



04

SESSION FOUR

Jesus Visited the Temple

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we learn about Jesus' zealous love for God's Word. As a young boy visiting the temple, Jesus asked questions and gave answers to the religious leaders. Jesus' parents misunderstood His reason for being there, and Jesus responded by claiming to be involved in His Father's work. Jesus was a fully human boy, yet totally devoted to His Father and submissive to His earthly parents. We join Jesus in being about His Father's work, as we are also called to grow in wisdom and obedience as we showcase His glory.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:40-52

THE POINT

Jesus modeled for us love for God's Word and obedience to God's will.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

The Bible gives us just one precious window into the childhood of Jesus. This glimpse came from Luke, who had likely interviewed Jesus' mother, Mary, as he wove together his account of Jesus' life. Luke previously described Mary's thought process and feelings, how she pondered the events of Jesus' birth and treasured them in her heart. Luke only could have received such intimate details from eyewitness testimony.

But why this story? And why does it center on Jesus at the temple? When you consider all of the events Luke could have recounted—including the death of Jesus' father Joseph, Jesus' career as a carpenter, or His relationship with His brothers—we wonder why Luke gave us this story and not others. What is so important about Jesus' boyhood visit to the temple?

- **Is it difficult for you to imagine what Jesus' life was like as a child? Why or why not? What aspects of Jesus' childhood are most intriguing to you?**

Option 2

Have you ever heard the phrase, "The only bad question is the one left unasked"? Questions help us establish facts, get to know people, and explore new possibilities. The Bible's first mention of Jesus speaking said that Jesus asked questions of the religious leaders and teachers in the temple.

- **Why do you think Jesus, as the Son of God, asked questions of these teachers and religious leaders?**

Despite being the Son of God and having intimate knowledge of His Father, Jesus still spent time in the temple (His Father's House), listening to the Scriptures (His Father's Word). He demonstrated a hunger for God's presence and God's Word, even from a young age. We can follow Jesus' example, no matter how old we are, to ask questions, to grow in our knowledge of God and His Word, and to simply spend time in the presence of the Father.

- **What are some questions you want to ask God or some things you want to know about Him?**
- **How can we learn from His Word in new ways? Who do you know that would be willing to discuss some of your questions with you?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus modeled for us love for God's Word and obedience to God's will.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus** - the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Mary and Joseph** - Jesus' mother and earthly father

PLOT

Today's session is really the only account we have from Jesus' childhood. The Gospels focus their attention on Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection, and rightly so. However, God intended this portion of Jesus' childhood to be included in the Gospel of Luke for a specific reason. It highlights Jesus' humanity and divinity, and gives us an example of what we should prioritize in our own lives.

TIMELINE

JESUS' EARLY YEARS

Jesus grows in favor with God and men.

JESUS' BAPTISM

The meaning of baptism in the life of the believer.

JESUS OVERCOMES TEMPTATION

Where Adam and Eve and the early Israelites failed, Christ succeeded.

JESUS LEARNED GOD'S WORD

Jesus grew up in Galilee, among Jewish people who didn't take the observance of God's law that seriously. In contrast, the Jews in the South (Judea) were more meticulous in their observance of the Law. Even though Jesus' family lived among marginal, nominal Jews, they were faithful to the Law of God. As an example, Luke wrote that Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover—a ten-day walk from Galilee.

In this passage, Jesus was twelve years old and growing in wisdom and knowledge. As a child, Jesus would have learned to read in the synagogue. It was a place where children were taught to read, using the alphabetical Psalms to learn their letters. (See Psalm 119.)

40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. 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. (Luke 2:40-47)

The custom was for families to travel in groups for safety, with the men separate from the women. Perhaps this explains why the young Jesus was “misplaced.” Maybe Mary assumed He was with the men while Joseph thought He still might be traveling with the women. At twelve years of age, He could have been with either group. Maybe His parents thought He was with another one of the family members.

