by listening to Immanuel for His take on the situation
 - Be willing to give each other gentle shame messages³
 - "We are people who behave in this way...."
 - "We don't do" (the behavior that was hurtful or "not like our people.")
 - "We are your people and we remind each other of who we are when we forget."
 - No man left behind! We don't leave our people stuck in their sins/iniquities. This would not be adult maturity.
 - Read Immanuel Journaling to each other
 - Pray for each other

Imitation/Modeling

- Identify people in your life who have one or more of the RARE skills
 - Spend time with them
 - "I noticed you really handle anger well...."
 - "You don't seem to get discouraged. Tell me how that came about."
 - Ask them to tell you stories from their life
- Identity Groups are modeling for each other all the time
- Our growth will be accelerated when we are intentional about imitation
- Paul said, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice." Phil. 4:9

Intimacy with Immanuel – God with Us

- The practice of paying attention to what God is whispering to our hearts
- Intimacy with God helps with everything:
 - Helps with Return to Joy and Peace

³ From *The Pandora Problem*, Dr. Jim Wilder, available from the Deeper Walk International online bookstore

- Process powder keg issues (ie, triggers)
- Turns on our relational circuits – open, receptive
- Process traumas
- Jesus can give new perspectives

Ponder, Journal, and Discuss:

1. In your life, have you experienced something like an identity group? Over time, your Journey Group may become an identity group, but it is ideal to some local friends who are “your people” so that your times together are less formal and more extended than Journey Group. Ask Immanuel who might become part of your identity group. Ask Jesus for more opportunities to spend time with these people.

2. As you interact with Jesus, it may help to make a list of people who fit into the following categories:

- More ability to remain relational in difficulty than I have
- More ability to return to joy from anger, fear, shame, sadness, disgust or hopeless despair than I have
- Has an interactive relationship with Jesus
- Ability to gently point out when I’m not being my “best” self
- Has suffered without becoming bitter

As you go through your week, ask the people on your list and others around you to tell you stories of how they have handled hard tasks, suffering, difficult relationships, negative emotions, and growing in Christ. Make notes in your journal when something seems especially important to you.

3. Ask Jesus what He would like you to do to become more intimate with Him. Notice if it seems that He guides you to resting time with Him, Scripture, journaling, nature, exercise, worship, or some other way of deepening your relationship with Him. Slowly put into practice what you sense Him asking of you. It may be a good idea to try one new/different practice at a time so that you can see what increases your sense of His presence and your “mutual mind” with Him. Note your experiences in your journal.



We pass on our maturity through our example and our stories. It is good to be proactive and intentional about this process. Thinking through your stories is good brain exercise and prepares us for those moments when we want to share how we learned a particular maturity task.

God's plan for transformation is Belonging + Identity. This helps us remember and identify areas in which we want to grow and help others to grow. Remember, when we are at infant or child maturity, we should focus on our own growth. When we reach solid adult maturity, we are better equipped to help others with their journey. It is also helpful to remember that passing through these maturity tasks is what wires our brain from Levels 1 through 4.

Important! Even though the maturity stories represent skills that we would have ideally received at certain chronological ages, your maturity stories may come from another time in your life. You will have many Return to Joy stories that occurred at various times of life. Your stories do NOT have to match the chronological time when you first reached that maturity level.

Infant Maturity Stories

- Attachment story(ies):
 - Stories of important people in our life with whom we know we have a strong, loving connection
 - Look for a story of both a male and a female in your life
- "Eyes of Heaven" or "Godsight" stories
 - May be the same people from your attachment stories
 - Stories of people who were able to see you as God sees you
- Return to Joy Stories
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Shame
 - Disgust
 - Despair
- Attunement
 - Times that I felt what someone else was feeling and be with them in it in a comforting way
 - Times I offered validation and comfort

Child Maturity Stories

- Stories of my immediate and extended family
 - Our characteristics and how we came to be that way
 - What it is like us to do in various situations
- My talents and skills
 - Stories of things that seemed to come naturally to me
 - Stories of skills I worked hard to gain
 - Stories of how I used my talents and skills

- Stories of creating belonging for one other person
 - My childhood friends/My siblings
- Stories of asking for what I need/expressing myself
 - Being weak and needing help
 - Expressing my personality (especially when it seemed different from others)
- Stories of controlling my cravings/desires
 - Learning a sport/skill
 - Doing without
- Stories of learning what satisfies
 - What really makes me feel like “me”
 - Satisfaction vs. Pleasure

Adult Maturity Stories

- Stories of my spiritual identity
 - How do I give life?
 - Seeing myself as God sees me
- Stories of My Peer Group/My Tribe/My People
 - How I learned who were my people
 - How we give and receive life/grow together/need each other
 - How we practice “what it is like us to do”
 - How we create belonging for others
- Stories of protecting others from myself
 - When I was upset (angry, scared, sad)
 - Asking for help instead of “pressing through”
- Stories of bringing 2 or more back to joy
 - Conflict resolution with a win-win solution
 - Attunement, Validation, Comfort in a group
- Stories of suffering well
 - In times of deprivation or difficulty
 - When tough situations don’t resolve quickly

Parent Maturity Stories

- Stories of giving without receiving
- Stories of being a calming presence
- Stories of my elders – who advises me
- Stories of enjoying/protecting/serving my family
- Stories of helping others mature
 - Providing opportunities for risk and failure with a “safety net”
 - Helping others suffer well and do hard things
 - Seeing others as God sees them
 - Helping others learn their identity/talents/personality
 - Helping others learn to create belonging

Elder Maturity Stories

- Stories of creating belonging for the familyless
 - Through the body of Christ
 - Through your family
- Stories of encouraging my tribe
 - Who we are
 - What it is like us to do
- Stories of “What does Jesus want us to know?”
- Stories from every maturity level

In this week's meeting, we will share maturity stories. There are 3 options available for how to choose a story to tell:

1. I've attached a list for you to look over and choose one maturity task about which you can think of a maturity story you'd like to tell.

2. You can think over the last week or two and think of a time when you handled a situation using adult maturity - using the RARE characteristics.

3. You can think over the last week or two and think of a time when you DIDN'T handle a situation in RARE fashion, and tell a story about "What it would be like my True Self to do." In other words, if I had been Acting Like Myself, here's what I would have done. This is a very valuable "replay" type of story that gives your brain (and the listener's brains) a new model for how to handle the situation. It's also a great way to share your weakness and receive a tender response.

In your story, plan to tell how you felt in your emotions and your body when the situation was happening. It's also good to tell a story that is mild to moderate in intensity - our brains don't train well when they are triggered or overwhelmed.

I'm really looking forward to having Story Time with all of you!



MATURITY MATTERS, LESSON 5 & 6 GOODBYE FEAR BONDS, HELLO LOVE!

In *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*¹ by Dr. James Wilder and others, we learn that maturity is built on our bonds with others. Based on our earliest bonds, we learn to bond two ways; we can bond around the fear of pain, disconnection, or negative emotions, or we can bond around the joy of being together. We can call these types of bonds fear bonds and love or joy bonds.

When we are fear-bonded to others, we find ourselves anxious about the bond, fearful of the emotions arising from the bond, and fearful both of being together and being apart. We worry that negative emotions will weaken or dissolve the bond. When we are together, we are anxious that we will do something to cause a problem, and when we are apart, we fear that the bond isn't strong enough to hold up to separation. We may stay together because we are afraid of being alone, or we could be afraid of what the other person will do if we leave.

When we are joy-bonded, the bond provides a strong foundation of security, even when we are apart. We don't have to fear negative emotions, because we know our bond is safe even in situations that bring negative emotions to the surface. When we are away from each other, we remember each other fondly and know the bond is secure. When we are together, we are able to enjoy each other, be our authentic selves, and share our strengths and weaknesses openly.

Joy bonds are a strong foundation for maturity, so in this lesson, we will look at how to recognize when we have fear bonds, and how to move from fear bonds to joy/love bonds. When one relationship is transformed from fear to joy, we begin to more securely interact in all our relationships, and gradually we move into fearless joy bonds throughout our relationships.

¹ *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, Dr. Wilder, et al. Available in the Deeper Walk International online bookstore. This lesson is based entirely on chapter 4 of *Living*.

LOVE BONDS versus FEAR BONDS IN RELATIONSHIPS²

Love Bonds	Fear Bonds
1. Based on love and characterized by truth, closeness, intimacy, joy, peace, perseverance and authentic giving.	1. Based on fear and characterized by pain, humiliation, desperation, shame, guilt, and/or fear of reaction, abandonment, or other detrimental consequences.
2. Desire driven. (I bond because I want to be with you.)	2. Avoidance driven. (I bond because I want to avoid negative feelings or pain.)
3. Grow stronger both when we move closer and when we move farther away. (When we move closer, I get to know you better. When we move farther away, I am still blessed by the memory of you.)	3. Only grow stronger by moving closer or by moving farther away. (The closer we get, the scarier it gets, so I have to avoid the closeness or the farther away we get, the scarier it gets, so I have to manipulate closeness.)
4. We can share both positive and negative feelings. The bond is strengthened by this truthful sharing.	4. We cannot share both positive and negative feelings. The bond is strengthened by (1) avoiding negative or positive feelings or (2) by seeking only negative feelings or seeking only positive feelings.
5. Participants on both ends of the bond benefit. The bond encourages all to act like themselves.	5. Participants on only one end of the bond gain advantage. The bond actually inhibits people from acting like themselves.
6. Truth pervades the relationship.	6. Deceit and pretending are required.
7. Love Bonds continually grow and mature people, equipping them to find their hearts.	7. Fear Bonds increasingly restrict and stunt growth, keeping people from finding their hearts.
8. Love Bonds operate from the front of the brain (the joy center) and govern "how do I act like myself?"	8. Fear Bonds operate from the back of the brain, and govern "how do I get what I want?"

² From *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*, p. 68. Available in the Deeper Walk International online bookstore.

TYPE A AND TYPE B TRAUMAS³

TYPE A TRAUMAS	TYPE B TRAUMAS
<p>Type A trauma is harmful by its <i>absence</i>, which cause damage to our emotions. To some degree, one or more of them will typically be found in each stage of our lives, and we can all find at least one Type A trauma wound that needs attention. When you look at the <i>Maturity Indicators Chart</i>, you will see that a failure by the Family and Community — the middle column— produces a Type A trauma. In fact, <i>absences</i> in those areas define what Type A traumas are. Here are a few <i>absences</i> that illustrate Type A traumas.</p>	<p>Type B trauma is harmful by its <i>presence</i>. Having been on the receiving end of the following experiences can create a Type B trauma. There is a range of severity in Type B traumas. It is important to remember that to discount “lesser” traumas is to avoid the truth about how much it hurts, and thereby miss the chance for healing. Avoiding or ignoring wounds do not make them go away. Here are some harmful events that are examples of Type B traumas:</p>
1. Being cherished and celebrated by one’s parents simply by virtue of one’s existence.	1. Physical abuse, including face slapping, hair pulling, shaking, punching, and tickling a child into hysteria.
2. Having the experience of being a delight.	2. Any spanking which becomes violent, leaving marks or bruises or emotional scars.
3. Having a parent take the time to understand who you are — encouraging you to share who you are, what you think and what you feel.	3. Sexual abuse including inappropriate touching, sexual kissing or hugging, intercourse, oral or anal sex, voyeurism, exhibitionism, or the sharing of the parent’s sexual experiences with a child.
4. Receiving large amounts of non-sexual physical nurturing — laps to sit in, arms to hold, and a willingness to let you go when you have had enough.	4. Verbal abuse or name-calling.
5. Being given age appropriate limits. Having those limits enforced in ways that do not call your value into question.	5. Abandonment by a parent.
6. Being given adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care.	6. Torture or satanic ritual abuse.
7. Being taught how to do hard things — to problem solve, and to develop persistence.	7. Witnessing someone else being abused.
8. Being taught how to develop personal resources and talents.	

³ Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, Wilder, et al., p. 85, 88

Changing Motivation From Fear to Love

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This handout is available online at

<http://www.lifemodel.org/download/Changing%20Fear%20to%20Love.pdf>

Our direction and goals come from our thoughts. Our motivation comes from our emotions. While we work very hard to educate our thoughts and correct our beliefs, few people train or perfect their motivation with equal discipline. As far as our nervous systems are concerned, our minds run well when motivated by love and desire and poorly when motivated by fear. From a moral point of view, love is also superior. Perfect, that is to say, mature *teleios* love casts out fear. (1 John 4:18)

It should not come as a surprise that fear motives creep into our lives as we fail to mature properly. We learn our motivation during infancy through bonded relationships. Whatever emotions our parents use to motivate us become our internal source of motivation during life. If these early bonds form from love and closeness they serve us well but if they form from fear and the avoidance of pain our motivational system stays immature.

Fear bonds form as the result of failed attempts at self-preservation. While self-preservation is the great value of fear, early experiences in fearful relationships we cannot escape, produce very negative and upsetting internal emotions. When these unpleasant emotions exceed our capacity to return to joy and quiet on our own, we begin to avoid pain as a form of self-preservation. After a while, avoiding pain becomes the central focus of fear bonds even when there is no real risk of overwhelming our capacity.

Once avoiding pain becomes the goal we hear phrases like, "What if he gets mad?" "Are you going to be upset?" "I'm afraid that—fill in the blank" "I'd be too embarrassed!" "You are really pissing me off!" "I have to make him/it stop." "I can't stand it when..." "What difference will it make?"

We must then ask a serious question about avoiding pain and overwhelming feelings. Is it self-preservation if I stop being and acting like myself? When I no longer do or say or act like what I really feel inside isn't my "self" lost? When I can no longer even figure out what I want, feel or even think, haven't I lost my "self" already?

What we discover in many people who are fear-bonded and motivated is a loss and obscuring of personal feelings, thoughts, values and desires. They are afraid to make an impact on others. Often the fear is that they will not have an impact or make a difference. Fear bonded people are also quite confused about what fears are theirs and which ones belong to others. Just being around anxious people makes them edgy or distressed. They often withdraw, placate, entertain or please others to make the fear stop. Often the result is that they take on responsibilities that are not theirs because they are afraid of what will happen if they don't. Other times they shrink back from their duties because they feel inadequate.

Another group of fear-bonded individuals are afraid to let others have an impact because they fear losing their own impact. These controllers frequently control people around them with anger, contempt, rejection, ridicule, the "silent treatment," and other ways of creating pain including, physical violence.

Naturally we recognize these behaviors as representing brains that have lost their synchronization at level 2. They are operating out of fear and a desire to make things stop instead of synchronizing with others (level 3) or expressing their own values, goals, desires and preferences (level 4.) They have lost their flavor. They have ceased to be lights. Thinking they are preserving themselves they have lost themselves and disappeared.

Before we can understand how to change a fear-bond back to a desire/love-bond, let us review how a healthy identity would deal with fears at each level of development. From this review we can see where we need to start correcting the fear-bond.

Avoiding Fear-Bonds at Each Level of Maturity

1. Infant maturity

- a. Recognize the fear (what am I really afraid of?)
- b. Know who I want with me when I am afraid
- c. Discover what I want (desire)
- d. Talk about my fear

2. Child Maturity

- a. Recognize my part in the fearful situation
- b. Recognize the other person's part in the fearful situation
- c. Use a third person to check my reality
- d. Separate my responsibility from yours (a+b)
- e. Learn to be myself rather than control others

3. Adult

- a. Stay in relationship while letting others have fears
- b. Do nothing about what others fear-let them handle it
- c. Take care of our own business with personal style
- d. Remind self and others about our mutual goals and desires

There is a big separation between adult and higher levels of maturity when it comes to handling fears. Up to this point every person is responsible for their own fears and no one else's. Without many years of practice distinguishing *this fear is mine* from *that fear is yours*, then moving to higher levels of dealing with fear will only bring confusion about responsibility. The shift of responsibility from dealing with my own fears to helping others with their fears is a major sign of dysfunction when it is attempted by anyone of adult maturity or lower. Even for parents, taking on the fears of others is dysfunctional outside the parent/child relationship.

Parents must be very careful not to develop fear-bonds in their children. Since parents want to build capacity in their children, they help children back to joy from fear and teach them to act like themselves during manageable levels of the emotion.

4. Parent

- a. Help one's personal people (natural and spiritual family)
- b. Take some shared responsibility for the fears of younger minds
- c. Identify fears in younger mind

- d. Help younger mind return to joy and peace
5. Elder
- a. Help “at risk,” isolated, marginalized people
 - b. Identify community fears
 - c. Help community remember what is like us to do
 - d. Remain a non-anxious presence

Elders, as we know, act like parents-at-large for their communities. Elders will provide just barely enough security for people to recognize and face their own fears knowing that they are not alone and remembering what is really important to “our people” under these scary conditions.

Converting Fear to Desire Based On Our Maturity Level

Now, the reason for our discussion was to change fear-bonds to love-bonds where our desires and identity can shine. To make a change from fear to love we start first with the adult level. If we can correct the problem at this level it will be easiest. The adult will simply think and decide differently and the problem is solved.

Solutions:

1. Confidently be yourself. Take care of your business. Stay in relationship with others around you who are anxious but do nothing about their part of the problem. Speak of mutual goals that are important during this time of threat and fear.

If this adult solution worked, then you have corrected the fear bond. This does not mean that others will not react by trying to put pressure on you to become frightened again, so you may have to make this correction several times under even more pressure and anxiety from others.

If you still feel fear or cannot imagine how to use an adult solution we must go deeper and correct some earlier problems that lead to fear bonds. First we look at the child level skills. Resolving fear-bonds at the child level is not just a matter of understanding and choosing differently. These solutions take longer and involve study and consultation with others. They require a good deal of problem solving to figure out “mine” from “yours.” We generally do not solve these problems without consultation and encouragement.

2. Define your responsibilities carefully. Go through the demands you feel you must meet and see which ones are logically yours and which are unreasonable. Find someone qualified to double-check your judgment. Now, be equally clear when you are trying to solve someone else’s problem or fear. You should now be able to speak clearly about what is yours and what is someone else’s part of the problem and solution.
3. Check to see if someone else is controlling you by being upset or threatening to become upset. If you are being controlled return to step 2 until you can speak calmly and clearly to them about your

responsibilities and boundaries.

4. Check and see if you are attempting to control others through your threats or upset. If so return to step 2 until you can speak calmly and clearly to them about your responsibilities and boundaries.

If you still fear and cannot imagine or manage to speak clearly to others about your responsibilities and limits, then we must go deeper and correct problems and develop skills needed for the infant level. We get here when we can't figure things out on our own or even if we do, the fear is strong enough that we can't talk freely and openly about who we are so our "self" continues to be hidden and lost when we are afraid.

5. Find out what I am really afraid of with help from experienced minds. Often what I am afraid of is not a current day reality or what it seems to me. I may think I am afraid I am not doing my job but I am really afraid someone will be angry or ridicule me. I am afraid I will not survive being ridiculed because of my early life experiences.
6. I must discover who I want with me when I am afraid and what I want them to do with or for me. I need someone who can handle the fear without being overwhelmed and help me focus on myself instead of the threat I perceive.
7. I must discover what I really want and what really matters most to me in the current situation so that I can express my goals and values.
8. I must learn to speak about what matters to me even while I feel afraid by having someone patiently help me find words I can mean and practice saying them in a low threat situation until I am ready to speak of my values, goals and preferences to others who are afraid or of whom I am afraid.

This process of defining and expressing our identities gets much easier as our identities mature and become solid. The farther we have grown, the easier it is to change fear- bonds to love-bonds.

Ponder, Journal, and Discuss:

1. Do you have any relationships that have secure joy/love bonds? Ask Jesus how He sees the relationships you have that are joy-bonded. Also ask Him how you can grow your joy-bonded relationships even more secure. Journal your thoughts.
2. If you have a close relationship that seems more fear-bonded than joy-bonded, ask Jesus how He sees the other person in that relationship. Based on the information in this lesson, what are some steps you can take to begin moving from fear bonds to joy bonds? Journal your thoughts.



MATURITY MATTERS, LESSON 6 Looking at Our Relationships

Hello Friends,

This chart may look like a terrible thing at first glance-- who would evaluate their relationships on a chart? However, the chart grew out of several heart characteristics I have: I love people and connecting with them as the people God created them to be, I love to see the big picture, I love to make the big picture understandable to others, and I love to understand why things are the way they are. Also, I'm a paralegal and we make charts.

As you look at fear bonds and love/joy bonds, God enables you to begin to understand your personal relationships. This is true of many other relational concepts as well-joy, quieting, attunement, maturity, and attachment/relational styles. You can use this chart to synthesize all these different concepts and take your understanding of relationships to a whole new level, especially when combined with Godsight - seeing people as God sees them. Used wisely, this chart helps you have compassionate curiosity about your relationships - "what are the different components that make this relationship so easy for me, while that other one seems so difficult?"

