

# ***The Immanuel Approach (to Emotional Healing and to Life)***

## **Chapter 35: Is the Immanuel Approach Biblical?**

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**DRAFT**

As the Immanuel approach has become more widely known, people have appropriately raised the question, “Is it Biblical?” Our perception is that the Immanuel approach (for emotional healing and for life) is clearly consistent with and strongly supported by the Christian scriptures.

**I. “God with Us” Verses (the basics):** To begin with, well known verses unambiguously teach that the Lord is always with us, that we should expect to be able to perceive his presence, and that he wants us to have a living, interactive relationship with him. For example,

In Matthew 18:19-20, Jesus assures us, “I also tell you this: If two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together because they are mine, *I am there among them.*” (Italics mine)

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. *And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”<sup>1</sup> (Italics mine)

In John 14:20-21 & 23, Jesus states, “When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, *and you are in me, and I am in you.* Those who obey my commandments are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them, and I will love them. *And I will reveal myself to each one of them....* All those who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, *and we will come to them and live with them.*” (Italics mine)

In John 15:4-5, Jesus says, “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit...unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit; because apart from me you can do nothing.”<sup>2</sup>

In James 4:8a, the apostle James assures us, “Draw close to God, and *God will draw close to you.*” (Italics mine)

And in Revelation 3:20, Jesus states, “Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, *I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends.*” (Italics mine)

**II. Scriptural support for deliberate appreciation:** Deliberate appreciation is included in the Immanuel approach process at several points, and this component of the Immanuel approach is not just good brain science and good clinical practice, it is also very biblical.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise specified, Scripture quotes are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>The *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

The Old Testament contains many passages encouraging us to deliberately remember, and be grateful for, what the Lord has done for us. For example:

You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. . . . And when arrive in the land the Lord has promised to give you, you will continue to celebrate this festival. Then your children will ask, “What does all this mean? What is this ceremony about?” And you will reply, “It is the celebration of the Lord’s Passover, for he passed over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. And though he killed the Egyptians, he spared our families and did not destroy us.” (Ex 12:14, 25-27)

Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out with amazing power and mighty deeds. . . . (Deut 5:15)

Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, . . . . (Deut 8:2)

When all the people were safely across the river, the Lord said to Joshua, “Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell the men to take twelve stones from where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan and pile them up at the place you camp tonight.” So Joshua called together the twelve men and told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the Lord your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder – twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes. We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future, your children will ask, “What do these stones mean to you?” Then you can tell them, “They remind us that the Jordan river stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord’s covenant went across.” These stones will stand as a permanent memorial among the people of Israel. (Josh 4:1-7)

The Psalms are especially full of exhortations to deliberately remember and appreciate the Lord’s goodness. For example:

Praise the Lord, all you who fear him! Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob! Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not ignored the suffering of the needy. He has not turned and walked away. He has listened to their cries for help. (Ps 22:23-24)

Let the godly sing with joy to the Lord, for it is fitting to praise him. Praise the Lord with melodies on the lyre; make music for him on the ten-stringed harp. Sing new songs of praise to him; play skillfully on the harp and sing with joy. For the word of the Lord holds true, and everything he does is worthy of our trust. He loves whatever is just and good, and his unfailing love fills the earth. (Ps 33:1–5)

Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth! Sing about the glory of his name! Tell the world how glorious he is. . . . Come and see what our God has done, what awesome miracles he does for his people! He made a dry path through the red sea, and his people went across on foot. Come, let us rejoice in who he is. . . . Let the whole world bless our God and sing aloud his praises. Our lives are in his hands, and he keeps our feet from stumbling. (Ps 66:1-2, 5-6, 8-9)

Shout with joy to the Lord, O earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with

praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation. (Ps 100:1–5)

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. Sing to him; yes sing his praises. Tell everyone about his miracles. . . . Think of the wonderful works he has done, the miracles and the judgments he handed down. (Ps 105:1-2, 5)

See also: Ps 9:11-12, Ps 30:4-5, Ps 68:4–6, Ps 95:1–7, Ps 96:1–13, Ps 98:1–9, Ps 103:1–22, Ps 107:1, 2, & 43, Ps 117:1–2, Ps 118:1–29, Ps 134:1–2, Ps 135:1–3, 19–21, Ps 136:1–26, Ps 147:1–20, Ps 148:1–14, Ps 149:1–9, Ps 150:1–6.

And many of the Psalms *model* deliberately remembering and appreciating the Lord’s goodness. For example:

I will thank the Lord because he is just; I will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High. (Ps 7:17)

I will thank you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. . . . (*ten more verses of specific appreciations*). (Ps 9:1–18)

I love you, Lord; you are my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold. I call on the Lord, who is worthy of praise, for he saves me from my enemies. . . . (*forty six more verses of specific appreciations*). (Ps 18:1–50)

Praise the Lord! For he has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength, my shield from every danger. I trust in him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I will burst out in songs of thanksgiving. The Lord protects his people and gives victory to his anointed king. (Ps 28:6–8)

I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are discouraged take heart. Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness; let us exalt his name together. . . . (*nineteen more verses of specific appreciations*). (Ps 34:1–22)

See also: Ps 3:3–6, Ps 5:4–12, Ps 8:1–9, Ps 12:5–7, Ps 13:5–6, Ps 16:1–11, Ps 19:1–11, Ps 21:1–13, Ps 22:3–5, 9&10, 22–31, Ps 23:1–6, Ps 25:8–15, Ps 30:1–12, Ps 31:19–24, Ps 33:1–22, Ps 36:5–12, Ps 40:1–10, Ps 48:1–14, Ps 54:4–7, Ps 57:1–11, Ps 63:1–11, Ps 65:1–13, Ps 66:1–20, Ps 67:3–4, Ps 71:14–24, Ps 73:1–28, Ps 75:1–10, Ps 76:1–12, Ps 77:10–20, Ps 89:1–18, Ps 92:1–15, Ps 95:1–7, Ps 96:1–13, Ps 98:1–9, Ps 99:1–9, Ps 100:1–5, Ps 103:1–22, Ps 104:1–35, Ps 105:1–45, Ps 106:1–48, Ps 107:1–43, Ps 108:1–5, Ps 111:1–10, Ps 113:1–9, Ps 116:1–19, Ps 118:1–29, Ps 124:1–8, Ps 126: 1–3, Ps 134:1–3, Ps 135:1–21, Ps 136:1–26, Ps 138:1–8, Ps 139:1–18, Ps 144:1–2, Ps 145:1–21, Ps 146:1–10, Ps 147:1–20, Ps 148:1–14, Ps 149:1–9, Ps 150:1–6.

