



Matured

Jesus, as the unique Son of God, experienced human life fully and without sin.

LUKE 2:41-52

Many know the feeling of being left behind or leaving someone behind. Our attention led us one way while the rest of the group went the other way. We may have been on the other end when we realized someone in our group was no longer with us. After celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph found themselves separated from Jesus as they journeyed back to Nazareth. This account gives us a glimpse into the uniqueness of Jesus.

Share about a time you or someone in your group became physically separated. What lessons did you learn about yourself as a result of that separation?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LUKE 2:39-52

After Simeon and Anna's encounter with the infant Jesus in the temple, nothing else is known about His childhood except this passage in Luke 2:39-52. Joseph would have provided Jesus with the early elements of His education. Scholars are undecided whether Jesus would have had the opportunity to attend a synagogue school in Nazareth, as most of these types of schools were limited to Jerusalem in that day. As a child, Jesus would have learned to speak, read, and write Aramaic. He also would have picked up Hebrew and Greek from its prevalence in society. His study of the Torah would have been from Sabbath services in the synagogue, because sacred scrolls were scarce and the price was extremely costly.

Jesus would have learned a trade from Joseph. Custom decreed that the eldest son follow the occupation of his father, so Jesus would have spent time in the carpentry shop (Mark 6:3). He would draw from lessons learned from carpentry. He spoke of specks that irritate the eyes and logs that blind a person (Matt. 7:5). He spoke of a house foolishly built on sand and another built upon a rock (Luke 6:46-49). He spoke of the impossibility of adding one cubit to a person's life (Matt. 6:27). On the way to Calvary, He spoke of the difference between green wood and dry wood (Luke 23:31). Jesus' formal education and His trade shaped His early years.

When a Jewish boy turned thirteen, he was regarded as an adult. The year before Jesus turned thirteen, His parents brought Him to the temple during Passover, and the ensuing events demonstrated that Jesus was the unique Son of God.

As you read Luke 2:41-52, highlight the interactions Jesus had with other people. How do these interactions help us understand Jesus' uniqueness?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ENGAGED (LUKE 2:41-47)

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

VERSES 41-42

Luke noted that Jesus' *parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover*. The fact that they attended Passover *every year* is not an indication that it was the only feast they attended, but it was a notation of the faithfulness of Joseph and Mary to attend Passover.

Passover was part of a seven-day feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It commemorated God's deliverance of His people from Egypt, including the events of the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea. The unleavened bread was a reminder that they quickly left the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:11). Passover specifically brought to mind the slain lamb whose blood was placed upon the doorposts so that the Israelites' first born would be saved from the tenth plague (Ex. 12:13).

DID YOU KNOW?

All Jewish males were expected to attend three annual festivals in Jerusalem if possible: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Ex. 23:14-17; Deut. 16:16).

When Jesus was **twelve years old**, His parents took Him to observe the Passover. Though this probably was not the first time He had attended the feast, this year held special significance. This would be the final year He observed it as a child. At age thirteen, Jesus would become a full son of the covenant, meaning He had reached adulthood in the eyes of the Jews. He would then be able to read the Torah for Himself and would constitute one of the ten men required to establish a synagogue. The later writing of the Mishnah declared that the last Passover before thirteen years of age was a special time for the child to prepare for his becoming an adult. As the events unfolded, Jesus would prove to be more than prepared already.

VERSES 43-45

And when the feast was ended was a reference to the entirety of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As the caravan that included His parents left for Nazareth, **the boy Jesus stayed behind**. This phrase could imply that Jesus intentionally stayed behind in Jerusalem or that He inadvertently was left by His parents. Either way, the parents **did not know** that Jesus remained in Jerusalem. Perhaps their caravan traveled in groups divided by gender and age, and each parent assumed the other had included Jesus as they left for Nazareth. When the family got back together at night, they discovered that Jesus was not with **their relatives and acquaintances**. They had spent a day journeying, and now they would have to return to Jerusalem to find him, which would require another day's journey.

VERSES 46-47

The **three days** would have included the day they traveled, the day they returned, and a third day that they looked for Jesus in Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary found Jesus **in the temple**, meaning the courts of the temple where theological discussions took place. Jesus was **sitting among the teachers**, who were rabbis and scholars of the Mosaic law. It would have been highly unusual for a boy who was yet to reach the age of thirteen to be welcomed in the discussions they were having in the temple.

Jesus was doing two things with the rabbis. First, He was **listening to them**. Jesus was listening to the discussions of the foremost scholars and authorities of the Hebrew Scriptures of His day. Second, He was

asking them questions. The degree of amazement that resulted from these two actions suggests that this was not passive listening and questioning. They were not childish questions placated by simple answers but were probing questions that challenged the authorities of the law and provided **answers** that the rabbis had not considered. Jesus' **understanding** amazed everyone in the temple courts who heard Him.

Why is it important to emphasize Jesus' being fully divine and fully human? Why are both important to understanding who Jesus is?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.*

Read Matthew 1:23; John 1:14; 1 Peter 2:21-24; Isaiah 53:3-10; and 1 John 4:2-3. What aspect of Jesus' human nature can you identify in each passage? Review John 8:58; 10:30; 20:28-29; Mark 2:9-12; and Matthew 28:9. What do these texts reveal about Jesus' deity?