There's also a Journaling sheet attached to dig deeper into your thoughts and God's thoughts about a specific relationship. You can sit down and journal through all the questions to get a picture of your thoughts and Jesus's thoughts about this relationship. For your closest relationships, you might want to take a week or longer and journal in depth about each individual question. Some folks may feel ready for that, and others will feel overwhelmed with that idea. Talk with Jesus about your feelings -- "Is it a good time for me to go more in-depth with this right now, or would it be better to process what I've learned so far and journal more later?" (Is. 30:21 - And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.)

This week, gently engage with these worksheets. If your closest relationship is in a place of struggle right now, or you don't have any intimate relationships, ask Jesus to show you patterns in your most "daily" relationships, and ask Him for baby steps of growth towards closeness. Go through the worksheet and ask Him to talk to you about your relationship with Him, if you'd like! Ask Him how a particular relationship might change in these areas as you grow. As you use the worksheet and journaling questions, remember to practice grace and compassion towards yourself and your relationships - we are on a gentle journey toward wholeness. If any of this proves stressful, NOT TO WORRY - put it in a drawer or folder and come back to it in a year. God knows where you are in your relationships, and He will bring this to mind at the right time for you.

Ponder, Journal and Discuss:

1. As you engage with the chart, did you notice patterns that extended to several of your relationships? For instance, you might be drawn to people with certain attachment styles or maturity levels. You may notice a family pattern with regard to joy and quiet. Ask Jesus what He wants you to know about any patterns you notice.
2. How might you use the chart and journaling to prepare for a difficult conversation with a friend or family member?
3. How might using the chart and journaling be good preparation for holidays or other times when groups gather? Could this be useful in looking at groups of which you are a part - Bible study, work relationships, friend groups? Ask Immanuel how He might help you to use this in various situations you are facing.

Evaluating My Relationships

Name	Increases my joy/I increase theirs	We can quiet together	Fear-based bond? Me/Them	Ability to Attune Me/Them	Attachment Style Me/Them	Heart Values Me/Them	Maturity Level Me/Them

Journaling about my relationship. You can journal fairly quick answers to these questions, or you can take one set of questions per day and journal your thoughts more in-depth. Both can provide great insights.

Do I increase his/her joy? Does he/she increase my joy? How could we grow in this area? Jesus, what are you saying?

Do we quiet together well? How could we practice this skill in a natural way? Jesus, what do you want me to know?

If you see fear bonds in the relationship: Jesus, what do you want me to know? What are baby steps to growing out of this fear bond? What will this relationship look like when we are joy/love bonded?

Do I attune well w/him/her? Does he/she attune well with me? What can we do to grow our understanding and ability to synchronize with each other's emotions, thoughts, hopes, and dreams? Jesus, please share your thoughts with me.

What are our respective attachment styles? How does this create difficulties? How does this work well for us? Jesus, show me what secure attachment will look like for us.

What are some of my heart values? His/hers? How does this affect our different perspectives on life? Jesus, help me see the heart values you put in this person and in me.

What is my current approximate maturity level? What is his or hers? How does this affect our ability to stay relational and connected in difficult times?



MATURITY MATTERS, LESSON 7 Parent and Elder Maturity

In the Infant stage, we learn to receive with joy. As a Child, we learn to take care of ourselves. When we are an Adult, we become proficient at taking care of ourselves and one other. When all of these are accomplished, we are ready for the Parent stage of maturity – taking care of another while receiving nothing in return, or as Dr. Jim Wilder said in the webinar *Pointing the Way to Maturity* - “we are ready to teach a baby to be a human.”

When we see the stages of maturity building on one another like this, it's clear that potholes will occur on our life's roadways when we don't accomplish all the tasks in each stage. Learning to receive and ask for what I need as an infant prepares me to recognize what I need as a Child and meet those needs myself, or ask for help. This leads to the ability to recognize those needs in another person, one who can take care of themselves fairly well. This is the mature love of an adult - desiring to meet the needs of another, and allowing them to meet some of our needs. Parent maturity, however, desires to meet the needs of one who can do absolutely nothing to reciprocate.

Below you will find a table which lists the important tasks of Infant, Child, and Adult maturity. As you read through these tasks, ask Immanuel to help you see how important it would be to have these skills in your repertoire as a parent.¹

Infant	Child	Adult
Lives in joy/expands joy capacity.	Asks for what is needed; can say what one feels	Cares for self and others in a satisfying way
Develops trust	Knows what satisfies	Can return self and others to joy in negative emotions
Begin to organize self into a person through modeling	Can do hard things even when doesn't want to	Develops a group identity; bonds with peers
Return to joy from negative emotions	Develops personal resources and talents	Protects others from self
	Knows self/makes self known	Contributes to the community
	Understands the “big picture” of life	Knows and expresses heart characteristics

¹ From the *Maturity Indicators* chart, provided in this course, and *Maturity Skills Assessment*, <https://www.joystartshere.com/site/doc/Maturity%20Skills%20Assessment.pdf>

What problems might you expect to see in a family where the parents haven't mastered these tasks well? It's easy to see why each family has its own pattern of "iniquity" which means "bent" or "not growing as it was intended." While this might seem a negative and depressing train of thought, it can actually be very encouraging and hopeful, because gaps can be filled and foundations repaired when the problems are identified. When buying an older home, one has an inspection to see what repairs are going to be needed. This is so much better than moving in, completely unaware of all the structural weaknesses. Now we can see where our family was off track, and gather tools, information, and experts, and begin the hopeful work of repair, so that the structure is stronger than ever before.

A healthy parent has the following maturity tasks to master:

- Protect, serve, and enjoy one's family
- Devote oneself to taking care of children without expectation that children will reciprocate
- Allow and provide spiritual parents and siblings for the children – others who are also walking this pathway to wholeness in Christ
- Learn how to bring children through difficult times and return to joy from other emotions.

It is important to note that many adults who don't have children of their own are at Parent maturity level and are doing the important work of helping children learn tasks their parents haven't successfully mastered. We can be very thankful for all the school teachers, coaches, scout masters, Bible teachers, aunts, uncles, and family friends who step in and meet this critical need. This is God's intention for the community.

When parents successfully bring their children to adult maturity, they may step into the role of Elder to the community. The task of an elder is ***sacrificially taking care of the community***. Elders go beyond parent maturity in that they can give sacrificially not only to their own children, but also to others in the community who are in need of a reminder that they are valuable and beloved.

In U.S. culture, elders are often encouraged to abdicate their responsibilities, retire, and enjoy the "good life." What a difference it would make if retirement were viewed as a time to build relationships with those in the community who need models of healthy maturity, Immanuel awareness, and secure attachment

Filling the Gaps

As adults, we can move more quickly through these maturity tasks because we have the benefit of hindsight and experience to help us identify gaps – we have seen areas where our skills are lacking and our ways aren't bringing joy, peace, and satisfaction into our lives. In addition, unlike children, adults can study the tasks and learn to recognize a more mature person who has a missing skill.

Moving forward

As we finish up this unit on Maturity Matters, what is your plan for future maturity growth? Here are some questions to help you form a plan:

What is the highest level of maturity I could have based on my age and my family structure?

What is my current maturity level? An example might be, "I'm at adult maturity with a child maturity gap in doing hard things and an infant maturity gap in handling fear."

What maturity tasks do I want to work on next? Some things to consider: You can work on more than one task at once if you balance your plan between tasks where you don't know what the task looks like in daily life and those where you have a good "picture" in mind, but just need practice, and between "major" foundational tasks like learning to handle negative emotions and the more easily accomplished tasks like contributing to the community.

What are some practical baby steps I can take in working on these maturity tasks?



Jim Wilder and Marcus Warner point out three types of shepherd leaders in their book, *Rare Leadership*¹. They are the good shepherds, the hirelings, and the bad shepherds. You have likely seen all three in your church experiences. Other titles for those leadership styles can be called the Gentle Protector, the Possum, and the Predator.

Without training, we are all natural predators. Joy Starts Here² says,

“We are all born weak and unskilled into families that have some skills but not others. Every time there has been some kind of trauma to our ancestors, there is a corresponding likelihood that gentle protector skills were lost. Each time skills were lost, we were left with more of our predator brain structure exposed... the predatory brain will propagate every time protector skills are lost. As predators increase, our vultures fail to respond tenderly to weakness and joy levels drop.”

Learning how to live as a Gentle Protector is learning how to live like Jesus. Having His heart for others, especially when they are weak, is the sign of a mature believer. Because they have experienced His tenderness for their weakness, they are able to model that for others. Living as Possums and Predators is the natural state of people who are part of a fallen world. They wear masks, hide their weakness, ignore those who prey upon the vulnerable, or prey on them themselves.

Portrait of a Gentle Protector

Aunt Beast is a tall, grey being from the planet Ixchel in Madeline L'Engle's book, *A Wrinkle in Time*. She has five long, waving tentacles but no eyes. Meg, the 12-year-old heroine from planet Earth, arrives on Ixchel frozen from an encounter with The Black Thing... evil. Meg is close to death and neither her human father nor her friend, Calvin, can save her.

Aunt Beast bends over Meg and she feels a reassuring sense of safety flow through

¹ Available from the Deeper Walk International online bookstore.

² Available from the Deeper Walk International online bookstore.

her. The beast picks her up and cradles her in two of its arms and carries her off to a quiet place to heal her. Aunt Beast treats her with great love, as she learned to do as a mother with her own children, and sings Meg to sleep. Meg feels “a sense of security that was deeper than anything she had known since the days when she lay in her mother’s arms in the old rocking chair,” simply by being in the arms of the beast. Later, the beast speaks to Meg the difficult truth about Meg’s bad attitude towards her father, one of the emotional remnants of her encounter with The Thing. Aunt Beast recognizes that evil leaves its stain upon children who have encountered this evil and is patient and non-judgmental towards Meg as she recovers her true self.

Martin Luther King Jr is an excellent real-life picture of a gentle protector. Jessica Handy says: “He fought violence and racism with peace, but not passivity. He used peaceful protest to stand against predatory behavior in a way that was protective of everyone on both sides. Though not everyone was protected, given the context, he did highlight the dangerous, predatory spirit of many others which allowed a nation to see its own sin and seek transformation.”

Rare Leadership says that good shepherds, or gentle protectors, are those who protect the flock and lay down their lives for the sheep.

- A Gentle Protector:
 - Is safe for vulnerable people to be around because they are transparent about their own weaknesses
 - Has a strong, joyful identity
 - Is able to create secure attachments
 - Will put the good of those they lead ahead of his/her own
 - Keeps relationships bigger than problems
 - Returns to joy from upsetting emotions
 - Is tender towards their own weaknesses by admitting them and asking for help
 - Sees others the way God sees them
 - Stands up to narcissistic predators, not enabling dysfunctional behavior
 - Draws out the potential in those who are weak, treating weakness with tenderness
 - Stays relational during hardship without getting overwhelmed
 - Encourages the weak to point out weaknesses in the strong... including themselves

Portrait of a Possum

The world is full of possums. Possums lack the skills to be gentle protectors. According to *Joy Starts Here*, their main preoccupation in life is to avoid attack. This becomes their motivation for everything in life and can even become core to their identity.

Their willingness to ignore evil at the cost of the vulnerable getting abused stems from that life- purpose to stay out of the limelight so that they do not become the target of such abuse. They are fear driven and unable to be their authentic selves. Everyone has experienced being a possum at some time. Maybe it was when you didn't report the bully on the playground because you were afraid of becoming his next target.

Examples of possums are several of the staff involved in the cover up of the Penn State Jerry Sandusky abuse scandal. Tim Curley, the athletic director denies being told of the misconduct by Sandusky but is accused of covering up the allegations. Gary Schultz, the senior VP for finance and business was charged with covering up the allegations, as well. Ray Gricar, Centre County District Attorney, choose not to prosecute Sandusky in 1998 which helped end a police investigation into the report. These men hold partial responsibility for the great harm that came to all of the boys Sandusky abused and their families. It was too scary for them to speak the truth out loud and challenge the power held by Sandusky and other top university officials that knew what was going on.

Rare Leadership describes possums as hirelings who run at the first sign of trouble. They do not truly care about the sheep.

- Possums:
 - Play dead when the going gets rough
 - Are not willing to risk taking off masks and being authentic
 - Are often nice people who like to make everyone happy
 - Easily get overwhelmed in crises
 - Are usually relationally isolated

Portrait of a Predator

A bad shepherd, or predator, is someone who monitors weaknesses, looking for a way to gain a personal advantage. All people have a predatory system inside their brain which develops with little or no training. Examples of predatory behavior abound. You all know them. Even more personally, you all have some degree of predator within you. It can be something as simple as blaming a sibling for breaking the vase to keep from getting in trouble, or as big as shooting the witness of a crime to avoid getting caught. Predators attack others to get something they want with no thought of how it hurts those attacked. They see the victim as unimportant and deserving less than they deserve.

Hitler is a famous predator. He had no attachments to people and used them for his own evil purposes. His predatory behavior caused unfathomable pain to the world for generations.

Another example is the Wells Fargo credit card scandal. Employees were encouraged

to secretly create millions of unauthorized bank and credit card accounts without their customers knowing it. They moved funds from their existing accounts and were charged for insufficient funds or overdraft fees because there wasn't enough money in their original accounts. These false accounts allowed Wells Fargo employees to boost their sales figures and make more money.

Rare Leadership says that bad shepherds devour the flock and use sheep for their own self-indulgence and pleasure.

- Predator
 - Devour the weak
 - Use other's weaknesses to their own advantage, pouncing on weakness in order to grow their own power and indulge their own pleasure
 - Self-justified, blame others and use shame to control, denying faults in self and tracking faults in others
 - Avoid feeling shame at any cost, using manipulation, intimidation, and intensity
 - Perform and give the appearance of maturity when they are actively using fear to control and influence other people

Questions to Ponder (by Sue Sather)

- How was weakness viewed in your family of origin?
- What weaknesses are particularly difficult for you to respond to with tenderness?
- What weak (fragile, delicate) things can you think of that are valuable?
- Who are your favorite gentle protector models in books, movies, TV, or real life?
- When feeling unsafe, what masks do you put on to make yourself look stronger?
Choose one to share during JG
- When have you been on the receiving end of a tender response to weakness? What was that like for you?
- When have you offered a tender response to weakness to another? What impact did this have on the situation?
- What current area of weakness do you need to bring to Immanuel for His perspective?



Brain Skill 14 is Stop the Sark, and this may be the most difficult skill to understand because it is “running in the background” of our mind. The word “sark” is taken from the Greek, and is translated “flesh” in the New Testament. Because of this translation, “sark” is largely understood to be sins we commit with our “flesh” or body – sexual sin, drunkenness, gluttony, etc. These sins are one aspect of the word “flesh,” but another, more elusive aspect is defined in Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary as “the *weaker element in human nature*” and “the *lower and temporary element in the Christian*,” and “the *outward and seeming*,” as opposed to the inward and real. These definitions are the elements of the sark that oppose Godsight – His eternal perspective of mankind, our lives, and the world.

In Chris Coursey’s book *Transforming Fellowship*¹, he notes, “Just as Skill 13 is seeing what God sees that guides us to a peaceful destination, Skill 14 is the skill that turns us around when we are lost. Sometimes we think we are heading in the right direction when in fact we are going the wrong way. This Greek word sark . . . refers to seeing life according to our view of *who people are and how things should be.*”

Chris further notes that just as the Pharisees of Jesus’ time firmly believed they knew right from wrong, so our sark can lead us to believe that we *know* the right thing in a given situation, when in fact we may be far from Godsight. Extreme examples might be the murder of physicians who perform abortions and other acts of terrorism that spring from religious fanaticism, but we certainly don’t have to be fanatics to fall victim to our sark.

When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He responded that love for God and love for other people were the essence of all the commandments. When we find ourselves more concerned about who or what is

¹ *Transforming Fellowship*, p. 181. Available on the Deeper Walk International online bookstore.

right rather than how to walk in *love*, we can be assured that our sark is in play.

The sark operates from the accumulation of our experiences in life rather than what God knows to be true. For instance, we may mistrust people of a certain gender, race, or religion because of our personal history, or we may think God is harsh and disappointed because of our experiences. Because the sark sees others as the sum of their past actions, sark thinking is characterized by criticism, judgment, gossip, resentment, legalism, self-justification and self-righteousness².

Because of this focus on our own experience and history, there are as many configurations of the sark as there are human beings. However, there are some common manifestations we may recognize:

- The *biblically informed sark* is dangerous because the more Scripture we know *without intimacy with Immanuel* which brings Godsight, the more likely we are to be certain we know right from wrong. The biblically informed sark is often certain that its opinions are morally right, pleasing to God, and should be enforced on others. Keeping the relationship intact is often considered to be of secondary importance³. Without love, the biblically informed sark will lead to predatory behavior.
- The *undirected sark* creates problems because without direction, guidelines and goals, our sark will seek the path of least resistance in order to avoid pain. This may mean that truth loses out, because the truth is often hard and leads to difficult choices. Undirected, the sark may also leave relationships too quickly or refuse to set boundaries. The undirected sark may lead to codependency, possum behavior, and elastic moral standards.
- The *dependent sark* is one result of what I call the *poorly loved heart*. The dependent sark believes that it will never know what is right, and therefore gives over decision making to others. This may lead to abdicating responsibility, having a victim mentality (or actually being a victim of abuse), and other possum behaviors.

² *Transforming Fellowship*, p. 182.

³ *Ibid.*

- The *independent sark* is a *poorly loved heart* which has made vows such as, “I have to figure life out for myself,” “No one else will tell me what to do,” or “I can make better decisions than anyone else.” The independent sark tends to be very prickly and proud and is likely to exhibit predatory behavior.

Learning to stop the sark is done in community – we watch humble people who continually look for Immanuel’s presence and input, and quickly acknowledge when they act from the sark. We also learn to stop the sark when mature, loving members of our community can gently bring our own sark tendencies to our attention.

In *Transforming Fellowship*, Chris mentions, “We rely on people who have the skill to guide us. With trusted friends and family members, we turn to these lampposts for ‘a witness’ in our decisions and relationships. There is wisdom for [this skill] in the passage where Jesus says, ‘Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.’ (Matthew 18:19-20, NIV). This is not simply a verse about finding people to agree with us so we get what we want; it is an example of mutual mind between people and the Living God where we are ‘on the same page⁴.’”

SARK IN SCRIPTURE

We know that Scripture is the inspired word of God. As we study the Bible, we must be careful to remember that while many portions tell us God’s thoughts, some other verses illustrate a discussion between God and man, or man’s thoughts without Godsight. For instance, a number of the Psalms begin with the cries of David or others who feel abandoned or punished by God. Look at Psalm 88:

“O LORD, God of my salvation;
I cry out day and night before you.
Let my prayer come before you;
Incline your ear to my cry! . . .
You have caused my companions to shun me;
You have made me a horror to them. . .

⁴ *Transforming Fellowship*, p. 187.

O LORD, why do you cast my soul away?
Why do you hide your face from me? . . .
Your wrath has swept over me;
Your dreadful assaults destroy me.
They surround me like a flood all day long; They close in on me together.
You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;
My companions have become darkness.”

Does this Psalm carry the voice of a person who is experiencing Godsight? No, this is a sark attack, and the psalmist feels as though all his current difficulties are being visited upon him by God, and that God has turned away from him.

Other psalms reveal a process of return to joy and connection with our God who is with us. If we read only a portion of such psalms, we might find ourselves hearing the sark of the psalmist, rather than his thoughts after receiving Godsight. For instance, Psalm 13 says:

“How long, O LORD?
Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I take counsel in my soul
And have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over
me?

STUCK IN PAIN

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of
death, Lest my enemy say, ‘I have
prevailed over him,’ Lest my foes rejoice
because I am shaken.

REACHING OUT TO GOD

But I have trusted in your steadfast love; My
heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD,
Because he has dealt bountifully with me.”

**RETURN TO JOY and
GODSIGHT**

Perhaps you have heard it taught, "You know the Word says that God can't look on sin." This teaching comes from the book of Habakkuk, which begins with Habakkuk making complaints against God, and each complaint is answered by the Lord. Notice Habakkuk 1:2-4, where Habakkuk looks at what is happening in the world around him, and he is certain that God's will and His justice are no longer at work.

How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?

Why do you make me look at injustice?

Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?

Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and conflict abounds.

Therefore **the law is paralyzed,**
and **justice never prevails.**

The wicked hem in the righteous,
so that justice is perverted.

God's response is rather surprising:

"Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told."

Interestingly, Habakkuk indeed does not believe God! He continues his complaint in verse 1:13:

"You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"

Habakkuk's sark is telling him that *surely* God would never allow the wicked to win over the righteous, that he knows right from wrong, and this situation is clearly *wrong*. This is sure evidence of the sark at work: "I can determine right from wrong without God's input, perhaps even in spite of God's input!" Ever since the Fall, the sark has chosen to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, rather than choosing to trust in God's goodness. Being aware of the sark and asking Jesus for His perspective is the first step to stopping the sark.

