

JESUS THE STUDENT Luke 2.41-52

INTRODUCTION: According to answers.com, the average college student in the United States will change their major three times over the course of their college career. Also about 80% of college students change their major at least once¹. I was one of those students. I started out as physical education major, why I have no idea – seemed like a good idea at the time. Anyway, I changed majors and schools after the first year; my academics were so good the college invited me not to return for at least one semester. So I changed colleges and changed majors and my studies became much better. I even made the Dean's List a couple of quarters. I switched to a junior college and got my Associates Degree in Forestry. Two of our three daughters changed their major in college once as well.

Many high school students don't know what they want to do when they graduate much less what they want to study if they want to go to college. I normally tell people to save money and go to a junior college the first two years to get all the basics out of the way – math, English, history, all that. By the end of those two years you may have an idea what you want to do, or at least what you don't want to do which is helpful as well.

So if your average 17 or 18 year old high school graduate has no idea what they want to do, and if 80% of those attending college change their major at least once, sometimes more than once, then how is a twelve year old supposed to know what to do in life?

¹ "What percentage of US college students change their major?", www.answers.com (internet, accessed Apr. 23, 2019).

According to this one resource, *Wholly Kids: Guiding kids to life in Christ*², here are some insights into what your average 12 year old knows spiritually and emotionally:

They are already beginning to develop a religious belief system of their own;

They can already establish the discipline of daily Bible reading;

They can apply biblical principles to personal and social issues;

They are easily influenced emotionally and can cope with some feelings;

And there are no doubt some of what your average 12 year old today knows that we probably don't want to know.

Think about it, your average 12 year old today was born in 2007:

They have been born into a world that is constantly on-line 24-hours a day;

They have never known a world without iPhones and iPads; in fact, Apple unveiled the first iPhone in 2007;

The attacks of 9/11 may even be foreign to them;

The shopping mall was fading away and on-line shopping was the norm;

It is a really different world that the 12 year old is living in today.

But here's the question: does the average 12 year old know what they want to do in life?

Probably not, many going into college at 17 or 18 years of age have no idea what they want to do in life much less know what their calling from God is.

In Luke 2, we see a snapshot of Jesus at 12 years old, and at 12 Jesus had some interesting insights into His life that His parents did not understand. Here is what we learn from this one event in the life of Jesus:

² *Wholly Kids: Guiding kids to life in Christ*, Jeff Land, contributing editor (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2015).

THE CHRISTIAN WALK IS A LIFE OF LEARNING FROM GOD.

We're studying what the Bible teaches us about the early life of Jesus as He was in the temple listening and asking questions of the religious leaders.



FOR VBS TEACHERS: the whole point of this first day lesson is this³:

JESUS KNEW WHY HE CAME

I. THE EXPERIENCE THAT MADE AN IMPACT (vv. 41-42)

According to one biblical expert, when a Jewish boy reached the age of 12 he became, “a son of the Law” through a special ceremony that acknowledged him as such. At that age he was supposed to have learned enough to be sufficiently mature for following the Law of God. From that point he would be expected to attend the festivals in Jerusalem whose attendance the Law prescribed⁴.

If you were to read back several verses in Luke 2 you would discover that Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple when He was 8 days old in accordance with the Law, and that they would regularly go to the temple every year.

The example we set as parents when it comes to our faith in Christ is vitally important for our children. One resource I read indicated that children will adopt the faith practices of their parents until they are old enough to make their own decisions. So if we set the example for our children of a solid walk with Christ, then we are putting down a solid foundation for them as they grow and God begins to work in their own lives.

³ “VBS 2019 Missions Rotation Leader Guide” (Nashville: Lifeway, 2018), 6.

⁴ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 75.

This is the generational impact our faith has. Listen to two examples of how generations by our faith in the Psalms:

PS. 79.13: *So we your people and the sheep of Your pasture will give thans to You forever, to all generations we will tell of Your praise.*

PS 89.1: *I will sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord forever; to all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.*

The apostle Paul even praised the impact that faithful generations had made on the young pastor Timothy:

2 TIM. 1.5: *For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmonther Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.*

II. THE EXPLANATION THAT GAVE THEM INSIGHT (vv. 46-50)

We know very little about the early life of Jesus. We read of His birth, then we read of the Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the temple when He was 8 days old; we read of the wise men who came and found Jesus when He may have been around two, Here in Luke we read of this one experience in the life of Jesus when He was 12, and then we read nothing else until His ministry began when He was roughly 30 years old.

*Stages of Jewish teaching for boys*⁵:

⁵ H.D.M. Spence and J. Marshall Long, *St. Luke*, The Preachers Commentary, vol. XVI – Mark and Luke (Peabody: Hendrickson, nd), 42.

*Three years: he was given the tasseled garment directed by the Law in Num. 15.38-41;
Deut. 22.12;*

Five years: began to learn portions of the Law under his mother's direction;

Ten years: commences the study of the Mishna (traditional interpretations of the Law);

*Thirteen years: he began to wear the phylacteries which the Jew always put on at the recital
of the daily prayer;*

Eighteen years: instructed in the Gemara, a vast collection of interpretations of the Mishna

All His teenage years and his years as a young man in his 20s are lost to us.

LUKE 3.23, Luke records that when Jesus began His earthly ministry He was 30 years old.

So between Luke 2.42 when Jesus was 12, and Luke 3.23 when Jesus was 30 – those 18 intermediate years are lost to us forever; we have no idea about the life of Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

But when Mary and Joseph noticed that Jesus was missing, they had to return to find Him.

