
Lesson Overview

Biblical Passage Luke 2:41-52

Supporting Passages Ephesians 6:1-3

Memory Verse Luke 2:52

Biblical Truth Although fully God and fully man, Jesus' identity as the Son of God determined His purpose and actions in His life.

Context The previous lesson studied Jesus' coming to earth as a baby. He became God's presence in the world for the purpose of redemption. This lesson continues looking at Jesus' purpose as expressed through His childhood. Jesus clearly revealed that His identity as the Son of God took precedence over any earthly attachments. Even as a boy, Jesus showed that His purpose was to do God's will.

Learning Goals

- Students will evaluate how Jesus honored His family while still fulfilling God's purpose for His life.
- Students will evaluate how they develop godly priorities in their own lives.

Prayer Suggestions

As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.

- Pray that students will discover how Jesus fulfilled God's purpose and plans for Him even as a young boy.
- Pray that students will seek God's calling in their lives.
- Pray that the parents of your students will lead them to make God the priority in their lives.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

Jesus accompanied His parents, Mary and Joseph, to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of the Passover. This three-day journey was an annual, joy-filled celebration. The family traveled with a caravan of family members and other Galilean families. This provided a measure of protection against bandits and marauders.

While in Jerusalem, Jesus became separated from His parents. They left Jerusalem to return to Nazareth, but realized after the first day's journey that Jesus was missing. They found Him three days later in the Temple engaged in dialogue with the rabbis. Those who heard Him were amazed at His insight, but His mother wasn't happy when she finally found her Son. Afterward, Jesus returned home with His parents and was obedient to them. This visit to Jerusalem is the only glimpse the Bible records of Jesus' adolescent years. It provides a picture of Jesus' commitment to His Heavenly Father's mission and His obedience to His earthly parents' authority, all at a very young age.

Importance

This passage teaches the Essential Truth that **Jesus is God and Savior**. This passage of Scripture is important because it helps learners identify with Jesus in a unique way. All other Scriptures about Jesus before this Scripture present Jesus the Christ that is yet to come and Jesus the infant and toddler. All Scripture that follows these verses presents Jesus as an adult and as the Ascended One. This passage, however, is a rare glimpse of Jesus as an adolescent. His dependence on His Heavenly Father and His obedience to His earthly parents is a model for believers, as Jesus was both teacher and student in this passage. He has much to teach us about the love of His Father and the obedience and sacrifice involved in following His way.

This passage also touches on other Essential Truths: **The Bible is God's Word** and **Salvation is by Faith Alone**.

Interpretation

Luke 2:41-42 Ancient Jewish Law required every adult male to take part in certain events. However, after the exile to Babylon took place in 586 B.C., Jews were scattered throughout the inhabited world. It became impossible for most to go to Jerusalem for these feasts. Nevertheless, many Jews who lived in Palestine traveled to the city for the most important of these celebrations: Passover. The Passover Feast portrayed a picture of God's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt. During the Passover Feast, a lamb was sacrificed in remembrance of the lambs slain in Egypt whose blood was spread on the doorposts to protect infant males from death (Ex. 11:1-12:51).

Jewish tradition held that when a boy turned thirteen years old, he became an adult. He was then expected to carry out all the responsibilities that came with being a Jewish man and a son of the Law. The Bar Mitzvah ceremony is a modern recognition of that tradition; in it, a thirteen-year-old male becomes a son, or *bar* in Hebrew, of the commandment, *mitzvah*.

Jewish fathers prepared their sons for the day when they officially entered adulthood. It was common for the father to take his son to certain religious celebrations during the year before his thirteenth birthday. This may explain why Jesus accompanied **Mary mother of Jesus and Joseph, Jesus' earthly father** to the spring Passover Feast in Jerusalem. However, Jesus might have gone with them to the festival every year because of its importance.

Luke 2:43-45 Although the Passover festival was a seven-day event, the first two days were the most important. Many travelers left Jerusalem on the third day.

