

Luke 2:39-52 “And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 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.** 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. 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.”**

This passage is bookended by two things: *The parents' obedience* to the entirety of the law and its customs in Jewish tradition and *the growth and development of Jesus*. The text states that Jesus' obedience and submission to his parents and to the Father's will led to his growth in three areas: (1) Wisdom and understanding, (2) spiritual and physical strength, (3) favorable reputation with God and his countrymen.

Transition: This passage is instructive for a life of discipleship to Jesus. As believers in Jesus we are now co-heirs and partakers of new life in the Holy Spirit. As such, we follow Jesus' example seeking to become more like him each day—this is called spiritual growth.

Question: What were the keys to Jesus' growth and what can we learn from them for our growth in the Lord?

1. A family environment that is conducive for growth (2:39, 41).

What do we see in these passages?

Luke begins this unit by giving us a glimpse into Jewish life in the first century. He states that Mary and Joseph were devout—performing everything (in relation to Jesus’ birth and dedication) that the Law of Moses commanded.

V. 41 states that the family made, at the very least, the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. Moses commanded in 3 separate texts that faithful Jews were to observe three national holidays/festivals that would commemorate what God had done—celebrating God’s hand of deliverance and the giving of the covenant with Abraham and the Law (Exodus 23:14; 34:23; Dt. 16:16). **We have testimony from other Gospels that Jesus and his family likely engaged in the other festivals as well.** Later in life, Jesus and the family take part in the festival of Tabernacles in addition to Passover, and we also see the early Jewish church regularly participating in the Feast of Pentecost.

Only the men were required by Moses to celebrate the festivals—starting with 13 year old men. But Mary is right there with Joseph and has brought their 12-year-old son. Not required by law to celebrate the feasts, but does so voluntarily because she is a devoted person the God.

But we have other evidences of Joseph and Mary’s piety and devotion to the Lord.

The result is Jesus’ own obedience. Children have the capacity to fall back on our example.

- **Mary was a virgin (1:27).** In both the Greek-Roman and Jewish world, virginity was held in high esteem publically. The Romans for example highly regulated sexual practices in the ancient world and espoused very high ideals especially for chastity before marriage. And Mary was a devout Jewish girl who followed the law of Moses and did not engage in promiscuous behavior.
- **Mary’s response was faithfulness (1:34, 38-39).** Mary’s response to Gabriel’s message about bearing the Messiah was one of reflection/thoughtfulness, reflexive faith, and immediate action.
 - **V. 34 states that when Gabriel told her she would have the Messiah, she asked “How can that be since I have not been with a man?”** The angel then explained it to her. This in contrast to Zechariah’s disbelief. Zach reacted by saying, “What sign will you give me so that I will *know this to be true?*” Gabriel is put off by this. His response to Zechariah, “I am the angel of the Lord who stands in the presence of God Almighty—I’m the sign!” Then he makes him mute for the duration of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. In contrast, Mary’s response is not one of incredulity, but curiosity. The angel sense she has faith—but she wants to know how? And he tells her.
 - **Vv. 38-39, Mary responds in knee-jerk, humble faith,** “Behold, I am the Lord’s servant—may it be as you have said.” In v. 39 she gets up immediately and goes to Elizabeth’s home to celebrate the news.

- **Mary's heart overflowed in praise (1:46-55).** The content of her song showed that she is an attentive student of God's word. She is likely illiterate and unschooled. But she has **eavesdropped and imbibed the weekly lessons recited in the synagogues and the stories reenacted in the temple feasts.** **She has listened to her pious father, uncles, cousins—surrounded by a network of faithful people.** Her song shows that *she knows her heritage*—she knows her story. Two times in this story it states that “Mary treasured these things, pondering them in her heart (2:19, 51). That word “ponder” in other contexts means to meditate and think deeply.
- **Joseph was industrious (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 63, Lk. 4:16ff).** We know hardly anything about him. We have his Davidic lineage right here in Chapter 3 and we have Mary's genealogy in Matthew 1 (which by the way is also attributed to Joseph—because significance back then was assigned to men not women).
 - **Jesus is referred to as “the carpenter” or “the carpenter's son.”** That word is the word *tekton* and it can mean craftsman or stonemason. But Joseph is not thought of according to his father's name “Yakov” or his father-in-law's name “Eli”—but Mk 6 and Mt 13 both have the crowds at Nazareth ask “isn't this the carpenter's son?” Mark just shortens that and calls him “the *tektown*” or carpenter. Joseph is most often known for being a blue collar father, unlike John the Baptists' family who were white collar priests. **Joseph's hard working example is evident in his designation.** They lived in Nazareth, 6 miles from Sepphoris—a one-hour walk to a bustling town undergoing renovation under Herod Antipas at the time. Plenty of carpentry work and Nazareth was a low-rent area to live.
 - **Each day Jesus walks for a couple of hours with his father** on their way to work. Up until this time he has been educated or enculturated in the home by his mother, in the weekly synagogue meetings and yearly festivals where the priests would teach the people for a week at a time. Additionally, it was Joseph's responsibility as the father to teach and train his children in the Torah.

And this is the kind of home environment that Jesus grows up in. A mother who is devoted to her God in obedience to the law, full of faith and action, overflowing in praise to God.

And Jesus grows in wisdom-understanding, spiritual and physical strength, and a favorable reputation with men and the grace of God on his life.