Ponder, Journal and Discuss

1. Which of the common configurations of the sark have you noticed in yourself?
 - a. Biblically informed sark
 - b. Undirected sark
 - c. Dependent sark
 - d. Independent sark

2. After reading the portion from Transforming Fellowship below, what are some ways this might be put into practice in your life?

“We rely on people who have the skill to guide us. With trusted friends and family members, we turn to these lampposts for ‘a witness’ in our decisions and relationships. There is wisdom for [this skill] in the passage where Jesus says, ‘Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.’ (Matthew 18:19-20, NIV). This is not simply a verse about finding people to agree with us so we get what we want; it is an example of mutual mind between people and the Living God where we are ‘on the same page.’” (*TF*, p. 187)



Chris Coursey writes, "Hope and direction come from seeing situations, ourselves and others the way they were meant to be instead of only seeing what went wrong." (*Transforming Fellowship*, p. 172)

God deeply desires to be seen and known by His children. He wants you to find Him and be filled with His love. His heart is that you feel safe with Him and know that He is always with you, no matter what is happening around you or within you. He values you greatly! As you learn how to act like yourself out of the heart that Jesus gave you, you come into deeper intimacy with Him. You begin to act like He acts because you come to see the world (including yourself!) as He sees it.

God wants to draw His people close to Him. As you open yourself to that desire in you, you come to know His heart. As you choose Jesus each day and say "yes" to God's movement within and around you, He reveals His goodness and enables you to receive His love. The more you see yourself through the eyes of His love, the more you see others through that love, too.

Life Without Godsight

Apart from seeing as God sees, "people become problems to solve, commodities for personal gain and enemies to avoid," (*Transforming Fellowship*, p 172). Your limited vision keeps you from finding the "more" that is in those around you. You may respond to them out of fear, need, anger... anything that triggers your Sark, (the flesh), and keeps you from seeing them in the context of who God made them to be. EVERYONE has a story! The driver who just cut you off may have two kids at home with the flu and slept little the night before. The friend that did not return your call in your time of need may have had a fight with their spouse or be struggling with a health issue of their own. It is easy to find yourself in a place of judgement and criticism when others fail to respond to your needs. That is the way people live in this broken world.

When your own feelings become so loud that you are unable to hear God's perspective, you respond out of fear, hurt, and anger. Those feelings can keep you from seeing yourself and others as God intended you all to be. This leads to judging, blaming and shaming, criticizing and rejecting yourself and others. You see through the glasses of those emotions and people's true identities are clouded over.

What Does God See?

So many people are afraid of God. That makes His heart really sad. This is the way that the Enemy keeps you from receiving the very love that will heal you. Satan may convince you that the pain and evil that he brings is actually God's fault. When God is blamed, you may be unable to open your heart and connect with God in His goodness. God is reaching out to you and will do anything He can to bring you into His love. Your job is to say "yes" to Him... you must be willing to be found and held by your good God. He has already chosen you! You must choose Him, too. He understands your fear. Opening yourself to an ALMIGHTY God is a scary thing. The goodness that you find when you are able to do that will help you to keep choosing to do it again the next day and the next. He SO longs for you to come to Him! He has so much LIFE and LOVE to pour into you.

As His love begins to seep into your heart you will find it easier to bring your difficult emotions to Him. Rather than being "sent to your room" when you are sad or angry, God wants you to tell Him all about why you feel that way. He wants to meet you in the midst of your negative feelings. He wants to comfort you, attune to you, and then help you to understand what happened from HIS PERSPECTIVE.

Some questions you can ask God are:

- LORD, what do YOU see?
- What do You want me to know?
- How are You praying for me?
- What do You think about this, LORD?
- How do You see this person?
- How are You praying for this person?
- Where were You when this happened?
- How do You see this painful moment from my day?
-

His perspective brings comfort and restores our peace. As you come to see yourself through Heaven's eyes you begin to see others that way, too.

Getting God's Reframe

I can sometimes be easily distracted. This can translate to wandering thoughts in my prayer life. I spent many years feeling shame over that. I used to tell myself I was just a failure in my prayer life. I felt so discouraged! I WANTED to be more connected to Jesus, but I didn't think I had the capacity to do it.

One day I asked Jesus what He thought about my wandering mind. He said that He LOVED my mind. He made it, and it was good! He wanted to be with me, wherever my thoughts went. He said that He takes great pleasure in being with me no matter what I am thinking or how distracted I am. "In fact," He told me, "every time you bring your wandering thoughts back to Me, it blesses Me! If you have to do that even ten times a minute, that is TEN TIMES that you make the choice to be with Me. That makes Me jump for joy!"

Seeing myself through God's eyes changed the way I talked to myself. It opened my heart to receive more of His love. Over time, He has addressed some of my fears that were contributing to my inability to stay with Him in prayer. He also spoke to me about the role sugar plays in keeping me from concentrating. I am on a journey to change and heal those things that keep me from sometimes being more attentive to God and connected to His Spirit. But now I can work through the fears and deal with the sugar addiction because I am no longer distancing myself from God because of my shame. Just today I was struggling with distraction and He gently reminded me to "bring ALL of your thoughts to Me, Misa. I want to hear everything! I care about those things that you are feeling distracted about." I was able to talk to Him about the issues that were heavy on my mind and, together, we made some notes about some options for going forward. Then I was able to sit in His presence and feel His sweet love and peace.

Practicing the Skill

To practice seeing as God sees, follow the following steps from *Transforming Fellowship* (Chris Coursey, p 177). You can also read *Joyful Journey* and follow the writing prompts in the book.

- Identify a low-intensity moment from your day where you lost your peace. For example, *as I was sitting in traffic today, I felt frustrated and did not feel peace.*
- Write out a special moment or a gift you feel like God has given you at some point. Then spend three minutes remembering appreciation. You can also focus on a time

you felt that God was with you. For example, *I feel like my small group is a gift from God. My friends in the group help me feel seen and valued.*

- Invite Immanuel to show you what He wants you to know about His presence during that window of time. Ask or journal, for example, *LORD, what do you want me to know about Your presence when I was sitting in traffic today?*
- Notice the thoughts that come to mind and whether the thoughts restore some peace. Write them here:
- If you feel stuck, simply return to your appreciation moment and talk with Jesus about anything that hinders you from perceiving Him.

This is practice, so do not be discouraged if you cannot notice any “God thoughts.” Sometimes you need to try this several times to keep your relational brain circuits active.



Wholeness- No one possesses it completely (apart from Jesus), but we all long for it. We notice it when it is missing... in ourselves and in each other. Sometimes the lack of it is glaringly obvious. Other times, people hide their brokenness for some length of time. Regardless of how good we become with our facades, at some point the image cracks and our real, limited, broken selves leak out.

What Wholeness is Not

Wholeness is not perfection. Well, in the end when we die and get to be with Jesus it will be. Until then, we have to settle for something less. Trying to be perfect on this side of Heaven will make you less whole. I know. I've tried. Wholeness is not making people happy. Someone is always going to be a fly in the ointment. Sometimes it will be you. That's okay. We still love you. Wholeness is not thinking of and taking care of others every minute of every day. Self-denial is a good thing to learn and we can practice it regularly as Christians, but ignoring our own needs, beyond a certain point, will lead to the opposite of wholeness. Being successful in all you do is not equal to wholeness. Who defines that success and how? Appearing all put together and having the right answers is not wholeness. Eventually you will slip.

What Does it Mean to Be Whole?

- ❖ It is the ability to be in life-giving relationships where we can give and receive good things.
- ❖ It is the ability to know who we are apart from what other people think.
- ❖ It is the ability to see ourselves and others as God sees us.
- ❖ It is the ability to feel our feelings without being controlled by them - to allow feelings to be our road signs and warning signals about what is happening within and around us and be able to respond to those things in thoughtful, wise ways.
- ❖ It is having the courage and discipline to do what is good and right, even if it hurts.
- ❖ It is the ability to set boundaries and say no, while remaining kind and loving.
- ❖ It is having the emotional/spiritual strength to take risks and fulfill our life-purpose

- ❖ It is the ability to be honest and vulnerable in ways that bless other people, humbly admitting faults and being open to learning from others.
- ❖ It is the ability to reach out to others who are weak and in need and lift them up in sacrificial love.
- ❖ It is graciousness and kindness even in the face of cruelty, overcoming evil with good.

What Keeps Us from Being Whole?

One answer to that question is that trauma gets in the way of our becoming whole. That is true. And it is not true. It is true in the sense that trauma causes the means to wholeness to slip away. But it is not true in that all we need to do is to heal our trauma in order to be whole.

When we experience trauma, and are unable to recover the losses, our relational brain skills are impacted. For example, if we are abused and develop triggers around a certain environment or type of person (take doctors and medical environments, for instance), we become unable to respond to those environments or people using our whole brain. Instead, we react out of the amygdala in our brains which keep us in a fight, flight or freeze mode. We are not whole because we cannot use all the resources available to be the kind of person that God made us to be.

Over generations, as we lose those brain skills, our levels of brokenness increase. I cannot pass onto my children what I do not have and they cannot pass them onto their children. Unfortunately, it is a cumulative effect.

So, becoming whole doesn't happen automatically when we heal from our own trauma. The truth is, it is nearly impossible to HEAL from our trauma because we do not have the skills we need to do so. Hmm... that seems like a self-feeding loop, otherwise known as a vicious cycle. Really, it is worse than that. Our grandfather is traumatized and doesn't heal because his father did not have the brain skills required for him to connect well with God or others. Grandpa's trauma then causes him to lose even more relational skills which impacts the way he parents our mother. Mother is traumatized too and has even fewer skills to pass on...

You see how it can get stark pretty quickly. Wholeness ebbs away until few shreds of it are left. Then we wonder why we can't pull the rabbit out of a hat and make everything work after a year or two of therapy. We add a twelve-step group and few good self-improvement books and the cumulative result is a few baby steps forward. I know. I've been there and done that!

Why Doesn't Salvation Make Us Whole?

We are supposed to be changed when we become Christians, right? We read scripture, try to pray, attend church, and maybe even go to a mid-week small group. Shouldn't those things make us whole?

That depends. If we are regularly exposed to other people that are whole in the midst of those activities, the answer will be yes. If everyone is as broken as we are, or maybe even more, then the answer is no. God created us to become whole in community. It is not a "just God and me" exercise. We can certainly find examples of wholeness and brokenness, both to varying degrees, in the Bible. That helps, if we know what we are seeing. We can ask God to make us whole. Prayer changes things. But not usually in a vacuum.

When we become believers, God does not automatically heal our bodies. He wants us to learn how to take good care of ourselves and come to honor our bodies as His temple. It takes education and a lot of work! Likewise, we do not automatically become emotionally and relationally whole when we get saved. His Word gives us examples of both those who are growing into wholeness and those who are not. We get to choose which direction we allow Him to take us on our life journey.

God's original intent was for the perfect humans he created to pass on the relational, emotional and spiritual skills they had to the next generation, (I think they were imbued with those skills from their daily walks in Eden with their Creator... but that's another subject). When the fall took place, God had a plan in place to bridge the gap for us to be able to access Him. That plan did not automatically remove all of the fall-out from sin on this planet, though. We are still relational beings with the capacity to learn and change, or to bring harm and tear down. We have decisions to make and work to do. Part of that work includes growing in the context of community. That's how He made us. We are so blessed to have a map for growing into wholeness and the resources and support to enable us to say "Yes" to our good God as He partners with us to mold us into His likeness.

Ponder, Journal and Discuss:

1. As you look over the list "What Does It Mean to Be Whole" on page 1-2, ask God which ones He is *currently* helping you increase. Ask Him these questions and journal the thoughts that come to your mind:

- What will it look like for me to have this characteristic?
- Who are people I know who have this characteristic?
- What are my next steps, Lord?

2. One way to tell if we have areas where our families didn't pass down relational skills or whether we have been traumatized is "triggering." When we are triggered, our reactions to the situation will be greater than is expected. We may notice that people say things to us like, "WOW! What brought that on?" or "What's got you so upset?"

- Are you aware of situations where other people seem to think your emotional reaction is "over the top"? We are not at the point in our lessons to deal with triggering, but the first step is to begin to recognize that something else might be happening underneath the surface, and God does have solutions.
- Make a note in your journal of the type of situation that seems to trigger you.
- Remember back to our Quietening lesson: "In quietness and trust will be your strength." Is. 30:15. You may want to create an affirmation or prayer: "God, when I am triggered, quietness and trust will be my strength." "Quietness and trust will be my strength when I am triggered." Begin to notice your triggering and say the prayer or affirmation.



A person who is living from their whole heart is truly a beautiful sight – a gift of light to their family and community. Lesson 4 looked at aspects of wholeness such as maturity, healing from trauma, and belonging. We will continue to grow into wholeness for our entire lives as we continue to deepen our relationship with Immanuel and with those around us.

What is true identity? True identity is what emerges when we live from our heart, “when the spiritual eyes of our hearts are turned toward God, we see truth and receive guidance and discernment. . . joy motivates our hearts to watch God endlessly. Watching God springs from a love-bond with God. Jesus highlighted this truth when He said that wherever our treasure was, there we would find our hearts also (Lk. 12:34) . . . Only with our hearts turned to God can we have confidence in what we know. We can see what is good, what we should do, and who we are.”¹

This beautiful quote from *Living from the Heart* helps us see how wholeness and true identity or “true knowing” are intertwined. Taking steps toward wholeness helps clean up our image of God from all the tarnish brought by the pain of trauma, lies of the sark, fearful attachment styles, and lack of maturity. Our true identity is revealed and more fully manifested in our daily lives as we are able to fully embrace the reality that Immanuel is glad to be with us regardless of our behavior, our performance as a believer, or our position on the journey to wholeness.

In *Living from the Heart*, the conditions that lead to *true knowing* are these:

1. Our hearts must be the healthy hearts that Jesus gave us.
2. Our hearts must be turned toward God with all our love and strength.
3. We must weed out and avoid the words and judgments of the sark.²

¹ Living from the Heart Jesus Gave Us, p. 129-130, Wilder, et al

² Ibid., p. 131

Some of us will look at these conditions and become fearful that our performance of them is not adequate, but nothing could be further from the truth. Remember that we are on a continuum of *true knowing* – it is not a point out in front of us that we must reach on our own, but a gradual revealing of what is already within us through God's tremendous grace. Let's look at these conditions again:

1. Our hearts must be the healthy hearts that Jesus gave us. *We receive our new healthy heart as a free gift from God at the point of salvation.*
2. Our hearts must be turned toward God with all our love and strength. *As we receive healing and travel toward wholeness, our hearts will turn toward God with ever more love and strength. Don't you feel within yourself that desire to love God with every ounce of your strength? There is no condemnation here for "less than perfect" love for God.*
3. We must weed out and avoid the words and judgments of the sark. *Again, as we receive wholeness, we begin to recognize the sark and its constant efforts to understand life and make judgments without Immanuel's input. And again, no condemnation as we weed out the sark from our mind – as stated in Romans 7 below, in our inner being, we delight in God and His ways.*

Read through Romans 7:20 – 8:2 below:

Romans 7:**20** Now if I do what I do not want, *it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.* **21** So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. **22** *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* **23** but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. **24** Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. **8** *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

We have both *been set free* and are *being set free!* As we learn to trust God and rely on what He reveals to us, we will walk in the freedom of the Spirit. This freedom is described in Proverbs 3:5-6:

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding [sark]; in all your ways acknowledge (discern, know, focus

your heart on] Him and He will direct your paths.” (Prov. 3:5-6, emphasis from Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You, p. 132)

The contrast between the healthy heart and the sark can also be seen in Isaiah 30:15 – 16:

¹⁵ For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel,

“In returning and rest you shall be saved;

in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” [HealthyHeart]

But you were unwilling, ¹⁶ and you said,

“No! We will flee upon horses”; [Sark]

therefore you shall flee away;

and, *“We will ride upon swift steeds”; [Sark]*

therefore your pursuers shall be swift.

Here in Isaiah, we see that the Lord tells the people of Israel how to live from their true, healthy hearts – to return, rest, quiet themselves, and trust in Him. Contrasted with this is the sark – reliance on their own strength, fighting in their own power. God offers us each a life of trust and rest, and He will also allow us to wear ourselves out seeking our own strength and ways. Let us listen to Him and grow into our true identity!

Questions to Ponder and Share

1. Has there been a time in your life when you felt like you were in some alignment with your true identity? If so, what were some characteristics of that time in your life?
2. What activities seem to make you feel more “yourself”? This might mean these activities make you feel alive, energized, and passionate, or they might make you feel peaceful and at rest.
3. Our joy capacity must grow in order for our joy to “motivate our hearts to watch God endlessly.” (Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You). What activities bring you a sense of “glad to be together” joy? What are some ways you can build more joy building into your daily life?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Fearless | <input type="checkbox"/> Order | <input type="checkbox"/> Vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial stability | <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Patience | <input type="checkbox"/> Wealth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Patriotism | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-being |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship | <input type="checkbox"/> Peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholeheartedness |
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As we look at our true identity, it is helpful to remember that as new creations, our identity in Christ is secure. Along with this lesson I've attached a document called *Who I Am in Christ*¹. Each of the truths on this list is *always* true of *every single one* of us. It is helpful to interact with Immanuel about our identity in Christ, so I encourage you to take this list and ask God what He wants you to know about these truths. You might want to journal with Him about each truth individually. This is an task which can take many months, not one that you try to accomplish quickly.

In addition to our identity in Christ as believers, there are also characteristics we each receive from God which vary from person to person. There are infinite facets of God's personality and character, and He delights to implant in each person a very specific combination of His character and personality. As I asked Immanuel what He wanted me to know about these heart characteristics that are in each of us in wide variety, I sensed the following:

"My daughter, you all belong to each another. You are all an intricate body, and each one carries traits of Me that will manifest My presence in your particular corner of the world, and will bring joy, peace, belonging and healing to people with whom you interact. As you seek and develop these heart characteristics, you become more of the person I created you to be, you connect more strongly with Me, and you impact your community in the ways I chose for you. It is a delight to Me to see each of you looking for the treasures hidden within yourselves and each other. Enjoy this treasure hunt together!"

In the 4 level control center of the brain, our heart characteristics are developed in Level 4, otherwise known as the Identity Center. This is the part of our brain that knows "what it is like me and my people to do," so a well-trained Level 4 is tuned in to the special traits God has placed within us. As we learn to use these traits in our interactions, we partner with God to create belonging and restore shalom - the sense that things are as they should be. What a tremendous gift to our fractured world!

In her video curriculum *Attune to Attach*², Maribeth Poole teaches about our Identity Center and our heart characteristics. Along with this lesson you'll find Maribeth's

¹ "Who I am in Christ," Neil Anderson, <http://ficm.org/>

² Attune to Attach DVD course, <https://maribethpoole.com/>

list of heart characteristics and concepts that may help you begin to identify what God has planted in your heart.

As you look at this list, consider these questions:

1. Which of these words or traits resonate with you?
2. Are there concepts here that feel especially important to you?
3. What breaks your heart? Would it really upset you if you could not *be* one of these words? For example, one person might feel very sad to lose *tradition*, while another might be heartbroken at the idea of a world without *uniqueness*.
4. Is there a concept here that you would be willing to fight for, whether for yourself or for others? For instance, God placed a strong desire for *justice* in some of us, while others might see *mercy* as more important.
5. Do you see a word here that you absolutely love when people apply it to you? My daughter Olivia has many heart characteristics, but she feels particularly satisfied when people notice and enjoy her sense of humor!

Spend some time this week journaling with God about these questions. Ask Him to help you notice your heart characteristics as they manifest in your daily life. Also ask Him to bring to mind those things that hurt you, that break your heart. What does He want you to know about the particular combination of His personality traits that He has placed within you? Where might these traits be particularly helpful as you interact with others?

This week in Journey Group, we will discuss what you have sensed from God as you interacted with Him about your heart characteristics.



This week, we will bring together a few concepts that intersect with our heart characteristics – wounds, maturity, and attachment styles.

Wounds

As we look at our heart characteristics, it is good to recognize that our heart characteristics create particularly sensitive spots within us. In Thrive training, we alternate looking for your heart characteristic with identifying your “main pain.” If I have a heart characteristic of *justice for the weak*, then I will feel great pain when I see the strong take advantage of the weak. I might look at other people and wonder, “Why do they not see this terrible situation?” or perhaps I stay awake at night trying to think of ways to help. This is the beauty and the pain of heart characteristics – we are created to be like God in certain ways, and those ways are very good. When the evil of the world comes against the good of our heart, we feel pain. We can learn to look inside ourselves and say, “I am the kind of person who would feel pain in this situation. This is the way God created me, and it is good.”¹ This recognition of our heart characteristics and the pain we feel is a step towards suffering well.

