

Why The Shepherds?

I understand an angel talking to Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph. They were all central to the action. But it's interesting to consider why the shepherds got in on the action.

Three reasons come to mind—

1—From the earliest hours of Jesus being on our planet, God honored and included those that others consider the lower class. I love this so much about God! For our sake, Jesus not only became poor, but intentionally hung out with the poor. It only makes sense that the “least of these” were there to celebrate this dramatic expansion of God's Kingdom.

2—Shepherds this close to Jerusalem would have been aware that, when a lamb was born without any visible flaw, it would be wrapped in cloth and laid in the manger in order to keep it set apart as a sacrificial lamb.

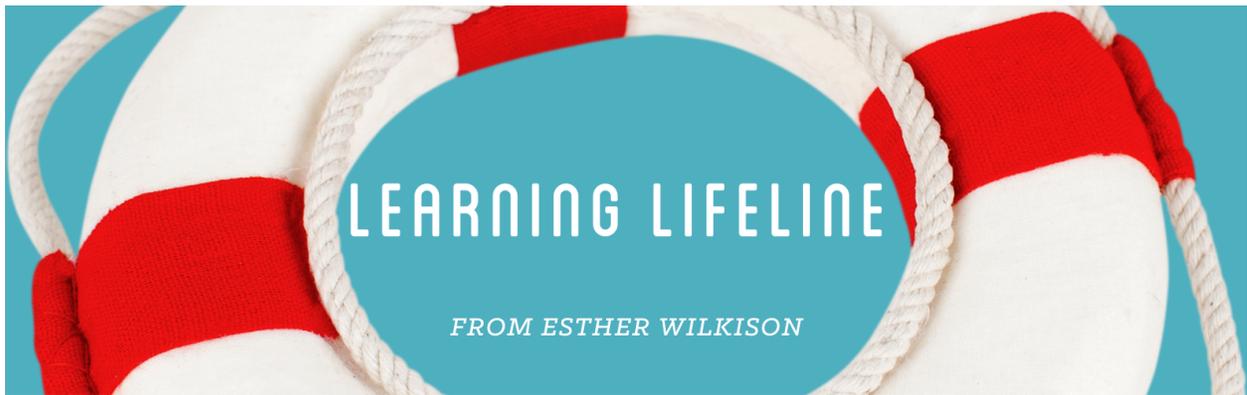
I wonder what those shepherds thought when, a few years later, King Herod killed all the baby boys in that area. Maybe they thought the Baby wrapped up like a perfect lamb had been sacrificed before He could grow up. I'm glad Herod failed to kill Jesus as a young child, since we all need the active obedience of Christ as well as His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.

3—Another reason might be that the shepherds were willing to exert the effort to see what God was up to. When invited, the shepherds were curious enough to go see for themselves.

I'm hoping you are a bit like the shepherds as you read this. Christ's birth was the hinge point of spreading the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Nothing in my last year was quite that consequential, but I did get to see God expand His kingdom in me through the work of *Learning Lifeguard*.

Scenic Overlook

Maybe you know the feeling of driving up a road so steep and full of hairpin turns that you wonder if you are making any progress. Then you pull into a parking area with an



observation point where you can look back and see how far you've come. This time of year feels like a scenic overlook, where I take in the view of what God has been up to in the past year and contemplate what next year might hold.

This past year, I was reminded of a saying from one of the pastors at my church—"this is no more complicated than manna." Just as God provided enough manna when it was needed, even so—God has again chosen to build our faith by providing just enough to pay bills each month.

Someday I pray we have a tribe of supporting partners and resources to do all the good that is in our hearts, but I hope we never forget the miraculous just-in-time provision that God has used to pull us close to Him and close to those who have invested in us. You know who you are! And God does too. I pray He will bless you for your generosity. We are far more grateful than we can express.

