



Charlie: “See, this works!”
Case Study from Live Ministry Series (LMS) Commentary

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Session summary: This 2012 session begins with Charlie describing how he has been waking from dreams in the act of speaking the words, “Will you please *listen* to me!” with intense, demanding frustration. My thought at this point is that Charlie should establish an interactive connection with Jesus, and then once this is in place he could submit his tentative initial target to the Lord and ask for both guidance and help. So I coach him to do this, beginning with the usual Immanuel approach initial steps of asking God to bring forward a memory for a previous time of positive connection, and then deliberately stirring up appreciation in this context. What happens next is both interesting and a bit atypical, but it works. After asking the Lord to bring forward a positive memory, Charlie describes how he has become increasingly aware of God’s abiding, constant availability as an interactive presence: “I’m becoming more aware...if I have a question, or difficulty...if I ask [the Lord for help],...I get an answer....There’s somebody there, responding....[I have] the sense of not being alone....[I have the sense that] God is there, available.” And as he talks about this, he realizes that it also feels true in the present. That is, thinking about God’s abiding availability as an interactive presence, remembering recent interactive connections, and feeling grateful for all of this transitions smoothly and spontaneously into an interactive connection in the present.

Once an interactive connection has been established, Charlie asks the Lord for guidance and help regarding the session in general, and specifically regarding the tentative focus for the session. Immediately after this request, painful memories from Charlie’s early childhood started coming forward into his awareness, and these memories all carry the same emotional package of Charlie feeling bewildered, alone, *not* seen, *not* heard, *not* understood, and *not* helped. In the context of each of these memories, Charlie invites God to be with him, asks for help in perceiving the Lord’s interactive presence, and asks for guidance and help with respect to processing the unresolved trauma. In some of these situations, Charlie experiences a phenomena that is actually fairly common (see additional discussion below): when we ask for interactive connection and/or guidance and/or help, the Lord responds by bringing more memories forward. However, it always feels like the new memories are part of moving the session forward, and eventually Charlie experiences the Lord’s interactive presence, and receives help with healing, in the context of each of the painful childhood experiences he has remembered. After engaging with the Lord’s living, healing presence in each of the memories, Charlie specifically reports that He no longer feels like he is alone (since he can perceive God’s presence with him), and that it feels true that God sees him, is listening to him, understands him, and is helping him. Jesus also provides a bit of humor for us in the context of the first painful memory that comes forward. Shortly after perceiving the Jesus’ presence with him in this memory, Charlie bursts out laughing, and reports that Jesus just said, “See, this works!”

At the beginning of the session (14:21), Charlie states, “I need somebody to show me – to walk around with me in this whole area here, where I’m living, and tell me what’s going on...What’s going on and what’s coming up. What can I expect. Because I never know what’s gonna happen.

And I don't know what to do with it when it happens." And then at the end of the session, Charlie spontaneously comments, "What I am experiencing is...just what I asked for [at the beginning of the session....The Lord is] going through these things, like a trip..." He reports feeling as if Jesus is giving him a "guided tour" through the time in his life during which he had previously felt so alone and bewildered.

7-month follow-up – lasting positive changes: As Charlie demonstrates and describes at length in the follow-up interview, he can still perceive God's presence in the memories we worked with during the session, he has observed positive changes that seem to be results of the Lord's work in this session, and these positive changes have remained. The intensity of his energy when his "Listen to me" issue gets triggered has decreased, he is more able to recognize that he is triggered and to own this as part of the problem, the positive thoughts and emotions from the end of the session still feel true in the specific memories in which we worked, and it still feels true that the Lord gave him a "guided tour" through all of the memories that came forward. Now, when he thinks about this whole period of his life, it feels true that the Lord is with him and is helping him understand everything around him, as opposed to feeling that he is alone and feeling bewildered.

Going back to specific memories as part of the follow-up interview: Especially for thematic issues that usually don't resolve with one session, going back to the same specific memories is a good way to do follow-up. Even if the whole issue isn't yet fully resolved, if the healing was genuine you can go back to the same specific memories and verify that there are lasting changes. The follow-up interview for this session with Charlie provides good examples of this principle. He clearly describes that the larger thematic issue is not yet fully resolved; however, when we go back to the specific memories from the session, Charlie reports that negative thoughts and emotions that appeared to have been resolved in the session continue to be absent, and that the new, positive thoughts and emotions that seemed to have come as a result of interactions with Jesus continue to be present.