Maturity

Our maturity level affects how much we actually live from the heart characteristics God has placed within us. For instance, if God has gifted me with leadership but I am at child maturity and cannot take care of my needs as well as the needs of others, my leadership may look like bossiness and produce dissatisfaction in those I lead. My ability to manifest my gift of integrity will be affected by whether I’ve learned the child level task of doing hard things. The gift of contentment combined with infant maturity will look like laziness.

As you pray about the heart characteristics God has given you, it is helpful to look at the maturity tasks you are working to develop. How might your maturity gaps affect how your heart characteristic looks in your life?

Attachment Styles

Our attachment styles will also have an effect on how fully we express our heart characteristics. Perhaps God has given you the heart characteristic of kindness, but you

¹ Teaching from Jim Wilder

currently have a dismissive attachment style. In dismissive attachment, one might not notice opportunities for kindness because you've learned to ignore or minimize emotional needs. As you heal from dismissive attachment, you may suddenly notice your kind heart is blooming as you see the emotions within you and in your friends. Or perhaps God has placed within you the heart characteristic of harmony, but you have disorganized attachment which brings disorder and conflict into your relationships. It might be difficult for you to recognize this characteristic of harmony within yourself until you begin to move toward a more secure attachment style.

If you know your attachment style, ask Jesus to reveal to you how that might be affecting your heart characteristic. Perhaps He can give you a glimpse of how your heart characteristic will be more clear as your move toward secure attachment.

Exercise

With this lesson, we will review Maribeth's contemplative outline "*Who am I?*"² where she shares some of her own ruminations with Immanuel as she sought to understand the person God created her to be. You might want to do a similar contemplative exercise with God, including some of the following prompts from Maribeth's journaling:

"I am designed in the image of God!

I am one who is: _____

I value: _____

I believe people are: _____

I dislike it when: _____

Father, when I am _____, help me grow into the fullness of who I am so that I may continue to live out my true original design and true self with constancy!"

Download Maribeth's outline at the link in the footnote below, read through it, and then create your own "Who Am I?" meditation to remind you of who you are when life pressures cause you to forget.

Questions to Discuss in Journey Group

1. What heart characteristics seem to resonate with you the most?
2. Is there a type of painful situation that has seemed to bother you throughout your life? This thought may help you identify your heart characteristic.
3. What maturity tasks will you need to work on so you can more fully manifest your heart characteristic(s)?
4. How has your attachment style affected the expression of your heart characteristic(s)?

² Available at <https://www.lifemodel.org/download/Who%20Am%20I.pdf>



Healing Hearts

LESSON 1: FOUNDATIONS FOR PROCESSING PAIN

**“In the world you will have tribulation,
but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)**

Because we live in a very broken world, there is no option available in which we avoid pain altogether. Given this, one would think that the first order of business for parents of young children would be teaching them how to handle pain, but this doesn't seem to be in many parenting manuals – it's not a very popular topic. Because this topic is rarely on the parenting agenda, most of us learned to avoid acknowledging or feeling pain. This may work for a period of time, but most of us “hit the wall” by middle adulthood – we can no longer ignore our pain, the negative emotions that accompany pain, or the relational damage that unprocessed pain has caused. Perhaps you are in this place now, or someone you love has reached this place. It's an excellent place to be, because it is reality, and once we acknowledge the reality of pain, we can begin to process our pain.

What does unprocessed pain look like? We often see the result of unprocessed pain in the things we do to *avoid* facing it. These might be any of the following (or your own personal favorite might be different!)¹:

- Defending
- Blaming
- Staying busy
- Controlling
- Enabling others
- Walking on eggshells
- Withdrawing
- Perfectionism
- Analysis/logic
- Electronics/social media
- Television
- Alcohol and drugs
- Unhealthy sexual activity
- Workaholism
- Thrill-seeking
- Food

There is a reason that the Bible says “Do not fear” 365 times. Once we learn to process pain successfully, we won't fear it, and our lives expand with possibilities – no more

¹ Some material in this lesson is from Barbara Moon's book, “Reframing Your Hurts: Why You Don't Have to Fear Emotional Pain,” which is available on Amazon.com with her other excellent books. Barbara was personally mentored by Jim Wilder for many years.

avoided conversations, land mines in relationships, or unexplored dreams! Perhaps this is what is meant in Ps. 118:15 - I called on the LOR D in distress; The LOR D answered me and set me in a **broad place**.

What if our attitude toward problems and pain changed completely? Take a few minutes to watch this video clip of Graham Cooke talking about problems: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0ZOqBAXscg&t=122s>

Perhaps we won't be like Graham and actually envy others when they have problems, but we can learn to face them without fear.

Setting a Good Foundation for Processing Pain

Our brains are designed to search for a solution for our pain. When we are in great emotional pain and distress, it's normal to feel like "I need to address this immediately! Help me NOW!" However, processing pain involves bringing pain to the surface, so we need to build our joy capacity before we dive into this process. If we don't focus on building a strong foundation of joy capacity prior to processing pain, we will find ourselves unable to face life with our pain exposed to the light.

How do we build joy capacity? Spend time with family members and friends building connection and joy – play games, take walks, watch joyful and/or funny movies or videos (YouTube has many videos of babies laughing, animals doing silly things, and bloopers from favorite shows or movies), build a fire outdoors and make S'mores, tell funny stories and clean jokes, look for free or inexpensive activities in your area, start a family hobby, have craft night – the ideas are endless.

Quieting

The first relational skill we will use in processing pain is Quieting, which is an essential step in restoring our relational circuits. We must have our relational circuits on gain access to Levels 3 and 4 of the brain, as these are the parts of the brain that can process pain. (We will talk more about the brain levels in a few weeks.)

Step 1: Shalom My Body: the exercises that Jim Wilder designed to help quiet your body's reactions to distress (rapid breathing and heart rate, tense muscles, flushing, etc.):

- Moro Reflex, also called Breathe and Scrunch;
- Tapping by the collar bone;
- Deep breathing; and
- Yawning
- Each of these is accompanied by the phrase, "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You, O Lord" from Ps. 56:3

Step 2: When you sense that your body is settled down, move on to Appreciation. Actively bring to mind one or more Appreciation Memories. When you can fully enter into our Appreciation Memories, you know your Relational Circuits have been restored.

Step 3: Connect to Immanuel. From your Appreciation Memory, ask Jesus, "What do you want me to know right now?" If you sense His presence or response, you are ready to begin processing the pain, or moving forward in the situation.

Don't worry if you need to Quiet at times when aren't able to take all these steps. It is a good idea to see which elements of Shalom My Body are most effective at quickly and unobtrusively quieting your body.

Triggering

Unprocessed pain is stored in our subconscious mind as emotional sensations, so we are usually unaware when a current situation has "triggered" the recall of an unprocessed pain memory. When a current situation "feels" the same as the old, unprocessed pain memory, we will be triggered. For instance, Karl Lehman² tells of how he found himself enraged at drivers who would race to the front of a merge lane in Chicago traffic, until he processed the pain of playground bullies pushing their way to the front of the line for the slide in elementary school. Once he processed the old pain, his emotional response became much more in line with the situation, and he was able to act like himself.

How do we know when we are triggered?

- Our response to a situation seems "over the top"
- We "feel" younger than we are, which means we might
- Feel like we don't have the resources to handle the situation
- We respond with infant or child maturity
- We feel or are incapable of acting like the person God created us to be

What do we need when we are triggered? We need attunement, which is described below:

Attunement Offered

- ┆ I see you
- ┆ I hear you
- ┆ I correctly understand your internal experience
- ┆ I join you in your emotions
- ┆ I genuinely care about you
- ┆ I am glad to be with you, even in your big emotions

Attunement Received

- ┆ You feel seen
- ┆ You feel heard
- ┆ You feel understood
- ┆ You feel I am with you
- ┆ You feel that I care about you
- ┆ You feel that I am glad to be with you

² Karl Lehman is a founder of the Immanuel Prayer approach, and his book "Outsmarting Yourself" has excellent material on triggering. His books are available on Amazon.com and at his websites www.kclehman.com and www.immanuelapproach.com.

We will talk more about triggering, attunement, quieting, and growing capacity in the following weeks.

Questions

1. Which of the ways to avoid pain on page 1 have you used most often in the past?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much anxiety do you feel when you think about the following³:

Talking over a problem with:

- _____ My boss
- _____ My co-worker
- _____ My spouse
- _____ My child
- _____ Other relative

The idea of:

- _____ Rejection by others
- _____ Work responsibilities
- _____ Family Responsibilities
- _____ Abandonment
- _____ Exposure

The idea of:

- _____ Failure
- _____ Success
- _____ Emotional intimacy
- _____ Physical pain
- _____ Poor health/getting sick
- _____ Death
- _____ Wasting my life

- _____ God's view of me
- _____ God's will for me
- _____ Loss of control
- _____ Needs not being met
- _____ My own anger
- _____ Another person's anger
- _____ Shame
- _____ Making mistakes

3. What is a strong Appreciation Memory you can use to help you restore your relational circuits when they are dim or off? Name it below:

³ Taken from exercise 11A in Forming, one of the Connexus video curriculum modules which is available from Life Model Works. David Takle is the author of Forming and other books available from Amazon.com and Life Model Works.



Healing Hearts

LESSON 2: DEEPENING MY CONNECTION TO JESUS WITH IMMANUEL JOURNALING

As we move into healing our hearts, we will need more joy capacity as we discussed in Lesson 1. Our joy capacity grows as we deepen our connections with healthy people – in the moments of attunement, we are actually sharing their capacity. Deepening our connection with Immanuel enables us to tap into God's infinite capacity. Understanding this concept gives new meaning to the following verses:

Ps. 46:1: God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

Ps. 31:20: You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man; You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.

Ps. 71:3: Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come.

I love this image of God our Father, Jesus our brother, and Holy Spirit our guide, standing ready to welcome us, attune with us, and share their capacity with us. This is a much more relational picture of Immanuel than simply a fortress or rock to which we run to hide; this is a friend who is practicing active listening, validating and comforting our pain, and going with us to face our pain. I like to imagine an actual fortress during a medieval battle to which soldiers could return to receive rest after the turmoil outside the gates, medical care for their wounds, and the encouragement of their commanding officer that he will be with them as they return to the battle. This picture is worlds away from a distant Creator who watches our struggles from afar, judging our successes or failures.

Immanuel Journaling is one method of putting us in touch with God's attuned heart for us. "Joyful Journey," by Jim Wilder, John and Sungshim Loppnow, and Anna Kang, is the book that introduces Immanuel Journaling¹. This little book is a treasure!

Jim Wilder has stated that Immanuel Journaling has brought quicker transformation to more people than any other Life Model methodology introduced thus far. Consistent journaling with God with this framework places you in touch with God's heart for you – it enables you to receive His constant, abiding attunement with your

¹ Joyful Journey, <http://www.lifemodel.org/shopping/index.php>

emotions. As we learned last week, when we feel seen, heard, and understood, we are able to begin processing pain. You will notice as we move through the steps of Immanuel Journaling that it parallels Karl Lehman's attunement chart from Lesson 1².

Immanuel Journaling is designed to deepen your attachment and connection to God who is with us. The importance of this is pointed out in a short blog post by Sungshim Lopnow below:

"We become like the person we are most attached to. Think about this, who are you most attached to? This is likely the most important question you can ask yourself because you will become like that person over time.

Immanuel Journaling is one tool, one simple way, that can help us attach to Jesus. To learn how to be bonded to Immanuel in a way that we begin to recognize that God is actually glad to be with us. He likes us and this attached relationship forms us.

How are you arranging your life in such a way that the fruit flows from a bonded relationship with the gentle presence of God in Immanuel?"

<http://immanueljournaling.com/relationship-is-the-key/>

A steady practice of Immanuel Journaling will build your bond with Jesus so that you can more easily connect with Him to process pain, and so that He is an easily available resource throughout your day, which will help you process pain as it happens.

Immanuel Journaling is based on Exodus 3, the story of Moses at the burning bush. Notice the bolded words below:

⁷ The LORD said, "**I have indeed seen** the misery of my people in Egypt. **I have heard them crying out** because of their slave drivers, and **I am concerned about their suffering.** ⁸ So **I have come down to rescue them** from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now **the cry of the Israelites has reached me**, and **I have seen** the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. **I am sending you** to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

¹² And God said, "**I will be with you.**"

² Karl Lehman, "Outsmarting Yourself," available from Amazon.com and Life Model Works.

Immanuel Journaling begins with Appreciation to ensure our relational circuits are on and then moves into hearing God speak to us in a pattern based on Exodus 3. The following provides a brief explanation of each step in Immanuel Journaling:

GRATITUDE

Dear God, I am thankful for... This can be anything; an event, being in nature, pet, special memory or something that makes you smile.

My Dear child... Write what you think a loving father's response would be to your gratitude.

I CAN SEE YOU

I can see you... Write what you believe God sees, what you think He observes in you. This can include physical sensations (breathing, pain, discomfort), emotions (tears, calm, relaxed) or what you are doing (sitting, tense body, restless).

I CAN HEAR YOU

I can hear you... Write what you believe God hears you saying to yourself. This can be something simple like you saying that you enjoy the warmth of the morning sun or that you are frustrated with yourself or someone else.

I UNDERSTAND HOW BIG THIS IS FOR YOU, HOW YOU FEEL. I VALUE YOU.

I understand how... Write what you think God sees about your situation. Ex: He sees how sad or overwhelmed you feel, what He enjoys about you as you enjoy the morning sun, etc.

I AM GLAD TO BE WITH YOU. I VIEW YOUR WEAKNESS TENDERLY

I am glad to be with you. I... Write about what you perceive God might be saying to you in a kind, tender, loving and gentle way.

I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH

I can do something with you and for you... Write about what God might be saying as to how He will be with you and assist you.

READ YOUR RESULTS ALOUD, PREFERABLY TO ANOTHER PERSON. You might be tempted to skip this step, but it's a very important part of the experience to hear the words you sensed from God out loud. If you have no one with whom you can share your journaling, read it out loud and God's love and comfort sink in to your soul.

Attached is a blank Immanuel Journaling worksheet. Try to do Immanuel Journaling

Immanuel Journaling

Dear God, I am thankful for...

FROM THIS POINT FORWARD, WRITE AS IF GOD IS TALKING TO YOU:

My Dear child...

I can see you...

I can hear you...

I UNDERSTAND HOW BIG THIS IS FOR YOU, HOW YOU FEEL. I VALUE YOU

I understand how...

I AM GLAD TO BE WITH YOU. I VIEW YOUR WEAKNESS TENDERLY

I am glad to be with you. I...

I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH

I can do something with you and for you...

READ YOUR RESULTS ALOUD, PREFERABLY TO ANOTHER PERSON



Healing Hearts

LESSON 3: DEEPENING MY CONNECTION TO JESUS WITH THE IMMANUEL APPROACH

The Immanuel Approach to life includes tools for connecting with Jesus (Immanuel Journaling), and emotional healing tools (Immanuel Prayer), but also the Immanuel Lifestyle: living a life connected to Jesus and seeking His perspective on every situation. Jim Wilder and Jane Willard began bringing Jesus into their counseling sessions in Pasadena many years ago, and Dr. Karl Lehman developed Immanuel Prayer as an extension of Theophostic Prayer. When Dr. Wilder and Dr. Lehman met and realized their separate paths had converged, they sensed a calling from God to collaborate on this form of healing prayer which seemed to enable recipients to develop their own connection to Jesus and leave the prayer session untraumatized by looking at painful memories.

There are now many sources of in-depth information and training for the Immanuel Approach¹. The relational skills we are learning in Journey Groups are all helpful in growing our capacity to stay connected to Jesus in ever more complex and distressing situations. Relational skills and the Immanuel Approach go hand-in-hand.

On his website, Dr. Lehman introduces the Immanuel Approach like this:

The Immanuel approach to emotional healing

- Shifts the primary objective from “resolve trauma and relieve symptoms” to “help the person connect more intimately with Jesus by removing barriers between her heart and Him.” We gratefully accept the resolution of psychological trauma and the associated symptom relief as side benefits, but ***the more important priority is to remove blockages that stand between our hearts and Jesus.***
- ***Starts with recall of positive memories and deliberate appreciation***, to prepare our brain-mind-spirit systems for connecting with the Lord; and then establishes a living, interactive connection with Jesus as the foundation for the session.
- Is organized ***around turning to Jesus, focusing on Jesus, and engaging directly with Jesus at every point in the session.***

¹ Life Model Works has a booklet entitled “Share Immanuel” by Dr. Wilder and Chris Coursey: <https://www.lifemodel.org/product.php?type=book&rn=86>; Dr. Karl Lehman’s site has pdf chapters of his book “The Immanuel Approach,” as well as DVD training to purchase: <http://www.immanuelapproach.com/>; Alive & Well provides in-depth training in both Immanuel Lifestyle and Immanuel Prayer at their website: <https://alivewell.org/>; Healing Center International provides brief DVD training: <https://www.godhealstoday.org>

The Immanuel approach to life

- The Immanuel approach to life includes healing for psychological trauma, but clearly recognizes that this is only one part of God's agenda for working in our lives. For example, *the Lord also wants to build our capacity, grow our maturity, and spend time "just" being with us as a friend.*
- Takes the tools for helping us connect with the Lord outside of special "sessions," with the *ultimate goal of helping us get to the place where we perceive the Lord's presence, and abide in an interactive connection with Jesus, as our usual, normal, baseline condition as we walk through life each day.*
- Again, identifies the primary objective, the most important priority, as intimacy with God.

Separate from this lesson you will receive 3 documents:

- Dr. Lehman's "Super Simple Approach to Immanuel Prayer," designed to be used in groups, (1 page document).
- Dr. Lehman's explanation for the "Super Simple Approach to Immanuel Prayer," which is 10 pages long. (Read this document if you want, but it is not necessary to read it in order to participate in Immanuel Prayer.)
- Healing Center International's "Immanuel Prayer Session Worksheet," which can be used individually, (2 page document).

In our Journey Group, we will practice the "Super Simple" Immanuel Prayer approach.

Super Simple Immanuel Approach Exercise for Groups and Beginners

(1 page summary, Karl D. Lehman, MD, Revised 2/14/2014)

1.) Break up into small groups: The ideal number for each group is three. Two to five can work.

2.) Positive memories and appreciation: Opening prayer (optional). Focus on memory/memories of previous positive experiences of perceiving the Lord's presence and connecting with Him. Each group member describe positive memory/memories to the others, and name specific things you appreciate about these experiences. The goal is to remember and appreciate until you *feel* appreciation/gratitude.

3.) Reenter a positive memory and establish an interactive connection: One at a time, 1) spend several minutes reentering/reconnecting with one of the positive memories, 2) from "inside" the memory, pray something along the lines of "Lord, help me to perceive Your living presence, and to have an interactive connection with You," and 3) share whatever comes into your awareness. After each person has gone through these pieces, pick a recipient and a primary facilitator for the rest of the exercise (steps #4 through #6), with the others in the group listening, supporting, and interceding.

Note: The recipient must be able to establish an interactive connection with the Lord in step 3 in order to move on to the rest of the exercise. Do not proceed with the remainder of the exercise if you don't have a recipient with an interactive connection. (See essay for additional explanation)

4.) Help Recipient choose a traumatic memory to work on: Select a low to moderate intensity traumatic memory (see full text version for additional directions regarding memory selection).

5.) Invite/welcome Jesus into memory, ask for interactive connection, engage with Him to receive healing: (Recipient) From the perspective of being inside the memory, pray something like: "Jesus, I make a heart invitation for You to be with me here. Please help me to have an interactive connection."

a.) If recipient is able to establish an interactive connection in the memory: Engage with Jesus to receive healing (see full text for additional instructions).

b.) If recipient is *not* able to establish an interactive connection: "Safety net" troubleshooting (reestablish initial connection, engage Jesus there. Full text for additional instructions).

c.) Recipient has trouble, and asking Jesus for guidance & help does *not* resolve the problem: "Safety net" troubleshooting (reestablish initial connection, engage Jesus there. Full text for add'l).

d.) You're running out of time and trauma is still not resolved: End of exercise safety net.

6.) End of exercise – more appreciation, the Immanuel story, and the safety net:

If complete resolution of traumatic memory: Help recipient to thank the Lord, and to formulate and tell the Immanuel story. Help name specifics especially appreciated. Closing prayer (optional).

