

Title: IA Story: Tom, Mom, and Immanuel

May 27, 2014

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to let you know that I've finished another draft chapter (Chapter 19: Tom, Mom, and Immanuel) for the new Immanuel approach book. I have included a copy of the text below. The pdf with better formatting is also now posted with the rest of the book on the "Getting Started" page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

Blessings,

Karl

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Text for Chapter 19: Tom, Mom, and Immanuel:

Charlotte and I have close friends, Tom and Adey Wassink, who are husband and wife co-pastors of a church in Iowa City. Tom is also a psychiatrist and a professor at the University of Iowa, so I particularly appreciate hearing about his experiences with the Immanuel approach. (I don't have very many psychiatrist colleagues who are both facilitating Immanuel approach sessions for others and also receiving their own Immanuel approach healing.) Charlotte and I were blessed to enjoy several short fellowship and prayer getaways with Tom and Adey during the summer and fall of 2013, and during one of these get-togethers Tom told us about the experience described below, from an Immanuel session he had in May of 2013. He has also graciously given me permission to share this Immanuel story with the rest of you.

I was eight years old and in the backyard with my Mother and six year old brother. My mother was upset and crying and my brother and I were miserably looking down at the ground. "Why can't the two of you get along! Honestly, I just don't know what to do. I'm at my wits' end!" I had horrible sibling rivalry with Mark. I was mean to him, kept him out of neighborhood friendships, and cheated to win at games. I still don't know why—insecurity? jealousy? and I certainly had no idea back then.

My family is Dutch, so Mom crying was a big deal. We never showed emotion except for joy when Michigan beat Ohio State, but my mother crying now had nothing to do with football. She didn't know what to do with our rivalry either -- how to help us talk about it, how to help us explore why it was there, or how to help get us through, and it felt to me that in that moment she was putting her frustration onto us, two clueless young brothers who already felt confused, angry, and guilty.

I had started the Immanuel prayer time with a positive memory of sailing with friends off the coast of Maine on a sunny afternoon, and I connected with Jesus when I invited him into the experience and then immediately saw him sitting right beside me on the bow, his feet dragging in the chill water just like mine. I also asked Jesus to help me be aware of his presence in the room where we were praying, and then I sensed him sitting in a chair, leaning forward and looking at me intently. I asked, “What do you want to show me Jesus?” and a few moments later I was in the memory of being in the backyard with my mother and brother.

In my remembering, I entered the shame of that moment. I could see the three of us sitting in the grass, our wooden deck off to the side. I felt angry. This isn't fair! She was the Mother, the one in charge, who was supposed to know how to deal with these things. And her helplessness, sadness, and frustration were supposed to be hers—but now, not only was I beyond hope regarding my brother, but I also was the cause of my mother's tears! I already felt bad about how I was treating Mark, and now I felt guilty for making Mom cry too.

“Where's Jesus?” the person praying with me asked.

“Jesus?” I thought, “Who cares! What can he do? This thing can't be undone. I have lived distant from my brother (and guilty towards my mother) for 40+ years. I don't want Jesus to somehow make me feel all happy about it.”

But then I saw him. He was sitting on the deck, sort of behind me, facing sideways. He obviously was there for me, but I think he knew I wouldn't talk to him yet. In my mental imagery, my child self in the memory stood up and moved a foot or two towards him, but I was still facing my mom and brother. They had stopped moving, like in the movie scenes where all action freezes except for the main character.

And then the weirdest thing happened. I (adult Tom) was still feeling very angry at Jesus. So I watched in shock (and amazement) as eight-year old Tom from inside the memory sighed, shrugged his shoulders, walked up onto the deck and plopped down next to Jesus. I had been watching the whole scene from an outside observer perspective (from above, and a little to the left), but I also at this point sort of went inside my little self. And I said—and these were the only words I spoke in the whole process of going through the memory—“This really sucks.” And Big Jesus sitting beside me said, “Yeah, this really sucks.”

Well, that was enough for little Tommy. He/I took a deep breath, got up, and began to walk back to Mark and Mom. I remember my adult self thinking, “Wait—that was too fast! You can't just fix a life time of sibling rivalry and bad parenting with ‘That sucks!’ Go back—sit down!” But try as I might, I could not deter little Tommy. He all of a sudden felt good! He trooped on down to Mom and Mark and just wanted to play. All of a sudden, this whole intense sibling rivalry meltdown, with all its pain and shame and heaviness, felt like a silly

distraction getting in the way of having fun on a sunny afternoon.

I remember trying to probe the child me that was still inside the memory. I was looking for some kind of sign that I was making the whole thing up because it just seemed too easy. But I was not in denial—I knew what had happened—I knew it was real—and I was now serene. I was as connected as I'd ever been with that experience--with that whole thread from my childhood memories. Jesus was *present, with me*, and that was enough.

Follow-up: The healing benefits of this interaction with the living presence of Jesus appear to be long-lasting. It's now May of 2014, a year after the Immanuel prayer time just described, and in these past twelve months Tom has noticed things shifting in a good way with respect to his mother. For example, he visited his parents recently and felt himself to be "more free and open in conversation with her, less secretive." He also "felt the possibility of engaging more deeply with her about real topics of conversation—religion, church, and growing up in a socially rigid environment." Furthermore, whenever he goes back to the memory of being in the back yard with his mother and brother, he continues to perceive Jesus' presence with him in the memory and that this once painful experience has been permanently resolved. Instead of feeling the shame, despair, and anger that this memory used to carry, now when he visits it he feels only the freedom he was experiencing as he came out of the prayer time.