The Old Testament also includes many accounts of Israel’s leaders very deliberately reminding the people of the many ways in which God has blessed them, provided for them, and protected them. See, for example, Deut 4:32-40, Deut 11:1-7, Deut 29:2-8, Josh 24:2-13, 1 Sam 12:6-13,

Neh 9:5-31,

The apostle Paul repeatedly encourages us to be grateful and to thank the Lord for his goodness:

Do not be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts. And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 5:18–20)

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the word of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father. (Col 3:15–17)

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. (Col 4:2)

Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (1Thess 5:16–18)

And Jesus models appreciation and gratitude, as he thanks the Father for many things:

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. (Mk 6:41)<sup>3</sup>

When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. (Mk 8:6&7)<sup>4</sup>

Then he took a cup of wine, and when he had given thanks for it, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. For I will not drink wine again until the kingdom of God has come." Then he took a loaf of bread; and when he had thanked God for it, he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (Lk 22:17-19)

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. (Lk 24:30)<sup>5</sup>

Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. . . ." (Jn 11:41)

### **III. More scriptural support for perceiving God's tangible presence and for having interactive connections with the Lord:** The Bible is absolutely full of stories that describe

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<sup>3</sup>*The Holy Bible: New International Version.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>4</sup>*The Holy Bible: New International Version.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>5</sup>*The Holy Bible: New International Version.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

people having clear, unambiguous experiences of God's tangible presence. And many of these stories include people having *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with God. I provide a number of examples here, and you can refer to appendix five in *Immanuel: A Practicum*<sup>6</sup> for many more examples.

**A. Adam and Eve:** The biblical accounts of God interacting with Adam and Eve clearly imply that they perceived God's physical presence as audible and visible (they *heard* God walking, and *hid* from him). They also clearly hear God's audible voice (God *called* to Adam), and have conversations with God as one would talk with a friend or neighbor. For example:

Toward evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. The Lord God called to Adam, 'Where are you?' He replied, 'I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.' (Gen 3:8-10)

See also Gen 2:15-17 and Gen 3:11-19.

**B. Cain and Abel:**

“At harvest time Cain brought to the Lord a gift of his farm produce, while Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his offering, but he did not accept Cain and his offering. This made Cain very angry and dejected. ‘Why are you so angry?’ the Lord asked him. ‘Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it.’” (Gen 3:3-7)

See also Gen 3:9-16.

**C. Abraham:** Abraham is famous for perceiving God's tangible presence, for hearing from God, and even for having *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with God.<sup>7</sup> For example:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty, serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation.” At this, Abram fell face down in the dust. (Gen 17:1-3)

See also Gen 12:1-3, Gen 12:7, Gen 13:14-17, Gen 15:1-21, Gen 17:4-22, Gen 18:1-33, Gen 21:11-13, Gen 22:1-2, and Acts 7:2.

**D. Isaac:**

From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, where the Lord appeared to him on the night of his arrival. “I am the God of your father, Abraham,” he said, “Do not be afraid, for I am with

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<sup>6</sup>Patricia A. Velotta, *Immanuel: A Practicum* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014), pages 99-123.

<sup>7</sup>While some of the verses do not specify whether Abraham perceived God's audible voice or whether he perceived God's thoughts in his mind/heart/spirit, some of the verses do clearly describe Abraham having an audible conversation with the Lord, just as one would talk with a friend or neighbor.

you and will bless you. I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant.” Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the Lord. (Gen 26:23-25)

#### **E. Jacob:**

God appeared to Jacob once again when he arrived at Bethel after traveling from Paddan-aram. God blessed him and said, “Your name is no longer Jacob; you will now be called Israel.” Then God said, “I am God Almighty. Multiply and fill the earth! Become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! And I will pass on to you the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants.” Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob. Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. . . . Jacob called the place Bethel – “house of God” – because God had spoken to him there. (Gen 35:9-15)

See also Gen 28:10-19, Gen 31:11-13, Gen 32:22-30, Gen 35:1, Gen 48:3

**F. Moses:** Moses is especially famous for perceiving God’s tangible presence, for hearing from God, and for having *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with God.<sup>8</sup> For example:

Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of Israel went up the mountain. There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a pavement of brilliant sapphire, as clear as the heavens. And though Israel’s leaders saw God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they shared a meal together in God’s presence!” (Exodus 24:9-11).

Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in their tent entrances. . . . As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at the entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. . . . Inside the Tent of Meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. (Exodus 33:8-11)

Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and called out his own name, “the Lord,” as Moses stood there in his presence. He passed in front of Moses and said, “I am the Lord, I am the Lord, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. . . .” Moses Immediately fell to the ground and worshiped. . . . When Moses came down the mountain carrying the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn’t aware that his face glowed because he had spoken to the Lord face to face. And when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses’ face, they were afraid to come near him. (Exodus 34:5-8, 29-30)

For a huge pile of additional accounts in which Moses perceives God’s visible presence in some way and/or hears from God and/or has a *back-and-forth, interactive conversation* with

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<sup>8</sup>Just as with Abraham, while many of the verses do not specify whether Moses perceived God’s audible voice or whether he perceived God’s thoughts in his mind/heart/spirit, some of the verses do clearly describe Moses hearing God’s audible voice. And Ex 33:8-11 clearly specifies that Moses routinely had “face to face” conversations with God, “as a man speaks to his friend.” Furthermore, Num 7:89 clearly states that Moses heard God’s audible voice whenever he went into the tabernacle to speak to the Lord.



God, see also Ex 3:1-22, Ex 4:1-17, 21-26, Ex 6:1-13, Ex 7:1-9, 14-19, Ex 8:1-6, 16, 20-23, Ex 9:1-4, 8-9, 13-19, 22, Ex 10:1-2, 12, 21, Ex 11:1-2, Ex 12:1-20, 43-49, Ex 13:1-2, Ex 14:1-4, 15-18, 26, Ex 16:4-5, 11-12, 28-29, Ex 17:1-6, 14, Ex 19:3-6, 9-13, 16-24, Ex 20:22-26, Ex 24:1-2, 12-13, Ex 25:1-8, 22, Ex 31:18, Ex 32:7-14, 33-34, Ex 33:1-3, 12-23, Ex 34:1-3, 34-35, Ex 40:1-15, Lev 1:1, Lev 4:1, Lev 5:14, Lev 6:1,8,19,24, Lev 7:22,28, Lev 8:1, Lev 11:1, Lev 12:1, Lev 13:1, Lev 14:1, 33, Lev 15:1, Lev 16:1-2, Lev 17:1, Lev 18:1, Lev 19:1, Lev 20:1, Lev 21:1,16, Lev 22:1,17,26, Lev 23:1,9,23,26,33, Lev 24:1,13, Lev 25:1, Lev 27:1, Num 1:1, Num 2:1, Num 3:5,11,40,44, Num 4:1,17,21, Num 5:1,5,11, Num 6:1,22, Num 7:4,89, Num 8:1,5,23, Num 9:1, Num 10:1, Num 11:16,23,25, Num 12:4-8, 14, Num 13:1, Num 14:10-20, 26 (interactive conversation), Num 15:1,17,35,37, Num 16:19-36, 42-45, Num 17:1,10, Num 18:25, Num 19:1, Num 20:6-12,23, Num 21:8,16,34, Num 25:4,10,16, Num 26:1,52, Num 27:6,12-18, (interactive conversation), Num 28:1, Num 31:1, 25, Num 33:50, Num 34:1,16, Num 35:1,9, Deut 3:23-28, Deut 31:14-16, Deut 32:48, Deut 34:4, Heb 11:27