Jesus was not left in Jerusalem because of parental neglect. Jesus and His parents traveled with a group on the way to and from Jerusalem. That group probably included extended family—aunts, uncles, and cousins—as well as neighbors from Nazareth and the Galilean region. Often women and young children traveled in front while older boys and men brought up the rear. Perhaps both Mary and Joseph wrongfully assumed Jesus was with the other parent. Perhaps they assumed He was with another relative. Whatever the case, they realized Jesus was not with the group after a day of traveling. This might have happened when they stopped for the night. They probably headed back to Jerusalem at first light to find Him.

Luke 2:46 Luke stated that Mary and Joseph found Jesus “after three days.” Most likely, this refers to the amount of time that had elapsed from the time they realized He was missing. The time would have included a day for the return trip and at least part of another day searching in Jerusalem. They found Jesus in the Temple complex in the presence of “the teachers.” He was not only “listening to them,” but also responding to questions they asked.

On the Sabbath and during the feast days, men of the **Sanhedrin** and other Jewish **teachers** often sat on benches in a circle with learners (usually adults) seated on the ground around them. These rabbis taught from the Hebrew Scriptures, expounded upon Jewish tradition, and took questions from those in their audience. One method of rabbinic teaching was similar to Socratic dialogue. Students would ask questions of their teachers; the teachers would then respond with counter-questions. This could have been the kind of teaching in which Jesus was immersed.

Luke 2:47 It was typical for the rabbis to be teaching, but Jesus was anything but a typical student. He was not yet considered a son of the Law, but Luke noted, “Everyone who heard Him was **amazed** at his understanding and his answers.” Jesus’ grasp of the Law was evidence of His divine identity. It was not just that He knew the facts of Scripture; He had an incredible understanding of God’s Word. The word *understanding* describes an ability to put the pieces together and discover the relationship between them. Jesus could see the meaning behind the facts. Isaiah’s prophecy about the Messiah was being fulfilled: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:2). Clearly Jesus’ understanding had not come from the Jewish leaders but from God Himself.

“Everyone” who heard Him was surprised at His insights. Apparently, this even included the Jewish rabbis. However, within a couple of decades some of those leaders would reject Him; they would oppose Him specifically because He taught His insights into God’s Word.

Luke 2:48-50 Mary and Joseph were “**astonished**” when they discovered where Jesus was and what He was doing. They knew God had sent Jesus as the Messiah who would save His people from their sins. Still, they did not understand exactly what that meant. God’s plan for Jesus was obviously beyond what they could imagine.

Mary was clearly upset when she found her son. She asked Him, “Why have you treated us like this?” Most parents would react the same way: praying one minute that their son was alright, and then scolding him out of concern and fear the moment he was found. Jesus was not fazed. To Him, the Temple was a natural place to be. He was amazed that His mother would show so much concern for His whereabouts.

Jesus had experienced a normal human life throughout His childhood, but Scripture does not tell how much He knew about who He really was. Mary may have shared what she knew with her son as He grew, but ultimately God the Father would give Jesus greater revelation about this as He matured. Jesus’ response to His mother indicated that God had been doing so throughout the years.

Jesus’ words in verse 49 are the first words spoken by Him in the Gospel of Luke. They reveal that Jesus had greater insight into His divine nature and mission than His mother did.

Mary’s statement to Jesus emphasized His relationship with Joseph (“your father”). Jesus’ response emphasized His relationship with God (“my Father”). Jesus may have used questions to disarm Mary’s concern. Nevertheless, He seemed almost shocked that she did not remember or understand who He was.

Jesus’ response to His mother (“I **had to** be”) revealed that His obedience to God’s call must have priority over the concerns of His parents. Parental authority and respect do not suffer when a child gives preference to God. Mary and Joseph knew Jesus was profoundly unique. Gabriel’s message, the virgin birth, and the visit of the Magi amply demonstrated His uniqueness. Still, His earthly parents could not understand the scope and nature of this uniqueness at the time. Over the ensuing years, it would slowly be revealed to them.

