

Jesus at the Temple

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Even as a child, Jesus prioritized the work His Father had given Him to do.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Luke 2:40-52

Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is fully divine. Christians also believe that Jesus is fully human. The Old Testament foretold that the promised One, the Messiah, would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:3), and the New Testament affirms that Jesus' earthly life bore all the marks of Him being human. Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature from...

His conception

to a baby born

to a toddler

to a young boy

to a young man

to a man on a mission.



What are some ways Jesus may have grown in wisdom and in stature?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus demonstrates wisdom in God's law (Luke 2:40-47).

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.

The fourfold description of Jesus in verse 40 is a brief but significant summation of His life as a child. Luke emphasized Jesus' full humanity, not only that He grew from an infant to a boy to a man but also that He grew in His wisdom and perception of God's will. God's grace was on Jesus, which meant that He was the object of God the Father's special attention, yet this was still reflective of His status as a human being.



Why is it important to keep in mind that Jesus is fully human as we are?

Jesus' parents again demonstrated their faithfulness to the Lord by traveling to Jerusalem every year to celebrate Passover. But on this occasion, twelve-year-old Jesus remained in Jerusalem as His family left with a caravan of families to return home. When they found Him—three days later!—Jesus was with the teachers in the temple. Everyone in His presence was amazed at His wisdom and understanding as He listened and asked questions. At this point in time, the religious leaders responded in wonder to young Jesus' wisdom. But as a man, the religious leaders would respond in outrage.




How can we grow in wisdom concerning the things of God?

Point 2: Jesus prioritizes His Father's work (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.

Mary spoke to Jesus as a child and referenced the impact His actions had on herself and Joseph, His earthly father. They were anxious and scared. What parent wouldn't be? Jesus, however, responded with His first words in Luke's Gospel, words that spoke to His **identity**: The God of the temple they were standing in is His Father; He is the Son of God. This response confounded Mary and Joseph even as it confirmed His unique relationship with God the Father.

It had been twelve years since the angelic messenger had proclaimed to Mary that Jesus was the Son of God. But despite the past revelations she and Joseph had received concerning Jesus, Mary seems to have forgotten just who her Son really was and what He had come to do. This incident in the temple provided a needed reminder of Jesus' identity to His earthly parents. It also clarified the focus of His **mission**: His priority was obedience to His heavenly Father.

 What are some ways believers need to prioritize the mission of God in their lives?



Voices from Church History

“His whole life and death were nothing else but perfect obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, and he was always fully occupied in that task. He teaches us that if we look to be children and co-heirs by adoption along with Christ of his Father's kingdom, we must also along with our Master and Lord yield ourselves up wholly to the will of our heavenly Father and always be occupied in his business.”¹

—Bernard Gilpin (c. 1517-1583)

Point 3: Jesus increases in favor with God and with people (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.

After this incident, Jesus went home to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph, and they returned to life as they knew it. It is important to know that this was not an incident of disobedience in Jesus' life but a display of His priority in obeying His heavenly Father. Perhaps this is why Luke mentioned Jesus' submission and obedience to His earthly parents in the days and years that followed. God's law mandates that children obey their parents, so God the Son incarnate, or in the flesh, obeyed His earthly parents.



In what areas of your life are you encouraged to obey the Lord because of the Son of God's perfect obedience to His sinful earthly parents?

The last thing Luke notes in this section is that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people. Verse 52 serves as a transition from Jesus' childhood to His adulthood, describing the trajectory of Jesus' life for the next eighteen years. As the years passed, the wisdom Jesus exemplified in the temple scene, His understanding of the Scriptures, and His discernment of God's purpose only increased. The Son of God took on humanity, and the Boy became a Man that He might die in our place so we might find favor with God and others.

Jesus' Humanity: In addition to being fully divine, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is _____ human. The New Testament affirms that Jesus' earthly life bore all the marks of being a human. He experienced the circumstances _____ to living as a human being, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, and _____.