**G. All of the people in the wilderness with Moses:** There are a number of scriptural references that clearly describe situations in which all of the people in the wilderness with Moses were able to see and/or hear God's tangible presence. For example:

On the morning of the third day, there was a powerful thunder and lightening storm, and a dense cloud came down upon the mountain. There was a long, loud blast from a ram's horn, and all the people trembled. Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. All Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake. As the horn blast grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply for all to hear. (Exodus 19:16-19).

And once the tabernacle had been completed, all the people in the wilderness with Moses could see the visible presence of God hovering over the tabernacle twenty-four hours of every day, 365 days of every year, for the remainder of their time in the wilderness:

Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled it. Moses was no longer able to enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the Tabernacle was filled with the awesome glory of the Lord. . . . The cloud of the Lord rested on the Tabernacle during the day, and at night there was fire in the cloud so all the people of Israel could see it. This continued throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:34, 38)

For more examples of the entire Israelite congregation perceiving the tangible presence of God, see also Ex 16:9-10, Ex 20:18-19, Ex 24:15-17, Ex 33:8-11, Lev 9:23-24, Num 9:15-23, Num 10:34, Num 14:10, Num 16:19,42, Deut 4:33,36, Deut 5:22,

**H. Joshua:** There are many verses that describe Joshua perceiving God's tangible presence and/or hearing from God and/or having an *interactive conversation* with God. First of all, Joshua was present in all of the situations in which the whole congregation of Israel saw a visible manifestation of God's presence and/or heard God's audible voice. Secondly, Joshua was Moses' assistant, and was usually with Moses on the many occasions in which Moses saw visible manifestations of God's presence and/or had conversations with God and/or

heard from God. For example:

“As he [Moses] went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at the entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. . . . Inside the Tent of Meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, stayed behind in the Tent of Meeting.” (Ex 33:9,11)

Furthermore, there are verses that specifically, explicitly describe God appearing to and speaking to both Moses and Joshua. For example:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “The time has come for you to die. Call Joshua and take him with you to the Tabernacle, and I will commission him there.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tabernacle. And the Lord appeared to them in a pillar of cloud at the entrance to the sacred tent. . . . Then the Lord commissioned Joshua son of Nun with these words: “Be strong and courageous! You must bring the people of Israel into the land I swore to give them. I will be with you.” (Deut 31:14-15, 23)

Finally, there are many verses that clearly describe God speaking directly to Joshua. For example:

“After the death of Moses the Lord’s servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant. He said, “Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River in the land I am giving them. . . . No one will be able to stand their ground against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.” (Josh 1:1-2,5)

And for additional examples of God speaking directly to Joshua, including two with interactive communication, see Josh 3:7, Josh 4:1,15, Josh 5:2,9,13-15 (back-and-forth, interactive conversation), Josh 6:2, Josh 7:7-15 (interactive conversation), Josh 8:1,18, Josh 10:8, Josh 11:6, Josh 13:1, Josh 15:13, and Josh 20:1.

**I. Samuel:** One scriptural reference provides a general statement that God both appeared to Samuel and communicated with Samuel on multiple occasions:

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him, and everything Samuel said was wise and helpful. All the people of Israel from one end of the land to the other knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh and gave messages to Samuel there at the Tabernacle. (1 Sam 19-21)

The Bible also describes a number of specific occasions on which God spoke to Samuel. For example:

So Samuel took a young lamb and offered it to the Lord as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the Lord to help Israel, and the Lord answered. Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived for battle. But the Lord spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them. (1 Sam 7:9-10)



For additional examples of God speaking to Samuel, including several occasions on which there was *back-and-forth, interactive conversation* between Samuel and God, see 1 Sam 3:2-11 (interactive conversation), 1 Sam 8:6-7, 21-22 (interactive conversation), 1 Sam 9:15-17, 27, 1 Sam 15:10, and 1 Sam 16:1-3,7 (interactive conversation).

**J. Solomon (and the gathered people of Israel):** At the dedication of the temple, God appeared to Solomon and to all the gathered people of Israel:

When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple. The priests could not even enter the Temple of the Lord because the glorious presence of the Lord filled it. When all of the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the Lord filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying, “He is so good! His faithful love endures forever!” (2 Chron 7:1-3)

God also appears to Solomon and speaks to Solomon on two other occasions (see 1 Kings 3:5-14, 1 Kings 9:2-9, 2 Chron 1:7-12, and 2 Chron 7:12-16).

**K. Elijah:** A number of verses describe God speaking to Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:2-4, 8-9, 1 Kings 18:1, and 1 Kings 21:17-19, 28-29), and one biblical reference clearly describes a *back-and-forth, interactive conversation* between God and Elijah (see 1 Kings 19:9-18).

**L. Job:** The scriptures describe God appearing to Job in the form of a whirlwind, and also describe God speaking to Job from the whirlwind. Note that Job specifically mentions *seeing* God: “I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.” (Job 42:5). Note also that God and Job have a *back-and-forth, interactive conversation* that continues through one hundred and thirty-five verses (Job 38:1 through Job 42:6).

**M. Isaiah:** The biblical account of Isaiah’s ministry clearly describes Isaiah both *seeing God’s visible presence* and *hearing God’s audible voice*:

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. . . . Then I heard the Lord asking, “Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?” (Isa 6:1,8)

Note also that this same chapter describes a *back-and-forth, interactive conversation* between God and Isaiah (see Isa 6:1-13). The remainder of the book of Isaiah includes a number of additional accounts of God speaking to Isaiah. (See Isa 7:3, Isa 8:1,5,11 Isa 13:1, Isa 14:28, Isa 15:1, Isa 17:1, Isa 19:1 Isa 20:1-3, Isa 21:1,11,13, Isa 22:1, 15, Isa 23:1, Isa 31:4, Isa 37:21-22, Isa 38:4, Isa 48:16-17, Isa 49:5-6, and Isa 50:4-5.)

