



Learning Lifeline

A LETTER ABOUT LEARNING FROM ESTHER WILKISON

Recently, I've brought up the trending topic of Social & Emotional Learning in conversation with some seasoned teachers. One was eager to find more ideas to help students in crisis. One wondered if this is just the latest expectation heaped onto teachers who are already running on empty towards the destination of burnout.

While I fully support helping students with their social and emotional needs, I'm convinced that the best path to meeting the needs of students is to meet the needs of the teachers, parents, and spiritual leaders who are trying to pour into those students.

Often as leaders, we think our only need is just a little more time so we can push ourselves—machine-like—to meet the needs of others. Ever thought you need to “kick it into overdrive” on busy days? Machine terminology can reveal a core belief that we are disconnecting from our humanity. That may not seem like a big deal, but since God made us human and since the defeated enemy wants to destroy us, our thinking around this is a life-altering big deal.

Often our inner critical voice drives us to shut down our desires and feelings so we can push through to accomplish goals. We may get a dopamine rush from accomplishing more tasks, but shutting down our humanity comes at a high cost.

We may excuse our machine-tendency under the faulty conclusion that we are “dying to self”, but disconnecting from our God-designed need for social connection and emotional awareness is not making us more godly—just more prone to impatience and chronic illness.

We tend to think our harsh voice is something we use on ourselves while we speak to others in loving tones. While that may be true to a point, eventually our core belief that our productivity matters more than we do is likely to lead to the same false core belief and harsh voice in the heads of the next generation.

True learning is always more caught than taught. We can only reproduce after our own kind.

I love how often when Jesus was here, He clearly showed His human need not only for food, sleep, and time with God, but also for companionship in work, sorrow, and celebration. He was not hurried or driven. Love never is.

The thing that keeps so many of us stuck is how alone we are. Certainly, God is with His own, but He never intended us to live life without embodied people to be on our team—people who are for us, who track with us weekly if not daily, who know our deep delights as well as our deep sorrows. People who do not try to control us or use us, but who make space and time for us to think of our best ideas.

I'm convinced that every teacher, parent, and leader needs time with a supportive human who will make space to think through and talk through what is going on. The supportive human also needs to be able to encourage you to create ideas and implement your ideas. I hope you have a fellow traveler or three in your world that are doing this for you. If not, ask God to lead you to the help and support you need.



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You may find yourself in a role where you are trying to support other leaders as well as students, even though you are lacking the support you need. Many are in that same position right now. That's why I'm devoting so much of my schedule to one-on-one Mentor Training. If Jesus needed others walking His road with Him, we do as well. As a human who carries His image, you are worth the investment.