

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

³⁹When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth^a. ⁴⁰The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him^b. ⁴¹Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover^c. ⁴²And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast^d; ⁴³and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it^e, ⁴⁴but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances^f. ⁴⁵When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him^g. ⁴⁶Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions^h. ⁴⁷And all who heard

^a 2:39 **When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.** Luke leaves out the account of the escape to Egypt before Herod's massacre of infant and toddler boys (Matthew 2:13-18), but adds information no other writer does. Evidently Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem before they went to Egypt.

^b 2:40 **The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.** Can a sinless person learn anything? This becomes part of the information that helps us understand the incarnation. Jesus was fully God from the point of conception in Mary's womb. But He was also fully man. He did not possess superhuman knowledge and strength His whole life. On an earthly level He was dependent on His parents for His daily needs. This being the case, our Lord and Savior experienced growth physically, intellectually and spiritually during the period from infancy to age twelve.

^c 2:41 **Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.** This was part of obeying the Law of the Lord. The pilgrimage was a familiar one for young Jesus.

^d 2:42 **And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast.** Jesus was approaching *bar mitzvah*, the time when He would become a "son of the commandment." He would be required to travel to the temple thrice yearly with the other men. Going to Jerusalem at Passover meant that the family would participate in the choosing of a lamb, keeping it four days and take it to the temple for sacrifice.

^e 2:43 **as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it.** Keep in mind that by this time Joseph and Mary likely had several other children. Matthew 13:55-56 and Mark 6:3 give the names of four brothers of Jesus (James, Joses, Judas and Simon) and also says there were at least two sisters. This means that our heavenly Father sent His Son to be part of a family with seven or more children. Joseph and Mary had enough children prone to misbehavior to worry about. They were certainly not concerned about the One Who never sinned.

^f 2:44 **supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.** A day's journey may have been a ten or fifteen mile walk. In a large group it would have been easy to assume Jesus was there.

^g 2:45 **When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.** Jerusalem would have still been crowded with people leaving or preparing to leave after Passover.

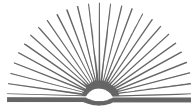
^h 2:46 **after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.** Some people have no appetite for Scripture. The Lord lived on more than bread. We might wonder what kind of questions Jesus asked the teachers having just witnessed the Passover rites.

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers^a.⁴⁸ When they saw Him, they were astonished^b; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You^c.”⁴⁹ And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house^d?”⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them^e.⁵¹ And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them^f; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart^g.⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men^h.^a

Question and answer is one God’s teaching methods. Observe the way God intended for the story of redemption to be passed on:

And when your children say to you, “What does this rite mean to you?” you shall say, “It is a passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.” Exodus 12:26-27

^a 2:47 **all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.** The amazement of the teachers can be compared to the reaction of the parents of another twelve-year-old, this time a girl whom Jesus raised from the dead (Luke 8:56). The word meant to be “beside yourself” and has even been translated “bewitched.” The same word is part of a quotation in Luke 24:22 as the Emmaus disciples described their feelings upon hearing that Jesus’ tomb was empty.

^b 2:48 **When they saw Him, they were astonished.** That word is used elsewhere of a “wow” reaction. Here it appears at least Mary was a little put out with her Son.

^c 2:48 **His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.”** Luke succeeds here in pointing out to us how normal the upbringing of Jesus was, showing the way He identified Himself with the human experience. Boys do things that scare their mothers. Jesus was no different. Mary’s word for her anxiety is used elsewhere by Luke of both grief at a perceived loss (Acts 20:38) and actual torment (Luke 16:24-25). Mary was not pleased to have such a scare and scolded the sinless Child.

Note that Mary considered Joseph the acting “father” of Jesus even though she knew the biological truth.

^d 2:49 **He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?”** This was not a slam on parental authority. It was a history lesson for Mary. It was a reminder of the words of Gabriel:

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” Luke 1:35

Later Jesus spoke of another house of His Father as a place with plenty of room for those who know the Way (John 14:1-6).

^e 2:50 **they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.** The lesson had been taught but the students were not yet ready to learn it.

^f 2:51 **He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them.** Note that Joseph and Mary did not seek a way to get Jesus up to Jerusalem so His talent could be recognized and He could have the best opportunities for advancement. The brought Him up in their own home in relative obscurity because that is what parents do. It was not yet time to send Him into battle.

^g 2:51 **His mother treasured all these things in her heart.** This a different “treasure” word than the one used of Mary’s thoughts in Luke 2:19. Mary *guarded* this memory. It was one more piece of the puzzle resolved after her Son had risen from the dead.

^h 2:52 **Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.** Jesus was growing up. That is where Luke physician stands alone among the gospel writers pointing out normal human development before Jesus started His public ministry.

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^a 2:39-52 This text does not tell us that Joseph and Mary were perfect parents nor does it imply that the Father wanted Jesus in the most stable environment available. If that were true He would not have sent Him into a sin-cursed world. But the fact that Jesus was born under the law of Moses and was in fact the living fulfillment of the law necessitated that He be nurtured in a home where God's law was taught and lived. This makes the home of Joseph and Mary a pattern for those of us who want to point our children to the cross. Here are some practical applications when we consider the way we minister to children:

a. For parents:

- On one hand, that child belongs to you, not the state or the church. Parents and grandparents, no youth pastor or Christian worker should take your place as the primary instructors of your children.
- On the other hand, that is child is not yours, but God's. You should not send little people into the world to fight your battles, but you should not seek to hang on and protect forever. You will eventually have to send your arrows out into combat. Prepare them. Set aside your work for public gatherings with the people of God like Joseph and Mary did (Hebrews 10:25).

b. For workers in children's ministry:

- Be diligent in your study. Your role is more than babysitting or showing up Sunday morning and reading a lesson. You are a steward of a child who is not yours.
- Find ways to serve those who have children. You will sometimes be in a position to impart truths to young people that fathers and mothers do not. Families in Israel expected their children who could understand to participate in worship and instruction (Nehemiah 4:2). So should we.

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