

Title: "Pre-Immanuel Approach Ideas for Working With Kids"

February 13, 2022

Greetings all,

A single mom who has been doing a lot of Immanuel Prayer with her two grade-school-age boys recently shared several very practical observations and insights regarding pre-Immanuel-Approach work that can sometimes be very helpful, or even necessary, for kids who initially have difficulty with more typical Immanuel Approach sessions (for example, they are very young and/or very energetic). When she first learned about the Immanuel Approach several years ago, she tried to use the same process I demonstrated with adults in my mentoring groups with her kids. Unfortunately, this didn't go so well with her four and six year old boys. They were disinterested and anxious about it, and she was initially discouraged. Fortunately, over the following three to four years the Lord led her to do what I call "pre-Immanuel-Approach work" – work that built a foundation for them, so that they could have understanding and capacity to do the child's version of the full Immanuel Approach process that she uses with them now. I have included below several specific observations, insights, and ideas regarding this pre-Immanuel-Approach work (sharing with permission):

"After 'plan A' not working, the Lord began leading me to practice appreciation moments with them in uneventful, non-threatening times. They were much more receptive to this. He also began giving me the idea to have conversations about hearing God's voice and inviting Him to be with us in moments of beauty/nature (like while looking at a sunset or a flower, etc). In addition, God started teaching me ways I could share my own Immanuel stories with my boys in age appropriate ways.

When my sons were ages five and seven, the Lord gave me the idea of "Jesus dates" that we tried to do once a week to practice connecting with God and just enjoying Him. My more playful son especially looked forward to connecting with Jesus through play. At those ages, when there were "bad times," like injuries or fights, the boys began to experience the living interacting presence of Jesus in those real time moments. At this point I was watching the Lord meet with us in incredible ways; but I still had never been able to motivate/inspire them to process pain without being in the middle of a present painful situation that was triggering the pain.

And then, when my boys were about seven and nine years old, the Lord began to teach me about the practice of stillness, and inviting quiet appreciation and God's presence into times of quiet. When we began inviting the Lord into our stillness, one of my son's specifically began to experience tearful interactions with Jesus. Soon he began to experience the fuller Immanuel Prayer process of sharing quiet and appreciation with the Lord, followed by a painful experience or emotion surfacing, followed by him tearfully sharing with me what he was feeling (and me directing him to share what he just told me directly to Jesus); and then he would experience Jesus Himself speaking to him and interacting with him in comforting ways. Right in the middle of an ordinary day, without anything going wrong leading up to it – without needing to be in the middle of a present painful situation that was triggering the pain.

Today their ages are nine and *almost\** eleven. We still enjoy Jesus dates and practice times of stillness, although those times look different than they used to. We also now have times of just sitting down and doing what looks more like a shortened grown-up Immanuel Prayer session. During these times of prayer with one son, the other son gets to choose a extra special activity to do alone, so they always look forward to these times. I expect Jesus to meet with both of them in some way every time we pray now.

When I first began this journey I often felt nervous and fearful, thinking things like, "How do I know if my kids are actually perceiving Jesus?" "What if this doesn't work and they get confused?" "What if I do this wrong and I ruin my kids' impression of God?" etc. Over the years there were many times that the process seemed confusing, it was difficult for me to discern between childness vs. true Jesus interactions, and I would feel unsure as a parent facilitator. During those challenging times, the Lord began to teach me to quiet myself, smile with Him about it, and just try again another time. I began to learn that this really is a no-pressure journey, and that Jesus is handling all the details along the way.

I am so thankful for the foundation the Lord has been laying for our little family. He has been so kind to meet with us in times we have really needed Him!"

Also, I have just posted an update for the "Immanuel Approach with Children" essay on the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics page of [www.immanuelapproach.com](http://www.immanuelapproach.com). (This is the first update for this essay since 2015, and the updated version has almost twice as much content as the earlier version!)

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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