

Luke 2:39-52
December 22, 2024



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

Jesus' process of spiritual growth guides our approach to discipleship.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What skill or ability do you have (athletic, musical, artistic, cooking, woodworking, gardening, etc.)?

How does your skill level compare to when you first began?

Who has been the biggest help to you in developing your skill? Have you been able to help others develop their interests in your skill?

Though some of us might not consider ourselves very talented, we all have skills of one kind or another. And, for each one of us, we are more accomplished at our skills than we were when we first began to develop them. Acquiring our skills has been a process that probably has included a lot of practice, a sizeable amount of trial and error, and at



least some guidance from people more proficient at the skill (at least at the time) than us.

Discipleship, developing as messengers of the good news of Jesus Christ, is much the same way. We might feel awkward or timid or like we don't know what we are doing when we first begin. Yet with time, practice, and guidance from folks a little more proficient than we are, we can develop in this area just as we have in our skills.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 2:39-42.

Based on these verses, how would you describe the home in which Jesus grew up?

What evidence do you see that Jesus' maturity was a process, a work in progress?

We know very little about Jesus from the time He was quite young until He began His ministry, but we do know some things. Verse 40 tells us that Jesus “grew up.” The Greek verb tense is one that communicates ongoing or progressive action—a process. And it tells us that this growth process took place in three spheres: physical (“became strong”), intellectual (“filled with wisdom”), and spiritual (“God’s grace was on Him”). While Jesus was fully divine with all the characteristics of divinity, He temporarily set aside or put in escrow some aspects of that divinity that He might fulfill what it means to be human. As a child, Jesus did not know all things; rather, He “grew up” mentally and spiritually just as He grew physically from the baby in the manger to the lad in the temple to the Son of Man in ministry. While we can’t say with absolute certainty, verse 40 seems to address the time from Jesus’ infancy (v. 21) at least until He was 12 years old (v. 42). Jesus’ maturity was not accomplished in days or weeks, or even months.

We are not surprised that Mary and Joseph contributed to Jesus’ growth. We would have expected that and we are not disappointed. We see that even before He was old enough to comprehend, they were in the practice of being obedient to the Lord (“they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord,” v. 39). They also set a consistent example for Jesus and engaged Him in spiritual training by regularly making the trek to Jerusalem to participate in the “Passover Festival” (vv. 41-42). Passover commemorated God’s deliverance of the Jewish people from their enslavement in Egypt and foreshadowed ultimate deliverance when the Lamb of God’s blood was shed for salvation from enslavement to sin.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 2:46-47.



Who in these verses contributed to Jesus' growing spiritual maturity?

What evidences of Jesus' growing spiritual maturity do you find in the passage?

Do you see any surprises or ironies in this account?

It is instructive that Jesus was found "in the temple complex sitting among the teachers." Often in the Gospels we find the Jewish teachers in a confrontational or disparaging position against Jesus. That is not the case here, though, as 12-year-old Jesus had apparently sought out these teachers to learn from them. Notice three specific ways Jesus and these teachers interacted. Jesus was "listening to them." They knew more than He did and He was ready to hear what they had to say. But He also was "asking them questions." Perhaps He came with questions He had been wrestling with or pondering. Perhaps the things the teachers taught sparked questions in young Jesus' mind. Whatever the situation, He sought to have clarified things that hadn't yet come into clear focus for Him. But these teachers also asked Jesus questions, for they were "astounded at ... His answers." Jesus seems to have been very eager to learn from these teachers, but they also seem quite willing to have invested their time and energy to help an interested young man grow in understanding.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 2:48-52.

What evidence of Jesus' spiritual maturity do you find in this passage?

How much do you think Jesus understood at this point about who He was and what His purpose was?

What significance do you see in Jesus' response that He "had to be in My Father's house"?