More than one issue in a single memory – check the specific issue: Another important point when following up regarding lasting changes with respect to thematic issues, and when following up regarding specific memories as part of this, is that there can be more than one issue imbedded in a single memory. And, therefore, when following up regarding a specific memory it is also important to follow-up regarding the specific issue that was addressed in the session. For example, when we worked with the memory about the Good Humor ice cream truck, Charlie clearly describes perceiving God's presence with him, and reports that "I'm all alone," "there's nobody here for me," and "I'm bewildered" were replaced with "God is here with me, and He hears me, He understands me, He is helping me, and I don't feel bewildered any more." And when we go back to this same, specific memory in the follow up interview, and check regarding these same, specific thoughts and emotions, the positive changes are found to have remained.

However, when Charlie and I were watching the recording of the session, we identified another issue that was imbedded in this same Good Humor ice cream truck memory. He realized that this memory was one of the roots of his life long experience of constantly feeling like "I get there too late, and I'm always trying to catch up." And, in contrast to the specific issues in this memory that we *had* addressed in the session, when he first connected to this new issue in the ice cream truck memory it felt fully *unresolved*. Strikingly, Charlie actually experienced healing as we were viewing the session and talking about it, because he could still perceive God's presence with him in this memory, and just the perception that God was with him

partially resolved the new issue in minutes. But when it first came forward during the follow up process, it was a new issue – not previously identified or worked with – and it had a full portion of negative thoughts and emotions associated with it before the connection with the Lord brought healing.

Charlie continuing the healing work after the session: At the end of the time we had available for this particular session, it seemed clear that there was still more work to do, and that God would be happy to keep working with Charlie to bring even more healing in the memories that were coming forward and even more resolution for the issues we had been working with. I made a comment along the lines of "It looks like something good is happening/has gotten started. We're out of time here, but keep going on your own time." Follow-up comments regarding this point didn't get included in the recorded follow-up interview, but when I asked Charlie about this while he and I were reviewing the session immediately before the filmed interview, Charlie mentioned that he had continued the healing work "informally." That is, he hadn't worked on these issues in another session with a facilitator, but he watched for any times that these issues got stirred up, invited the Lord to be with him in the place of being stirred up, and then talked to the Lord about the thoughts and emotions that came forward. Charlie's perception was that this did result in additional healing. Furthermore, Charlie experienced additional healing as we watched the session together (watching the recording reactivated the issues and memories, he again perceived the Lord's presence with him in the memories that got activated, and he experienced more healing as he engaged directly with the Lord regarding the issues that came forward).

Discussion/commentary:

The Immanuel approach can be simple, even when dealing with complex content: You will notice that at different points in the session, we make brief references to extensive childhood trauma,¹ and to complex personal issues associated with this trauma; however, in this session (with an adequate interactive connection with Jesus as the foundation), Charlie and I don't need to analyze or organize any of this complicated content. I just keep coaching Charlie to focus on Jesus, engage directly with Jesus, and ask Jesus for help; Charlie simply follows my coaching, and then describes whatever comes into his awareness; and the session keeps moving forward. The point here is that, because of the Lord's guidance and help, the Immanuel approach can be simple, and therefore something that a lay person can facilitate even when the recipient's history and issues are complicated.

Sometimes the Lord responds to requests for other things by bringing another memory forward: Charlie's session provides an excellent example of a common and important phenomenon: sometimes when we ask for tangible presence/interactive connection, and/or guidance, and/or some other kind of help, instead of directly giving us what we asked for, the Lord brings another memory forward. For example, at 18:20 in the session, we ask Jesus to help Charlie perceive His presence in the context of several memories that have already come forward, and also ask for guidance and help in processing these memories. However, instead of answering our requests directly, in the context of the memories that have already come forward, the Lord brings new memories forward (19:17). This phenomenon actually occurs a number of

¹Among other things, Charlie's mother died when he was two years old, his father abandoned him and his step mother when Charlie was four years old, and Charlie was shifted from one relative to the next for the remainder of his childhood.

times in this session (see also 39:20 and following, 42:45 and following, 44:40 and following, and 48:07 and following).

