



Learning Lifeline

A LETTER ABOUT LEARNING FROM ESTHER WILKISON

How do you deal with the kids who do not go with the flow of your expectations? How do you respond to those who don't catch on when you teach? Before considering concepts like *lazy* and *rebellious*, let's change the context.

What might happen if, without any training or experience, I decided to drive an 18-wheeler? Perhaps I assume I can handle a big rig because I've been driving a car for years. Yet, if I manage to turn the key, shift into gear, and accelerate—we are all in trouble. Chances are high that I will get hurt, harm the truck, and endanger other drivers.

A big rig makes wider turns, takes more time to stop, and needs a runaway ramp should its brakes give out while going downhill. The only chance I have to succeed at driving an 18-wheeler is to learn how the truck works and develop the skills I need to adjust my driving.

As with all illustrations, this one breaks down. An 18-wheeler looks remarkably different than a car, yet people in hard places typically look like everyone else. Kids going through trauma only know the life they are living. They cannot explain to adults how what they are going through is impacting their ability to learn, interact, and cope.

Parents and teachers long to help. We don't want kids to over-identify with their challenges and accept defeat. How do we guide kids carrying oversized loads? I'm convinced God wants to equip us, so I'm asking you to consider two recommendations.

First—Consider Jesus.

In our last *Learning Lifeline* we talked about how, when Jesus was on earth, He was what I call a Lighthouse Person—standing securely attached to God the Father and shining with love that was patient and kind—even in the crisis times. We talked about how Jesus grew in wisdom in how He related to Himself, to God the Father, and to others.

Jesus did not grow up in idyllic circumstances. While in His tiniest, most vulnerable form—as He was being knit together in His mother's womb—Jesus was already facing trauma. When any pregnant woman faces extreme stress—her nervous system's response to overwhelming threats affects the life growing inside her.

As a young teen, Mary faced public humiliation as well as the threat of abandonment from the man she was pledged to join in marriage. An angel persuaded Joseph to go forward with the marriage, but in their small, extremely conservative town—Mary and Joseph no doubt felt the pressure of family and neighbors who assumed the worst about how she got pregnant.

Due to the occupying Roman rulers, Mary and Joseph had to travel. Their trip was hard due to the uncertainties of a first pregnancy and the lack of ideal accommodations. What Mary dreamed of since finding out she was chosen by God was nothing like the reality she faced as she screamed through the pain of labor and delivery.



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While still a toddler, Jesus's parents bundled Him up one night to run for their lives so He would not be murdered by legal authorities. After years as refugees in Egypt, Jesus and His family again moved internationally to start life in a small town notorious for being unimpressive.

Please note—Jesus's trauma did NOT happen because His parents were doing something wrong. While others' stories have their own complexities, Mary and Joseph were remarkably obedient to God. Yet, Jesus was born to imperfect people coping with a broken, dangerous world.

Maybe one reason Jesus did not start His public ministry until He was thirty was that He needed years to grow stable and strong after facing so many hard things early on. Maybe He could always spot the weak and needy because He had the heightened sensitivity that often accompanies those from trauma backgrounds. Maybe recovering from early trauma developed the resiliency that made Jesus the supreme Lighthouse Person—the calm presence who responded in wisdom no matter how upset the crowd or stormy the sea.

Second—Consider Learning More.

I challenge you to pick one or read all of the books of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible. Notice both what Jesus went through and how He helped those who faced every form of trauma.

I also challenge you to get more training. To address trauma, as well as other reasons kids struggle, I am currently producing online courses to help parents and teachers. Short, focused videos will give you specific practices that have already proven transformational for those who have used them. Please pray as we develop resources for you and those you know. Look for more details in the weeks ahead.