



Immanuel Approach Community

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As described in chapter three of the big lion book, building and living an Immanuel lifestyle is so much more than just learning to facilitate Immanuel Approach sessions. Learning/building an Immanuel lifestyle can be challenging, practicing the daily discipline of an Immanuel lifestyle can sometimes feel burdensome, and *persisting* with an Immanuel lifestyle can be especially challenging. As you build and live an Immanuel lifestyle, it is very helpful to be part of an Immanuel Approach community.

I. Learning/Building Immanuel Lifestyle: Learning/building an Immanuel lifestyle will be much easier in community. As with every field of interest, whether bird watching, basketball, or bioengineering, it is easier to learn the principles and skills when you spend time with others who share the same interest. It is always helpful to learn and practice with others. If you are blessed to be part of a community with some who are ahead of you on the journey, you will benefit from having veterans who can answer your questions as you encounter intermediate and advanced issues and problems. And you will especially benefit from watching them model skills that you need to learn. Furthermore, you can share their faith and capacity (in proportion to the strength of your attuned connection).¹

II. Daily Discipline of Immanuel Lifestyle: The daily discipline of living out an Immanuel lifestyle can sometimes feel burdensome. Community helps, just as with so many other aspects of day-to-day life. As we all know, it's easier to spend an hour at the gym each week if you get together with a workout partner than if you try to maintain this same discipline on your own. Furthermore, sharing and hearing Immanuel stories on a regular basis,² and seeing fruit from Immanuel healing in those around you, will constantly remind you why it is worth the effort and time to maintain your Immanuel lifestyle.

III. Persisting Over Time, Especially Through Distractions and Challenges: I have been surprised and sobered to notice that some people will have powerful positive experiences with the Immanuel Approach, and even be living an Immanuel lifestyle, but then walk away from any involvement with the Immanuel Approach. Sometimes their Immanuel lifestyle will be derailed by a huge, sudden disruption, such as changing jobs, moving to another state, or being diagnosed with cancer, and then they never go back. And in other situations, the person slowly drifts away from an Immanuel lifestyle as they get increasingly absorbed in other interests and activities that

¹ For discussion of how someone with high capacity can share their capacity with others, across the bridge of an attuned connection and in proportion to the strength of the attuned connection, see the “Capacity and Immanuel” section of chapter three and Part II of the “Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and the God Who Is with Us” essay series (available as a free download from the “Special Subjects/Advanced Topics” section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com).

² It is especially easy to share our Immanuel stories with others who are already familiar with the Immanuel Approach. So when we are in IA community, we are much more likely to both share and hear Immanuel stories.

compete for their time and energy, such as sports camps, romantic relationships, home ownership, or an increasingly demanding career.

However, I have also observed that being imbedded in an IA community, where you are regularly interacting with others who are living an Immanuel lifestyle, helps to persist with an Immanuel lifestyle over time, even through distractions, major life changes, and other life challenges:

- When you are part of an active IA community, you will regularly be hearing stories about beautiful, powerful encounters with Jesus, and you will be seeing the fruit in people's lives that result from their Immanuel encounters. This will constantly re-inspire you to make the effort and set aside the time necessary for persisting with your Immanuel lifestyle.
- On days that you are tired, discouraged, or confused, you can be encouraged/bolstered by the excitement and faith of the others in your community. (On the days they are tired, discouraged, and confused, you can return the favor.)
- Regular interactions with others who share Immanuel stories, who display IA healing fruit, and who are involved in IA ministry helps keep the Immanuel Approach more central in day-to-day life, and this protects against the slow, subtle, sneaky drift toward all of the distractions that compete and away from an Immanuel lifestyle.
- Finally, if your Immanuel lifestyle has been derailed by an especially difficult life challenge, or if you realize that you have been drifting away due to distractions, being surrounded by IA community can make it much easier to re-engaging.

IV. Examples of IA Community: In case you are wondering, "So what does IA community actually look like?" here are a few specific, concrete examples:

Practice partners: At the "Lite" end of the IA community spectrum, you can find one (or several) practice partners - people you get together with every one-to-several weeks and trade off facilitating for each other. You can also compare notes regarding principles and techniques as you learn together and support each other.

Discussion/practice groups: One of the best options in the middle of the spectrum is discussion/practice groups. For example, I know of several groups that get together once each month for a long evening of Immanuel Approach study and practice. They share a pot-luck meal, discuss one of the chapters from this book, watch a demonstration by the group leader (an alternative is to watch a clip from one of the live-session DVDs), and then break up into smaller clusters to practice. The participants I have spoken with report that this has been very rewarding and effective for learning, and also encouraging, life-giving, energizing, and inspiring with respect to building and living an Immanuel lifestyle.

Deluxe IA community: At the ideal, deluxe end of the spectrum, you start with both options already mentioned and then add/recruit a network of family, friends, and colleagues who are increasingly living IA lifestyles.

Anyone who knows about the Immanuel Approach: Anyone in your life who knows about the Immanuel Approach will contribute to your IA community in one way or another.

V. Finding/Building Your IA Community: In case you are wondering, "So how do I find/build my IA community?" here are a few suggestions:

- Use materials from the Getting Started page to introduce your family, friends, and colleagues to the Immanuel Approach. (This is the ideal plan from my perspective, since it also helps to actively spread the Immanuel Approach.) Again, anyone in your life who knows about the Immanuel Approach will contribute to your IA community in one way or another.
- Use the network directory to find others looking for a study/practice group.
- You can sometimes meet people who are a good fit for your personal IA community in training/practice groups associated with other ministries that teach the Immanuel Approach, such as Immanuel Practicum with Patti Velotta, Face to Face with Cathy Little and Melinda Wilson, or Alive and Well with Margaret Webb.
- Many people have built very life-giving IA communities by starting an IA study/practice group at their church.

VI. IA Community People are My Tribe: In addition to the benefits described above, I just love being with others who know about the Immanuel Approach and who are living Immanuel lifestyles. IA community people are my tribe. It's especially fun and encouraging to be with them. I experience especially deep, meaningful, satisfying connection when I am with them. And I experience especially generous, robust relational-connection joy when I am with them.