Luke 2:51-52 Luke did not want to leave the impression that Jesus was a rebellious child. He added that Jesus accompanied Mary and Joseph home to Nazareth “and was obedient to them.” Jesus’ early recognition of His unique relationship with God did not require Him to leave or rebel against His parents. The word “obedient” that Luke used clearly communicates that Jesus continually submitted to His parents’ authority. Jesus voluntarily submitted to His parents; they could not force it upon Him.

For Mary, these events were more that she “treasured” from that time forward. While the word used here is different from that used in Luke 2:19, the words are similar. This instance emphasized how Mary carefully and continually remembered all she had experienced at the Temple. It seems she was always thinking about the things she had experienced with her son.

Luke added a final word about Jesus’ life from that time forward. His statement probably referred to the next eighteen years, the years before His public ministry began. “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” These words speak of His intellectual maturity that went beyond mere knowledge (“wisdom”), His continued physical growth from boy to man (“stature”), His moral and spiritual maturity (“favor with God”), and His social development (“favor with . . . men”).

Implications

Some students are at the stage in life in which they think that no one should tell them what to do. As they begin

making their own decisions, many of them tend to bristle against parental authority. They may think that their parents are out of touch and that their rules are outdated. The Bible provides clear instruction regarding a child's responsibility to obey his or her parents. The greatest example of this is seen in Jesus. He submitted to His parents throughout the years when He was under their authority.

The challenge for many parents is encouraging their students to discover and follow God's will for their lives, whatever that may be. Parents have a great responsibility to assist their children in spiritual growth. Parents must guide their children to become more dependent on God and less dependent on their parents. It can be a challenge for parents to allow God's will to have precedence over their own wishes.

The young boy Jesus was zealous for the wisdom of God. His zeal should serve as an example for teens and adults. We should be concerned about maturing in the wisdom and knowledge of God and in obedience to His commands. How does your desire to grow spiritually compare to your desire for other things?

Teaching Plan

Connect

Review Questions

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

Print one copy of the "Review Questions" activity sheet for your use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide the context for today's lesson.

Master Teacher Option: Paper Planes and Priorities

(10 minutes, moderate set-up)

Students will complete in a paper airplane contest.

Provide paper for each student.

Pass out paper and allow students a couple of minutes to make and refine their own airplanes. When everyone is ready, hold a contest to see whose plane flies the farthest. After the competition, interview the winner briefly with the following questions:

- **What made your airplane special?**
- **What do you think is the top priority when making airplanes for competitions like this?**

Conclude by saying: **Even in the simplest competitions, priorities are important. In life, priorities are key to success. In order to honor God, our priorities must reflect His priorities. In today's lesson, we'll look at how Jesus established His priorities at an early age.**

Explore

Master Teacher Key Study: His Adolescence

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Luke 2:41-52 to examine Jesus' act of obedience toward His Heavenly Father.

Print one copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen for each student.

Learning Goal: Students will evaluate how Jesus honored His family while still fulfilling God's purpose for His life.

Pass out pens and copies of the Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Luke 2:41-52.

Transform

Deeper Discussion

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss how they develop godly priorities in their own lives.

Learning Goal: Students will evaluate how they develop godly priorities in their own lives.

Use the following questions to lead students do discuss how they develop godly priorities in their own lives:

- **How could seriously putting God first as a child of God affect our lives?**
- **How does putting God first and recognizing God's purpose for us affect the choices and decisions we make today?**
- **How do our lives illustrate God's purpose in the world?**
- **How can we fulfill God's purpose now and prepare to fulfill it in the future?**

Divide students into groups of two or three and encourage them to discuss ways they could work to make God the highest priority in their lives. After a couple of minutes, lead students in prayer, that God will help them focus their priorities and their lives on Him as they make decisions every day.

Master Teacher Option: Illuminated Purpose

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will use a light bulb and a lamp to illustrate how a person fulfills his or her purpose by plugging in to God.