**N. Jeremiah:** The scriptures report that Jeremiah felt the Lord’s physical touch and that he heard the Lord speaking to him:

The Lord gave me a message. He said, “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world.” “O Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I can’t speak for you! I’m too young!” “Don’t say that,” the Lord replied, “for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell

you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken!" Then the Lord touched my mouth and said, "See, I have put my words in your mouth!" (Jer 1:4-9)

Note that chapter four also describes an extended *back-and-forth, interactive conversation* between God and Jeremiah (see Jer 1:4-19). Furthermore, the remainder of the book of Jeremiah includes many additional accounts of Jeremiah hearing from God (and sometimes also having interactive conversations with God). See Jer 2:1, Jer 3:6,11, Jer 5:14, Jer 7:1, Jer 8:4, Jer 11:1-20 (interactive conversation), Jer 12:5, Jer 13:1,3,6,8, Jer 14:1,11,14, Jer 15:1-21 (interactive conversation), Jer 16:1, Jer 17:19, Jer 18:1,5,13, Jer 19:1, Jer 22:1, Jer 24:3-4, Jer 25:1,15,27, Jer 26:1-2, 4, Jer 27:1-2, Jer 28:12, Jer 29:30, Jer 30:1, Jer 32:1,6-8, 26, Jer 33:1,19,23, Jer 34:1,8, Jer 35:1,12, Jer 36:1,27, Jer 37:6, Jer 39:15, Jer 40:1, Jer 42:7, Jer 43:8, Jer 44:1-2, Jer 46:1, Jer 49:34, and Jer 50:1.

**O. Ezekiel:** The biblical account of Ezekiel's ministry clearly describes him seeing visible manifestations of God's presence, feeling God's physical touch, hearing God speaking to him, and having *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with God. See, for example, the following two passages:

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened to me, and I saw visions of God. . . . The Lord gave a message to me, Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, there beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and I felt the hand of the Lord take hold of me. (Ezekiel 1:1-3)

Above the surface over their heads was what looked like a throne made of blue sapphire. And high above this throne was a figure whose appearance was like that of a man. From his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor. All around his was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining through the clouds. This was the way the glory of the Lord appeared to me. When I saw it, I fell face down in the dust, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me.

"Stand up, son of man," said the voice. "I want to speak with you." The Spirit came into me as he spoke and set me on my feet. I listened carefully to his words. "Son of man," he said, "I am sending you to the nation of Israel, a nation that is rebelling against me." (Jer 1:26-2:3)

And the remainder of the book of Ezekiel includes many more accounts of Ezekiel seeing God and/or feeling God's physical touch and/or hearing from God. (See Ezek 2:8-9, Ezek 3:1-4,12-14,16,22-24, Ezek 4:15-16, Ezek 6:1, Ezek 7:1-2, Ezek 8:1-18, Ezek 9:1,3,5,7,9, Ezek 10:2-4,6,18-19, Ezek 11:1-2,5,14,22-23, Ezek 12:1,8,17,21,26, Ezek 13:1, Ezek 14:1-2,12,21, Ezek 15:1, Ezek 16:1, Ezek 17:1,11, Ezek 18:1, Ezek 20:1-2,45, Ezek 21:1,8,18, Ezek 22:1,17,23, Ezek 23:1,36, Ezek 24:1,15,25, Ezek 25:1, Ezek 26:1, Ezek 27:1, Ezek 28:1,11,20, Ezek 29:1,17, Ezek 30:1,20, Ezek 31:1, Ezek 32:1,17, Ezek 33:1,22-23, Ezek 34:1, Ezek 35:1, 36:16, Ezek 36:16, Ezek 37:1-4,9,11,15, Ezek 38:1, Ezek 40:1-4, Ezek 43:2-7,18, and Ezek 44:2-5.) Note also that Ezek 3:24-4:15 and Ezek 37:1-14 describe *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* between Ezekiel and the Lord.

**P. Daniel:** Daniel receives a number of visions from the Lord, and in one of these visions he sees both God the father and Jesus:

I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of fire, and a river of fire flowed from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. . . . As my vision continued that night, I saw someone who looked like a man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed. (Dan 7:9-10,13-14)

**Q. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi:** There are a number of minor prophets who hear from God, who sometimes see visible manifestations of God’s presence, and who also sometimes have *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with God. See, for example, the following two passages from Habakkuk:

How long, O Lord, must I call for help: But you do not listen! . . . The Lord replied, “Look at the nations and be amazed! Watch and be astounded at what I will do!” . . . O Lord my God, is your plan in all of this to wipe us out? Surely not! . . . Then the Lord said to me, “Write my answer in large, clear letters on a tablet, so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else. . . .” (Hab 1:2,5,12, Hab 2:2)

I see God, the Holy One, moving across the deserts from Edom and Mount Paran. His brilliant splendor fills the heavens, and the earth is filled with his praise! What a wonderful God he is! Rays of brilliant light flash from his hands. He rejoices in his awesome power. (Hab 3:3-4)

For more examples of these prophets hearing from God and/or seeing God and/or having interactive conversations with God, see Hos 1:1-2,4,6,9, Hos 3:1, Joel 1:1, Amos 1:1-2, Amos 7:1-9 (interactive conversation), Amos 8:1-3 (interactive conversation), Amos 9:1, Oba 1:1, Jon 1:1, Jon 3:1, Jon 4:1-11 (interactive conversation), Micah 1:1-4,6, Micah 2:3, Nah 1:1,12,14, Zeph 1:1, Hag 1:1-5,7,13, Hag 2:1-2,6,10-11,20, Zech 1:1-2,7,13-14,16, Zech 3:1-2, Zech 6:7-9,12, Zech 7:1,6,8-9, Zech 8:1-2,18-19, Zech 11:13,15, Zech 12:1, and Mal 1:1-2.

**R. Those who knew Jesus during his life on earth:** From Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the wise men who saw Jesus as an infant<sup>9</sup> to the elders at the temple who spoke with Jesus as a twelve-year-old<sup>10</sup> to the disciples that spent all day every day for several years with Jesus during his adult ministry<sup>11</sup> to the crowds that came to Jesus for teaching and

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<sup>9</sup>See Luke 2:8-20, Luke 2:25-35, Luke 2:36-38, and Matt 2:1-12.