Jesus had not only "astounded" (v. 47) the Jewish teachers, but He "astonished" His parents. Perhaps they marveled at where He was or what He was doing. At the very least, they were concerned Jesus had not made a point of accompanying them on the journey to head home and got on to Him for that. His response that He "had to be in My Father's house" is telling. Jews would regularly refer to God as "our Father" or "Father in heaven," but they apparently did not refer to Him as "my Father." Thus, by this point, Jesus had come to recognize His relationship with God in a unique way that other Jews seemingly did not. We cannot know exactly what Jesus understood at this stage about His relationship with the Father or His purpose, but it is seemingly obvious that He had insights beyond the typical Jewish faith. Even so, notice what verse 52 says. Similar to verse 40 that sums up Jesus' growth from birth to age 12, verse 52 states plainly that after the events in the temple "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people." To the three spheres of growth in verse 40, verse 52 adds a social sphere. But the remarkable element is that He continued to increase "in favor with



God.” The One who had already come to recognize a unique, personal relationship with “My Father” continued to grow in spiritual maturity beyond that point. And again as in verse 40, the placement of verse 50 suggests the increasing continued until we see Jesus again in Luke’s Gospel, at His baptism in 3:21.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Discipleship, becoming a proficient messenger of the gospel and growing spiritually, is a process that takes time. Where are you in the process? What evidence do you see that you have grown over the past year?

Who has invested time and energy into helping you grow spiritually? Into whom are you investing time and energy to help them grow? The example of this passage (sharing information, answering questions, and asking questions) serves as a good model for helping others grow.

If the Bible makes the point—not once but twice—that Jesus continuously grew spiritually, then certainly you and I still have things to learn. How will you assure that you continue to grow in the process of discipleship? In what area would you need to focus your growth over the next year?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Father, in our microwave culture we want everything to happen instantaneously. Help us realize that growing in our relationship with you is an ongoing process largely sparked by our investing in others what we have learned ourselves. May we so strongly desire to become ever more proficient messengers of the gospel that we will joyfully invest in the process.

LOOKING AHEAD

Chris Weaver will be preaching from Romans next Sunday. Encourage your group to look ahead to next week’s scripture passage as we are reminded about our call to share the gospel.

December 29, 2024 --- Romans 10:1-13



COMMENTARY

LUKE 2:39-52

2:39 Luke did not include several of the well-known incidents that appear in the Gospel of Matthew, including the visit of the magi and the trip to Egypt to avoid an attempt by Herod the Great to kill the infant Messiah (Mt 2:1-23).

2:40 This description of Jesus as a young boy is similar to that of John the Baptist in Lk 1:80. The additional elements emphasized that Jesus was filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on Him (see the similar description of Stephen in Ac 6:8,10).

2:41-42 This is the only incident Scripture reports about Jesus' life between the time He was a small child and His baptism by John (3:21-22). Adult Jewish males and their families were expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The Bar Mitzvah (Hb "son of the commandment") ceremony at age 13 marked the time when a Jewish male was recognized as a man. Since Jesus was now 12 years old, this was His last Passover before adulthood.

2:43-45 Joseph and Mary went a day's journey before worrying about Jesus because they assumed He was with the traveling party. It was completely out of character (see v. 51) for Him not to obey them in every respect.

2:46-47 Three days included one traveling from Jerusalem, one coming back, and the third searching for Jesus in the city. The teachers were rabbis who were scholars of the Mosaic law. It was highly unusual for a boy to be welcomed by a group of rabbis, much less amaze them with brilliant scriptural understanding.

2:48-50 Joseph and Mary did not understand that Jesus was referring to His heavenly Father (My Father's house; i.e., the temple), whom He also had to obey even when such obedience entailed giving His parents' concerns less priority.

2:51 The phrase kept all these things in her heart, like verse 19, implies that Mary herself was Luke's source for much of the unique material in chapters 1 and 2.

2:52 During the years in which Jesus lived in obedience to Joseph and Mary, He continually increased in wisdom (intellect and practical holiness), stature (growing to adult size), favor with God (spiritual closeness to the Father) and favor with people (social respect). Jesus' wisdom was already noteworthy as a young boy (see note at v. 40), and the rabbis marveled at His understanding at age 12. His advancement would have been astounding by the time He began His ministry.