Mary and Joseph's group left for Galilee and traveled one day before anyone noticed Jesus was gone. Apparently, they then turned around and walked another day back to the city. They spent the third day looking all over for Jesus. Imagine their relief when they returned to the temple court and found the young boy sitting with the teachers, absorbed in listening to their teaching. When He returned as a young rabbi, Jesus would use the same area of the temple court for His own teaching (Matt. 21:14,23; 26:55; Luke 19:45).

If you look closely at the text, you will notice that Jesus was not simply teaching the elders—Luke said Jesus was listening and asking questions. He was of the age where He was expected to interact with adults in matters of the Old Testament. However, those who heard Jesus in the temple were surprised by the understanding Jesus displayed in His answers.

- **Even though He is the Son of God, Jesus listened to and asked questions of the teachers in the temple. What can we learn from His example?** (p. 28, PSG)

JESUS WAS INVOLVED IN GOD'S WORK

When Jesus' parents found Him, He was surprised by their reaction to His "disappearance." Why did His parents have to search for Him? He seemed puzzled that they did not know to go straight to the temple. After all, He had to be there, right? Where else would He be? Look at how the story progressed.

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. (Luke 2:48-50)

Mary's question is typical of any mother. She sounded like any exasperated mother would after experiencing a missing child. However, Jesus seemed surprised that His parents would be searching for Him.

The question about the way Jesus treated them was not designed for an answer. Mary was making a point. They couldn't understand why Jesus was gone for three days.

Jesus did not respond to Mary's question. Instead, He responded to her second statement, "We have been looking for you." In youthful simplicity, Jesus wondered aloud why they had to search for Him. His answer indicates that He thought it would be clear where He was—in His Father's house—attending to His father's business. There was no negligence or inconsiderate behavior here. Jesus acted on His own understanding of who He was.

John's Gospel often presents the "misunderstood Jesus." Whenever Jesus said something deeply spiritual, His listeners almost always responded misunderstanding (John 3:9; 4:11). Luke provided a small window into His youthful life and showed that Jesus was misunderstood as a young man, even by those who loved Him the most.

Jesus' family misunderstood His task, but Jesus did not. In fact, in the temple, Jesus displayed a startling clarity. He knew precisely where He was supposed to be and what He was supposed to be doing—He was supposed to do His Father's work. He engaged with the text of Scripture, together with a community of men who had come together around God's Word. He did not appear to be dominating the scene; rather He asked questions right along with everyone else. The ability to formulate a meaningful question was and still is highly regarded among the rabbis. Often there is more learning in the question than in the answer.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Sinlessness of Jesus (p. 29, PSG)

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

JESUS GREW IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND OTHERS

For the second time, Luke stopped the action and threw the spotlight on Mary.

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. (Luke 2:51-52)

The first time Luke focused on Mary was after the shepherds had come and gone with their news of angelic glory and a remarkable message. At that point the narrative pictured Mary alone, treasuring and pondering all that happened around and in her (Luke 2:19). That was the sort of young woman she was: thoughtful and meditative. Twelve years later, she still stored these images in her heart, as she would no doubt be doing for the rest of her life.

The statement in verse 52 corresponds to the beginning of this story (Luke 2:40). The parallel statements indicate that Jesus grew in wisdom and in favor. The favor Mary first found with God was lavished upon Jesus' life as well (Luke 1:30). The favor Jesus had with people would return in the early years of His ministry, as He would be hounded by the crowds. But as the popularity of His messianic vision began to erode, Jesus would eventually be left alone without anyone's favor as He died on the cross.

So often, we focus on Jesus as a radical outsider and we overlook the fact that Jesus had close relationships throughout His life. Beginning in the temple, where the elders appreciated His first-rate understanding of the Scriptures, Jesus would continue to receive praise from the people who could only notice that Jesus spoke and lived differently.

Jesus' kindness and compassion, as well as the moving words He spoke, drew men and women to Him throughout the brief years of His time on Earth. This is what He had in mind when He encouraged His followers to shine like lights in a darkened world. We are not to hide our lights, just as Jesus did not. Whatever the cost, we must risk gaining favor as Jesus gained favor, by engaging with the Word and the world around us.

