

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Lesson 2: Jesus' Early Years

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

Jesus was the Son of God, but he also experienced life as an ordinary teenager. Even though Scripture doesn't talk specifically about his teenage years, it does give clues for how Jesus lived those years in preparation for the rest of his life on Earth. This lesson will focus on encouraging students to follow Jesus' example to use their teenage years to grow in wisdom and to prepare for the rest of life.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: In many ways, Jesus was a typical teenager—but he was preparing for an extraordinary life.
2. WHY: Like Jesus, teenagers today can grow in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and with people.
3. HOW: Students will identify some truths about how Jesus prepared in his teenage years for the rest of his life and how those same practices will benefit them today.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:39-52

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Proverbs 2 and James 1:2-8

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read Luke 2:39-52.

Jesus was raised in a traditional, religious Jewish household, which meant the family participated in multiple Jewish festivals every year. Passover was the pinnacle of these festivals, held in the early spring as a celebration of deliverance from slavery from the



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Egyptians. Jesus' family, together with a larger community, traveled by foot from Nazareth to Jerusalem—a distance of about 70 miles—to celebrate Passover. It was a big deal for Jews to participate in this annual celebration, which lasted about a week.

When Jesus wasn't found in the entourage traveling back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph were understandably anxious about their son's safety and whereabouts. Though they also understood Jesus was the Son of God, as his parents they must have forgotten that in this moment—leading to the memorable conversation about his Father.

Jesus was perfect, even as a teenager—obeying his earthly parents but paying even closer attention to obeying his heavenly Father. As you lead your group, encourage your students to follow Jesus' example of growing in wisdom, stature, obedience, and favor.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- How are your teenage years preparing you for the rest of your life? Share your thoughts tonight with the group.
- What was Jesus like as a 12-year-old kid? Find out when the group meets!

Parent Email

We've provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We've finished our two-lesson study on the birth and early years of Jesus' life. This week we looked at Jesus as a 12-year-old. Although Scripture doesn't give a lot of details about his adolescent years, the Bible does give some insight into how Jesus grew during that critical season of life.



Specifically, this week we discussed Luke 2:39-52 and saw how Jesus used his teenage years to grow in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and people. He demonstrated obedience toward God and toward his parents, and his teenage years prepared him for adulthood and his years of ministry.

Sometime this week, I'd love for you to keep the conversation going by discussing these kinds of questions with your teenager:

- What are some specific ways your teenage years can shape the rest of your life?
- How are obedience and wisdom connected to your spiritual preparation?
- How can you balance the desire to enjoy your teenage years while also preparing for the rest of your life? Are these goals in conflict? Explain.

And as a family this week, consider reading Proverbs 2 together and discussing when we need wisdom in life and how we find God's wisdom.

Have a blessed week!



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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, have students form groups of three or four, distribute paper and pens or pencils to the groups, and then SAY:

As a group, create a list of words or phrases that most people would use to describe a typical 12-year-old. Spend a couple of minutes creating as long of a list as possible, and then as a group, choose your top three words or phrases. Be prepared to explain why your group selected those words or phrases.

After about five minutes, bring everyone back together and have groups share and explain their selections.

ASK:

- *Do you think most of these words were fair or accurate? Why or why not?*
- *Which words or phrases best describe who you were at the age of 12?*
- *What do you think Jesus was like as a 12-year-old—and why?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Sometimes people view youth as something negative—the idea that a 12-year-old or a 15-year-old or an 18-year-old can't accomplish anything meaningful or lead a life of significance until they're older. But as we'll see today, being young isn't a bad thing—and Jesus offers a great example for you as a teenager to follow.*

TEACHING GUIDE

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor, (2) Jesus obeyed his Father—and his parents, and (3) Your teenage years are spiritual preparation for the rest of your life.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.



LEADER
TIP



LEADER
TIP



Read Luke 2:39-52 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's explore this passage together and discover some truths we can learn from Jesus when he was 12 years old.*

1. Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor

ASK:

- *Think about the lists your groups made a few minutes ago—which words or phrases would apply to 12-year-old Jesus, based on this passage?*
- *What made Jesus a typical 12-year-old? What made him different from the typical person that age?*
- *Verses 40 and 52 both talk about Jesus growing in wisdom. What does that mean—how does someone your age grow in wisdom?*
- *This passage says Jesus hung out in the Temple with religious leaders for three days. How does participating in God's family help our wisdom to grow?*
- *Verse 52 says Jesus grew in stature—in other words, he grew up physically. But the best physical growth is accompanied by physical health. As a follower of Christ, what are some risks of placing lots of emphasis on spiritual health but little emphasis on physical health?*
- *What are some ways “favor” can be a positive and beneficial thing? When might it be viewed as something negative or unfairly preferential?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Even though the Bible reveals very little about Jesus' teenage years, it clearly says that he grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and with other people. Perhaps God wanted us to just take notice that wisdom, stature, and favor are defining characteristics of the teenage years. Perhaps God wanted us to stay focused on just a few key goals and truths during adolescence.*

2. Jesus obeyed his Father—and his parents

ASK:

- *When have you struggled to obey your parents? Think about a specific time and what you learned from that situation.*



- *When Jesus stayed behind at the temple, was that an act of disobedience toward his parents? Why or why not?*
- *What do you think Jesus meant in verse 49?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The religious leaders were amazed at his answers to their questions. His parents didn't understand his answer to their question. And in all of this, Jesus understood that he had to be obedient to his heavenly Father—but that he also needed to obey his earthly parents. Just as Mary had been obedient to God in accepting the mission of birthing Jesus, we now see that Jesus displayed an obedient attitude, too. Obedience flows from love, honor, and respect.*

3. Your teenage years are spiritual preparation for the rest of your life

ASK:

- *What are some specific ways your teenage years can shape the rest of your life?*
- *How are obedience and wisdom connected to your spiritual preparation?*
- *How can you balance the desire to enjoy your teenage years while also preparing for the rest of your life? Are these goals in conflict? Explain.*
- *This is the only passage of Scripture that talks about Jesus between his birth and infancy, and the start of his earthly ministry as an adult. Considering that fact, what makes these verses so remarkable or memorable or noteworthy?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We see in Luke 2 that Jesus was spiritually preparing for adulthood—including his earthly ministry. He had a long-term perspective on his life; he wasn't just focusing on the "here and now." It's easy in our world to just focus on living for today, but living wisely as a follower of Christ requires a bigger view. Even as a 12-year-old, Jesus grasped the importance of wisdom, favor, and obedience.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

ASK:

- *When you think about the fact that Jesus was a teenager and dealt with issues that ordinary teenagers face, is that encouraging or is it intimidating? Why?*

