

HE SHALL BE CALLED "OUR WONDERFUL COUNSELOR" LUKE 2:41-52

Luke's Gospel opens with a number of so called "infancy narratives." They include: the announcement to Zechariah (1:5-23); the announcement to Mary (vv. 26-38); the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth followed by Mary's song (vv. 39-56); the birth of John followed by Zechariah's song (vv. 57-80); the birth of Jesus (2:1-7); the visit of the shepherds (vv. 8-20); and Jesus' presentation in the temple (vv. 21-40). Although the story of Jesus' visit to the temple twelve years later isn't exactly an infancy story, it clearly brings the infancy narratives to an appropriate end (2:52; cf., 1:80; 2:40). One commentator offers the following more detailed explanation of Luke's purpose for including it: "The purpose of this story is to transition to Jesus' ministry by demonstrating his exceptional spiritual and physical growth. The account has two themes. The first is Jesus' growing awareness of his unique father-son relationship with God . . . The second theme is Jesus' growth in wisdom, as revealed in his dialog with the Jewish teachers in the temple" (Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 266).

This Week's Core Competency

Kindness/Goodness – I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Jesus is clearly aware of his identity and mission by the time he converses with the temple teachers

What's this wisdom that has been given him?

– Mark 6:2

at twelve years of age. When he responds to his mother's question with a question of his own, he indicates as much. He refers to "my Father's house" not "our Father's house." "When the boy first became conscious of his peculiar relation to the Father in heaven we do not know. But he has it now at twelve and it will grow within him through the years ahead in Nazareth" (Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 2:35). This awareness of his identity and mission, which would continue to grow from age twelve, had apparently been growing until that time as he developed and matured. What he knew in his divine nature, he became aware of in his human nature as he grew in wisdom and stature.

Others recognized that Jesus was no ordinary twelve-year-old. Luke tells us that everyone who overheard his conversation with teachers in the temple "was amazed at his understanding and his answers" (2:47). On this incident, one commentator explains: "Jesus' wisdom (cf. 2:52) caused Israel's leading teachers to be amazed. No doubt Luke wanted his readers to see in this incident the unique wisdom of God's Son. This amazement is caused by the wisdom of his understanding as revealed by both his questions (2:46) and answers (2:47) . . . Luke may have intended his readers to see in this incident a supernatural display of wisdom" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 122).

When it comes to knowing the right thing to do, if we need anything, it's supernatural wisdom. And now we know where to find it. We get it from Jesus, our messianic king and savior, who is endowed with the divine wisdom needed to

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govern Israel and the nations. About the branch from Jesse, the prophet assures us, "He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or what he hears with his ears, but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth" (Isa 11:3-4). This wisdom is on display in his discourses recorded in the Four Gospels. No wonder Matthew closes his with Jesus' commandment to "make disciples . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (28:19-20).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Isaiah 9:6

*For unto us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Luke 2:41-52

41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. 43 After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then

they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "every year" in v. 41.
- * Bracket "Feast of the Passover" in v. 41.
- * Circle "twelve" in v. 42.
- * Bracket "after the Feast was over" in v. 43.
- * Box "but" indicating contrast in vv. 43, 50, 51.
- * Bracket "after three days" in v. 46.
- * Circle "teachers" in v. 46.

- * Circle "amazed" in v. 47.
- * Circle "your father" in v. 48.
- * Underline the rhetorical question in v. 49.
- * Circle "my Father's house" in v. 49.
- * Highlight v. 49.
- * Circle "treasured" in v. 51.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Passover was one of three annual festivals. What did that celebration entail? (Cf., Ex 12:1-20)
2. What do you infer about Jesus' parents from verses 41-42?
3. Put the events described in verses 43-46 in chronological order.
4. The incident described raises puzzling questions. What puzzles you?
5. What is Luke getting at in verse 47?
6. Placed next to each other, verses 48 and 49 create palpable tension in the reader. How so?
7. The point of the narrative is found in Jesus' saying in verse 49. Put it in your own words.
8. Why would Luke add the comment in verse 51?
9. **Discussion:** Read verse 52 and talk about how Jesus could *grow* in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Jesus' visit to the temple at twelve years of age is the first story of this kind in the Gospels. It's fascinating for a couple of reasons. First, it tells us the only thing we know about Jesus' childhood. It comes as no surprise that this snapshot of him as an adolescent did not satisfy the curiosity of later generations. Consequently, we find in the apocryphal Gospels and other extra-biblical writings all sorts of stories about what Jesus said and did as a child. In the estimation of one writer: "Most of these stories are, however, so fantastic and childish and give such an unnatural and distorted representation that they cannot by a long way be compared with the contents of the four Gospels. We at once realize what an unbridgeable gulf exists between the canonical Gospels (written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost by personal witnesses or by persons who had firsthand information at their disposal), and the apocryphal writings (which are the fruit of fabrications and legends)" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 125-26). Second, it contains the first red-letter words, the first words of Jesus, recorded in the Gospels.