If some positive interaction with the Lord, but *only partial* resolution of the trauma: 1) Help recipient return to connection with Jesus from beginning of exercise, and to spend time with Jesus and deliberate appreciation until he/she *feels* grateful and peaceful (the negative emotions have fully resolved). 2) Help recipient to thank the Lord, and to formulate and tell Immanuel story regarding the positive interaction. 3) Closing prayer (optional, depending on context)

If no positive interaction with the Lord in working with the trauma: 1) Help recipient return to connection with Jesus from beginning of exercise, and to spend time with Jesus and deliberate appreciation until he/she *feels* grateful and peaceful (the negative emotions have fully resolved). 2) Closing prayer (optional, depending on context).



Immanuel Prayer Session Worksheet

Date: _____

Part One

If you are doing this in a group, have everyone in the group do the first page together.

Step 1: Prayer of Protection

Lord Jesus, I commit myself to you, and I ask that you would push back any cosmic or demonic interference right now, and allow me to experience a clear connection with you, without interference or retaliation of any kind. I trust you, my Sovereign God, to make it safe here for me to experience your presence, in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Invite the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, come! Have your way.

Step 2: Quiet

Quiet your body through relaxation. Get as comfortable as you can through: deep breathing (five in, five out), yawning, Shalom for my Body, progressive relaxation, body scan (checking your body for tense areas and relaxing them).

Step 3: Remember (A Positive Memory)

Ask the Lord to help you recall a positive memory, either a close time with him, or a time of joy. Give the memory a name. You can write a few sentences about it in the space below, if you like.

Step 4: Appreciate

Savor the memory and the emotions in the memory. Appreciate it and the character of God revealed there.

Step 5: Locate

Look for Jesus. You may sense him in the memory (past) or here in the room now (present) or both. Pray, *Lord, I welcome you with my heart. Help me to perceive your living presence, and to have an interactive connection with you.*

Step 6: Moving Closer

You can be as close to Jesus as you like. If getting close to Jesus is easy, go to Step 7. If there is distance between you and Jesus, do you feel or sense any resistance or hesitancy about moving closer? What do you believe might happen if you got closer? Ask him if your belief is true and listen to what he says.

Step 7: Connect

Turn to Jesus and engage with him. This may be verbal or nonverbal. Take time to be in his presence. You can pray, *Lord Jesus, what do you want me to know? Help me to receive everything that you have for me here.*

Enjoy your time with the Lord.

If you are in a group, share your positive memory or connection place with Jesus with the group.



Part Two

Use this page to process an unresolved or painful memory. If you are working in a group, divide the group into triads with two to coach and intercede and one to receive. The one who receives should have experienced a strong connection with Jesus on the first page before doing this page.

Step 8: Remember (A Painful Memory)

If you are experiencing a solid connection with Jesus, refresh the memory of connecting with Jesus from earlier and then ask him to guide you to an unresolved or painful memory. Start with something mildly troublesome. Before you go to the unresolved or painful memory, tell your facilitators about your positive appreciation moment.

Step 9: Locate

Look for Jesus. He was there with you during the experience you remembered. You can pray,

Jesus, open my ears, eyes and heart to you. Please help me to be aware of your presence with me here. If you are able to locate him go to Step 11, if not go to Step 10.

Step 10: Relocate

If you are unable to locate Jesus in the painful memory, go back and reconnect with Jesus in the positive memory and spend more time with him. You can simply enjoy his presence and end the session here, or try to approach the painful memory again after spending time with Jesus building joy. Or, you can stay in the painful memory and ask for help by simply praying, *Lord, I need your help. Show me what is getting in the way. What do I need to do to take the next step forward?* Spending more time in his presence builds the capacity to face pain. A third option is to go back and forth between the positive memory and the painful memory, or to approach the painful memory as if you were looking at it through a ship's porthole—with some distance.

Step 11: Connect

Focus on Jesus and interact with him. This may be verbal or nonverbal. You can pray, *Lord, what do you want me to know about this? Jesus, do you have more for me in this situation? Help me to receive everything you have for me here.*

Step 12: Closing Prayer

Step 13: Share

Share your story with three people if you can, but at least one other person! Make sure you keep your description of the problem short and focus on what happened when Jesus showed up.

ⁱ Adapted from Dr. Karl Lehman, Patti Vedotta and Robert Walter

Super Simple Immanuel Approach Exercise for Groups and Beginners (complete instructions for *super simple* exercise only)

(Karl D. Lehman MD, Revised 2/14/14)

If you have questions regarding any part of these instructions, see the “Immanuel Approach Exercises for Groups & Beginners detailed discussion of all group exercises” essay for additional explanation and discussion. Also see www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises for additional handouts for group exercises, opening and closing prayers, and more.

Note: for this super simple exercise, with a VERY small tool box (ONE healing intervention and ONE troubleshooting tool), I strongly recommend trying the exercise with a trainer/leader providing verbal explanations and instructions, and the practice groups using only the 1 page summaries as “cheat sheets.” Using these complete instructions for a reference resource before and/or after can be helpful, and it is important for the person providing verbal explanations and instructions to be familiar with the detailed instructions, but I think this exercise is simple enough that most groups can get through it with verbal explanations and instructions in combination with the 1 page cheat sheets. My observation is that if the facilitator tries to use the detailed instructions during the actual exercise, she lets herself lean on them too heavily instead of trying to follow the verbal instructions and lead the exercise more from memory (with just small prompts from the cheat sheets). When this happens, it seems that the facilitator often gets bogged down in the detailed instructions.

1. Break up into small groups: Break the larger group into small clusters (three to five participants in each cluster).

Opening prayer and commands (optional, depending on context see detailed discussion essay for additional explanation):

2. Positive memories and deliberate appreciation: Ask the Lord to bring forward a memory of a previous positive experience of perceiving His presence and connecting with Him. If no memory comes forward spontaneously, take time to deliberately find one. Ask the Lord to help you recognize different aspects of the positive experience that you can specifically appreciate. Each person in the group then describes her positive connection memory to the others in the small group, and names specific things she appreciates about the experience. The goal is to *reconnect* with the positive memory, and to describe specific things that you appreciate until you *feel* appreciation/gratitude. Note that faith and gratitude “momentum” usually grow for all in the group as each person shares.

Remember that you may need to help other group members in using safety net #1 later in the exercise. As described below, sometimes you will need to remind them of specifics as part of coaching/helping them to return to their positive memories, repeat their deliberate appreciations, and reestablish their initial connections with Jesus. So pay attention (taking brief notes is ideal).

As we and our colleagues have been working with the Immanuel approach, with groups and individuals and in many different settings, we have identified several frequently asked questions and special considerations with respect to the positive memories that recipients work with to begin the Immanuel approach process:

a. “What if I don’t have any memories of positive connections with the Lord?”: Memories of past positive connections with the Lord are ideal, but if you have not yet had special interactive connections with God then use a memory of some other special event. For example, a memory of a particularly beautiful experience with one of your children, a favorite family Christmas memory, a memory of an especially positive vacation with friends, or a memory of thoroughly enjoying your favorite meal. You can practice deliberately reentering the positive memory, reconnecting with the positive emotions associated with the positive memory, and deliberately focusing on things you appreciate even if an interactive connection with God was not part of the original positive experience. Also, for step 3, below, you can experiment with asking the Lord to help you perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection in the context of this

“non-God” positive memory. Maybe this exercise will be your first time for perceiving the Lord’s presence and experiencing and interactive connection.

b. More than one positive memory: One positive memory is usually adequate, but it is ideal to have several, since appreciation momentum builds as one works with several positive memories in succession. Having several memories available will be helpful if anyone gets stuck in particularly intense negative emotions later in the exercise, and therefore needs an especially strong positive memory and appreciation safety net. So if you are working with people who are more likely to need an especially strong safety net (for example, they have survived severe trauma, their support system is poor, and their coping skills are weak), we recommend repeating the first step several times, so that each person has a safety net that includes several positive memories.

c. Appreciation memories without splinters: Many people have positive connection with God memories that still include trauma splinters. For example, the person’s appreciation memory may be for an Immanuel approach session in which she experienced Jesus’ loving, healing presence powerfully *with* her in a traumatic memory of her intoxicated father emotionally, physically, and sexually abusing she and her siblings. However, in this kind of complicated trauma, it is common to have a number of distinct traumatic pieces, so that unresolved pieces (or “splinters”) may remain, even while the parts of the memory that *have* been resolved *are* indeed now positive places where the person experiences the Lord’s healing presence. And if the traumatic memory the person works on later in the exercise resonates with the unresolved splinters, the initial appreciation parts of the memory can get blended together with the negative thoughts and emotions from the (now) activated splinters, so that the memory is no longer usable as a safety net. Therefore, if the people you are working with are describing appreciation memories that may have splinters (the positive memories being describe are about the Lord’s presence in the midst of trauma), and especially if many of the people in your larger group have similar traumas, so that each person’s splinters could trigger other participants, it is important to coach the participants to deliberately find positive memories that are completely free of splinters – memories without any aspect of pain or trauma. For example, feeling God’s presence while appreciating a beautiful sunset, seeing Jesus standing beside her as she holds her new baby, or experiencing a connection with Jesus in the context of a particularly beautiful worship service.

If a participant discovers that all her memories of positive God connections are memories of God’s presence in the midst of trauma, she can try a simple exercise that is often successful in generating completely splinter-free memories of interactive connections with God. The participant starts with a non-God positive appreciation memory, such as holding her baby, playing with a favorite pet, spending time with a best friend, or some beautiful nature experience like looking out over the Grand Canyon at sunrise. Then, just as for those who don’t yet have positive memories for interactions with God (above), she can go through the deliberate appreciation step with these non-God positive memories, and then use these same memories to go through step 3, below. With this simple exercise, many become able to perceive God’s interactive presence in memories that had previously been non-God positive memories, and these new interactive connection positive memories are totally splinter-free (not associated with trauma in any way).

3. Reenter a positive memory and establish an interactive connection with the Lord: After you have identified one or more memories of past positive connection with the Lord, and *feel* appreciation for His presence and care in these past experiences, spend several minutes reentering/reconnecting with one of the memories. Then, from “inside” the memory, pray something along the lines of “Lord, help me to be aware of Your living presence, and to have an interactive connection with You.”¹ Share whatever comes into your awareness with

¹In most cases the person perceives the Lord’s living presence and establishes an interactive connection in the context of the memory imagery (the subjective experience of being inside the memory spontaneously morphs into a new, living interaction with Him, but still in the context of the autobiographical content carried in the memory). However, some people will perceive the Lord’s living, interactive presence in the room where they are receiving ministry; some people will perceive the Lord’s living, interactive presence in the context of a different memory that comes forward spontaneously; some people will perceive the Lord’s

the others in your group. Again, if you have not yet had experiences of interactive connection with the Lord, then use a memory of some other special event.

Note about taking turns: It's best to take turns for this part of step 3 with each member of the group going through the whole process of reconnecting with her positive memory, asking the Lord for help with perceiving His presence and establishing an interactive connection, and then describing "whatever" comes into her awareness before moving onto the next participant². After each member of the group has gone through the first part of this step, pick one person to continue through the rest of the exercise as the recipient and pick a second person to be the primary facilitator. As the recipient is working on her traumatic memory, the primary facilitator (with the support of the other group members) should be reminding/coaching her regarding the instructions. (Ideally, the facilitator will coach regarding the instructions to the point that the recipient can focus all of her attention on her healing, without having to worry about looking at the instructions.) The facilitator (with the support of the others) also needs to apply the safety nets if the recipient gets stuck. *Note that from this point onward these exercise instructions are directed to the facilitator.*

appreciation until she *feels* appreciation and is at an okay place to stop. Caution note: if the recipient is not able to establish an interactive connection with the Lord *then she does not have the full safety net in place*, and it is very important that she does *not* go on to working with traumatic memories in a group exercise or unsupervised beginner practice setting.

Note: It is very important that the chosen recipient be able to establish an interactive connection with the Lord. Do not proceed with the remainder of the exercise if you don't have a recipient with an interactive connection. (See essay for additional explanation)

4. Choose a traumatic memory to work on: Help the recipient select a low to moderate intensity traumatic memory from one of the following categories (we recommend picking low intensity memories when you are just getting started with these group exercises):³

Memories for painful experiences from your recent adult life that do not yet feel fully resolved. One good way to find low intensity traumatic memories from your recent adult life is to look through recent unpleasant experiences in which you did not perceive the Lord's presence at the time of the original experience, and you still do not perceive His presence in the memory. Most of these will turn out to be traumatic experiences. Pick one that is minor. Note: picking a memory for a minor traumatic experience in recent adult life is probably the best way to stay in the shallow end of the pool.

Memories that you have been able to think about and talk about without getting overwhelmed, "stuck,"

living, interactive presence in the context of imagery that does not seem to be coming from any specific memories, and some will experience two or more of these simultaneously.

² See the "Immanuel Approach Exercises for Group and Beginners detailed discussion of all group exercises" essay for additional information.

³Some ask "Why not just ask the Lord to bring forward the memory He wants to work on?" This *is* what we do in individual sessions, but our concern in the group setting is that none of us have perfect perception of the Lord's guidance. In the context of a group exercise the leader cannot discern with each participant regarding the accuracy of their perception of the Lord's guidance, and the consequences of mistaken discernment are much greater (for example, getting into an overwhelming traumatic memory in the group setting, without appropriate resources to care for this). Therefore, in the group setting we are usually more conservative and directive, and provide guidelines for selecting memories as opposed to having each person simply ask the Lord what to do/where to go.

and needing someone else to help you get back on your feet emotionally.

Please *do not* focus on an upsetting symptom and ask: “Lord, take me to the memory where this is coming from.” This approach may take you to a memory that you have never before worked with, or even to a memory you have never before been consciously aware of.⁴

Please *do not* go to memories where you have gotten stuck and/or overwhelmed, and have needed someone else to help you get back to a place where you were okay.⁵

Please *do not* go to memories that you have never previously talked about. If you have never previously described the experience to another person, it may be much more intense and overwhelming than you initially feel or perceive⁶

5. Invite/welcome Jesus into the memory, ask Him to help you to establish an interactive connection, and engage with Him to receive healing: Coach the recipient to focus on the traumatic memory, and deliberately reenter/reconnect with it. In some situations, such as emotional healing groups in first world countries, participants will often be high functioning, well defended, and have difficulty connecting with their traumatic memories. For these situations, one simple way for the recipient to reenter/reconnect with the memory is to picture herself back in the painful situation, and then talk about the details until she can feel the negative emotions associated with the original experience.

****Caution note:** In some situations the concern will be for the recipient to avoid triggering and overwhelming everyone else in the group. For example, in groups where many of the participants have survived severe trauma, and in which many of the participants share similar trauma, if one group member starts talking about the details of a painful memory the others can quickly become overwhelmed by intense triggering. In these situations, the participants can usually reconnect with painful memories very easily (usually, all they need to do is close their eyes and think about the original experience for a moment), and it will be important for the person leading the overall exercise to coach participants to *avoid* describing the details of their trauma. In fact, the person leading the overall exercise should specifically coach the participants to describe their trauma very briefly, and in only the most vague and general terms.

Once the recipient is emotionally connected with the traumatic memory, coach her to invite/welcome Jesus to be with her in the memory, and to ask Him to help her perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection. From the perspective of being *inside* the memory, she can pray something like, “Jesus, I welcome You to be with me here. Please help me to be aware of Your presence and to have a living, interactive connection with You,” or “Jesus, I make a heart invitation for You to be with me here.

⁴This is a precaution for people who are just learning the process. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, you can feel free to use the “focus on an upsetting symptom, and ask the Lord to take you to the underlying memories” approach.

⁵Again, this is a precaution for people who are just learning the process. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, you can be more adventurous with respect to the memories you pick to work with.

⁶Again, this is a precaution for people who are just learning the process. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, you can be more adventurous with respect to the memories you pick to work with.

Please help me to perceive Your presence and to establish a living, interactive connection with You.”⁷ Then coach her to observe whatever comes into her awareness, and to the extent she feels comfortable doing so, describe her internal mental content to the others in the group *regardless of whether it makes sense or feels important*. (Remember that our brains works better in community, and that she may not recognize Jesus’ presence in her memory until she shares her internal experience with the others in the group).

a.) If the recipient is able to perceive the Lord’s presence and establish an interactive connection: If the recipient is able to perceive the Lord’s presence and establish an interactive connection in the traumatic memory, then coach her to keep focusing on Jesus and to engage with Him at every point in the session, regarding every issue that comes up, and regarding every difficulty that she encounters. Keep coaching the recipient to focus on Jesus and to use the following two prayers (as each is appropriate), “Jesus, what do You want me to know about this?” and “Jesus, please help me.”⁸ And after each interaction with Jesus, coach the recipient to “describe any thoughts, emotions, images, memories, or physical sensations that come into your awareness, *regardless of whether they “make sense” or feel important.*” (Remember, our brains work better in community).

b.) If the recipient is *not* able to perceive the Lord’s presence or establish an interactive connection: If the recipient is not able to perceive the Lord’s presence or establish an interactive connection in the memory, go straight to the *troubleshooting safety net intervention* described below in section d.ii. Please don’t fall into the trap of feeling like a failure if you have to use the safety net. Remember, when you are just beginning to practice with the Immanuel approach *it’s actually important and valuable for you to use the safety net*, so that you are sure that it really works.

c.) If you’re running out of time (fifteen minutes or less remaining) and the recipient is still feeling bad: If you are getting to the end of the session (fifteen minutes or less remaining), the traumatic memory has not been resolved, and the recipient is still feeling bad go to the *end-of-session safety net intervention* described below in section d.i.:

d.) “Safety net intervention” overview: The safety net intervention is to help the recipient get back to her positive, safe interactive connection with Jesus from the beginning of the exercise. If the recipient’s connection with Jesus at the beginning of the exercise was especially strong and her connection with the negative thoughts and emotions in the traumatic memory is only moderate, she may be able to go directly back to her initial interactive connection, and then quickly return to gratitude and peace as she spends time with Jesus in that context. However, if the recipient’s connection with Jesus at the beginning of the exercise was not so strong, and if she is intensely connected to the negative thoughts and emotions in the traumatic memory, you may need to coach her to review her positive memory, coach her to repeat the deliberate appreciation exercise, and then coach her to repeat step 3 in order for her to return to the positive, safe interactive connection from the beginning of the session.⁹

⁷Feel free to adjust the exact wording so that it feels like the best fit for your group’s experience and church culture.

⁸Again, you can adjust the wording so that it feels like the best fit for your group’s experience and church culture. For this super simple exercise, stay with a *very* small menu (two or three) *very* simple variations of these two prayers.

⁹The *Bob: Safety Net Demonstration* live session teaching DVD (#29 in the LMS series) provides a good example of quickly and easily going back to the initial interactive connection, without having to go

i.) End-of-session safety net intervention: If you're using the safety net as an end-of-session intervention so that the recipient can end the exercise in a good place, then start with helping her get back to the positive, safe interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise (as just described). Once she has reestablished the connection from the beginning of the exercise, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and deliberately appreciating both the Lord's goodness and the initial positive memory until the negative emotions from the traumatic memory have been fully replaced by gratitude and peace.

ii.) Troubleshooting safety net intervention: You can also use the safety net as a troubleshooting intervention that enables the recipient to continue working with the trauma. If you are wanting to pursue this option, start with helping the recipient to get back to the positive, safe interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise (as just described). And then, *continuing in the context of this positive place*, coach her to engage with Jesus regarding the painful memory. Coach her to tell/ask Jesus anything she wants to talk/ask about regarding the trauma, and coach her to especially talk/ask about any places of difficulty (for example, any places where she was not able to perceive His presence, or any places where she asked for help but did not perceive resolution). Coach her to continue focusing on Jesus, and then to observe any thoughts, emotions, images, memories, or physical sensations that come into her awareness (and especially anything she sees or senses the Lord to be doing). Finally, coach her to describe whatever comes into her awareness. (Your brain works better in community!)

Sometimes, just reestablishing the positive, safe connection from the beginning of the exercise, and then talking to Jesus about the traumatic memory and the problems that developed in trying to work with it, will use up the remainder of the session. However, in some situations the recipient will reestablish an interactive connection, talk to Jesus about the traumatic memory and any points of difficulty, and get to a good place fairly quickly – she has a good connection with the Lord, she understands whatever He has shown her about the problems that developed in working directly with the traumatic memory, and there is a lot of time remaining. At this point, if the recipient desires to do so, she can try again with respect to working directly with the trauma (working from the perspective of being inside/connected to the painful memory). Sometimes the process will then proceed smoothly to complete resolution; but if you get stuck again, just use the safety net intervention again. And repeat this cycle until you run out of time or the traumatic memory gets resolved.

iii.) Practical tips regarding advanced safety net coaching: With some situations in which the recipient is intensely triggered to severe trauma, the facilitator will need to provide special persistence and skill in helping her return to the interactive connection from the beginning of the session.