Provide a lamp and a light bulb. Also provide paper and pens.

Learning Goal: Students will evaluate how they develop godly priorities in their own lives.

Show the light bulb to students. Ask: **What is the purpose of this light bulb?** (*to give off light, to light up dark places*) Emphasize that the light bulb is useless unless it has a source of electricity, just like a candle is useless without a source of fire. Place the light bulb in the lamp, and then turn the lamp on. Highlight that the light bulb can now fulfill its purpose because it is aligned with the very thing that will allow the bulb to fulfill its purpose.

Explain that the lamp is like God, and we are like the light bulb—we must align ourselves with God so

that we can fulfill our purpose in Him. Ask: **What are some ways that we can know what God's purpose is in our lives?** Allow students to share answers. Emphasize actions such as studying and reading the Bible, praying, and talking with mature followers of Christ about the Bible.

Distribute the paper and pens. Instruct students to write down some ways that they can better know God's purpose through how they read the Bible and pray. Encourage them to write down the names of one or two spiritually mature adults of the same gender with whom they can talk about God and the Bible. Encourage students to take this list home with them this week and to put it in a place where they can see it as a reminder to seek God's purpose and to align themselves with it.

Take Home Activity

Family Devotion

(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)

Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 4: "He Is the Gift"
The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.

1. In Luke 2, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that _____ should be taken.
 - a. all the firstborn among the Israelites
 - b. his picture
 - c. a census of the entire Roman world**
 - d. a census of the Roman senate
2. Joseph and Mary traveled from _____ to _____.
 - a. Judea to Samaria
 - b. London to Paris
 - c. Damascus to Jerusalem
 - d. Nazareth to Bethlehem**
3. Luke 2:9 says about the shepherds: "The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were _____."
 - a. astounded
 - b. mystified
 - c. terrified**
 - d. filled with joy
4. God said that _____ would be a sign to the shepherds.
 - a. a hangnail on their index fingers
 - b. a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger**
 - c. a 20-year drought
 - d. an old blind man in the Temple
5. Finish this verse: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth _____ to men on who his _____ rests."
 - a. joy / favor
 - b. peace / love
 - c. peace / favor**
 - d. curses /irritation

LESSON 5

HIS ADOLESCENCE

Biblical Passage: Luke 2:41-52

Memory Verse: Luke 2:52 “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”

1. At an early age, Jesus focused on putting God _____ (Luke 2:41–50).
2. At an early age, Jesus learned to be _____ to God and then to His parents (Luke 2:51–52).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How could seriously putting God first as a child of God affect our lives?
 - How does putting God first and recognizing God’s purpose for us affect the choices and decisions we make today?
 - How do our lives illustrate God’s purpose in the world?
 - How can we fulfill God’s purpose now and prepare to fulfill it in the future?
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DUAL IDENTITY

Read verses 48–49 and note the differences between the following authority figures in Jesus’ life:

“Your Father and I”	“My Father”

How did having earthly parents and a heavenly Father affect Jesus’ identity?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

“Obedience to Christ nearly always costs everything to two people—the one who is called, and the one who loves that one.”
—*Oswald Chambers*

HIS ADOLESCENCE

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: Competing priorities are always a challenge. Many of the choices we make may be good—but are they the best? In a brief glimpse of Jesus at the age of twelve, He showed that He was already able to order His priorities, demonstrating a balance between His commitment to His Heavenly Father and honoring His earthly family. His life sets a great example for us to follow. Jesus existed as Mary and Joseph’s son but also as the Son of God. While living in submission to His earthly parents, Jesus always allowed His identity as the Son of God to direct the path in all aspects of His life.