Verses 41-48 set the stage for Jesus' pronouncement in verse 49. He travels to Jerusalem with his father and mother to celebrate the Feast of Passover. Joseph and Mary are godly parents who make the three-day trip every year. This year is different, however. Jesus is twelve, and the following year he will become a "son of the covenant" obligated to obey the law as an adult. When the feast is over, his parents join their travelling companions and leave for Nazareth unaware that they are leaving Jesus in Jerusalem alone. (Apparently when a large group of festival pilgrims traveled together, the women and younger children went ahead while the men and older boys followed behind. Perhaps Joseph thought Jesus was with his mother and siblings at the same time Mary thought he was with his father.) When they stop the first night, Jesus is nowhere to be found. Joseph and Mary are unable to sleep that first night. At the crack of dawn they head off to Jerusalem to search for him, and spend a second sleepless night together after they arrive. The following day they find him in the temple

conversing with Jewish teachers. Everyone within earshot is astonished by his words. The rabbis are taken aback by his wisdom and insight. "One suspects that some of these rabbis later remembered this incident when Jesus became a popular teacher Himself. Obviously, Jesus already had unusual wisdom and insight into the Scriptures, which were the center of these discussions" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Luke," 2017 ed., 55, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/luke.pdf). His parents are astounded by what he is doing. Relieved yet annoyed, mother Mary scolds her son, saying in essence, "Son, you should not have treated us like this. Your father and I have been worried sick searching for you." Her attitude was unwarranted but understandable.

Jesus answers by saying, in essence, "You did not need to search for me. You knew I had to be in my Father's house." On Jesus' reply to his mother, one commentator observes: "Mary and Joseph's anxiety contrasts with Jesus' calmness. Mary's reference to Jesus' earthly father also contrasts with Jesus' reference to His heavenly Father. Jesus' first question prepared His parents for His significant statement that followed in His second question. Jesus' response to Mary and Joseph showed that He regarded His duty to His heavenly 'Father,' and His 'house' (temple), as taking precedence over His duty to His earthly father and his house" (49). Clearly Jesus is aware of his unique relationship to God, his divine Father. What's more, he is conscious of the divine imperative on his life. "I must be (*Gk dei*) in my Father's house," he says. With regard to divine necessity, one commentator writes: "Luke loves to mark key sayings with *dei* ('it is necessary') to show the presence of the fulfillment of God's plan (4:4; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7. 26, 44). Here is the high point of the infancy narrative, as Jesus explains his call in his own words. In the meantime, he is obedient to his parents" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 101). Finding Jesus in the temple at twelve is analogous to finding young Tiger Woods on the golf course. In either case, it's impossible to miss that both are headed for greatness—albeit of very different sorts.

The Message of the Passage

Jesus is truly the Son of God and Savior for as an adolescent he demonstrated remarkable wisdom that stemmed from his unique relationship to God and his Father's unique calling on his life.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Where is the wisdom of Christ to be found?

How can we access that wisdom?

Identify an issue you are currently facing requiring divine wisdom.