Tip #1 Provide *detailed* coaching: If the recipient gets stuck in a bad place and is having difficulty getting back to her initial positive memory and interactive connection with Jesus, the primary facilitator and other members of the group need to provide *detailed* coaching for each step of the safety net intervention. For example, you can remind her of some of the specifics from her positive memory, and then coach her to recall them and describe them in detail. You can coach her to spend time picturing and appreciating specifics that were particularly special, and you can also help her to find some new specific appreciations. If the recipient is still having trouble with actually *feeling* gratitude, you can coach her to recall and appreciate several positive memories in succession. (Remembering from chapter six, appreciation momentum builds as one

through the positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation steps.

works with several positive memories in succession.)¹⁰ Once the recipient is subjectively feeling gratitude, you can remind her to reenter the positive memory and ask Jesus for help with perceiving His living presence and establishing an interactive connection, and then encourage her to observe and describe whatever comes into her awareness.

Tip #2 Persist with safety net even if recipient doesn't feel like going to positive memory: Sometimes the recipient will be strongly connected to a memory of severe trauma, she will be feeling intense negative emotions, and her relational circuits will be deeply off. And because of the ways in which our relational circuits interact with our memories and emotions, with her relational circuits deeply off she will not initially *want* to think or talk about positive memories, when she tries to recall and reconnect with positive memories she will initially find this to be difficult, and when she starts remembering and talking about her positive memories she will not initially *feel* any appreciation.¹¹ In these situations you may need to be very directive and persistent in coaching the recipient to recall and describe her positive memories, name specific appreciations, and deliberately reenter the positive memory, *even when she doesn't initially feel like it*. In some situations it may take as long as fifteen to twenty minutes, but our experience is that if a person persists in recalling, talking about, appreciating, and reentering positive memories of experiencing the Lord's presence, she will eventually calm down, return to feeling appreciation, regain access to her relational connection circuits, and be able to get back to the good place of perceiving the Lord's presence and feeling connected to Him. It may take some practice to learn to be adequately directive and persistent in these situations, but with appropriate coaching most people can learn this fairly quickly.

Tip #3 Validate distress, reassure that pain is not being dismissed or ignored: When the recipient is intensely connected to a traumatic memory she will sometimes be deeply blended with the subjective experience from inside the original trauma. In these situations, when you suggest going back to the connection from the beginning of the exercise the recipient can feel like you are going somewhere else, and leaving her to stay behind in the painful place by herself. She might feel like you are simply abandoning her, or at the very least that you are trying stuff her pain back down into her unconscious because you don't want to deal with her messy emotions. In these situations it is very helpful to acknowledge the validity of the person's distress, remind her regarding the purpose of the positive memory intervention, and reassure her that she is not being ignored, managed, or abandoned. I usually say something along the lines of, "I understand that this painful memory place is very important, and needs to be cared for. We're not trying to ignore or minimize this memory place, or just stuff it back down. But for right now, the next step in the healing process is to "switch gears" and go back to the positive memories and interactive connection from the beginning of the session. And when you have reconnected with

¹⁰Again, appreciation momentum builds as one works with several positive memories in succession, and it is therefore wise to build safety nets that include several positive memories if you are working with participants who are at risk for getting particularly stuck in particularly intense traumatic memories. Hopefully, group exercise leaders will be aware of these concerns if they are working with people who are particularly vulnerable. Therefore, for the purposes of these advanced safety net coaching notes I will assume that recipients have several positive memories that they can work with if this is needed.

¹¹For a definition of relational circuits and detailed explanation regarding these ways in which they interact with our memories and emotions, see the "Key Concepts" page of www.outsmartingyourself.org, chapters 12, 15, 16, and 17 in *Outsmarting Yourself*, and Part II of the "Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and The God Who is With Us" essays (this essay is available as a free download from www.kclehman.com).

Jesus in that safe, positive place we will ask him for more help regarding this painful place.” Or, for the end of the session, “...but for right now, in this group setting, we want to ‘switch gears’ and help you use the positive memory safety net so that you can get back to a good place for the end of the exercise.”¹²

Tip #4 Start with offering attunement: Attunement can be a particularly helpful resource for any situations in which the recipient is intensely connected to a traumatic memory and resisting the safety net intervention. If you know about attunement and are skilled in providing it, the ideal is to start with offering attunement until the person regains access to her relational connection circuits, *and then after she has regained access to her relational connection circuits* coach her through the steps of recalling positive memory, deliberately stirring up appreciation, and reestablishing an interactive connection.¹³ Again, starting with attunement is ideal; however, persistent safety net coaching as described above, even without skilled attunement, will almost always¹⁴ be effective.

Tip #5 Don’t go back to the same memory: Once the recipient has calmed down she may return to the exercise, but if the group had to do a lot of coaching (as opposed to just a few gentle reminders), *she should work with a different memory*. The fact that she needed so much help indicates that the first painful memory is not good material for a group setting. I am confident the Lord can heal any traumatic memory, but it is best to deal with the more intense and complicated traumas in settings in which the recipient can receive more advanced one-on-one trouble shooting if this is necessary.

6. End of exercise – more appreciation, the Immanuel story, and the safety net:

If the recipient experienced complete resolution of the traumatic memory: Coach the recipient to thank the Lord for His healing presence and healing work. Coach the recipient to formulate and tell the Immanuel story (be sure that she names several specifics she especially appreciates).

If the recipient experienced some kind of positive interaction with the Lord in the context of the traumatic memory, but only partial resolution: 1) If she has not already done so (safety net as she was running out of time), coach the recipient to return to her interactive connection from the beginning

¹²If you can honestly do this (for example, you have plenty of time in the current session and can return to the trauma after getting more help from Jesus in the context of the initial positive memories, or you are planning to have future sessions in which you can return to these traumatic memories), it is ideal to also assure the person that you will eventually come back to continue work on the unresolved trauma. However, do not offer this assurance unless you are sure you will be able to provide what you promise.

¹³When I offer attunement as part of the safety net intervention, I usually include comments validating the recipient’s pain, assuring her that we are not just trying to manager her, reminding her of the purpose of the intervention, and reassuring her that we will return. For additional discussion of attunement as a resource for helping the recipient regain access to her relational connection circuits, see chapters 15, 17, and 18 in *Outsmarting Yourself*, and “Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and The God Who is With Us, Part II: The Pain Processing Pathway” (available as a free download from www.kleehman.com).

¹⁴As mentioned above, a very small number of participants may encounter especially complicated difficulties that can actually hinder them from cooperating with the initial-positive-memory-and- interactive-connection safety net. As also mentioned above, deliberate, skilled, and persistent attunement is one of the most consistently effective interventions for helping these people calm down and get back to a place where they are able cooperate with the initial-positive-memory-and- interactive-connection safety net.

of the exercise. As mentioned earlier, the recipient may be able to just go directly to her connection with Jesus, or she may need to repeat the positive memory and appreciation steps in order to reestablish her initial connection. After she has reestablished her positive, safe connection with Jesus, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and appreciating both the positive memory and the Lord's goodness until she feels grateful and peaceful. (She should no longer be feeling the negative emotions from the trauma.) 2) Coach the recipient to thank the Lord for this positive interaction, and then help her formulate and tell the Immanuel story regarding the positive interaction that has occurred (be sure to help her name specifics she especially appreciates).

If the recipient did not have a positive interaction with the Lord in the context of the traumatic memory: If you have not already deployed the end-of-session safety net, do it now. That is, coach the recipient to return to her interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise so that she can end the exercise in a good place. Again, the recipient may be able to go directly to her connection with Jesus, or she may need to repeat the whole positive memory, appreciation, interactive connection package. After she has reestablished her positive, safe connection with Jesus, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and appreciating both the positive memory and the Lord's goodness until she feels grateful and peaceful. (She should no longer be feeling the negative emotions from the trauma.)

With each of these options, remember to coach the recipient to do the "end of exercise" steps out loud with the others in the group. (Our brains works better in community.)

Brief comments regarding the Immanuel story: The "Immanuel story" is the story of 1) how things were before God showed up, 2) what happened when God showed up, and 3) how things have been different since God showed up. The concepts here are pretty simple, but unfortunately many of us are a lot better at talking about the pain part of the story than we are at talking about the God part of the story. As a result, we will often spend thirty minutes describing every detail of the long history of our pain, and then summarize the God/healing part of the story in thirty seconds. And in groups with a lot of trauma, this can set everybody else on fire. So we want to provide some additional coaching regarding how to formulate and tell the Immanuel story:

First round: Start at the point you first perceived God's presence with you (as opposed to starting at the beginning of the pain story). With the help of the group, give a blow by blow account of everything from the moment of perceiving God's presence forward. Tell each thing God did, and your reaction to it. Describe every detail you can get words for, especially your emotions, body sensations (if this is helpful), and anything you perceived to change as you engaged with God regarding the healing work. After these pieces have all been well developed, put them together and tell them as a story. If there are concerns about triggering others, leave the story like this, and tell it to at least three people as soon as (reasonably) possible after finishing the exercises.

Second round: (if there are minimal concerns regarding triggering others): Tell the story again, *slightly* expanded, with a *little* bit of context regarding the pain part of the story (how things were before God showed up). As soon as (reasonably) possible after finishing the exercises, tell the story to at least three people.

For additional explanation regarding the Immanuel story, see chapter fifteen, "Formulate and Tell the Immanuel Story," in the draft version of the new book (available as a free download from the "Getting Started" page of www.immanuelapproach.com).

7. Closing prayer (optional, depending on context see detailed discussion essay for additional

explanation):

8. Repeat steps 1 through 7 with another member of the group: If time permits, the group can return to step 3, and then repeat steps 3 through 7 with another member of the group.

Summary regarding the “Safety net” intervention (going back to the initial positive memories, appreciation, and interactive connection with the Lord): When encountering any of the difficulties below, the recipient can go back to the positive memories, appreciation, and interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise, and then get help from Jesus in that positive context. This simple but effective intervention can be a resource and/or “safety net” in various ways at various points throughout the exercise.

- If the recipient is not able to perceive the Lord’s presence in the traumatic memory, even after asking “what’s in the way?” and trouble-shooting;

if the recipient should become stuck at any point in working with the traumatic memory, and especially if the recipient becomes stuck and has lost her interactive connection with Jesus;

or if the recipient is able to perceive the Lord’s presence in the traumatic memory, but does not experience a strong enough connection to be able to receive the help she needs;

– for each of these situations, coach the recipient to go back to the positive memory starting place and re-establish connection with Jesus in that context. From the positive memory place of restored connection with Jesus, coach the recipient to ask Jesus for help and specifically ask Him about the traumatic memory. Then if time permits, the recipient can go back to the traumatic memory and apply the new guidance/help she just got from Jesus. Repeat as many times as necessary.

- At the end of the session, if you run out of time before the recipient has fully resolved the traumatic memory, help her return to her connection with Jesus from the beginning of the exercise. After she has reestablished this positive, safe connection, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and appreciating both the positive memory and the Lord’s goodness until she feels grateful and peaceful.

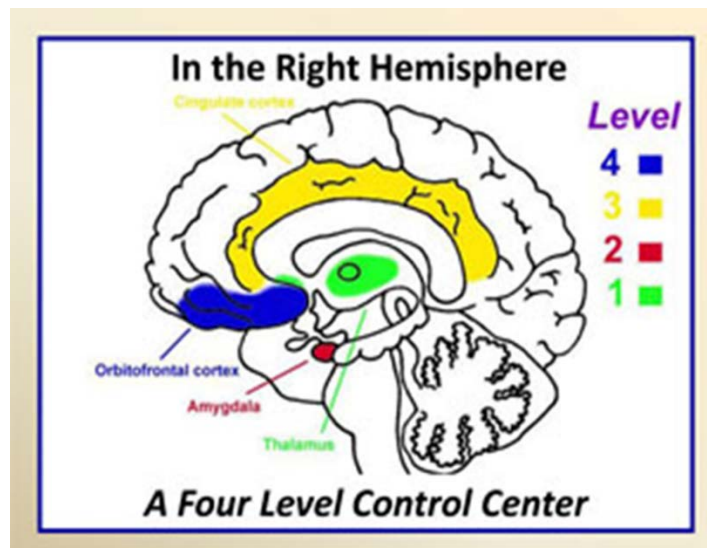
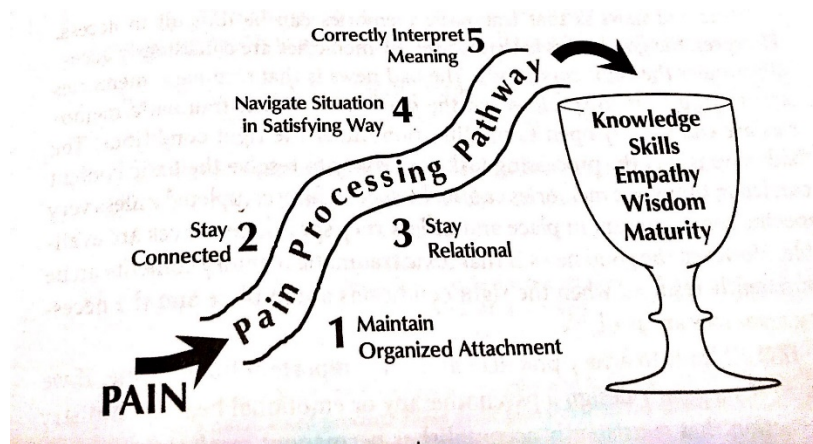
For a one page handout of this exercise for individuals to use while practicing this exercise please visit www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises.



Healing Hearts

LESSON 4: TRAUMA (A&B) & BRAIN PAIN IN LEVEL 1

This week, we begin to look at pain and why some pain seems to get “stuck” along the processing pathway. We will be using several charts to help us understand trauma and processing our pain. Below is Karl Lehman’s Pain Processing Pathway illustration which we will be using, along with the illustration of the brain levels.



The 5 steps of processing pain correlate with the 4 levels of the right brain control center + the left side of the brain as Level 5.

Levels 1-4 are the Right side of the brain

- Fast track, 6 cycles per second
- Nonverbal: Eye contact, voice tone, facial expression, body language
- Stores emotional content of our memories (what it felt like emotionally)
- Stores body feelings of our memories (what it felt like physically)

At each level there are different tasks, feelings, and solutions, as illustrated in the chart below.

Level and Task	Feeling	Solution
Level 5: Articulate	Confused - What is going on?	More information
Level 4: Act	Inadequate – I don't know what to do	An Example
Level 3: Attune	Overwhelmed with my emotions	Mirroring/Synchronizing
Level 2: Assess	Disconnected from others; taking care of myself	Quieting
Level 1: Attach	Alone, rejected	The one I love

Over the next few weeks, we will learn more about how pain manifests itself at the different levels, and what solutions and interventions are most helpful for each level. It is lifechanging to recognize what is happening when you are upset and know what you need, and will change your family and community when you can offer others what they need when they are in distress.

As we looked at in our Maturity Matters Unit, trauma can be described with two categories: **A trauma** is the absence of the good things we need to flourish, while **B traumas** are the bad things that happen to us. Both A & B traumas can affect our Control Center at all levels, and as you can see from the center column in the chart above, trauma and pain cause different feelings at each level of the brain.

In a conversation with Jim Wilder some years ago, I expressed my surprise that my life seemed to have been greatly affected by the A traumas I had experienced. Dr. Wilder responded, "Oh, over the years we have discovered that B traumas don't always have a tremendous impact, but A traumas **always** cause long term damage, because A traumas represent the absence of what you needed for your brain to fully develop." This insight has been a great comfort to me as I've walked through my healing – God is redeeming my pain and healing my brain in spite of an emotionally anemic childhood.

Here is a simple overview of the functions of Level 1, the Attachment Center, as well as a description of what Level 1 needs from others to develop securely.

Level 1 – Attachment Center – Attach Securely –

- Recognizes what is personal to me – people we know, familiar things and locations, etc.
- Determines to what we will pay attention
- Needs a secure relationship, someone who creates joy and quiet with me.
- Need to be the sparkle in your eye – my brain knows someone is glad to be with me, which is JOY. (When we know someone is glad to be with us, the thalamus releases dopamine.)
- Built through the first year of life, or can be created at any time later in life.
- Provides a secure foundation as we move through life.
- Even when we are not with “our person,” we know we are secure.

Exercise to build Level 1: *Connect and Rest* (3 min. for each round)

- Set a timer for 3 minutes
- Sit knee to knee with your spouse or a good friend
- Make eye contact and smile genuinely. Imagine that someone has told you, “Using only your eyes, let this person know how you feel about them.” If you do this exercise with someone you don’t know as well, use your eyes to express “glad to be with you” joy.
- Break eye contact and look down when you feel the need to break eye contact
- Continue with cycles of “connect” and “rest” for 3 minutes.
- Variations on this exercise:
 - Think of an appreciation memory for 2 minutes before a round of Connect & Rest
 - Tell each other a story from your day before a round of Connect & Rest
 - Play some of your favorite music during Connect & Rest
 - Quiet together for 2-5 minutes after a round of Connect & Rest
 - Listen to Jesus for 5-10 minutes after a round of Connect & Rest, and share anything you journal or sense from God

PAIN AT LEVEL 1

When Level 1 is not well-developed, we will develop insecure attachment. In the Creating Connection Unit, we discussed the four attachment styles: Secure, Dismissive, Distracted, and Disorganized. (With this lesson, I’ve included Maribeth Poole’s Attachment Profiles document so you can refresh your memory about the characteristics of each attachment style.)

Pain at level 1 is attachment pain, and Jim Wilder describes it this way: “Attachment pain is the mother of all pains. Attachment pain can make anything from the smell of fresh bread to lovers kissing cut through us like a knife. It is a very rare murderous crime story that does not have attachment pain as the start and always as the ending. SPECT scans show the attachment center fully inflamed [during upset].”¹

Attachment pain lowers our capacity and makes all other forms of pain or distress worse. When we are in attachment pain, we may find ourselves more challenged in returning to joy from negative emotions, and the intensity of our emotions may be heightened. Because our brains want to avoid or relieve pain, be aware that we are more susceptible to cravings while in

¹ Thrive Training, Track Three, p. 97

this level of pain. It's a good idea to avoid making major decisions while in attachment pain since many pain-reducing options are very appealing – new relationships, “treat yourself” purchases, changing jobs or locations, etc. Since attachment pain is very draining, getting plenty of rest is helpful as you are processing your pain.

It's important to know that attachment pain regarding the loss of a particular person can't be fixed by interactions with anyone else, which explains why “rebound” relationships rarely work. Attachment pain must be processed over time, and we will find that the pain and the healing comes in waves. We will feel the pain, get overwhelmed, and seek relief, desperate to avoid the feeling. When we allow ourselves to *feel the pain, share the pain* with another person and/or God, and then *quiet the pain*, we will gradually heal from the pain.² Healing from the grief of the death of a loved one is an example of attachment pain, but attachment pain can also come from a friend moving away, a rupture in an important relationship, and old, unresolved, often unrecognized attachment pain from lack of a secure attachment earlier in life.

Once we recognize that we are feeling attachment pain, we can begin to cycle through the steps of 1. Feel the pain; 2. Share the pain; and 3. Quiet the pain. As we feel, share, and quiet our pain with another person, a secure attachment begins to form. The more joy, pain, and quiet we share together, the more secure the bond. As our connection to God grows deeper, we can take these steps with Him and build a secure attachment which will never end.

THIS WEEK, try to do the “Connect and Rest” exercise at least 2-3 times with a friend or family member.

- Connect and Rest can be played as a game with children. Explain it this way: “In this game, we are going to talk with only our eyes – no words. We will look at each other and send the message, ‘I like you and I’m glad to be with you’ using only our eyes. When looking at each other starts to feel weird or uncomfortable, we look down at our lap and take a deep breath. When we feel ready, we look into each other’s eyes again.”

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some examples of attachment pain from your own life?
2. After these attachment pain events, did you go through some form of the *feel the pain, share the pain, quiet the pain* format for healing your pain? How did you handle the pain?
3. If any of these painful events is not fully healed, create a plan to process the pain:
 - a. Who is a safe person with whom you can share this pain?
 - b. Set aside a time to meet with this person.
 - i. When you meet, first think of an appreciation memory which has no “splinters” and spend at least 3 minutes fully entering into this appreciation memory.
 - ii. Next, go to an appreciation memory of the person or event of unhealed attachment pain. Share this memory with your partner. Allow yourself to feel the pain and verbally share the pain.

² Ibid., p. 96

- iii. Allow your partner to validate your feelings of pain and comfort you by his/her presence and words that you are not alone in the pain.
- iv. Practice deep breathing, yawning, or other Shalom My Body steps to quiet your body.
- v. Return to your "pain event" appreciation memory and enter in. Examine your emotions and body sensations. Is your pain lessened? If you and your partner have the capacity, you can repeat the "share" and "quiet" steps again.
- vi. To end this pain processing exercise, return to your "splinter free" appreciation memory and spend 3 minutes re-entering the joy of that memory.
- vii. Pray together for God's continued healing and presence, and thank your partner.
- viii. Your goal is for your pain to become manageable and not overwhelming. You may need to repeat this exercise a number of times to reach your goal.