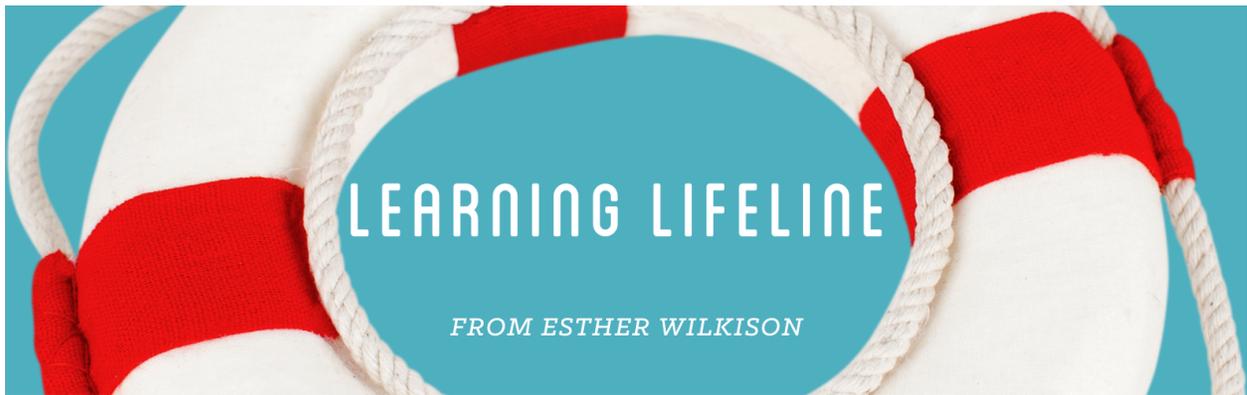
Years back, I tracked progress by quantity—the number of speaking engagements, teachers taught, or families helped by educational coaching. I track differently now—by the transformation I see in my life and in the lives of those I am deeply connected with.

I began *Learning Lifeguard* to rescue (and train others to rescue) those overwhelmed by learning. God has been shifting my focus to rescue (and train others to rescue) those overwhelmed by life. Of course, Jesus is the ultimate Rescuer, but I love getting to train others to have His eye for those in danger, His heart to help, and His non-anxious presence and Holy Spirit power to heal.

God has given me three circles to work in.

1--Individuals & Small Groups

With trauma as my mission field, I've realized the most effective work I can do is to provide a safe place for individuals to tell their stories and grow in the relationships and practices that lead to thriving as they follow Jesus. This work is not flashy and it doesn't scale, but the life change is remarkable! Instead of reaching large groups all at once with information, I'm reaching a few at a time with personal guidance and support that enables them to develop



habits and practices that lead to thriving. Only then are they able to pass on the practices to those they influence.

God has taken me on a path of healing for the past three and half years with a skilled, Spirit-filled therapist. This year I finished therapy and moved into a new normal. I'm eager to continue sharing all I've learned.

Starting in January, I'm making it easier to reach out to me for individual coaching sessions through [LearningLifeguard.com](https://www.learninglifeguard.com). Also, I'm launching a course called *Relational Reset* to guide small groups through the core practices that helped me overcome overwhelm. I'm beginning locally at first, and then hope to expand online. If you know anyone interested in coaching or in joining the *Relational Reset* course, please let me know.

2--Other Rescuers

God continues to open doors for me to train parents and teachers who are reaching the next generation for Christ. Right now, I'm preparing new material for the teachers and parents who I am scheduled to work with in January.

Going forward, I'm asking God to connect me with administrators of schools who are willing to commit to fully equipping their teachers to be trauma-informed while supporting their personal thriving as well. Today's students are desperate for teachers able to catch them up and help them through developmental delays. Today's teachers are desperate for someone to provide workable solutions and spiritual support in the battle where they are on the front lines. If you know any schools that might be interested in the solutions I offer, please let me know.

3--Readers

I write the *Lifeline* newsletter to equip and encourage those influencing the next generation. However, *Lifeline* is not my only writing. Besides researching and writing topics that I speak on, I've also been working on a book with the working title of *Overcoming Overwhelm*. I know He has good plans for this book when I consider the investment He has made in it. Stay tuned to future *Lifelines* to find out when you can buy your copy.



Could You Help?

Each time you receive a *Lifeline*, please pray about who God may want you to forward it to. This would be a help to us as we want to reach all who could benefit from regular encouragement.

Please pray with us that God will:

1. Give me the wisdom I need to finish the book.
2. Connect me with schools interested in long-term teacher support and training.
3. Guide 25 individuals to join the current ministry partners who already support the work of Learning Lifeguard at \$100 a month, or 50 will give \$50 a month, or 100 will give \$25 a month.

If *Learning Lifeguard* has blessed or encouraged you, will you please prayerfully consider supporting us in a one-time gift or ongoing partnership? Contributions can be made through [Venmo](#) or checks made out to Learning Lifeguard and sent to Esther Wilkison, 113 Stephens Lane, Greenville, SC 20609.

As we celebrate Christ's birth, we at Learning Lifeguard thank all of you who have been a part of the work God has given us to do. May this Christmas be a time when you can know how fully God loves you and how much He wants to walk with you through every day of the year ahead.