QUESTIONED (LUKE 2:48-50)

⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

VERSE 48

Jesus' parents reacted like everyone else who heard Him conversing with the rabbis—they were **astonished**. The words that follow indicate that at least a portion of Mary's astonishment was that Jesus had

remained behind to speak with the Jewish scholars. Mary asked Him, **Son, why have you treated us so?** Partly with the relief of having found Jesus, Mary reproached Jesus for not joining the caravan back to Nazareth. She took Jesus' actions personally, when Jesus' following statement indicates that no such mistreatment was intended.

Mary next indicated that they had been **searching for** Him **in great distress**. She used an unusually strong word to describe this search. Her word choice included a word that normally meant physical torment or suffering. Luke used this same word to describe the depth of suffering the Ephesian elders felt when they realized that they would never see Paul's face again (Acts 20:38). In Mary's words, one might sense relief from the panic she had felt for three days as her son was missing.

VERSES 49-50

Jesus responded to His mother with a curious question: **Why were you looking for me?** Certainly any good parents who lost their child would be searching for him. Was Jesus showing a callous disregard for His parents? Was He rebuking them? Neither of these reasons can account for Jesus' words. Rather, He was setting up His next statement. The heart of Jesus' answer was in the latter part of verse 49. He asked, **Did you not know ...?** He was saying He was under compulsion or divinely ordained to be in His **Father's house**. In the Greek text, the word *house* is not present, only the article which could be translated "the things of or the affairs of His Father." However, the fact that His parents found Him in the temple accomplishing the affairs of His Father would lend credence to the translation, *Father's house*.

Perhaps it is significant that these are the first recorded words of Jesus in this Gospel account. Jesus was not rebuking His parents nor disregarding their feelings, He was indicating He had a higher allegiance to His heavenly Father. Jesus had a relationship with God that transcended that of His earthly parents, and obedience to His Father exceeded that of His parents' understanding.

Joseph and Mary **did not understand the saying that he spoke to them**. How did they not understand? Had not the angel miraculously announced this birth to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)? Did not the angel come to Joseph explaining the situation with Mary's virgin birth (Matt. 1:20-21)? Did they forget about Simeon and Anna's pronouncements in the

temple when Jesus was a baby (Luke 2:25-38)? One must remember that even with these things, Jesus had apparently lived a normal life as a child without stories such as this one leading to amazement and wonder. Later, Jesus' own disciples would seem confused after seeing Him do miracles and hearing Him preach (Luke 9:44-45; 18:31-34; 24:25-26). Even today, having access to Scripture and volumes written about Him, people have a difficult time comprehending Jesus, the Son of God. Mary understandably struggled with His identity.

What could Mary have learned from this incident about Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin (Phil. 2:5-11).

OBEDIENT (LUKE 2:51-52)

⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

VERSE 51

Jesus had just shined light on His divinity as the unique Son of God, but what happened next illuminated His perfect humanity. Jesus **went down** with His parents. Because of Jerusalem's elevation, to travel to Nazareth was to go down in elevation. He returned as a dutiful earthly son to Mary and Joseph. This is the last reference in the Gospels to Joseph. Scripture does not record what happened to him from this point.

The text carefully stated that Jesus **was submissive to them**. Luke probably emphasized this to note that Jesus did nothing wrong in

this case and was not disobedient to His parents. He had a higher authority than His earthly parents and a higher calling with His heavenly Father. At times this calling would cause concern and even suffering and pain to His earthly mother. A sword would pierce her own soul as she stood at the foot of Jesus' cross (John 19:25-27), as Simeon had prophesied (Luke 2:35). In this case, Jesus had to do the will of His Father.

The confusing events surrounding Jesus' discourse with the rabbis in the temple caused Mary to file away these memories for further contemplation. This is what she had done when the shepherds arrived at Jesus' unusual birth (2:19). Perhaps Mary herself served as Luke's source for these two unique events.

How did Jesus' obedience to both His Father and His earthly parents highlight His divinity and humanity?

VERSE 52

What happened between Jesus' discourse in the temple and His reappearance at His baptism some eighteen years later? We must be content merely with a summary statement found in verse 52. Jesus **increased** in several areas of His life.

First, Jesus advanced intellectually. He grew **in wisdom** as He aged. As He had to learn to walk as a baby, He would also learn to think with increasing wisdom. This did not divest Him of His divinity but demonstrated His humanity. Jesus also grew physically—**in stature**. Jesus also advanced **in favor with God**. Though He was tempted in all ways yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), in His humanity He grew in understanding how to please His heavenly Father. Finally, He grew in favor with **man**. He knew how to live in relationship with people and achieve social respect. The fact that Jesus grew in these areas does not imply that He was not fully God prior to His development. Rather, it indicates that as fully divine and also fully human, He experienced growth and development as any human would, except that He was without sin.

APPLY THE TEXT

- Jesus demonstrated unique understanding of and concern for the things of God even as a child.
- Jesus can be trusted to answer our anxious questions.
- Jesus obediently returned to His home with His parents, growing spiritually, physically, and socially.

Rate your concern for the affairs of God the Father. What actions do you need to take to increase your concern for the affairs of God the Father?

Who do you know who seems to be anxious about the identity of Jesus? What truths can you share with them from this passage that might help them?

Discuss how your Bible study group affects the spiritual growth and development of children in your church and community. What are some practical ways your group can increase that impact?

PRAYER NEEDS