TYPE A AND TYPE B TRAUMAS

TYPE A TRAUMAS	TYPE B TRAUMAS
<p>A Type A trauma is harmful by its <i>absence</i>, which cause damage to our emotions. To some degree, one or more of them will typically be found in each stage of our lives, and we can all find at least one Type A trauma wound that needs attention. When you look at the <i>Maturity Indicators Chart</i>, you will see that a failure by the Family and Community — the middle column— produces a Type A trauma. In fact, <i>absences</i> in those areas define what Type A traumas are. Here are a few <i>absences</i> that illustrate Type A traumas.</p>	<p>a Type B trauma is harmful by its <i>presence</i>. Having been on the receiving end of the following experiences can create a Type B trauma. There is a range of severity in Type B traumas. It is important to remember that to discount “lesser” traumas is to avoid the truth about how much it hurts, and thereby miss the chance for healing. Avoiding or ignoring wounds do not make them go away. Here are some harmful events that are examples of Type B traumas:</p>
1. Being cherished and celebrated by one’s parents simply by virtue of one’s existence.	1. Physical abuse, including face slapping, hair pulling, shaking, punching, and tickling a child into hysteria.
2. Having the experience of being a delight.	2. Any spanking which becomes violent, leaving marks or bruises or emotional scars.
3. Having a parent take the time to understand who you are — encouraging you to share who you are, what you think and what you feel.	3. Sexual abuse including inappropriate touching, sexual kissing or hugging, intercourse, oral or anal sex, voyeurism, exhibitionism, or the sharing of the parent’s sexual experiences with a child.
4. Receiving large amounts of non-sexual physical nurturing — laps to sit in, arms to hold, and a willingness to let you go when you have had enough.	4. Verbal abuse or name-calling.
5. Being given age appropriate limits. Having those limits enforced in ways that do not call your value into question.	5. Abandonment by a parent.
6. Being given adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care.	6. Torture or satanic ritual abuse.
7. Being taught how to do hard things — to problem solve, and to develop persistence.	7. Witnessing someone else being abused.
8. Being taught how to develop personal resources and talents.	

Attachment profiles

I. “Sally Secure” Secure/Autonomous Attachments Secure Parents	II. “Dismissive Danny” Avoidant Attachments Dismissive Parents	III. “Ambivalent Arnold” Resistant or Ambivalent Attachments Pre-Occupied or Entangled Parents	IV. “Disorganized Debbie” Disorganized/Disoriented Attachments Unresolved/Disorganizing Parents	
<p>Due to knowing well that God is all He claims to be, Sally has confidence as she goes through life. She is looking forward to the “adventures” that are to come. She is not fearful of the mistakes she will make as she relates to her family, friends, co-workers, and others. Sally is not unnerved by the many things she must learn, she is a non-defensive and eager learner.</p> <p>At the times when interpersonal conflict arises, Sally does not withdraw in fear or become angry and demanding. Instead, she interacts with the person, pursuing mutual care and respect if at all possible.</p> <p>When difficult situations occur, Sally is not reactive. She calmly takes the time needed to learn fully what the situation is before responding. In complex situations Sally’s response is often helpful to everyone involved and people feel comfortably supported when she is there.</p> <p>Sally is able to draw out the struggles another person is having, reflectively showing her understanding as she joins them in the path that lies ahead.</p>	<p>Danny lives with a focus on following rules. Since he has not developed an inner confidence in handling hard situations, he feels a need to have clear guidelines to follow. This becomes more important to him than entering into the emotional pain or disturbances occurring with those he meets.</p> <p>Danny’s creativity and ability to problem solve are limited due to his main focus on following rules.</p> <p>It is fearful for Danny to let people have possible negative opinions of him. Thus, he is motivated and guided by a strong shame focus. He is defensive when problems occur and afraid he may be found “wanting”. This inhibits his capability to learn.</p> <p>Due to his need to keep life seemingly in control, Danny is not able to enter fully into a difficult situation. To do this, he must dismiss or minimize the full significance of what he or others are experiencing.</p>	<p>Arnold has a strong desire to relate well and care about those in his life. Whichever person or event is the most demanding is the one that grabs his attention. He lives with “the squeaky wheel gets the oil” syndrome. People do know they are important to Arnold when a crisis occurs, but if nothing urgent is being presented to Arnold, they may not know his true response. Due to the crises of the moment, responsibilities often are not taken care of, which results in frustration with him by others.</p> <p>When Arnold has a need in his own life, he is distracted from his life responsibilities as he seeks someone to meet his need. When he has found someone, he tends to become overly dependent for a period of time, being paralyzed and not functioning as he wishes.</p> <p>Arnold has a secret. Although he feels guilty and has tried repeatedly to stop, he continues to be drawn to pornography. He tries to remind himself that he will hate himself later, but the urge for the personal excitement, both physically and emotionally, is stronger than his self discipline. The days most barren of personal affirmation and tenderness are the ones he most often gives in to his addiction. Arnold’s life is governed by chaos more than by his values and goals.</p>	<p>At first, Debbie appears to be a stable, reliable, and responsible colleague. This is the case until difficult situations arise and she emotionally disintegrates. As time goes on, Debbie’s life is increasingly characterized by emotional outbursts and chaos. It seems like she has an internal magnet to fearful situations, as she is constantly in the middle of whatever crisis is at hand. In situations that are threatening to her, she is unable to gain a realistic perspective, bringing herself to a sense of calm. Instead, she is quite reactive. She is not easily able to receive the help she needs, and cannot relate in a way that is helpful to others. Verbal reassurance does her no good. She loses focus of her personal preferences and values during the times she is disoriented and internally disorganized.</p>	S N A P S H O T

I. “Sally Secure”	II. “Dismissive Danny”	III. “Ambivalent Arnold”	IV. “Disorganized Debbie”	D E S C R I P T I O N O F U P B R I N G I N G
<p>Sally Secure grew up in an atmosphere in which her parents were finely tuned in to her physical and emotional needs, giving timely responses. She was encouraged to express her thoughts and opinions and talk about the hard times that came in growing up. Her parents stayed involved, helping her learn to voice her needs, receive help as needed, take care of herself, empathize and appropriately care for others. Sally was encouraged to try new things and could do so with confidence due to the secure base in life provided by her family. Her family’s environment set the stage for her to be able to return to joy from any situation or emotion. As she grew, Sally learned what brought her personal satisfaction and joy. She had opportunities provided to her in which she could learn of the power given to her by God to bring life to others.</p>	<p>Danny quickly learned the rule that “children are to be seen and not heard.” Of course, he was just a child, so what did he know? Danny did not experience the faces of his parents lighting up in the delight of who he was. His emotions were dismissed as being unimportant and “incorrect”. The significance of his needs was not recognized and often went unmet. At times, he learned that his need presented an inconvenience to his parents and if he wanted to avoid the pain of being ignored or shamed, he must not let it be known. Although he did want to be loved and given attention, he learned not to expect it or seek it. He knew that his needs, opinions, feelings, and desires were unimportant. In order to navigate in his world, Danny focused on being a good child. He appeared to be well adjusted since he did not voice complaints or appear to be a clingy child. This “getting it right” added to the cycle of not receiving focused attention. There was no need to be met and no behavioral problem to be disciplined. This inflexible and non-spontaneous pattern led him into the path of a rigid relational style.</p>	<p>Arnold’s parents truly desired to give their child the attention and love needed; yet they were often distracted from doing so by other issues in life that riveted their emotional attention. Whatever situation had the most emotional intensity determined their focus. This inconsistency in availability, sensitivity, perceptivity and effectiveness left Arnold with a sense of uncertainty, giving him an urgent and constant need for comfort from external interactions. At times, his parents remembered their desire to love their child without tuning in to his specific needs at the time. This lack of sensitivity resulted in emotionally engulfing Arnold. He felt overwhelmed and anxious regarding future interactions. Internally Arnold was consumed with and driven by emotional doubts of one form or another. (Am I loved? Will the person leave me? Am I going to be rejected? Will their need to love me drown my needs for timely synchronization?)</p> <p>Along with this undercurrent, Arnold was a very caring child who gravitated to the “underdogs” and he received great appreciation from those he helped. He learned this was a great way to receive the attention he craved.</p>	<p>Disorganized Debbie grew up in a home fraught with fear. The parents to whom she needed to go for security were the very ones who brought her fear. Her mother was a very anxious lady whose emotions flowed out to her children when she related to them. She was constantly certain that danger was lurking, their house would be broken into, Dad was hurt in an accident if he was late getting home from work, and the children would get hurt when they played and climbed.</p> <p>Debbie learned from her mother that the world is not a safe place to live. Debbie also lived in terror of her father coming home at the end of each day. Would he fly into a rage? Was tonight the night that he would enter her bedroom and violate her? Would he again smash mom against the wall? Yes, it is certain to Debbie that the world is unsafe, not organized or reliable, and will not offer her love and protection.</p>	

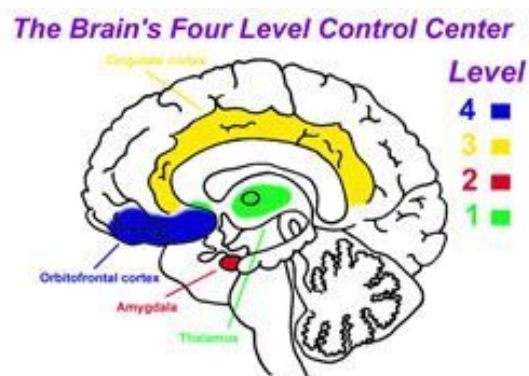
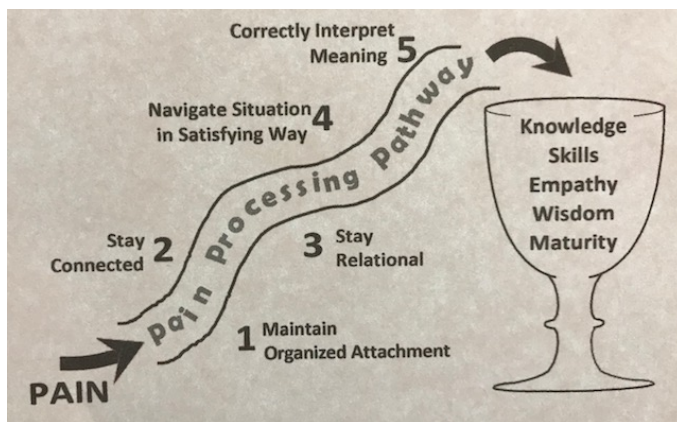
I. “Sally Secure”	II. “Dismissive Danny”	III. “Ambivalent Arnold”	IV. “Disorganized Debbie”	
<p>Sally Secure grew up with a sense of confidence and freedom to explore her world. She has enough inner certainty to tackle challenges in life in ways that are satisfactory to her. When emotional challenges as well as joyful times arise, she is able to fully feel the emotions while continuing to live from a kindly and respectful relational stance. She knows how to relate empathically with others and interact in ways that repair relationships when they “rupture”. Sally is not as concerned with “fairness” as she is with bringing about mutual care and the best interest of “her people.”</p>	<p>Danny grew up in an environment in which his needs, emotions, opinions, and ideas were disregarded. His mind internalized the belief of being unimportant and later, he could not easily recognize his own value.</p> <p>Memories are “recorded” through a process that includes emotional “wiring”. Not getting the message that who he is and what he thinks is of any importance, laid the groundwork for life’s events not to be “logged” well in his memory. Thus Danny has a limited view of himself. His life awareness is limited to “non-emotional” domains. Spontaneous and creative thinking has been discouraged, resulting in his interpersonal relationships being stilted. Danny’s view of life is inflexible as he takes a restrictive approach to living in the world.</p>	<p>Arnold recognized the importance of love and giving care and he was driven to be a “caregiver.”</p> <p>He had been conditioned as he grew to focus on the emotionally demanding situations in life, and thus his mind tracked these types of situations. He learned to attach to emotional crises more than to people. This resulted in his being “off and on” in relationships, depending on the emotional intensity of the moment. His preoccupation with demanding situations resulted in his being unreliable relationally as well as with day- to – day responsibilities. Arnold’s insecurity played out with him demanding the spotlight, being appreciated and respected. Even though he desired to gain security from his relationships, he gravitated toward relationship with people who were demanding or frustrated with him.</p>	<p>Debbie, who grew up in a very chaotic and fearful environment, has internalized the chaos and fear. From her mother, who lived with a constant sense of dread and anxiety, Debbie learned the world is not a safe place and something “bad” is going to happen. Due to mother functioning in a disoriented manner, Debbie has no constancy to build a secure view of her world. Dad was “scary” due to his outbursts of rage and abusiveness, which added to Debbie’s internalized belief that the world is unsafe and unreliable. Her parents, a source of comfort, were also a source of danger and fear for her. This left Debbie frozen in a stance between avoidance and approach. She lived from a hyper-vigilant “on-guard” stance- tracking all fear inducing situations. As life progressed, Debbie struggled with emotional, social, and cognitive difficulties. Her internal disorganization will impair her future interactions with others and inhibit her ability to function well. She will have a poor coping capacity and a marked inability to regulate emotional responses, stay focused, and “on track” in life.</p>	D E V E L O P M E N T A L O U T C O M E
<p>Sally responded with ease regarding her childhood and talked objectively. She was able to see both the negative and positive influences of her parents.</p> <p>Her fluid speech and self-reflection show access to memories that corroborated her life story.</p>	<p>Danny did not have much memory recall as questions were posed to him. He could not reflect on how his childhood relationships made an impact on who he is in the present.</p> <p>He would give an overall opinion of his childhood and parents, but was not able to give specific examples to corroborate the impressions of his life story.</p>	<p>Arnold’s past and present become intertwined in his narrative. His stories reflected past memories mixed in with present day situations, revealing unresolved issues.</p> <p>His lack of fluidity and sequence in his storytelling shows an inability to integrate the events of his past.</p>	<p>Debbie’s narrative regarding her childhood was incoherent and at times included long pauses of silence. The interaction itself strongly suggested unresolved traumas.</p> <p>Entire blocks of time from her past could not be accounted for or only remembered in a very disorganized way.</p>	N A R R A T I V E



Healing Hearts

**LESSON 5:
BRAIN PAIN AND SOLUTIONS
AT LEVELS 2 & 3**

As we move up through the Pain Processing Pathway, our tasks become more complex, but we are always seeking to stay present, connected to God and others, aware of the feelings of others, and to choose a mutually satisfying solution.



This may sound like a daunting challenge, but Dr. Karl Lehman tells us in his book *Outsmarting Yourself*¹ that each time we are triggered by unprocessed pain, we have another opportunity to successfully navigate this path. As we gain new resources such as maturity, more secure attachment, supportive community, and better connection to Jesus, we can complete the processing tasks, at which time the traumatic memory will no longer be triggering and toxic to us. At this point, the past trauma can be looked back on as a sad or upsetting memory, but it will no longer be traumatic in the same way – we will be able to suffer well.

Level and Task	Feeling	Solution
Level 5: Articulate	Confused - What is going on?	More information
Level 4: Act	Inadequate – I don't know what to do	An Example
Level 3: Attune	Overwhelmed with my emotions	Mirroring/Synchronizing
Level 2: Assess	Disconnected from others; taking care of myself	Quieting
Level 1: Attach	Alone, rejected	The one I love

¹ *Outsmarting Yourself* is available from Deeper Walk International, <https://www.deeperwalkinternational.com/>

Level 2 – Amygdala – Little Red Guy (Task: Assess for Safety)

- Assesses every situation for danger, provides us with adrenaline so we can take action.
- Level 2 has only 3 opinions: Good, Bad, or Scary, and
- Level 2 generally takes one of 3 actions: Fight, Flight, Freeze. Self-protection is the goal.
- Level 2 tends to be wired either for Approach or Avoid, based on past experience.
- When the brain is well trained, Level 2 is able to quiet and pass on the information upward to Levels 3 and 4 for further action.
- Level 2 is under the level of consciousness, faster than conscious thought.
- When poorly trained,
 - Level 2 goes on high alert,
 - floods our system with adrenaline,
 - shuts down access to the upper levels, and
 - responds in a non-relational way.
 - Our Little Red Guy learns to stay on high alert, flooding our system with adrenaline (short term) and cortisol (long term stress hormone).
 - When Level 2 is in control, we feel disconnected from others and like we must take care of ourselves. We are stuck in a non-relational state.
- **The ability to quiet is so important that it has been called “the best indicator of sound mental health.”**

Example of Level 2 Fear: When “Fire” is yelled in a crowded theatre, the poorly trained Level 2 will go into Fight or Flight mode. We will be unconcerned about the other people, and will push and shove until we reach safety. Only then will we calm down and remember that we are relational, and become concerned about other people’s safety. A well-trained Level 2 will pass on the message to Levels 3 and 4, and Level 4 will respond with relational, protective actions, such as offering help to those who need it, ensuring that everyone makes a safe exit. Level 2 needs *quieting* – *it will not respond to attunement*.

Level 3: Cingulate Cortex- Synchronization Center (Task: Attune)

- Level 3 is at the level of conscious thought, so it “knows” how it is feeling.
- Level 3 is where negative emotions are processed, or NOT.
 - Sadness, Fear, Anger, Despair, Disgust, Shame
- A poorly trained Level 3 will keep us stuck in negative emotions
 - Because we get “stuck,” we learn to avoid negative emotions we cannot process
 - We will avoid situations in which we or others might have those negative emotions
 - We develop a Fear Map of life – “Here are all the things I must avoid.”
 - We drop down into Level 2 very easily because emotions seem dangerous!
- A poorly trained Level 3 has trouble both giving and receiving attunement
 - We only learn what we receive
 - Without a trained Level 3, we don’t understand that we aren’t attuning;
 - Don’t understand why others are so upset
 - We don’t hold on to the attunement we receive because we go into another negative emotion so quickly
 - We feel overwhelmed with our emotions.

- Not only does this part of the brain synchronize many brain processes, but it synchronizes us with other people and with our world.
- A well trained level 3 can both give and receive attunement.
- When we have someone to attune and synchronize with us in each negative emotion, we learn our pathway back to joy in the negative emotion.
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Shame
 - Despair
 - Disgust
- A well trained Level 3 can return to joy (being glad to be with you), even in a negative emotion.
- It may hear words, but it BELIEVES non-verbal communication

Example of Level 3 Fear: My daughter Livy and I were at dinner with one of her friends. Livy and I were discussing something with a tiny bit of heat. The friend told us, "I'm really nervous – y'all need to stop talking about this! I can't handle it!" Her Level 3 was unable to handle even the perception that we were angry. We attuned with her fear, quieted with her, and continued our conversation with less intensity so that she could stay connected and relational. Level 3 needs *attunement* – *Level 3 upset says, "Show me you understand!"*

Solutions:

Level 2 Solution: *Quieting.*

- Notice what your body feels like in various negative emotions.
- Notice what situations/people/events tend to create negative emotions for you.
- Set regular times to practice the Shalom My Body exercises. You want them to become second nature so that when your body begins to signal distress, you move quickly into deep breathing, yawning, tapping, etc.
- We learn quieting from other people who have the skill. Think of people you know who quiet themselves well. You can build this skill by simple observation and modeling your behavior on theirs.
- When you are with someone else who is upset at Level 2, take care of yourself first. Remember the advice given about oxygen masks in an airplane emergency, "Put your mask on first, then help the person with you." Take deep breaths, speak quietly, and move slowly.

Level 3 Solution: *Attunement/Synchronization.*

- Dr. Daniel Siegel uses the phrase "Name it to tame it" with regard to Level 3². As you observe and notice what emotions you are feeling, you are attuning with yourself.

² Dr. Siegel has written *Parenting from the Inside Out*, *The Whole-Brained Child*, *No Drama Discipline*, and a number of other books. "Name it to tame it" is from *The Whole-Brained Child*.