<sup>10</sup>See Luke 2:41-47.

<sup>11</sup>Read the full text of any of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) to get a feel for the way in which Jesus essentially lived with his disciples for the years of his adult ministry – Jesus and his disciples ate together, they walked around Palestine together, they stayed in friend’s houses together, they rode in boats together, they went to parties together, and the text often explicitly mentions that his disciples were present when Jesus was teaching and/or ministering to the larger crowds.

healing,<sup>12</sup> *many thousands* of people experienced the tangible presence of God through Jesus as the incarnation.<sup>13</sup> These people saw Jesus in the flesh as a visible manifestation of God's presence, they heard his audible voice, and they touched his physical body.

Many of these people also had *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with Jesus. For a sample of the biblical accounts that clearly describe interactive conversations, see Matt 8:5-13 (Jesus and the Roman officer), Matt 21:23-45 (one of many interactive conversations between Jesus and the religious authorities),<sup>14</sup> Mark 7:24-30 (Jesus and the gentile woman), Mark 4:21-43 (Jesus and Jairus), Mark 9:14-27 (Jesus and the father of the boy with the evil spirit), Mark 10:17-22 (Jesus and the rich young ruler), Mark 10:46-52 (Jesus and blind Bartimaeus), Luke 17:11-19 (Jesus and the Samaritan healed of leprosy), Luke 19:1-10 (Jesus and Zacchaeus), Luke 23:40-43 (Jesus and the criminal on the cross), John 3:1-10 (Jesus and Nicodemus), John 4:4-26 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well), John 8:9-11 (Jesus and the woman caught in adultery), John 9:35-39 (Jesus and the man born blind), and John 18:33-38, 19:8-12 (Jesus and Pilate).

Furthermore, verses such as Matt 13:3-23 and 36-43 (Jesus explaining his parables to the disciples), Matt 14:13-21 and 15:32-36 (Jesus interacting with his disciples around feeding the five thousand and feeding the four thousand), Matt 15:22-33 (Jesus interacting with Peter and the other disciples in the context of the walking on water adventure), Matt 19:23-30 (Jesus talking with his disciples about the rich young ruler), Luke 5:1-11 (Jesus interacting with Simon as he calls Simon to be his first disciple), John 11:1-40 (Jesus interacting with his disciples, Mary, and Martha around Lazarus' death), and John 13:3-10 (Jesus interacting with Peter regarding washing Peter's feet) clearly portray a relationship between Jesus and his disciples that would have included back-and-forth conversations as a routine part of every day interactions. And Jesus' words from John 15:15 are particularly clear with respect to the kind of relationship he shared with his disciples: "I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn't confide in his servants. *Now you are my friends*, since I have told you everything the Father told me." (Emphasis mine)

**S. Those who interacted with Jesus after the resurrection:** After Jesus came back from the dead, he appeared to and spoke to many people. See, for example, Acts 1:3, "During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the kingdom of God." For another scripture reference supporting this point, see Acts 15:5-7, "He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by *more than five hundred* of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died by

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<sup>12</sup>For some examples of Jesus teaching and ministering to crowds, see Matt 4:23-25, Matt 5:1, Matt 8:16-17, Matt 14:13-21, Matt 15:29-39, Mark 1:32-34, 45, Mark 2:1-5, Mark 3:7-8, 20, Mark 4:21, 31, Mark 6:53-56, Luke 5:1, Luke 6:17-19, and Luke 12:1.

<sup>13</sup>It is helpful to remember Jesus' own words regarding this point from John 14:9: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!" See also John 1:1-2, 14: "In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. . . . So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. . . . And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father."

<sup>14</sup>See also Mark 12:13-17, Matt 9:9-13, Matt 12:1-4, Matt 22:41-46, Luke 5:17-25, Luke 5:33-39, Luke 7:36-47, Luke 10:25-37, Luke 11:37-54, Luke 13:10-17, Luke 16:1-15, Luke 20:27-40, Luke 22:66-71, John 2:13-20, John 5:16-23, John 8:1-9, John 8:12-20, and John 10:22-39

now.” (emphasis mine) And for several more passages supporting this point, see Matt 20:16-20 (Jesus meets the eleven apostles in Galilee and gives them the great commission), Luke 24:33-49 (Jesus appears to, speaks to, is touched by, and eats with the eleven apostles and also other followers who were gathered with them), Luke 24:50-53 (Jesus leads this same group to Bethany, and then blesses them and ascends into heaven as they watch), John 20:19-23 (Jesus appears to and speaks to “the disciples”), and Acts 13:29-31 (a summary statement regarding Jesus appearing to many disciples over a period of many days).

A number of these people also had *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with Jesus. My favorite example of interactive connection is the account described in Luke 24:13-32, in which Jesus meets the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. I love how he pretends to not know about his own ministry and crucifixion, and then goes on to explain all of the scriptures pertaining to himself. (What a fantastic Bible study that must have been! I have often wished that they had recorded all of the details.) And I love how they enjoyed his company so much that when he pretended to be going further, they begged him to stay with them for the night.

I also really like the story described in John 21:1-22, in which Jesus meets Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two other disciples in Galilee. I love the way he doesn’t tell them who he is, but rather just reenacts the whole “Throw your nets on the other side of the boat” scenario and then waits for them to figure it out. I also think it’s fun how he fries fish for them – here’s Jesus, the master of the universe who has just come back from the dead after defeating all of the powers of darkness, and he’s cooking breakfast for a bunch of poor fishermen. And I really appreciate how he gives Peter three chances to reaffirm his allegiance, as a way to help him process and heal from the trauma of denying Jesus three times on good Friday.

For a couple more examples of back-and-forth, interactive conversations between the resurrected Jesus and his disciples, see John 20:11-18, in which Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, and then has a short but beautiful back-and-forth interactive conversation with her. And see John 20:26-29, in which Jesus appears to the disciples and has the famous “So you said you wouldn’t believe unless you put your fingers in the holes in my hands and put your hand in the wound in my side? Well here I am – go ahead and do it”<sup>15</sup> interaction with Thomas.

**T. Those who saw Jesus after the ascension:** Even after Jesus has ascended into heaven, he continues to appear to his disciples, speak to his disciples, and have *back-and-forth, interactive conversations* with his disciples. First there’s Stephen, who sees both God and Jesus: “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily upward into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. And he told them, ‘Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!’” (Acts 7:55-56)

The apostle Paul provides another example. Jesus appears to Paul and has a back-and-forth, interactive conversation with Paul at the time of his conversion:

As he [Paul] was nearing Damascus on this mission, a brilliant light from heaven suddenly beamed down upon him! He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,

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<sup>15</sup>My slightly paraphrased version.



“Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?” “Who are you, sir?” Saul asked. And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” (Acts 9:1-9)

And then on several subsequent occasions, Paul has visions in which Jesus appears to him and speaks to him (See Acts 18:9-10, Acts 22:17-21, and Acts 23:11). Furthermore, Paul describes perceiving Jesus’ presence with him on the occasion of first being brought before a judge (see 2 Tim 4:16-17).

Ananias provides yet another example. As described in Acts 9:10-19, Jesus appears to Ananias in a vision, and they have a back-and-forth, interactive conversation in which Jesus directs Ananias to help Paul (and also reassures Ananias that Paul won’t just throw him in jail).

Finally, the book of Revelation describes an extended vision in which the Apostle John perceives the presence of both Jesus and God the Father. For example:

It was the Lord’s Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. . . .

When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance. . . .

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.” (Rev 1:10-18)

See also Rev 4 (the whole chapter), Rev 5 (the whole chapter), Rev 6 (the whole chapter), and Rev 7:9-17, Rev 8:1-5, Rev 11:15-19, Rev 14:1-5, 14-16, Rev 19:11-16, Rev 20:11-15, and Rev 21:1-8.

**U. Several additional New Testament examples of people perceiving God’s tangible presence:** In addition to the many occasions on which people perceive *Jesus’* presence, there are also a number of situations in the New Testament in which people perceive the presence of the *Holy Spirit* and/or *God the Father*. For example, at the time of Jesus’ baptism, the entire crowd sees the Holy Spirit manifested as a dove, and they hear the audible voice of God saying, “You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you.” (Luke 3:22) The experience of Peter, James, and John on the mount of transfiguration provides another example – as a cloud covers Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, they hear God’s audible voice saying, “This is my beloved son, and I am fully pleased with him. Listen to him.” (Matt 17:1-6)

Pentecost provides one more example, in that the disciples perceive the Holy Spirit’s tangible presence as the sound of a rushing wind and visible tongues of fire. (Acts 2:1-12) And the Lord’s interactions with Peter regarding his visit to Cornelius provide yet another example: first, Peter has three rounds of back-and-forth, interactive communication with God regarding



his vision of “unclean” animals and God telling him to “kill and eat,” and then the Holy Spirit speaks to Peter, reassuring him that he has sent the messengers from Cornelius, and that it is okay to go with them. (Acts 10:9-20)

**IV. Scriptural support for perceiving God’s presence in many different ways:** As discussed at length in chapter twenty-eight, a striking and important aspect of people’s experiences with the Immanuel approach is that recipients perceive God’s presence in many different ways. Therefore, another way in which the Immanuel approach is consistent with scripture is that people in the Bible also perceive God’s presence in many different ways. I present a handful of examples here, and you can see appendix six in *Immanuel: A Practicum*<sup>16</sup> for even more examples, and for additional discussion regarding this point.

Examples of people perceiving God’s presence in many different ways:

- Abraham perceived God as one of three men who came to visit. (Gen 18:1-33)
- Moses perceive God’s presence in the burning bush. (Ex 3:2)
- God appeared to all the people of Israel as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. (Ex 13:21)
- God also appeared to all the people of Israel as a glorious presence in the cloud over the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34, 38)
- God was present in the cloud above the mercy seat. (Lev 16:2)
- God appeared to Joshua as the commander of the army of the Lord. (Josh 5:13-15)
- Job perceived God’s presence in the whirlwind. (Job 38:1)
- One of the most important and profound ways in which God has manifested himself to us was as the incarnate Jesus. (John 14:9 and John 1:1-2, 14 have already been mentioned above in footnote #15. See also Phil 2:5-8.)
- The Holy Spirit appeared to the general public as a dove. (Luke 3:22)
- At Pentecost, the disciples perceived the Holy Spirit as the sound of a rushing wind and visible tongues of fire. (Acts 2:1-4)
- Stephen saw the glorified Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father. (Acts 7:55-56)
- Paul experienced Jesus’ presence as a blinding light and an audible voice. (Acts 9:3-6)
- Jesus appeared to the apostle John as a lamb. (See, for example, Rev 5:1-14)
- Jesus also appeared to the apostle John as a glorious heavenly being. (See, for example, Rev

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<sup>16</sup>Patricia A. Velotta, *Immanuel: A Practicum* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014), pages 125-143.

1:12-16)

- Throughout scripture, many different people in many different situations perceived God's presence by hearing God's audible voice or by receiving God's thoughts directly into their minds/hearts/spirits. (For a sample of examples, see Josh 3:7, Josh 4:1,15, Josh 10:8, Josh 11:6, 1 Sam 3:2-11, 1 Sam 15:10, 1 Kings 17:2-4, 8-9, 1 Kings 18:1, Isa 7:3, Isa 8:1,5,11, Isa 14:28, Jer 2:1, Jer 3:6,11, Jer 5:14, Ezek 6:1, Ezek 7:1-2, Hos 3:1, Joel 1:1, Amos 1:1-2, Jon 3:1, Zeph 1:1, and Zech 11:13,15.)

Again, see appendix six in *Immanuel: A Practicum* for more examples and for additional discussion.

**V. More scriptural support for prioritizing a living, interactive connection with God:** An interactive connection with God is foundational for the Immanuel approach process. Furthermore, our ultimate goal with the Immanuel approach is getting 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. To put this another way, in Immanuel approach sessions as well as in Immanuel approach every-day life, the number one, highest priority is to be *with* God. According to the team of more than 50 people who have spent 5 years preparing *The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible*,<sup>17</sup> being "with God" is the central, organizing theme of the whole Bible. Quoting directly from the general introduction:

"...the unity of the Bible is discovered in the development of life 'with God' as a reality on earth, centered in the person of Jesus. We might call this the Immanuel Principle of life."

So, according to these scholars and authors, the entire Bible happens to support this central foundation for the Immanuel approach.

**VI. Specific objections:** As the Immanuel approach has become more widely known, some critics have raised very specific objections.

**A. Mortals cannot see God:** For example, some critics quote verses such as "But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live," and "No one has ever seen God,"<sup>18</sup> and then conclude that we mortals cannot see God. These people then also conclude that the Immanuel approach must be fundamentally in error, since recipients participating in Immanuel approach sessions routinely claim to see Jesus.

