

**Notes to go with intro teaching from second week (January 12, 2009)
of “Healing in Community”
Reba Place Fellowship Monday evening seminar**

Teachers/Leaders for this 10-week seminar (Jan 5 through March 9, 2009):

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If anyone missed the second week, they should review these notes and/or listen to the recording of the intro teaching block.

I. Memory of previous positive connection = especially good context: Memories for previous experiences of positive connection with the Lord provide an especially good context in which to begin Immanuel approach emotional healing sessions.

An especially good context for re-connecting: When someone has an especially positive experience with the Lord, the conditions are obviously providing a good context for perceiving His presence and experiencing a positive connection with Him. With respect to the internal states of our brains, minds, and spirits, thinking about the memory of an earlier experience will recreate, to some extent, the conditions present in the original experience. Therefore, thinking about the memory of a previous positive connection with the Lord will, to some extent, recreate the same brain-mind-spirit conditions that were conducive to the original positive connection.

An especially good context for appreciation: The memory for a previous positive experience with the Lord provides an especially good context for doing the initial appreciation exercise. The reason for this is that the *size* of the positive effect will usually be larger if the person does the appreciation exercise in the context of actual memories and relationships, as opposed to doing the appreciation exercise with abstract, theoretical information.

My own experience with appreciating God provides a good example. I can do the appreciation exercise with abstract, theoretical information, such as the attributes of God found in scripture, and it looks like this:

“Lord, I appreciate that You are perfect, I appreciate that You are omnipresent, I appreciate that You are powerful, I appreciate that You are merciful, I appreciate that You are righteous...etc.”

In contrast, doing the appreciation exercise in the context of a specific memory of a positive connection with Jesus looks like this: My friend, Thomas, died several years ago, after fighting through 35 years of severe chronic mental illness. He never did anything important in the eyes of this world, but I think he was a hero. In my assessment, few people have done so well carrying such a heavy load. In spite of 35 years of suffering with severe mental illness that medication was only able to partially control, he remained faithful to the Lord. Most people with chronic mental illness use alcohol or street drugs to numb the pain, but Thomas never did this. In fact, not only did he not spend his money on pain numbing substances, but he intentionally lived extremely simply, so that he could have money left over from his welfare income to give to the church. This is just one of the ways in which he was quietly heroic. Several months before he died, I asked Him: “Thomas, how do you cope with all the suffering in your life?” And his reply was “I focus on Jesus – every day, all day long. If it wasn’t for Jesus, I couldn’t do it.”

Several days after Thomas died, I was out on my exercise walk. I had learned that I could use the Immanuel invitation and request prayer to connect with Jesus during my exercise time, and so I invited the Lord to be with me and asked Him to help me perceive His presence. As soon as I did this, I had a mental image of Jesus walking beside me, enjoying the weather, with the kind of smile you see on the face of someone who’s walking with a good friend on a beautiful day. As we were walking along, the thought came into my mind: “Lord, I’m so glad that Thomas is with You now.” This is hard to describe, but I was facing forward as I was walking, and my mental image of the Lord was in my peripheral vision, just as would be the case in the “real world.” Immediately – the moment I had this thought about Thomas – I “saw” the Lord’s face turn towards me, this big grin broke out on His face, and I sensed the clear response: “So am I!” And then: “He has fought the good fight, and has finished the race. He is here with Me now – his suffering has ended, and he is being rewarded for his heroic faithfulness.”

At this point in my appreciation exercise example, I would turn to the Lord and explicitly express appreciation directly to Him:

“Lord, somehow many subtle things about the way You walk beside me – Your smile, Your attitude, the way You stroll, Your overall attitude – tell me that you are *enjoying* yourself – that You *like* being with me – that You think of me as a *friend*. This means so much to me.”

“Lord, I feel like I can’t even get words to fully express the vibrancy and vitality of Your presence and smile. I appreciate how I can know I’m perceiving Your living presence by the way Your responses surprise me and feel so *alive* – so different from the internal perceptions that I initiate in my own mind.”

“Lord, You know that I sometimes struggle with the fear that there will never be true justice – that people like Thomas will never be adequately compensated. I feel such deep reassurance from Your striking, immediate, vivid, energized, detailed, emphatic response to my thought regarding Thomas. I appreciate that You recognize how hard his life has been, that You’re aware of how faithfully he followed You through the difficulties he lived with every day, and that You honor his quiet heroism. I appreciate that the magnitude of his struggle, of his obedience, and of his courage have not been lost on You; and that, even as we speak, he is in Your presence, receiving His reward.”¹

As you can see, doing the appreciation exercise in the context of this specific memory has a much larger effect on my emotions and oxytocin than appreciating the abstract, theoretical attributes of God (when I present this in a live setting, you can easily see and feel that I am much more emotionally connected and that my gratitude is much more intense).

The complete document has a longer discussion regarding “why,” but for the purposes of this presentation, here’s the really short summary:

¹Again, the contrast between these two ways of doing the appreciation exercise is much more noticeable when I present this example live, where my facial expressions, voice tones, and other forms of non-verbal communication help to convey the dramatic difference in emotional intensity.

Appreciation in the context of specific memories of positive experiences pulls in the larger effect size (with respect to emotional phenomena) of *experiential* knowing in the right hemisphere, as opposed to *cognitive, logical, language-based* knowing in the left hemisphere.

More John Gottman, observable behavior, and “bottom line” sociological outcome: In Gottman’s research, thinking and talking about past positive experiences of being together with your spouse was another strong predictor of positive sociological outcome, and also a deliberate intervention that could be used to improve marriages in distress. Just as with appreciation and marriage, these principles that apply to your relationship with your spouse also apply to your relationship with the Lord: thinking and talking about past positive experiences of being together with the Lord will benefit your relationship with the Lord.

So, putting all this together and getting back to “Memory of previous positive connection = especially good context”:

The practical application with respect to Immanuel emotional healing exercises is that we start each session with returning to a memory of a previous positive experience with the Lord; and then, *in the context of this memory*, we engage in our appreciation exercises and ask the Lord to refresh our perception of His presence and connection with Him *as realities in the present*. Our observation is that doing the *deliberate appreciation exercises* in the *context* of a memory of a previous good experience with the Lord provides an especially effective doorway/bridge for re-establishing a positive connection.

II. The importance presenting a balanced mixture of explanation and “hands on” experience: In a fascinating series of studies, Daniel Schwartz and John Bransford compared three groups of students. The first group received *cognitive explanation*, the second group received “hands on” lab *experience*, and the third group received a synchronized, coherent combination of the lecture explanation and lab experience. When the students were tested for usable understanding of the concepts being taught, the combined presentation was found to be *as much as three times (yes, that’s 300%) more effective than either component alone.*² In combined with my own observations and experience, this research has convinced me that the most powerful, stable, *usable* understanding is built by starting with *both* “hands on” experience (right-hemisphere experiential knowing) *and* left-hemisphere cognitive logical explanations, and then combining them in a synchronized, coherent final product. This is why we will be consistently mixing left hemisphere explanations with “hands on” exercises.

²Schwartz, Daniel L.; Bransford, John D., “A Time for Telling”, *Cognition and Instruction*, Vol. No. 4, 1998, pages 475 - 572.