Some biblical experts believe that Jesus missing was really not such a stretch. The caravan they were in could have stretched for a long way, filled with friends and relatives. The kids

could have been running back and forth, playing with their friends and relatives up and

down the caravan, so Jesus going missing was not really a stretch. But once it was

discovered He was not with them, that's then Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to find

Him in the temple with the teachers.

When Jesus was found with the teachers, here is what we can understand that Jesus knew:

- 1, God was His heavenly Father;
2. The Temple was His Father's house;
3. He had to be in His Father's house;

4. He needed to listen to the religious leaders;
5. He was also asking questions of the religious leaders;
6. He thought His earthly parents would understand why He was in the temple.

This gives us a snapshot of Jesus the student, Jesus the learner at the young age of 12. At what point in his life did Jesus understand His calling, understand who He was and why He came? We have no idea, but at 12, He knew God was His father and He had to be in His father's house with the teachers.

This is often the most significant struggle in any Christian's life – what does God want me to do? I think often if we could see this giant billboard on the highway that said, DO THIS, then we would be fine. But that's not the case. Or if we heard the very clear voice of God telling us what to do that would be fine too, but again, that's normally not the case. So how do we know what God would have us to do? Through prayer, through studying His word, through the work of His Holy Spirit through us we serve Him and walk with Him daily.

III. THE EXAMPLE THAT HONORED GOD (v. 51-52)

Jesus placed himself in subjection to His earthly parents in accordance with the 5th Commandment – honor your mother and father; Jesus did not hold the fact that He was God in the flesh over them; He did not get proud and did not have an attitude of not having to listen to them. Jesus continued to place himself in subjection to the teachings of the earthly mother and father.

God honored Jesus as He grew. The word INCREASING means to make progress. Jesus no doubt, as he grew, continued to gain understanding about His earthly mission.

Here's what's important: Jesus stayed with Mary and Joseph those silent years until God called Him to begin the mission he came for. Now no doubt Jesus learned in those years how to relate to people, He learned obedience, He spent time with His heavenly Father in prayer. This is what it means to increase, to make progress in our faith, to continue to spend time with God as he grows us, as he matures us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we continue to serve Him.

CONCLUSION:

At 12 years of age Jesus was in the temple learning from the religious teachers. Jesus knew who He was and whose he was although Mary and Joseph were still trying to figure it out. But Jesus at 12 teaches us some important lessons:

1. The lesson of KNOWLEDGE. There is always something we can learn from the word of God; we can also learn much from those who have walked with the Lord for many years if we have the grace to receive it. We must never allow biblical knowledge to cause us to be all about ourselves.

I have often shared with pastors that have not been to seminary that, first of all, seminary will not give you anything that God has not given you; seminary does not call someone into the ministry. Seminary helps deepen your knowledge and exposes you to important theological teaching. I knew after I had surrendered to the call to ministry I needed a theological education; I already had both an associates and a bachelor's degree but it knew it was the theological education I lacked. And I knew that if I was going to stay up with my peers in ministry I needed to get that education, so I pursued it and got it accomplished.

★FOR VBS TEACHERS: make sure you emphasize to your students the importance of studying and learning from the Bible.

2 TIM. 3.16: (NLT) *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

2. The lesson of TIMING.

Noah: He was 600 years old when God told him to build the ark;

Abraham: He was 75 when God told him to go with his family;

Moses: He was 80 when God called him to go back to Egypt. Moses is one person we know that spent the first 40 years of his life in the court of pharaoh learning to read and write; the next 40 years he spent in the wilderness learning to be a shepherd. Then when he was 80, God called him. God had been working in his life this entire time preparing him for the purposes of God.

John the Baptist. We read of John's birth from Luke 1. Then we read this in:

LUKE 1.80: *And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.*

That public appearance is recorded in **LUKE 3.1-3 [READ]**

We don't know how long John was in the wilderness. But John's time in the wilderness prepared him for the call of God in his life.

Jesus: He did not just immediately start His ministry after spending time in the temple. It took another 18 years before Jesus was prepared to commence the mission for which He was sent. It was in those 18 years that God was preparing him for the mission that Jesus came to complete, to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of man.

★FOR VBS TEACHERS: *emphasize that sometimes waiting is hard and we want to get going, but part of what God teaches us is to wait on Him.*

GAL. 4.4-5: (NLT) *But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.*

3. The lesson of PATIENCE. Part of successfully serving God is patience, waiting on God, letting God do what only God can do. Until Jesus reached the age of 30, He had to patiently wait until God gave Him the word to begin His ministry. The age of Jesus was not the time, but rather the calling of God to begin. The point is, waiting on God is not wasted time as long as we understand what it is. Waiting on God is not sitting around twiddling our thumbs, waiting on God is serving him and doing what God has called us to do until we know God is moving is forward. Unless God specifically tells us to sit and do nothing, we are to serve until God gives us clear direction otherwise. Patience is part of the fruit of the spirit and is developed as we learn to wait on and trust in God.

PS. 27.14: *wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.*

★FOR VBS TEACHERS: *waiting on God does not mean we sit and do nothing. It means we continue to serve God until He tells us to do something else. Patience is one of the ways the Holy Spirit grows us in our walk with the Lord.*

PS. 130.5: *I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.*

Just as Jesus knew why He had come, so too should we have a firm grasp not only on why Jesus came, to give his life a ransom for many, but what God in Christ has called us to do as well. We have been created to know God through Jesus Christ and to serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit until He returns.