My first response to this objection is that the primary intended meaning is sadly ludicrous. The vast majority of Immanuel approach recipients who get visual imagery describe seeing Jesus, and most people who read about the Immanuel approach don't even know that there are a small number of recipients who occasionally also report seeing God the Father. The

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<sup>17</sup>*The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Deuterocanonical Books*, Editor: Richard J. Foster; General Editors: Gayle Beebe, Lynda L. Graybeal, Thomas C. Oden, Dallas Willard; Consulting Editors: Walter Brueggemann, Eugene H. Peterson. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers), 2005.

<sup>18</sup>Exodus 33:20 and 1 John 4:12, respectively.

people who bring this objection are usually intending that it *actually apply to seeing Jesus*, and it is amazing to me that they seem to miss the fact that all four Gospels and the book of Acts clearly describe thousands and thousands of people seeing Jesus (as described above). This objection is *sadly* ludicrous because these folks are obviously so triggered that they aren't thinking very clearly, and their triggered fear and/or anger and/or confusion usually prevents them from being able to experience wonderful Immanuel approach Jesus encounters.

And even though the people bringing this objection are usually not intending that it apply to seeing God the Father, I will also offer a couple of thoughts in response to this more reasonable objection. My first thought is that the full meaning of the cited verses must be more complicated than "Mortals cannot see God," since there are so many verses, scattered throughout both the old and new testaments, that describe people seeing God (as presented above). And my second thought, specifically applying to Exodus 33:20, is that I think the intended meaning of this verse is that we cannot see the *full glory of God's unshielded face* and live. (If you look carefully at the many accounts of people seeing God, you will see that none of these passages describe the person seeing the full glory of God's unshielded face.)

For extensive additional discussion of this "we can't see God" objection, see the first part of appendix six in *Immanuel: A Practicum*.<sup>19</sup>

**B. Jesus is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God:** Some critics also quote verses such as, "Now he [Jesus] is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven,"<sup>20</sup> and argue that Jesus cannot appear to us, speak to us, or manifest to us in any other way since his resurrected body is seated beside the throne of God in heaven. And again, these people conclude that the Immanuel approach must be fundamentally in error, since recipients participating in Immanuel approach sessions routinely describe perceiving Jesus' presence with them here on earth.

My really short response to this objection is that the full truth must be more complicated than Jesus being confined to the heavenly throne room, since Acts 9:3-6 clearly describes Jesus appearing and speaking to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus.

For extensive additional discussion of this objection, see the second part of appendix six in *Immanuel: A Practicum*.<sup>21</sup>

**C. We don't see the Immanuel approach in the Bible:** Some critics have asked, "If this whole Immanuel approach process is real and valid, why don't we see Jesus, Paul, the other apostles, or anybody else in the Bible using it?"

Part of my response to this question is to name the reality that people in the Bible do not use many things that have been developed as a result of modern science. For example, I am not

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<sup>19</sup> Patti Velotta, *Immanuel: A Practicum* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014), pages 153-160.

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 12:2.

<sup>21</sup> Patti Velotta, *Immanuel: A Practicum* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014), pages 160-165.

aware of any biblical characters using antibiotics, orthopedic surgery, cell phones, or microwaves. But most of us have no problem with these inventions that were developed through science that was not available to people in the Bible. Similarly, some components of the Immanuel approach have been developed from neurological and psychological discoveries that were not available to the people in the Bible. And I think we should embrace and appreciate the Immanuel approach in the same way that we embrace and appreciate these other modern inventions.

The rest of my response is to look at stories in the Bible that provide early examples of components of the Immanuel approach. The sections above have already done this to some extent, as I have collected verses that provide biblical examples of deliberate appreciation, perceiving the tangible presence of God, and engaging in interactive conversations with God; but it is also helpful to look more carefully at a number of stories that provide especially powerful biblical examples of several more Immanuel approach components. The story of Stephen being stoned provides a good example of what I'm talking about here. As described in Acts 7:54-60:

The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists in rage. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily upward into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

Then they put their hands over their ears, and drowning out his voice with their shouts, they rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. . . .

And as they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Now, as we examine this story with the Immanuel approach in mind, we will discover that it provides a brilliant example of one of the most powerful and most common components of Immanuel approach sessions. Stephen sees Jesus, and Jesus captures his full attention. With his eyes and mind on Jesus, and as he experiences the Lord *with* him in his painful experience, Stephen moves into peace and joy. Instead of experiencing fear, anger, and other negative emotions that one might expect for someone being dragged by a mob and then stoned to death, Stephen displays the character of Jesus. As he experiences Jesus *with* him, he is able to overcome in these incredibly difficult circumstances, just as Jesus overcame the world.

Similarly, in an Immanuel session, the recipient will often perceive Jesus to be *with* her in the midst of the painful, difficult circumstances of a traumatic memory. And even though Jesus does not "fix" or change the difficult circumstances in the memory, his presence totally changes the subjective experience of being in the circumstances so that the recipient can heal and overcome instead of being traumatized. Like Stephen, she will come into peace and joy, and mirror Christlike character in giving heartfelt forgiveness and compassion to the people in the memory that hurt her.<sup>22</sup>

For similar discussions of Jacob wrestling with God (Gen 32:24-31), Hannah baring her soul

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<sup>22</sup>This paragraph and the previous paragraph have been adapted from Patti Velotta, *Immanuel: A Practicum* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014), page 178. Used with permission.

to the Lord (1 Sam 1:10-18), David bringing his pain to God (Ps 55:2), David asking the Lord for help (Ps 139:23-24), David recognizing God's will (Ps 51:6), David seeking forgiveness (Ps 51:1-4,10), David longing for the Lord (Ps 27:4), God being David's security and solution (Ps 27:5), David's devotion to the Lord (Ps 16:8,11), God's presence with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:22-28), the Samaritan woman encountering Jesus (John 4:19-26), Jesus and Peter walking on water (Matt 14:25-29), Abraham bargaining with God, (Gen 18:17,22-27,32-33), the man born blind – getting healed and subsequent interactions with religious leaders (John 9:1,7,25-26,32-33), Martha's response to Lazarus' death (John 11:20-27), Mary's response to the death of Lazarus (John 11:32-37), Paul considering everything as loss as compared to the knowledge of Jesus (Phil 3:4-8), and Jesus washing the disciples' feet, see appendix eight of *Immanuel: A Practicum*.<sup>23</sup>

#### **D. God spoke to people *in* the Bible, but now God only speaks to us *through* the Bible:**

Some critics readily agree that the Bible describes many characters who experienced interactive connections with God, and that these biblical characters received specific communication from God; but then these critics go on to argue that God no longer communicates with us directly. These critics accurately point out that some people who have claimed to hear from God have obviously been deceived, and they propose that the safest way to avoid this kind of deception and danger is to limit communication from God to only his written words that have been canonized in scripture. They believe that this is actually *God's* plan – they believe that God is aware of the danger of trying to communicate directly with fallible humans, and so now he only communicates with us through his written word in order to protect us from error.