1. At an early age, Jesus focused on putting God first (Luke 2:41–50).

Biblical Background: Every year, Jesus’ family observed the annual Passover Feast by going to Jerusalem (vv. 41–42). When His parents couldn’t find their missing twelve-year-old, they returned to Jerusalem to find Him (vv. 43–45). Even as a boy, Jesus concerned Himself with the things of God. For three days He remained in the Temple without His parents and had discussions with the teachers there. His parents found him in the Temple learning and giving amazing answers (vv. 46–47). His actions show that because **Jesus is God and Savior**, His first commitment was to His heavenly Father (vv. 48–50).

Illustration: For the Jewish boy today, becoming an adult member of the faith community is an important rite of passage in their lives. At the age of thirteen, the boy participates in a celebration of the *bar mitzvah*. The celebration includes the boy’s first reading of Hebrew Scriptures in the service, reciting the Ten Commandments, and being presented to the congregation as an active adult member. The ceremony also indicates that the boy is now responsible for his own actions and can be counted as one of the ten males needed within the synagogue. The ceremony is part of the process of passing the faith and godly priorities from parents to son.

Application: Jesus’ experiences at the Temple were a turning point in His life as well, and demonstrated His readiness to take on this responsibility.

2. At an early age, Jesus learned to be obedient to God and then to His parents (Luke 2:51–52).

Biblical Background: Jesus’ identity as man and God are clear in these verses. Mary expressed frustration that Jesus had caused her and His father worry. Jesus was likely surprised that they did not know where He was. He explained that His concern was the priority of His Heavenly Father. Yet, even though Jesus obediently returned to Nazareth with His parents (v. 51), His focus on putting God first in life positioned Him for growth in His relationships with God and people (v. 52).

Illustration: Clayton Byrd served in the France and Germany during World War II. One time, while on the front line, the soldier sharing a foxhole with him was wounded when shrapnel went through his helmet and punctured his skull. Nineteen-year-old Byrd picked up the soldier and carried him toward the Aid station. A lieutenant, fresh to war, stopped Byrd and told him to drop the soldier he carried and return to his post.

Byrd responded he would return to his post as soon as he got the wounded soldier to safety. The lieutenant threatened court-martial. Byrd responded, “Sir, you do what you have to do. I’ll do what I have to.” Byrd, a devout Christian, found out later that the soldier he helped survived the war, and the lieutenant’s request for a court martial was denied. In a time when obedience to command was essential, Byrd obeyed a higher calling. His decision risked his own future, but saved the life of another (*World War II Memoirs of Clayton Byrd*, unpublished, p. 25-26).

Application: As believers, we reflect Christ through our lives. Because we are His followers, we are driven to be obedient to His calling and commands. Obeying Him in faith illustrates our relationship with Him as His follower and child.

Conclusion: Even as an adolescent, Jesus recognized that God had to be first. And He lived and died as a result of that commitment. When we commit ourselves to developing Godly priorities, we have the opportunity to impact others with our faith . . . our families, our friends and associates, even people we meet briefly in the “foxholes” of life.

LESSON 5

HIS ADOLESCENCE

Biblical Passage: Luke 2:41-52

It had to be difficult to be the parents of the Son of God . . . knowing that He was special, yet not being able to fully comprehend all that He would be. Read Luke 2:41-52. This passage of Scripture points out that Jesus had possession of divinely inspired knowledge beyond his years. Yet His obedience to His heavenly Father required that He submit to His earthly parents. According to Scripture, He did, for He was ultimately without sin.

The challenge for Mary and Joseph, like all parents, was to allow their teenager to discover and follow the will of God for His life. Parents are to have that hands-on/hands-off approach, assisting and guiding where appropriate, teaching their teen to be less dependent on them, and more dependent on God.

With a consistent spiritual model provided by you, and with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, your teenager will grow into the person God has designed them to be. As they grow, your role is to encourage spiritual independence while at the same time providing an environment where they are encouraged and expected to obey and honor you.

Consider ways you might foster spiritual independence. How can you help your teenager “own” his or her faith?

CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- What are some times when the children in this family obeyed us as parents? What does it mean to “obey”?
- How is Jesus described in these verses?
- How does honoring our parents help us grow in our relationship with God