Beyond a godly home and family environment, the second factor that causes his growth...

2. A hunger for knowledge and understanding (2:46-51). Jesus has an **astonishing hunger and a voracious appetite** for knowledge and understanding of his faith. And this kind of thirst can only be slaked by direct and immediate interaction with the teachers and the temple.

Background: For Jesus, this whole experience was a defining moment.

What a site when they come over the hill—viewing 200k devout Jews packing the city. Every inn and every spare room rented out for the feast. Every street lined with vendors selling their crafts. Thousands of widows, beggars, orphaned children strategically placed to beg the out-of-towners for alms.

At sunrise on the morning of Passover songs and praises began to fill the streets, 20,000 priests divided into 24 divisions converge on the massive temple complex to attend to the festival.

In the morning the priests gathered the leaven bread to burn it as an offering, by midday the lambs were prepared—thousands upon thousands of lambs one per family.

By 3pm all activity stopped—a quiet Sabbath ensued—and the anticipation is electric. Joseph takes little Ye'shua into the temple where he can watch his father slaughter the sacrificial lamb while the priests capture the shed blood into gold and silver bowls—then sprinkle that blood on the altar and the Hallel psalms are sung—the nation worships God in sacrifice and celebration of all that God has done.

Joseph wraps the slaughtered lamb up in its own hide hauls it home with little Jesus in tow. In the evening, the lamb is cooked on a pomegranate spit grill—the family eats the lamb after sundown singing and celebrating what God has done—his judgment has passed over the faithful. **By amber candlelight little Jesus begins the tradition of asking his father questions. Why do we sacrifice the lamb? Why do we celebrate this feast?**

Joseph explains and reenacts for him and his siblings the exodus narrative. And the children sit captivated by the stories well into the night, enthralled by the faithfulness of God, the miraculous delivery and birth of their nation. As the sleepy eyed children are put to bed, the adults wander out into the streets where the celebration and the singing goes on for hours with torches lighting the city.

Jesus drifts off to sleep to the unforgettable images and scenes, and songs of devotion to Yahweh—the one true God of creation.

After the Passover feast the young family stays for another week with lots of free time to visit family, friends, and to sit in the temple courts listening to the great masters teach scores of Jewish

children and disciples. Jesus cannot get enough of this—his soul is enraptured by the majesty and the profound nature of this celebration.

On the day when his family packs up to leave—all of them assume that Jesus is with the other party. The women went ahead first and travelled up the long and wide road leading back to Nazareth, the men brought up the rear to keep a watchful eye on the women for their safety. A day into the trip, Joseph catches up to Mary at a watering outpost—and the boy Jesus is nowhere to be found.

That moment when you realize that you've lost God's one and only Son. All of us can identify with the humanity in this story.

They return back to Jerusalem which takes them another day back—they spend another day going from house-to-house, relatives, friends, neighbor kids that Jesus might have played in the streets with.

And then it occurs to them—the rabbis are still instructing the locals—and Jesus in that week could not drink in enough of their teaching and insights. So they find him...

- He is found “in the temple” (2:46a)—for learning, he's come to the right place.
- They found him sitting “among the teachers” (2:46b)—he's taken the right posture.
- They observed him “listening and asking” (2:46c)—he's engaging in the right activity.

Isaiah 11:2 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

This is the picture of Jesus. An insatiable appetite for God's truth and for understanding and wisdom. This is why they are astonished both at his questions and answers. A fresh keen insight into the word.

3. A uniquely divine nature (2:48-49).

Jesus was born in the time of Caesar Octavian—the great nephew of Julius Caesar. For over a century Rome prided itself in being a Republic governed by laws. Now **a supremely gifted administrator**, presiding over the Roman nation—a **cunning strategist** who won a decisive victory over Egypt—has risen to power. Octavian now leads the Roman empire and has the Senate declare him **“Augustus”—which is a priestly title meaning “Caesar the Sacred—Caesar the Pious.”** In addition to consolidating political and military power in Rome, Octavian Augustus is the high priest of Rome’s religious cult—and comes to be thought of by his followers as “The King of kings, Lord of lords—the son of god.”

And while this all plays out on the largest stage in the World, a little boy is born in backwater Bethlehem, raised in the middle of nowhere Nazareth. In the humblest of places—in utter obscurity.

- **He is God’s obedient Son (2:49).** Jesus’ life is characterized by perfect obedience—not just to God’s law but to his parents’ instruction. This is made possible because he is by nature God’s unique Son. Notice the text says that he is obeying the calling of God to be there but when his family requires him to return—he immediately obeys in an unqualified way.
- **He is God the obedient Son.** Christian theology teaches that Jesus is not just a son of God, or a favored servant or prophet of God—he is the Word who was with God and was God from eternity. And his appearance as a man is the first appearance of God made manifest in the flesh—a physical body. (Phil. 2:5-7) **“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”**

Jesus knows who he is and what his mission is supposed to be.

Jesus’ home life is conducive for intellectual, spiritual, physical and social growth.

Jesus is God’s obedient Son—growing up just like us. Obeying his parents, and ultimately the will of God the Father—and it was God’s will to crush him.

Communion/Worship: Our ushers are going to pass out the communion symbols, please hold them until the end of the song, take some time to reflect on contemplate all that Christ has done for us on the cross.

(Phil 2:8-11) “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”