In most of the sessions in which additional memories come forward instead of more direct answers to our requests, the different pieces coming forward eventually all fit together and we can see clearly that the Lord has been leading the process. (This was certainly the case in Charlie's session.) So as long as the new memories seem to be part of the session moving forward, I just coach the person to continue asking for help in perceiving the Lord's presence, asking for help in establishing an interactive connection, asking for guidance regarding how to cooperate with the Lord's work, and asking for any other kind of help that it seems that we need (and then I coach them to describe whatever comes into their awareness²).

Variability in people's perception of the Lord's presence: I would like to make some comments about visual imagery, and the fact that people's perception of the Lord's presence is very variable. Charlie provides a good example, especially with respect to visual imagery. In his experience with the Immanuel approach, his perception of the Lord's presence is usually very subtle, and visual imagery has been especially rare. Perceiving an image of Jesus, standing on the sidewalk waiting for him as he rode out of the park on his tricycle, is one of a very few instances in which Charlie has perceived a visual image of Jesus as part of the Immanuel approach. And confusion about what it means to perceive the Lord's *tangible* presence has hindered Charlie's Immanuel work, because he would get tangled in internal noise about whether he was experiencing what I was meaning when I would ask "Are you perceiving the Lord's tangible presence?" We had many episodes of confusion in our Immanuel prayer sessions because of misunderstanding each other on this point.

SO, to be clear: many people experience more dramatic tangible perception of the Lord's presence. For example, visual imagery of Jesus, an audible voice, or the sensation of physical touch (e.g., feeling Jesus' arms around them). However, some have Charlie's experience of a *subtle* interactive connection – it feels true that God, as a *personal* presence, is *with* them, but this is very subtle, with no visual imagery or other sensory perception. It feels true that He hears them, sees them, understands them, and responds to them – all the components of an interactive connection – but they usually do not experience a more vivid tangible presence, such as visual imagery, voice, or physical touch. And, in fact, my perception of the Lord's presence is often very subtle (much like Charlie's). Occasionally I have experienced more dramatic visual imagery, and clear, dramatic thoughts that feel almost like a voice, but usually my experience is very subtle. I will have a *very* vague mental image of Jesus' face, and then just the sense that He is with me, that He hears me, that He understands me, and that He will respond to me. And His responses are often in the form of very subtle thoughts that I have had to learn to recognize as coming from the Lord.

Another important point is that people's ability to perceive the Lord's presence often progresses as they deliberately troubleshoot to remove blockages, and as they continue their healing work (which often removes blockages indirectly). As they continue to remove blockages, they become able to perceive the Lord's presence more easily and more quickly, they perceive the Lord's presence in more dramatic ways more frequently, and, overall, their

²See "Describe everything that comes into your awareness," in "Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and the God Who Is With Us, Part V" for a careful discussion of this important component in the Immanuel approach process.

perceptions of the Lord’s presence become increasingly vivid/strong. This has been true for myself, and it has been true for almost everybody I have worked with. So it will be interesting to see how things unfold for Charlie as he continues his Immanuel healing journey.

“What’s in the way?” and the blockage that still needs to be addressed: At one point in the session, when Charlie did not quickly perceive the Lord’s presence in a particular set of memories, we asked “What’s in the way?” We didn’t receive a clear answer to this question immediately, but our perception is that the Lord answered this question later in the session (time on tape: 27:25). Charlie described a bad attitude/judgement/resistance towards the Lord, especially regarding the whole idea of Jesus being gentle, attuning, comforting him, or taking personal care of him (anything that looks or feels like Jesus being a compassionate therapist and/or caring for Charlie’s emotional needs). And our sense was that this package hinders Charlie from fully cooperating with the Immanuel approach – that it hinders him in perceiving the Lord’s close, tangible presence and that it gets in the way of Charlie engaging with the Lord in the kind of gentle, attuning healing work that the Lord often seems to do as part of the Immanuel approach. However, since the session kept moving forward (and it seemed that the Lord had already been doing good healing work), we didn’t stop to talk about this blockage at more length or work with it more directly.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that this blockage does hinder Charlie from being able to perceive the Lord’s presence and receive the Lord’s help more fully, so it will be important to work deliberately in future sessions to resolve this blockage.