



Learning Lifeline

A LETTER ABOUT LEARNING FROM ESTHER WILKISON

If you expect a toddler to lift a 100-pound barbell, write a book, or launch a company or a rocket—you will be disappointed. A child needs to grow and learn in order to handle life's big challenges.

Yet, sometimes children have weighty burdens from traumatic situations that are impossible for them to process. This overwhelms their ability to cope and leaves them feeling powerless. The neurons in a child's brain can wire together that feeling of powerlessness with events and activities too heavy to process. This happens for overwhelmed adults as well. Even later, when people have more ability, their brains are wired to think they are too broken to be wanted, too damaged to cope with close relationships, or too defective to handle specific adult responsibilities.

For decades, I devoted myself to helping others not feel overwhelmed. My identity was tied up in being the one to help those in crisis. My frantic hustle led to physical and mental burnout—repeatedly. While my intention was to follow Christ, I finally realized I was not living my life the way He lived His.

He didn't arrive on earth and fly into action. In fact, for 30 years he didn't appear to be doing anything to help a world in crisis. Other than the time when Jesus stayed in the temple when His parents headed home, all we know about His first 3 decades is that He grew in what I call W.S.G.O. (Luke 2:52).

He grew in **WISDOM**—developing skills to make good choices in all the areas of life that are not clear-cut or black and white. He developed a lifestyle that did not hinder Him. Specifically, Jesus grew in wisdom in how He related to Himself, God, and others.

STATURE includes growing from child-size to adult-size, but it also involves all the ways our SELF matures—in body, mind, soul, and spirit. When Jesus needed to rest, He rested. When He felt emotions, He expressed emotions appropriately. When He needed companionship, He asked for others to join Him.

Jesus also grew in loving favor with **GOD**. He oriented His life around what God wanted in every area. Obedience cost Him popularity, personal advantage, reputation, and—eventually—His life. Yet, His obedience attached Him to His Father. Even when ministry demands left Him exhausted, He kept up His regular pattern of silence and solitude to connect with God. His loving connection with God remains the bedrock foundation of His life.

Last, Jesus grew in favor with **OTHERS**. Our first and deepest connection is usually our family. Jesus treated His family with wisdom when they lost Him as a child. He also treated his family with wisdom when, as a single adult, He did not comply with family concerns that held Him back from His mission.

Jesus showed wisdom in every human interaction. The authors who wrote about His life describe Jesus as He helped those who had been traumatized. When His disciples yelled at Him in full-on panic, He responded with a solution that helped them feel safe and questions to get them to think. He knew exactly how and when to show mercy and give comfort. He didn't despair when faced with people bound in life-dominating patterns of immorality, demonic possession, or religious pomposity.



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None of it triggered His nervous system to react in ways that were impatient or self-protective. In a sea of life that was raging with crisis and needs, Jesus stood like a lighthouse—lamp bright and mirrors clean and positioned to shine into the darkness. He provided hope and direction to all who were driven with the waves, unstable in all their ways. In the midst of worry and hurry, danger and doubt, Jesus stood rock-solid as the Light of the world.

“Well, of course,” you may be thinking. “He was God!” Yes, He certainly was—and is. He also was, and is, fully human. The total dependence and active obedience of Christ were empowered by the same Holy Spirit that Jesus gives to all who believe and follow Him. Yet, if Jesus's followers have the same Spirit, why is it sometimes hard to find lighthouse people who stand secure and shine with love that is patient and kind—even in times of crisis?

That’s the question to ponder until next Thursday’s Lifeline. Please email me with any thoughts you have on this question or other questions on this topic. For this week, rest assured in the full favor Jesus has for you and for all those you love and long to help.