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Matthew 2:1-12

The journey of the wise men, these non-Israelite astrologers from the Far East, to Jerusalem to worship the King of the Jews might seem a bit out of place. That is, unless you remember the vision proclaimed by Isaiah years before, namely, all nations and people will seek God and learn to walk according to His ways (see Isa. 2:1-4). Matthew's account is a reminder that the God of the universe desires all people to worship Him. And He will draw all peoples to Himself in Christ (Isa. 49:6; John 12:32).

God still seeks to bring all people to Jesus. This is the good news of the gospel. God takes the initiative in bringing those who are far away close to Him. Once people find Jesus, like the wise men did, by God's grace they will also worship Him as the treasure of their quest.



Why is the wise men's seeking and worshiping of Jesus relevant to how the gospel message led us to find Jesus?

Day 2: Read Matthew 2:13-23

It is interesting that Jesus' family fled to Egypt to save His life from the destruction of Herod. It was Jesus' ancestors who fled from Egypt after God spared them from the destruction He brought about because of Pharaoh, another selfish and violent ruler.

Once Herod died, Jesus returned to Israel. The prophets often recounted how God had faithfully brought Israel out of Egypt in the exodus. Here, Matthew makes this connection, comparing the rescue and deliverance of Israel (God's "son") to Jesus', who is the true Israelite who will rescue and deliver all of God's people (v. 15).

How amazing it is that the sovereign God of the universe orchestrated events centuries apart to allow His people to see connections and recognize His power in bringing dual fulfillment to His promises. This is the same God who works His will in your life. He knows where you will go and what you will do. His sovereign hand still guides history.



How does God's control over historical events as depicted in the Bible encourage you in your personal relationship with Him?

Day 3: Read Luke 2:39-47

Jesus' family annually made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. This was not an easy journey; however, this journey exemplified the faithfulness of Jesus' parents.

The journey itself was formative to them as they remembered the Passover from the Old Testament, which commemorated God's deliverance, or exodus, of His people out of slavery in Egypt. As Exodus 12–13 remind us, the night before the exodus of God's people, the death angel (or "destroyer") visited the firstborn in the last plague of judgment over Egypt. However, when he came upon the household of an Israelite family, he observed the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the door and "passed over" those homes.

For Israelites, the journey to celebrate Passover was done in thankfulness and remembrance for God's grace and mercy to their people. Little did Joseph and Mary know that as they traveled to Jerusalem this time, their child would one day return to Jerusalem as our Passover lamb to take away the sins of the world.



What feelings emerge within you as you read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' childhood, knowing He would later become our Passover lamb?

Day 4: Read Luke 2:48-50

We all need reminders of who God is and what His purposes are. The mother of Jesus wasn't any different. When Mary found Jesus in the temple after searching days for Him, she stated, "Your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

Note that Mary spoke to Jesus as a child and referenced Joseph, His earthly father. However, Jesus responded with His "first words" in this Gospel account, words that identified the God of the temple as His Father: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

This not only confirmed His unique relationship with God the Father, it also reminded Mary of the same. Jesus had to be about His heavenly Father's business, even if it appeared to strain His relationship with His earthly parents. It had been twelve years since the angelic messenger had proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, and this incident served as a needed reminder to His earthly parents.



How have you seen the pursuit of God's mission lead to family tension?

Day 5: Read Luke 2:51-52

Once again, we are told of Jesus' obedience to the law in Luke 2:51, namely, that He was obedient to His parents. Being born under the law, Jesus also fulfilled the law even toward honoring one's father and mother (Ex. 20:12). In this sense, Jesus demonstrated His perfect allegiance to God the Father in expressing His obedience to Joseph and Mary.

Jesus' obedience and allegiance to the heavenly Father in this passage is a pattern of what's to come. This chapter in Luke began when Jesus was a baby (2:16), moved through His boyhood (2:40), made special note of when He was twelve years old (2:42), and finally He is referred to by His name, Jesus (2:52). This is the Jesus who would say to the Father, "Not my will, but yours, be done," in the shadow of the cross (22:42).



