Changing Gears - Changing Seats: What to do when your client perceives Jesus

***Summary of initial stages***:

Phase One of the Immanuel Approach involves creating safety and getting activity flowing in you and your client’s relational circuits. Attunement between the client and facilitator is central to this. Then, with a focus on previous positive memory and expressing appreciation, attunement is directed towards the Lord. The first way we do this is having the client notice what happens when we express appreciation to God and focus on His response. Doing this a number of times often leads to a spontaneous awareness and perception of His presence. The other route, which is core to Lehman’s process, is to make an explicit request for help to perceive His presence in the positive memory. Typically, if the client is unable to perceive his presence they are simply asked to report what they do experience/perceive and then the request can be made again. The thoughts, images, etc are important - the “content of consciousness” - as it has been described. The facilitator needs to be confident the client is reporting this because normally it is relevant. The dictum is “report everything”. If going back to attunement, appreciation, explicit invitation to perceive his presence still leaves the person not perceiving His presence the standard troubleshooting is to ask him “what is in the way?” Then again the client needs to report what comes into their mind. The facilitator then asks God to show what he wants the person to know about this. Although the client may not perceive God’s presence God can still clearly show what needs to be addressed to deal with the resistance/blockage.

In the initial phases the facilitator needs to be fairly proactive, in a sense coaching noticing and focussing, creating an atmosphere of interconnection, interpersonal resonance and active appreciation. Once the recipient is perceiving the Lord’s presence the role of the facilitator/coach changes significantly. Whereas previously you were driving now you hop in the back seat, let Jesus drive and in a sense become the chaperone.

***Driving from the back seat:***

Anyone who has tried it can tell you it doesn’t really work trying to drive from the back seat. It is very different in phase three than it was in phase one and two. It can be hard for the facilitator to adjust to this. The scenario now is your client has been interacting with God and now perceives His presence. Either is capable of taking initiative with the other and besides that, silences are important. If you really were a chaperone in the back seat of a car with the couple on a date in the front seat, in general you would try to shut up, keep out of the way and let the couple work out how to interact. So how does one go about this?

***Being there, showing interest and gently redirecting focus:***

For each person who interacts with the Lord in this way the interaction is unique. Somehow the facilitator needs to learn that is OK. Some people perceive the Lord’s presence but don’t quite get it that there are benefits from interacting with him. Or somehow they don’t realise it is OK to take initiative. So initially you are gently help them to pay attention to Him and see what happens. It is fine to ask the client to keep you in the loop and let you know what is happening according to the pattern of interaction you have already set up with the client. You will notice that the client generally needs to focus either on the Lord or on you. It is quite a developed skill to focus on both at once. So your interactions with the client could go something like this:

Facilitator: Is Jesus still there? Still ….(standing behind you, sitting, smiling, crying, mucking around…)

Client: No, he is now …

F: Ok, how is that for you?

C: Fine. Just not sure if…

F: Perhaps you could ask him?

Etc

**Summary**

Once your client is perceiving the Lord’s presence and able to interact with Him, your role becomes very different. You are now more like a chaperone on a date. The role becomes to keep supporting the client to focus on and interact with the Lord. And, according to what timing works for the client report back how He responds. When the Lord no longer wants to do more or time has run out pray a concluding prayer.