

Connected...Now What?

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Question: *I've been doing Immanuel Prayer with a few new people. Both have been pretty easy to connect with the Lord, positive memory etc. And then it just seems like they sit there. So I say just enjoy that, soak that in, what's it like, describe everything, etc. We are usually about 30 minutes into the session when I feel like I've asked every question I can think of to deepen that particular experience. And it seems like the Lord is just enjoying his time with them...*

At some point though, if several minutes have passed, can we ask the lord if there is anything else he'd like to work on with them? I did have them ask if there is anything else the Lord might want them to know there. Or if there is anything they wanted to ask the Lord there- But I guess my question is, what do you do when it seems like it isn't going anywhere? Like they are just sitting there with the Lord in the same spot?

Response: This is a fantastic question! When we started teaching Immanuel, almost 100% of our students had experience with Theophostic prayer or counseling of some kind, so they all were aware of their own healing issues and we never had to address this question because it just came up naturally. The farther along we progress in reaching a wider range of people, however, the more often this question arises. And because we started taping for our video curriculum a couple years ago, I'm not sure we address it adequately in our current training curriculum.

So here are my thoughts:

First of all, YES. It is OK to ask the Lord if there is anything else he'd like to work on with them! That's exactly the right thing to do. In fact, it is even permissible, and sometimes quite helpful, to ask the Lord about a specific issue the recipient wants to work on. If the recipient chooses their own issue to ask about, do remind them to ask with open hands, recognizing that the Lord may have other plans. In fact, the Lord may not address that issue directly, address it in the way expected, or even address it at all. Ultimately, we trust that God knows what the recipient needs more than the recipient or facilitator does. Thus I personally prefer your idea of asking the Lord what he wants to work on.

Interestingly, I just had a chance to talk with Barbara Moon yesterday. (She is the author of *Handbook to Joy-Filled Parenting*, *Re-Framing Your Hurts*, and other books that grew out of her being personally mentored by Jim Wilder.) I hadn't read your email with this question yet, but she happened to give me new words for directing the session at just the moment you're describing. Here's what she suggested: **"Lord, is there any dark place where you'd like to shine your light?"** I like this wording because it opens the door for God to address pain, while maintaining the focus on the light and connection rather than the darkness and pain.

I would not recommend asking this question unless you have first (preferably prior to the beginning of the session) explained it to the recipient and received their permission to ask it. The explanation could easily become part of the introduction to Immanuel Prayer when you are walking a new recipient through the connection process and what to expect. Simply explain something like this:

Sometimes there are blockages that keep us from experiencing God's love, care, and guidance as clearly as possible. Those blockages often involve dark places in our lives – experiences of being alone or feeling alone in pain, times when we hurt others and/or were hurt by others, and when we came to misinterpret who we are and who God is. When we ask God to shine his light in those places, he will often bring up specific memories where he wants to reveal his safe, loving, caring presence and to correct our misunderstandings. Whatever the Lord brings to mind, you get to choose whether you're ready to go there. During your session, an opportunity may arise to invite the Lord to shine his light in one of the dark places of your life. If that opportunity arises, is that something you're willing to consider doing?

(I wouldn't say this in advance, but if something like this comes up during the session and they say they're not ready to go there, then you can explore what might be keeping them from going there. Often there is another layer of painful experiences and false beliefs standing in the way, such as "God's not going to show up in that painful place," or "I'm too messed up for this to be fixed.")

Now, having shared the simple "shine your light" tool, here are some other things that may be happening when the session goes as you described. I think the "shine your light" tool has a good chance of working no matter which of these things may be happening. But it could be helpful as a facilitator to be aware of these anyway:

- 1. The recipient truly does need to just build capacity and grow in their ability to "be with" the Lord.** If this is the case, the Lord will probably make it clear at some point after you ask the "shine your light" question. Either the question won't go anywhere but the person will still be able to enjoy the connection experience and the experience will seem productive over time, or the Lord himself will communicate that he wants to stay in the connection place.
- 2. The recipient is consciously or subconsciously avoiding pain by staying in connection.** If this is the case, the "shine your light" question would still be the first thing I'd do. If that doesn't go anywhere, and staying in the connection doesn't seem to deepen or produce anything valuable, then consider avoidance a possibility. (It could take as little as a couple minutes or as much as a couple sessions to discern this.) With avoidance, there is usually an underlying hindrance in place, such as fear that God won't actually show up or help out in the pain place, or the recipient feels unworthy of God's help or attention. You can check for this by asking something like, "It's interesting that our next step in the session hasn't become clear. Would you be willing to ask the Lord if there's something standing in the way of receiving his guidance here?" (As always, you may ask on their behalf as long as they are willing for the question to be posed.)

3. Even without asking the recipient the “shine your light” question, **the Lord is actually bringing to mind the next step forward in the session, but the recipient is not noticing or reporting it.** The recipient is filtering out the important info, thinking that it isn’t important or isn’t from God – or because they don’t feel comfortable sharing it with you. You can probe for this by being more specific and directive in your “notice everything” guidance. You might say, for example:

“Take a moment and just scan that connection experience. Turn in a full circle and look behind you as well as in front of you. Is there anything you didn’t see before, or you saw but didn’t think was important enough to share?”

“There may be thoughts, impressions, words, images that come to mind but seem unimportant or unrelated. They may be totally unrelated to this connection experience. They may even be your thoughts about this session right now in this room. Take your time to notice if you have any thoughts or impressions you haven’t shared. Once you share them, we can figure out if they’re important for this session or not.”

“Are you aware of something coming up that you don’t want to share with me? If so, there may be a way for you to report it without giving details so that I can still guide you through it.”

4. **Finally, it’s possible the connection is a bit “thin.”** That is, a next step (whether healing or just increased connection and intimacy with the Lord) isn’t flowing naturally from the initial connection because the recipient is not really engaging with their heart yet. I went through a season where it worked to facilitate using relatively “thin” connections. But then I realized, by watching Margaret Webb facilitate, that there was another whole layer of depth I was missing. I was saying the right things, and the recipient was saying the right things in response, but there wasn’t a real depth happening emotionally. I needed to help the recipient access the level where their emotions were at the surface.

I think it just takes experience to learn what the deeper level of connection feels like so that you can recognize whether the recipient is there or not. Watching a few live sessions with experienced facilitators can be very helpful this way. Video is okay, but real-life is better because you can see the non-verbal emotional indicators more clearly. The Alive and Well live demo videos of Roger and Joanne receiving may be helpful for this.

The way I usually recognize the deeper level is body language. There are usually subtle indications when the recipient is more deeply connected, such as settling into a more relaxed posture, a change in voice tone, sighing or deep breaths, and sometimes tears or close to it. When I notice emotions coming to the surface, I usually try to reflect the words that go with them, as well as the nonverbal signals I’m seeing, in a way that makes space for those things without making the recipient self-conscious.

Sometimes deeper connection allows the healing and intimacy with God to flow more naturally with less guidance from the facilitator. Other times, directive guidance like “shine your light” can lead to a deeper connection where the emotions flow more naturally.

The last part of my response is about self-care and personal growth, as well as growth as a facilitator. As we always say in our Immanuel Prayer Minister Training, keep paying attention to your own emotional state while you are facilitating. If those uncertain-what's-next moments are bringing up any anxiety or fear for you, receiving ministry later or doing some Immanuel Journaling about it could be very helpful to address your personal triggers and remove more blockages in your own relationship with God and others. It will also help your recipient. Your emotional state, whether peaceful or anxious, does impact the recipient's feeling of safety, even if they're not aware of it. And the more you can stay connected to the Lord during the session, the more clearly you can receive his guidance for you as you facilitate.

Thank you again for this important question!

Jessie+