How does our experience as children teach us about our responsibility to submit to personal authority over us, especially God's?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus demonstrates wisdom in God's law (Luke 2:40-47).
- Jesus prioritizes His Father's work (Luke 2:48-50).
- Jesus increases in favor with God and with people (Luke 2:51-52).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



Why should we expect to hear wisdom from other followers of Jesus?



In what ways have fellow Christians helped you to become wiser and more about God's work in the world?

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Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor by email to
daniel.davis@lifeway.com or mail to
Content Editor, *The Gospel Project: Adult
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General Editor—*The Gospel Project*
AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING
*This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in
Light of the Gospel*

With this volume of *The Gospel Project*, the storyline of the Bible shifts from the Old Testament to the New, and we enter the era in which God begins to fulfill His promise of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the sessions that follow, you'll take a closer look at the context surrounding the birth of Jesus, the theological parallels between Adam and Jesus (the last Adam), as well as the early ministry of Jesus.

Some of these stories will be familiar to you and the rest of your group—the Christmas story, for example, or the story of Jesus' temptation. In the familiar stories, we want to help you see aspects of the Gospel accounts that you may have overlooked. In the less familiar stories, we want to help you see the beauty of Jesus' interaction with all kinds of people with all kinds of needs and all kinds of backgrounds.

Our hope as you study the Scriptures is that you will be drawn to worship Jesus as the Savior and Lord who fulfills God's original intention for us as His people. Here we see a Jesus withstanding temptation, calling disciples, loving the unlovable, and battling the evil one. May your worship of this Savior lead you to faithful obedience to His call in extending grace and mercy and the message of salvation to those around you.

UNIT 19

SESSION 1

1. "Sin," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, gen. eds. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III (IVP, 1998) [Wordsearch].
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 1992), 376.
3. Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans 10, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 2

1. Thabiti Anyabwile, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018), 40-41.
2. Jen Wilkin, *In His Image* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 107.

SESSION 3

1. John Piper, "God Is Always Doing 10,000 Things in Your Life," *Desiring God*, January 1, 2013, www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-is-always-doing-10000-things-in-your-life.
2. Martin Luther, *The Magnificat*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
3. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 690.

SESSION 4

1. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 168.
2. Thomas Becon, *The Sermon of Simeon in the Temple*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 5

1. Bernard Gilpin, *A Sermon Preached in the Court at Greenewich*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
2. Gloria Furman, *Missional Motherhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 200.

UNIT 20

SESSION 1

1. Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013), 1.
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (SCM Press, 2015), 91.

EASTER SESSION

1. Basil, *On Humility* 20, quoted in 1-2 *Corinthians*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 75.

SESSION 2

1. Jackie Hill Perry, *Gay Girl, Good God* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018), 171.
2. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959), 9.

SESSION 3

1. Trip Lee, *Rise: Get Up and Live in God's Great Story* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2015), 47.
2. Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance* 1.12.53, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 14.44, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Jerry Bridges, *31 Days Toward Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2013) [eBook].

UNIT 21

SESSION 1

1. Fred L. Horton Jr., "Exorcism," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003), 533.
2. Dexter Maben, "Mark," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1290.
3. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2000), January 14.
4. Dacher Keltner, "Hands On Research: The Science of Touch," *Greater Good Magazine*, September 29, 2010, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/hands_on_research.

SESSION 2

1. See *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 89.
2. St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. and ed. A Religious of C.S.M.V. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 35.
3. Kim Cash Tate, "Rejected by Friends, Loved by Jesus," *Desiring God*, December 29, 2015, www.desiringgod.org/articles/rejected-by-friends-loved-by-jesus.

SESSION 3

1. "Kawasaki Disease and Heart Transplant: Kendall's Story," Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, April 2012, www.chop.edu/stories/kawasaki-disease-and-heart-transplant-kendalls-story.
2. Andrew Murray, *Humility, in Humility and Absolute Surrender* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 42.
3. "John," in *Africa Study Bible* (Oasis International LTD, 2016), 1534.

SESSION 4

1. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on John* 24.23-24, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Samuel Ngewa, "John," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1286.