The first part of my response to this concern is to refer the reader to passages such as the following verse in 1 Corinthians, in which Paul clearly implies that the average believer is expected to receive words from God: “Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize what I am saying. When you meet, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in an unknown language, while another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must be useful to all and build them up in the Lord.” (1 Cor 14:26).

The second part of my response to this concern is to refer the reader to Dallas Willard's excellent book, *Hearing God*.<sup>24</sup> Dr. Willard spends much of the book arguing that God does still speak to us directly, and the material he presents includes strong, sound, compelling Biblical exegesis.

#### **E. People who claim to hear from God are claiming divine revelation equal to scripture:**

When those of us who are using the Immanuel approach claim to perceive God's presence, claim to have an interactive connection with God, and claim to hear from God in the context of this interactive connection, some critics misunderstand us to be saying that we are receiving divine revelation equal to scripture. And these critics are understandably alarmed by this *mistaken* perception that we claim to be adding to the canon of scripture.

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<sup>23</sup> Patti Velotta, *Immanuel: A Practicum* (Libertyville, IL: This Joy! Books, 2014), pages 177-196.

<sup>24</sup> Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).



The simple response to this concern is that we in the Immanuel approach community do *not* claim to be adding to the canon of scripture. We see the revelation in scripture as Revelation with a capital “R,” and we fully agree that this scriptural Revelation has much more authority than the revelation with a lower case “r” that we receive in the context of the Immanuel approach. Among other reasons for its authority, the capital “R” Revelation in scripture has been tested and confirmed by the world church for thousands of years. And the lower case “r” revelation we receive in the context of the Immanuel approach certainly does not have the benefit of this same confirmation and testing.

I *do* believe that the Immanuel approach helps us establish interactive connections with the living presence of God, and that God does indeed communicate with us in this context; but I do *not* believe that we are infallible in our ability to accurately perceive what the Lord is saying to us. As mentioned earlier in chapter thirty-one, *everybody* has trouble with *minor* counterfeit and/or contamination. Nobody is able to perceive the Lord’s presence or guidance with perfect, 100% accuracy. Even when we are able to establish a strong, clear interactive connection with the Lord, unconscious avoidance, subtle self deception, the complexity of the neurological processes involved, physical trauma in our fallen biological brains, psychological trauma in our fallen minds, internal dissociated parts with complex agenda, and deliberate demonic interference can all get in the way of perceiving the Lord’s presence and guidance with 100% accuracy. This is why we need to remain humble with respect to any content we receive in the context of Immanuel approach sessions – we should always consider the possibility that the details of our perceptions of God’s presence and the details of content we perceive to be coming from God could be at least slightly contaminated by deliberate counterfeit, and/or unconscious distortion, and/or simple honest mistakes.

Furthermore, we are not infallible in our ability to accurately interpret all aspects of the *meaning* of the content we receive from God, and we are not infallible in our judgment regarding how the content we receive from God *applies to the rest of the world*. Again, we receive revelation with a lower case “r,” and we need to be very humble with respect to this content that we perceive to be coming from God.

**F. Yes, Biblical characters experienced interactive connections with God, but it was very rare:** Some critics readily agree that the Bible describes people having interactive encounters with God, but then they point out that these encounters were very rare. They point out that during many periods in the biblical record, the entire nation of Israel went for many years with only a handful of recorded incidents in which people experienced the interactive presence of the Lord. And their conclusion is something along the lines of, “If people in the Bible encountered God so rarely, it seems presumptuous and hard to believe that the average Christian today can encounter God on a daily basis in the context of the Immanuel approach.”

In responding to this concern, I will once again refer the reader to *Hearing God*. Much of the book addresses exactly this question: “Can we, today – *average* Christians in the twenty first century – actually experience living, interactive communication with the Lord?” Dr. Willard’s conclusion is “Yes!” And he supports this conclusion with strong, sound, compelling Biblical exegesis. I include here one excerpt that is particularly relevant:

“If we look at the advice on how the meetings of the church were supposed to proceed, as given in 1 Corinthians 14, we see it is assumed that numerous people in the congregation are going to have some kind of communication from God which they will be sharing with



the others in the group: ‘When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.’ (1 Cor 14:26).

The ancient prophecy of Joel was fulfilled in the early church: ‘Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.’ (Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28-32). The wish of Moses, ‘that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them’ (Num 11:29) is substantially granted in the church of Jesus Christ when it functions as its Lord intended.”<sup>25</sup>

**VII. Additional resources:** As I’m sure the reader has noticed, I have referenced additional resources at several points in the above discussion. I thought it might be helpful to summarize these additional resources, as well as several others, in one easy-to-find location.

*The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible:* As mentioned above, the *Renovare* spiritual formation study Bible is an excellent additional resource, with study notes that highlight the “Immanuel Principle of life”<sup>26</sup> as the central theme that unifies the entire body of scripture.

Dallas Willard’s *Hearing God:* As mentioned above, Dallas Willard’s excellent book, *Hearing God*, includes extensive, strong, sound, compelling Biblical exegesis supporting our experience that God does still speak to us directly, and that this should be a common experience for the average believer.

Patti Velotta’s *Immanuel: A Practicum:* As mentioned above, appendices three through ten of *Immanuel: A Practicum* provide extensive additional material regarding biblical support for the Immanuel approach.

*Immanuel: A Practicum* website: As of April 2015, Pastor Patti has one hundred and sixty-five additional word studies related to the Immanuel approach posted as free downloads on the “Bible Studies” page of the *Immanuel: A Practicum* website ([www.immanuelpracticum.com](http://www.immanuelpracticum.com)).

Jim Wilder’s teaching CDs: Dr. Wilder presents a number of excellent points on the biblical support for the Immanuel approach in his audio teaching CDs, *Immanuel: Taking Healing to the World*, *2011 Share Immanuel Evenings*, *JIM Talks Vol 10* (on memory, healing, and synchronization), and *JIM Talks Vol 12* (on Immanuel healing). These are all available from the “Resources” page of [www.lifemodelworks.org](http://www.lifemodelworks.org).

Jerry Reddix and others who are engaging in ongoing careful study regarding the Biblical basis for the Immanuel approach (details pending).

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<sup>25</sup>Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup>As mentioned above, “the Immanuel principle of life” refers to “the development of life ‘with God’ as a reality on earth, centered in the person of Jesus.”