TIMELINE

**Special session*

WHO IS HE?

The disciples learn Jesus' identity and the purpose behind why He came.

THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES

Jesus invites ordinary people to follow Him.

BORN AGAIN

Nicodemus encounters Jesus and learns about the new birth.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus experienced the confusion all young people feel as they begin to learn that God has a calling on their lives. The Gospels readily portrayed the difficulty Jesus experienced. Jesus was not some sort of superman; He experienced conflict with His family even as a young boy.

As a grown man, Jesus faced conflict with the teachers of the law and with His own disciples. He was frequently misunderstood, yet never lost sight of God's call and purpose for His life. Even when Satan challenged Jesus' identity in the wilderness, Jesus remained faithful and obedient to His Father.

Like Jesus, as we attempt to follow God, we will be misunderstood. Our new identities in Christ will be challenged by those around us, even members of our own families. Still, if we follow Jesus' example, empowered by His grace, we too can remain obedient to the call on our lives.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What are some ways your church cultivates a love of learning when it comes to God's Word?** *Answers will vary.*
- **At this stage of Jesus' life, what do you think it meant for Jesus to say He was involved in His Father's work? How does our involvement in our Father's work grow as we mature physically and spiritually?** *Involvement in God's work will change and grow over the course of a believer's life. A person who trusts Jesus as Savior at a young age will have a different type of involvement than that of an adult Christian who has been walking with God for quite some time. However, regardless of life state or age, every Christian is called to participate in Kingdom work, whether it be faithful commitment to youth group as a sixth grader or taking a semester off of college to travel overseas for a missions project.*
- **What was the connection between Jesus' love for God's Word and His involvement in God's work? In what ways do God's Word and God's work intersect in your own life?** *God's Word will always be the believer's fuel to accomplish God's Work.*
- **Like Jesus, what character qualities should we try to cultivate in our own lives in order to grow in favor with those around us?** *Answers will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Knowing Jesus was involved in biblical discussions as a young person teaches us that young people should be involved in biblical discussions today, as well. Not only that, but we should also realize that the questions students bring and the answers they offer are beneficial to the discussion. In other words, people shouldn't assume that a young person's contribution will be overly simplistic. The church is a community of believers that is centered on the Word, and all age groups should be a part of the discussion.

- **When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation about the Bible with someone in a different age group within your church?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it important for churches to learn from the Scriptures together?** *Learning together is important for application—other people will help you to apply God's Word to various parts of your life.*



HEART

All young people arrive at a time in life when they must choose whether or not they want to make their parents' faith their own. Even though this account is unique to Jesus, the divine Son of God, we can nevertheless draw application from it for our own lives. Even if we have Christian parents and siblings or go to church on a regular basis, we have to reach a point in our lives where we take personal ownership of our faith.

- **Why is it important to emphasize that borrowed faith isn't real faith? What's the difference between the two?** *Borrowed faith is something you simply adopt because your parents or surrounding culture believe it. Having parents who pass down the Christian worldview isn't a bad thing. However, there comes a time when more is needed. To truly be a follower of Christ people need to own the faith for themselves.*
- **Have you grown up in a home with other Christians? If so, in what ways has that influence encouraged you to take ownership of your own faith?** *Answers will vary.*



HANDS

Being both fully human and fully divine, Jesus knew well what it was like to be a part of an earthly family. He was fully obedient in honoring His father and mother, and thus able to fulfill this law for us in our place. The fact He was obedient even when misunderstood reminds us that the authority God places over us is not dependent on our own feelings. In obedience to God's Word, we must honor those God has placed in authority over our lives.

- **How is our honor for those in authority a demonstration of our honor toward God?** *When we honor those in authority, we recognize that God is sovereign and good, and He has placed these individuals in our lives for a reason. As we honor those in authority, we honor God as well.*
- **When is it difficult for you to show honor to those in authority? How can Jesus' example encourage you during those times of difficulty?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #6, which contains an informational graph highlighting the biblical teaching concerning Jesus' full humanity and full divinity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRescueSpr17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject