



Learning Lifeline

A LETTER ABOUT LEARNING FROM ESTHER WILKISON

Was there ever a group who needed to be able to think for themselves more than those who followed Jesus during His three years of ministry? After all the miracles and daily interactions, can you imagine how high their hopes were? What could Jesus do to prepare them to think for themselves and apply what they had learned even in the face of shattering loss when He was buried?

Were the stories He told part of the preparation? What did He do after the stories that lead to even deeper learning? Why did He invest so much time asking them questions and listening to what His followers were thinking?

Did the way Jesus performed miracles deepen the way His followers understood Him? When a blind man cried out for mercy, why did Jesus ask him what He wanted? Wasn't it obvious? When a father of a boy who was possessed by a demon came to Jesus, why did Jesus ask the man how long the boy had been in this condition? He didn't need the back story to heal the boy, so why take time to hear the dad's story? The compassionate listening surely helped the father—did it also impact others who were listening?

Remember the time Jesus was in a crowd and He asked who touched Him? Why would He take time to hear a woman's twelve-year story of pain and frustration with ineffective treatments? Why didn't He rush past the woman to heal a twelve-year-old girl who was about to die? Come to think of it—why do we find no record of Jesus ever rushing anywhere? Wasn't He important like all of us who rush about?

How did Jesus pick out the first person He would send to tell others that He, the Messiah, had come? Why did He show her such respect as to ask her to meet His need for water? Why did He discuss theology and worship with her? Could He spot the key-influencers in every town like He did in that town?

Why did Jesus often answer questions by asking a question? How much self-control did it take for such a good communicator to patiently listen to the one processing through to come up with his or her own answers? Why did He give so much of His precious teaching time to let the students do the talking?

When Judas came to betray Jesus, why did Jesus call him friend and describe what Judas was doing in the form of a question? Did Jesus hope His question would do the heavy lifting of convicting that questions often do?

The question approach Jesus used worked a whole lot better than the approach of yelling, telling, and trying to control. Telling stories and asking questions developed deep learners who could take what He taught them in one context and apply it in a totally different context. Jesus gave His followers the skills of thinking deeply and asking questions.

For a great example—consider Mary of Magdala standing before Jesus's empty tomb. She had heard Jesus tell of a woman willing to turn her house inside out to find a lost coin. In Mary's case,



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what had gone missing was far more precious than a coin. How typical that the first thing Jesus does is ask Mary questions.

“Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”

She thought he was the gardener. So she said, “Sir, did you carry him away? Tell me where you put him. Then I will go and get him.” [Mary didn’t care how hard it would be to try to carry a dead body wrapped for burial.]

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him. Then she cried out in the Aramaic language, “Rabboni!” Rabboni means Teacher.

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me. I have not yet ascended to the Father. Instead, go to those who believe in me. Tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news. She said, “I have seen the Lord!” (From John 20)

Mary didn’t need to go get Jesus after all. He had already come to get her and to commission her to go tell the men the good news. Just as the woman who found the coin went to invite her neighbors to a celebration, even so Mary started inviting others into the greatest celebration ever.

Are you skilled at using questions to build relationships with others? Have you ever recorded an interaction you’ve had with a child or a class you’ve taught so you could see how often you ask questions? Or what tone of voice do you use when asking questions? Or how much time do you give students to answer? When was the last time your kids knew you wanted to know what they thought about things?

I’ve asked a lot of questions this week. Now I’m curious, what are you thinking? I’d love to hear your thoughts and questions.

Also, would you have a minute to help? Please forward this email to someone you know who might benefit from the problem-solving ideas we send out each week in our Learning Lifeline. We would love to bless as many people as possible. Thank you.