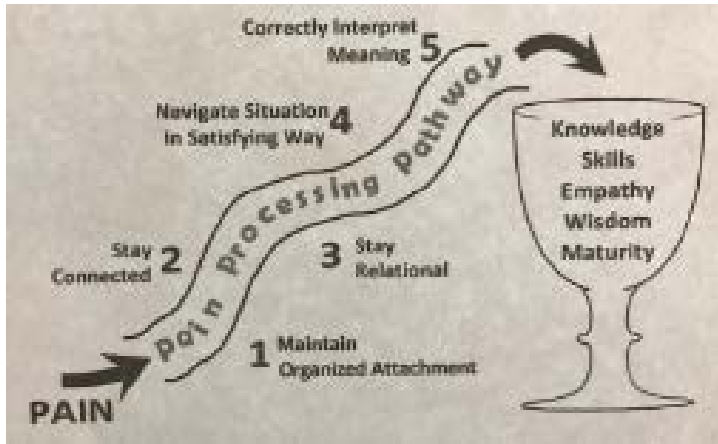
- After you have noticed and named your emotions, allow yourself to feel them and share them with someone trustworthy who is a peaceful presence. Allow that person to attune with you, and you will likely find the intensity of your emotion lessening.
- There is a subtle difference between simply sharing your feelings and *amplifying distress*. In sharing, we want to be understood. In amplifying, we want to stir up emotion in the listener as well. As a recovering “amplifier,” I can say that the need to amplify distress likely comes from some unhealed pain and as you grow in your joy capacity, you may want to do Immanuel Journaling or seek facilitated Immanuel Prayer to help you process that pain.
- When you are with someone else who is upset at Level 3, validation and comfort are two ways to offer attunement:
 - **Validation** means we identify how they are feeling and how big it is to them: “You are really mad – I can see how upset you are.” Validation does NOT mean we have to agree with how they feel, nor do we have to feel the same way. We want to acknowledge their feelings.
 - To offer **comfort** is to let someone know they are not alone in the situation. “I’m so sorry you are going through this. This is a tough thing to face.” This is not a time to offer solutions unless they are requested.
 - When you’ve offered validation and comfort, you may want to ask, “What would you like me to do?” Offering some options is a good way to set boundaries for yourself while still offering help. You might say something like this:
 - “Would you like me to listen? To pray with you? To offer advice? To think of some resources that might help?”
 - Don’t offer more than you can give, and when they tell you what they’d like, give them *only* what they request.

1. Can you think of a time when you were in Level 2 distress? Do you think you felt the situation was “bad” (creating anger) or “scary” (creating fear)? Did you go into a “fight,” “flight,” or “freeze” response? Were you able to quiet?
2. The negative emotions we process at Level 3 are fear, anger, sadness, shame, disgust, and despair. Can you think of a time when you felt one of these and someone attuned with you? Did they offer a form of validation and comfort? What did you feel like in your emotions when you realized they saw how you felt? In your body?
3. What would be different in our society if parents were taught how to help their young children quiet Level 2 distress? What about Level 3 upset? What evidence do you see around you that these skills are lacking? What might be some creative ways to make changes in your sphere of influence? In society at large?

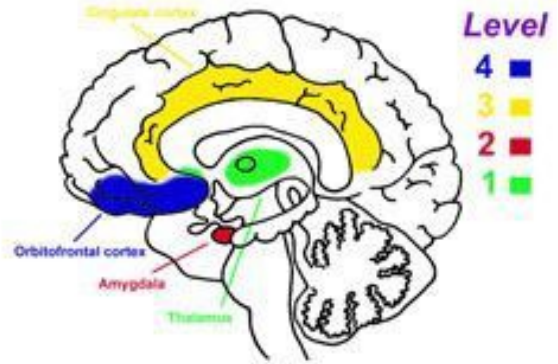


Healing Hearts

LESSON 6: BRAIN PAIN AND SOLUTIONS AT LEVELS 4 & 5



The Brain's Four Level Control Center



In Levels 1, 2, and 3 of the Pain Processing Pathway, our brain is working hard to recognize what is personal to us (Level 1) and hold on to our pattern of attachment, to evaluate whether we are in danger (Level 2), and to stay connected to other people and the situation (Level 3). Now, at Level 4, we are looking for a solution to the problem that is satisfying, one that enables us to be the person God created us to be. Level 4 leads us to ACT, and we need a good example at this level.

Level and Task	Feeling	Solution
Level 5: Articulate	Confused - What is going on?	More information
Level 4: Act	Inadequate – I don't know what to do	An Example
Level 3: Attune	Overwhelmed with my emotions	Mirroring/Synchronizing
Level 2: Assess	Disconnected from others; taking care of myself	Quieting
Level 1: Attach	Alone, rejected	The one I love

Tasks Performed by Level 4 – The Captain – Identity Center – Act

- A well trained Level 4 remembers our true identity (the person God created you to be)
- It reminds us “what it is like us and our people” to do in this situation
- It has an individual as well as a group identity
- It can override Level 2 upset.
 - “Thanks for the warning, we can take it from here.”

- It can stay relational, even when things are going wrong
- It recognizes our part of the problem– “Oh, I see how I upset you. I’m so sorry.”
- It is creative and flexible, comes up with great, satisfying solutions to problems

Pain at Level 4 Leaves Us Feeling Inadequate

- A poorly trained Identity Center leaves us unsure of what to do in various situations
 - We feel inadequate
 - We don’t know what it is like us and our people to do
 - We can’t see our part in the problem
 - “If YOU would only straighten up, this would all be okay”
 - We are rigid and not creative – we can only think of OUR solution to the problem
 - We shut down every solution others offer us
 - When we lose connection at Level 4, we drop down into Level 3 upset and maybe even Level 2 Alert/Alarm and Level 1 despair at being all alone.
- We don’t understand the meaning of the situation “Am I a terrible person? Is God not with me?”
- We feel inadequate and like we don’t have enough resources.

Discussion: It is always good for us to look at where we have strengths and weaknesses. Awareness of our gaps will prevent us from being caught off guard by triggering, and allows us to prepare for potentially problematic situations.

In which of the following situations would you be most able to behave out of your true identity, and in which situation you would have a difficult time being your true self:

1. You are explaining something to a group of friends, and one of your friends tells you that you are *wrong*.
2. You say something to a friend and she tells you that you hurt her feelings.
3. You are in a group, and they start gossiping about someone you know.

If you identify a situation where you might run into relational trouble, ask Jesus about it. “Jesus, what do you want me to know about this? How would you guide me to handle an interaction like this?”

Solutions at Level 4: Examples and Stories

Level 4 distress leave us feeling inadequate, unsure of who we are and what actions we should take. The most effective solution at Level 4 is an example, whether in real time or in the form of a story. When we tell our children stories about mistakes we have made and how we handled them, we are providing them with Level 4 examples. When we read in Scripture of Moses’ humility, Abraham’s faith, Job’s refusal to curse God, Jesus’ advice to His disciples, and the stories of the Acts of the Apostles, God is graciously providing us with examples through stories.

Sharing *Acting Like Myself* stories with our families and friends is a key way of growing our Identity Center at Level 4. As Chris Coursey says in the Track II online course, “Acting like myself stories are stories where the focus shifts from *sharing the emotion* [as we do in a Return to Joy

Story] to describing *what it is like me and my people to do* in the middle of distress. I discover to be myself when I feel a certain emotion. Have you ever encountered someone who, when upset, responded in a way that was relational, friendly and kind in spite of their upset? What about the opposite response? Have you experienced someone who was hurtful, mean or frightening when they were upset? What is the difference between the two examples in terms of how it feels to be around someone when they re upset?"

When our Level 4 is poorly trained, we are most concerned with relief from negative emotions. As we mature, we will find ourselves shifting to "How can I act like the person God created me to be?" We are also more in touch with how to express our unique personality and gifts in a given situation.

Level 4+/5: The Left Side of the Brain

- Acts as a Library or File Cabinet in that it stores information
- Stores the content of the memory, the story of "what happened"
- Processes the Verbal content of our interactions
- Slower than the Right Side (ie., Information and Verbal Input is processed more slowly than Emotion and Non-verbal Input)
- Is LESS IMPORTANT TO THE BRAIN than your non-verbal communication
- Makes sense and gives meaning to our experiences when Levels 1-4 have processed our experiences

Pain at Level 5 Leaves Us Feeling Confused

- We don't have the information we need to take action
- This is not a highly emotional state of upset
- We feel confused and unsure of the meaning of a situation

Example: "Why is there one shoe on the side of the highway? How does that happen?"

Level 5 is the ONLY level at which information provides a satisfying solution to our distress. Have you had the experience of being very upset and having friends quote Scripture to you? Did you feel angry that they didn't feel your pain with you? Perhaps you felt guilty that the Word was not a comfort to you. It's possible that you (like I) have been surprised when you offered Scripture or advice and were rebuffed. Understanding how pain is processed will help us know what we need when we are upset and how to offer a satisfying response when others are upset.

Another task at Level 5 is attributing meaning to an experience. Godsight means that He is always willing to share His perspective so we can attune with His viewpoint. Our *sark* or flesh has a perspective that is always at odds with God, so when our sark is combined with painfully unprocessed events in our life, our perspective is skewed. This skewed perspective leads to a faulty view of ourselves and others.

Chris Coursey talks about this false sense of self in the Track 2 preparation:

“We can have a false self that is based on faulty explanations about who we are. This is the conflict that goes on at Level 5. It means who we feel like we are internally does not match what we know about God’s truth and what Scripture tells us about being recipients of God’s love and favor through Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in Roman 8:1, *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* NKJV

This is a breath of fresh air if we are used to feeling beat up by the sark in the form of condemnation by others, accused, rejected, humiliated, threatened, slandered and more. We tend to remember these moments clearly, in particular our left hemisphere explanations, and the scars can run deep. There are always good reasons the distortions are present in the first place. Because our brain is designed to function in peace, we need to constantly invite Jesus to correct lies and distortions.

Do you recognize any distortions about yourself that need to be corrected?”

As you identify distortions you have believed, take time to talk with Immanuel about these distortions and to get His perspective about your identity.

The solutions to distress at Level 5 are correct information and God’s perspective to correct distorted identities and beliefs we’ve received from our own sark or that of others. Correcting the sark is a lifelong journey of intimacy with Jesus, updating our mindsight with His perfect understanding.



Quieting Exercises to Soothe Myself

by Sarah Manson, M.A.



Shalom for My Body

Startle Reflex (Moro Reflex): Arch your back and throw your arms and head back while you do a sharp intake of breath. Then bring your arms back down to a relaxed position while saying, “Whenever I am afraid I will trust in you, O Lord” (Psalm 56:3). **Do this four times.**

Yawn: Turn your head to one side and then yawn. Let your head return to the center while saying, “Whenever I am afraid I will trust in you, O Lord.” **Do this four times, alternating the direction of your yawn.**

Tap Vagus Nerve: Tap on the area under your collarbone (the vagus nerve) with your fingertips, a couple inches to the right and left from the center of your sternum, in a rhythm like a slow resting heartbeat. Breathe in while speeding up the rhythm. Then deeply exhale while massaging the same place you were just tapping and saying, “Whenever I am afraid I will trust in you, O Lord.” **Do this process four times.**

Read the Bible

The Psalms are often a good place to go when we are feeling overwhelmed.



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Why Is This So Important?

According to Thrive Today, “lowering my own energy level so I can rest after both joyful and upsetting emotions (as I need to and on my own) makes me feel stable. This self-soothing capacity is the strongest predictor of good mental health for a lifetime.”

9-1-1

9 – Deep breaths

1 – Appreciation: focus on something for which you are truly thankful or grateful.

1 – “Five-Bar” Moment: recall a moment of close connection with God that was joyful and/or peaceful. If you start to lose focus, think about what you appreciate about that “Five-Bar” connection. If you cannot think of a “Five-Bar” Moment, just continue your appreciation of anything you are thankful for.

Focus on the good feelings you felt. Name those good emotions.

Do a body scan. Focus on how your body felt. Locate the area of your body you are feeling good sensations and describe the sensation.

Attune With Me

Find someone who can attune to your distress and help you return to joy—someone who will tune in to you so that you feel seen, heard, understood, that they care about you and that they are glad to be with you.

Check out Karl Lehman’s book *Outsmarting Yourself* to learn more about attunement.



Healing Hearts

LESSON 7: PROCESSING PAIN IN COMMUNITY: PASSING THE PEACE

What does it look like to process pain in community? For many of us, this idea sounds too good to be true, but it is doable -- we can gain an understanding of how distress is manifested at different levels of the brain and how we can help each other. It's possible to invite people into this type of lifestyle, even though some will find the idea of sharing pain to be intimidating. Let's look at 3 questions: Why is transparency and sharing pain so frightening, what can we do to help offset that fear, and what model could we use for processing pain in community?

Why is sharing pain so intimidating?

1. God created each of us to notice weaknesses in ourselves and others, and to respond to them with gentle protector skills (otherwise known as the 19 relational brain skills). As we've seen through our lessons and our lives, gentle protector skills are in short supply in today's society. More common than *gentle protectors* are *predators*, who see weakness and take advantage of it, or *possums*, who work hard to "play dead" and hide when predators are on the prowl. This common lack of gentle protector skills leaves some of us feeling that letting our weaknesses out into the light is a dangerous proposition. (*Joy Starts Here* talks more in depth about Protectors, Predators, and Possums.)
2. The *amygdala* (*Level 2, Little Red Guy*) is programmed by our earliest life experiences, and it constantly assesses our environment based on that early programming, alerting us to danger, triggering the release of adrenaline and the fight, flight, or freeze response. Unfortunately, when our early life experiences do not include learning to handle negative emotions, our amygdala assesses negative emotions as danger, and any activity that produces negative emotions (like discussing our painful experiences) will trigger that fight, flight, or freeze response. This puts processing pain on our Fear Map, and we will avoid those negative emotions just as we would a huge crater in a road.
3. *Maturity gaps* and the accompanying *capacity issues* can also raise challenges to processing pain in community. For instance, if we are at infant or child maturity, we will not be skilled at identifying and asking for what we need, creating belonging for others, or returning to joy from negative emotions. Our capacity to handle the distress

of navigating the pain processing pathway in a satisfying way is minimal, and we will be easily overwhelmed.

What, then, are we to do? Is there hope?

Offsetting the Fear of Transparency

1. *Build joy capacity in the group.* Joy is WD40® for the brain, relaxing the over-alert brain, creating bonds between group members, and building safety. Having a time of joyful connection, appreciation, and play will create an atmosphere in which group members build joyful bonds which creates a safe place for connection.
2. *Practice quieting* in a variety of ways so that group members can learn the quieting techniques that are most effective for them. Shalom My Body exercises, deep breathing, stretching tense muscles, and listening to peaceful music are some quieting techniques that are helpful¹.
3. *Have more mature members share stories* of overcoming their fear of sharing and processing their own pain. Telling the story of a successful trip down the pain processing path encourages others and provides a model to follow. *Immanuel* stories include fewer details of what it was like when we didn't know God was with us, and in-depth details about what happened when we sensed God's presence and interacted with Him.
4. *Allow people to observe and interact at their own pace.* Those who are eager to participate can lead the way, with the mature gentle protectors watching for signs of overwhelm in any participant or observer.

What would be our model of passing the peace?

These are simply my suggestions, as there are a number of tools which can be used, and each group/community must see what works best for them.

1. *Include appreciation as bookends.* While you might want to begin the meeting itself with other activities, such as check in, ice breakers, joy building, quieting, worship, or play, when you move into the healing portion of the meeting, use the "safety net" of appreciation². After you have walked through your healing exercises or prayer, return to appreciation to finish your healing time. This helps ensure that group members will have a positive experience and be ready for more.
2. *Make growing intimacy with God your goal.* As Karl Lehman mentions in his "Super Simple Immanuel Prayer" explanation, our goal is not feeling less emotional pain

¹ *Belonging* module of Connexus has an extended Shalom My Body list of exercises.

<http://www.lifemodel.org/shopping/index.php>

² We discussed Karl Lehman's safety net in Lesson 3, Immanuel Prayer.

[\(http://www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises/\)](http://www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises/)

and resolving past traumas, although these are certain we certainly hope to see these side effects. Our primary goal in pursuing healing is to increase our intimacy with God. This involves growing our capacity to feel joy, to quiet ourselves, to learn what connection with God looks and feels like for us individually, to connect with God and our group members, and eventually, to have an interactive daily relationship with God. Don't be afraid to take things at the pace that is best for you and your group.

3. *Encourage and celebrate all victories and progress.* When sharing, celebrate with those who experience peace or joy during Immanuel time, even if they don't connect with Jesus. Cheer on the ability to return to an appreciation memory, to quiet successfully, to share a story.
4. *Don't be afraid to mix it up.* As I mentioned above, include a variety of play, joy building, worship, and quieting exercises in your meetings. For the "healing" portion of the meeting, you might want to have Immanuel stories (testimonies), use Immanuel Journaling, Group Immanuel Prayer Exercises from Karl Lehman's website, Facilitated Immanuel Prayer as taught by Alive & Well, exercises from David Takle's Forming curriculum, or HCI's Immanuel Prayer Exercise from our Lesson 3³.
5. Sample Format:
 - a. Open with prayer, Shalom My Body, check in, and a brief appreciation story. If your group is large, divide into triads for all exercises.
 - b. Immanuel Stories (Testimonies of an Immanuel Encounter) in triads.
 - c. Group Immanuel Prayer with one person in each triad receiving troubleshooting help. End with return to appreciation memory.
 - d. Sharing in triads – "What did you sense from Immanuel? If you didn't sense Immanuel, did you feel joy or peace, and were you able to return to your appreciation memory?"
 - e. Large group sharing and closing prayer.

My best advice is to start with what's available to you – if you have one person willing to meet you in your living room, that's plenty! Jesus sent His disciples out two by two, and God told Israel not to "despise the day of small things" (Zech. 4:9-10) God smiles on us when we invite someone to walk with us into more intimacy with Him.

³ See <https://www.godhealstoday.org/free-resources/> for a number of free resources, including 2 guided breathing exercises



Immanuel Prayer Session Worksheet

Date: _____

Part One

If you are doing this in a group, have everyone in the group do the first page together.

Step 1: Prayer of Protection

Lord Jesus, I commit myself to you, and I ask that you would push back any cosmic or demonic interference right now, and allow me to experience a clear connection with you, without interference or retaliation of any kind. I trust you, my Sovereign God, to make it safe here for me to experience your presence, in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Invite the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, come! Have your way.

Step 2: Quiet

Quiet your body through relaxation. Get as comfortable as you can through: deep breathing (five in, five out), yawning, Shalom for my Body, progressive relaxation, body scan (checking your body for tense areas and relaxing them).

Step 3: Remember (A Positive Memory)

Ask the Lord to help you recall a positive memory, either a close time with him, or a time of joy. Give the memory a name. You can write a few sentences about it in the space below, if you like.

Step 4: Appreciate

Savor the memory and the emotions in the memory. Appreciate it and the character of God revealed there.

Step 5: Locate

Look for Jesus. You may sense him in the memory (past) or here in the room now (present) or both. Pray, *Lord, I welcome you with my heart. Help me to perceive your living presence, and to have an interactive connection with you.*

Step 6: Moving Closer

You can be as close to Jesus as you like. If getting close to Jesus is easy, go to Step 7. If there is distance between you and Jesus, do you feel or sense any resistance or hesitancy about moving closer? What do you believe might happen if you got closer? Ask him if your belief is true and listen to what he says.

Step 7: Connect

Turn to Jesus and engage with him. This may be verbal or nonverbal. Take time to be in his presence. You can pray, *Lord Jesus, what do you want me to know? Help me to receive everything that you have for me here.*

Enjoy your time with the Lord.

If you are in a group, share your positive memory or connection place with Jesus with the group.



Part Two

Use this page to process an unresolved or painful memory. If you are working in a group, divide the group into triads with two to coach and intercede and one to receive. The one who receives should have experienced a strong connection with Jesus on the first page before doing this page.

Step 8: Remember (A Painful Memory)

If you are experiencing a solid connection with Jesus, refresh the memory of connecting with Jesus from earlier and then ask him to guide you to an unresolved or painful memory. Start with something mildly troublesome. Before you go to the unresolved or painful memory, tell your facilitators about your positive appreciation moment.

Step 9: Locate

Look for Jesus. He was there with you during the experience you remembered. You can pray,

Jesus, open my ears, eyes and heart to you. Please help me to be aware of your presence with me here. If you are able to locate him go to Step 11, if not go to Step 10.

Step 10: Relocate

If you are unable to locate Jesus in the painful memory, go back and reconnect with Jesus in the positive memory and spend more time with him. You can simply enjoy his presence and end the session here, or try to approach the painful memory again after spending time with Jesus building joy. Or, you can stay in the painful memory and ask for help by simply praying, *Lord, I need your help. Show me what is getting in the way. What do I need to do to take the next step forward?* Spending more time in his presence builds the capacity to face pain. A third option is to go back and forth between the positive memory and the painful memory, or to approach the painful memory as if you were looking at it through a ship's porthole—with some distance.

Step 11: Connect

Focus on Jesus and interact with him. This may be verbal or nonverbal. You can pray, *Lord, what do you want me to know about this? Jesus, do you have more for me in this situation? Help me to receive everything you have for me here.*

Step 12: Closing Prayer

Step 13: Share

Share your story with three people if you can, but at least one other person! Make sure you keep your description of the problem short and focus on what happened when Jesus showed up.

ⁱ Adapted from Dr. Karl Lehman, Patti Vedotta and Robert Walter