

Bruce, Intense Pain, Tough Questions, and Immanuel

June 5, 2013

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to share another fun Immanuel story. As many of you may notice, it is adapted from one of our live session training DVDs. It is also the draft for one of the story chapters of the Immanuel book we're working on.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

Bruce, Intense Pain, Tough Questions, and Immanuel

Bruce's five year old daughter was utterly exhausted, and whimpered weakly between bouts of retching. She had been vomiting for two days, and now it was 2:30 a.m. and she had started again. He held her, rocked her, tried to offer reassurances, and brushed the limp strands of hair off of her sweaty forehead, but she was still miserable and there wasn't much else he could do for her. It was painful to feel so helpless and powerless as he watched his child suffer. Eventually, Bruce cried out to the Lord with angry thoughts along the lines of, "Enough! Enough already! Why don't You just heal her, God?"

I was facilitating a demonstration session for one of our mentoring groups, and this is the memory that Jesus took Bruce back to after he had established an interactive connection with the Lord and then asked for guidance and direction. As he remembered watching his daughter suffer, and reconnected with the intense, painful feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, he also reconnected with his anger, and his specific frustration towards God, "Enough already! Why don't You just heal her?" At this point I invited Bruce to try the Immanuel intervention invitation, with the specific proposal that he would let Jesus be with him in this place, and then engage with Jesus directly regarding his pain, anger, and questions. Bruce made a simple invitation, "Lord, help me to perceive Your presence there," and then asked, "Just help me Lord, I don't understand why she has to go through that."

After a long pause, Bruce started sobbing, and was eventually able to choke out the following (through tears and sobs),

"I see Jesus...He's holding her...He's holding my daughter...He's holding her – He's kind of just rocking her – and He's telling me that He loves her. He loves her as much as I love her. He loves her more than I love her. He's gonna take care of her. He's just holding her. She's just laying there. But she's safe in His arms."

After another long pause, Bruce reported, “He’s just asking me to trust Him. Just to trust Him. Trust that He loves her. That I just need to rest in that.” And after a few more moments, he finished with, “He’s gonna take care of her.”

At this point I coached Bruce to scan through the memory, especially looking for any part of it that still felt bad in any way. But after taking a few minutes to carefully go through the memory, he responded with, “No, I just kinda picture myself going back to bed, and sleeping – just knowing that He’s in there watching her....Just seeing her with Him makes me feel like I can go back to sleep – that it’s gonna be okay.” I also coached Bruce to check and see whether Jesus’ words *felt* true, and he reassured me that they did. Finally, I coached him to go back through the memory (deliberately emphasizing the places where he had felt the most painfully powerless and the most frustrated with the Lord for not intervening more directly), and I asked him whether the Lord’s response to his pain, anger, and questions felt truly and *fully* satisfying. After another pause, Bruce responded quietly with, “Yeah, it does. It does. Yeah.”

During the two years following the session, Bruce experienced continued peace regarding the memory of his daughter’s suffering, and when he came in for a follow up interview at the end of these two years, I asked him to deliberately go back to the memory of his daughter’s illness to check again regarding any lingering pain, anger, or unresolved questions. After taking a couple of minutes to reconnect with the memory, Bruce reported that he still perceived Jesus with him in the memory, that the words from Jesus still felt true, that Jesus’ response still felt satisfying, and that he could not find any fear, anger, powerlessness, helpless, or negative thoughts in any part of the memory.

This session provides an example of a powerful, beautiful phenomena I have observed repeatedly with the Immanuel approach. My observation is that as suffering becomes increasingly intense and prolonged, we struggle to hold onto the truth that God both loves us and is with us. “How can this be true? How can God be with me and love me, and still allow this suffering to continue even as I ask and ask and ask for healing/deliverance/relief?” As we all know, this is one of the toughest questions in this history of Christianity. My experience with this question is that the books and sermons, with explanations regarding free will, building our faith, sharing in the suffering of Christ, etc, are satisfying when we are talking about *someone else’s suffering*, or when we are talking about our own suffering that is *long past and fully resolved*. But when we are in the middle of our own suffering, or thinking about past suffering that is not yet resolved, we have a hard time holding onto the truth about God’s presence and goodness. And the difficulty of the struggle is directly proportional to the intensity and duration of the suffering.

However, I have experienced and observed one exception. When we let Jesus be *with* us in the place of suffering, and engage with Him directly regarding our suffering (and any tough questions associated with it), we consistently end up actually feeling satisfied with His answer. Sometimes the person has needed to yell at the Lord for 30 minutes, expressing intense rage and confusion before being able to receive His answer. And many times the Lord’s answer has been something along the lines of, “Your brain is not able to understand why the Father and I

allow this, but I am with you, and because of who I am, that is enough.” But when the Immanuel approach recipients have been able to let Jesus be *with* them, and have truly been able to engage with Him directly regarding their struggle, they have always been satisfied with His response.

This has been the only intervention that has ever felt truly satisfying to me when I have been suffering intensely and struggling to hold onto the truth about God’s presence and love, and this has been the only intervention that I have ever observed to be truly satisfying to others in response to this tough question. Furthermore, this intervention seems to be very consistently effective. Every person who has been able to perceive the Lord’s presence and who has been willing to cooperate with this intervention has been satisfied with the Lord’s response and come to a place of peace. As described above, Bruce’s session provides a good example.

Note: the session and follow-up interview described here were recorded, and are available under the Live Ministry Session (LMS) title, *Bruce: Loss of Parents, Sibling Conflict, Daughter’s Illness*.