

Title: IA for Children – Healing for Phobia

February 4, 2012

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to share another encouraging story (from a close friend of ours):

When Emme was nine years old, several girls in the suburb where her family lived reported men in a car pulling up beside them and offering to give them a ride. Furthermore, in one of these situations one of the men had actually gotten out of the car and chased the girl. Even though she wasn't personally harmed or threatened, and even though these worrisome events never developed into anything more dangerous, something about these frightening incidents got stuck in Emme's mind in a way that was traumatic. She became persistently fearful about being "stolen" by strange men, and began having recurrent nightmares in which she was kidnaped, kept in some kind of cage or jail, "and I never saw my family again." She became fearful of walking in the neighborhood (even with a group of friends), to the point that she insisted on being driven to and from school and to and from her friend's houses. She even felt unsafe in her own home if her parents stepped out of the house for as little as three to five minutes. On top of everything else, her fears about being kidnaped caused her to begin fearing that she might not truly be a believer: "If I'm not trusting God and experiencing peace, maybe I'm not really a Christian."

Cognitively, Emme realized that her persistent fears and frightening dreams were abnormal (none of her friends, exposed to the same news about the same incidents, had these fears and dreams), and she hated the way her fearful thoughts and dreams made her feel; but she couldn't get rid of them. She would experience partial, temporary relief when her parents and others would remind her of the promises in scripture about the Lord being with her, reassure her regarding their presence to protect her, and reassure her about the reality of her safe neighborhood, but she would quickly slip back into fearfulness, with the frightening thoughts about being kidnaped feeling more true than the Bible verses or her parent's reassurances. And this unhappy state of affairs persisted for several years.

Fortunately, Emme's grandfather (a close friend of ours, who Emme calls "Grand") is an experienced Immanuel approach facilitator, and she heard her parents talking about how he would pray with people whenever he was in town. After hearing many stories about how these people experienced healing and freedom as a result of praying with her grandfather, she asked her Mom and Dad if she could be one of the people Grand prayed with the next time he came to visit. So when her grandparents came to visit just before Thanksgiving 2011, Emme was first in line. In the middle of the Immanuel prayer time, Emme began to think about being kidnaped and to feel the familiar fear associated with these thoughts. But then something different happened. As she describes it,

"Always before, I would get so overwhelmed by the fear that I wouldn't think about

anything else. But during the prayer time, for the first time, other thoughts came into my mind while I was thinking about being stolen and feeling the fear....I wasn't trying at all to find the answer myself – Grand had told me to just listen for what God's going to say to me – and these thoughts just came into my mind all by themselves....”

When I asked Emme to describe the subjective quality of these thoughts, she said that they “felt different from my usual thoughts – somehow they just felt different,” and then added, “It's hard to get words, but somehow I knew the thoughts were from God, and they felt true.”

According to Emme, the Lord started out with the basics, resolving her fears about whether or not she was truly a believer. “God said, ‘You are Mine,’ meaning, ‘You are a Christian.’” And then the Lord reassured her with simple yet powerful truths, such as “Do not be afraid, for I am your god,” and, “I will always be with you. Even if your Mom and Dad aren't with you, and you feel alone, you're not really alone. I will always be with you.” Finally, God explained to her that “...when we go through hard times, and bad things happen, God knows we're gonna get through it with His help. He's not going to let anything happen to me that I can't handle.” “And then He said, ‘Do not fear. I will help you get through it – whatever happens.’”

One of the most important points is that these thoughts from the Lord *felt true*. Furthermore, follow-up reveals that they have *continued* to feel true, and that they had power to bring deep and lasting change. When her Mom, Dad, and others reminded her of Bible verses and reassured her regarding the safety of her neighborhood, she would begin to struggle with doubts regarding the verses and reassurances within minutes to hours, and the frightening thoughts about being kidnaped, the associated fearful emotions, and the haunting nightmares would all return in full measure within days. In contrast, it has now been more than two months since her Immanuel prayer time with her grandfather, and she has remained completely free from doubts, frightening thoughts, fearful emotions, and scary dreams. Now the truth consistently *feels* true. When I was talking to Emme on the phone a couple weeks ago, she spontaneously commented, “It's silly to be so scared. I live in a safe neighborhood, I'm with my friends, my parents are close by, the Lord is always with me – why should I be afraid of being kidnaped?” These realities now feel so true, and her old fears now feel so unreasonable, that she almost seems to forget that for several years her frightening thoughts about being kidnaped felt more true than verses from the Bible or reassurances from her parents.

At the end of our conversation, she popped out with, “I'm for sure more joyful, more happy, now that I'm not scared all the time.”

We hope this story of the Lord's living, healing presence blesses you.

In Christ,

Dr. Lehman/Karl