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 41 **every year** "Went' is an example of the iterative imperfect which indicates that Jesus' family habitually went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. 'Every year' further emphasizes this" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 120). "The opening verse not only sets the stage for the episode itself, but once again underscores the faithfulness and piety of Joseph and Mary" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 42).
- v. 41 **Feast of the Passover** "Passover was one of three annual festivals Jewish men were required to celebrate in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16). Passover itself was the opening feast of the seven-day (or eight-day by another reckoning) festival called the Feast of Unleavened Bread and was celebrated on the fifteenth day of Nisan. The entire feast, however, was popularly called the Feast of Passover (cf. Luke 22:1; John 13:1). Passover commemorates God's deliverance or exodus of his people out of Egypt and the death angel's passing over Israel's firstborn. In this last plague the death angel visited Egypt's firstborn. However, when he came upon the house-holds of Israel, he observed the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the door lintels and 'passed over' those homes" (Stein, 121).
- v. 42 **twelve** "At the age of thirteen a Jewish boy became obligated to observe the law (Nid. 5:6; Nazir 29b) and in more recent years has begun to be called a 'son of the covenant-Bar-Mitzvah'" (121). "The Rabbinical law enjoined (Yoma, 82 a) that even before that-two years, or at least one year-lads should be brought up to the Temple, and made to observe the festive rites. Unquestionably, it was in conformity with this universal custom that Jesus went on the occasion named to the Temple" (Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, 120).
- v. 43 **after the Feast** I.e., "after seven days" (Stein, 121), or "on the third day of the Paschal week" as permitted by the law (Edersheim, 120; see note on v. 46 teachers), Jesus remained in Jerusalem while Joseph and Mary were returning home.
- v. 46 **after three days** "After the first day of travel from Jerusalem, they returned back on the second day to Jerusalem; and they found Jesus on the third day" (Stein, 122).
- v. 46 **teachers** "We know that it was the practice of the members of the various Sanhedrims—who on ordinary days sat as judicatories, from the close of the morning to the time of the evening sacrifice (*Sanh.* 88 b)—to come out upon the Sabbaths and feast-days on 'the terrace of the Temple,' and there publicly to teach and expound, the utmost liberty being given of asking questions, discussing, objecting, and otherwise taking intelligent part in these lectures. On the occasion of Christ's presence, these discussion would, as usual, be carried on during the 'Moed Katon,' or minor festive days, intervening between the second and the last day of the Paschal week" (Edersheim, 120; see note on v. 43 after the feast).
- v. 46 **asking** Jesus was no curious young lad; he was asking "probing questions designed to elicit decisions" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGNT, 127). "The scene of the boy Jesus in the temple anticipates Jesus' public ministry by presenting to the reader a twelve year old with precocious understanding of religious questions and with a developing sense of his own special destiny" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:54).
- v. 47 **amazed** "His unaffected questions and answers to their questions showed so many proofs of exceptional insight and lucid intelligence that the doctors marveled at it. With the Child Himself, however, there was no boasting, self-conceit, arrogance or self-exaltation" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 127). "We have already seen the response of 'amazement' in 2:18, 33, and this was a favorite word of Luke's (see comments on 2:18). Since this amazement is frequently the result of an encounter with the supernatural (cf. 8:56; 24:22; Acts 2:7, 12), Luke may have intended his readers to see in this incident a supernatural display of wisdom" (Stein, 122).
- v. 48 **why** Mary's question betrays her inward emotion "in words that give evidence of her deep motherly affection and her anxiety at the same time" (Geldenhuys, 127). The term "anxiously" refers to "deep mental anguish and pain (16:24-25; Acts 20:38)" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 100).
- v. 49 **why** "The point of the narrative has to do with Jesus' sense of mission and his preparation for it. This is most evident in the questions he asks his relieved (and possibly perturbed) parents" (Evans, 44). Jesus' questions "can be understood in two ways: (1) Why were you searching all over for me? Didn't you know I would be in the temple? (2) Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know I must be in my Father's house? The latter (which focuses on the why) is more probable than the first (which focuses on the where), since it better fits the thought of the rest of this verse" (Stein, 123).
- v. 49 **my Father's house** Lit., "in the _____ of my Father." This idiom can mean "in my Father's house" or "about my Father's business." The context favors the first since that is where Jesus is found" (Bock, 101).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Ever used one of these tags on social media: #parentingfail #mostokayestmom #dadoftheyear? I sure have. This week's passage reminds me of one of my more stellar moments when I lost my oldest son at the zoo. I remember standing at the elephant area screaming his name from the top of my lungs. Surrounding parents had one of two looks, either "Been there. You'll find him in a minute," or "Irresponsible parent! How could you lose your child?" That sick feeling in the pit of my stomach: #parentingfail. A few minutes that felt like an eternity later, another parent in the zoo brought him to me. I remember crying and holding him and trying not to yell and him crying and the look of betrayal in his eyes: #mostokayestmom. Almost every parent has a horror story of losing their child or failing him/her in some way. It is encouraging to me to read that Mary and Joseph were entrusted with the Son of God... and lost Him! They weren't perfect parents. God chose them anyway. At Hillsong a few weeks ago, one of the artists said, "Many people think excellence is perfection, when really excellence is giving your very best to God." We view parenting excellence as perfection. Today shift this view of excellence to being the parent God created you to be. Offer your best to Him and Him alone. Show yourself and your child love, mercy and grace. I'm praying for sweet family moments this holiday season.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Isa 9:6, Lk 2:41-51

1. From Isaiah 9:6, what are the names of Jesus listed?
2. In the Luke passage, where did Jesus' parents find him?
3. What was Jesus doing in the temple and how did the people react?

What Do You Think

From Isaiah 9:6, what does it mean that "the government will be on His shoulders"?

What R U Going To Do

Jesus obeyed his Heavenly Father, and His earthly parents. This week, what is one thing you can do to obey your Heavenly Father? Your parents? Pray and ask God to help you!

Core Comp

Kindness/Goodness - I treat others better than myself.

Memory Verse

Isaiah 9:6 - *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.