

I HAD TO BE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE

Luke 2:41-52

Key Verse: 2:49

“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

The Bible doesn't tell us all the details about Jesus' childhood. Among the four gospels, only Luke recorded how Jesus grew in his boyhood. Today's passage has an important message for everyone. If you have not personally met Jesus yet, it tells you who he is so that you may accept him as your Savior. If you are a born-again Christian, it teaches you how to grow in God's wisdom. God has given every person potential to grow in his image. Let us learn from the boy Jesus how we can grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God.

I. THE BOY JESUS LOVED THE WORD OF GOD (41-47)

Look at verses 41-42. *Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.* The Passover was a very special event for the people of Israel. God delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. As we learn in Genesis, Jacob and his family of 70 members went to Egypt to avoid a severe famine. After 430 years, they grew to be a nation of 2 million people. But they had become slaves. They cried out to God as they groaned under the cruel Egyptian slave masters. God heard their cries and sent his servant Moses to lead them out of Egypt.

But Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, refused to let them go. He didn't want to give up his slaves. God warned him repeatedly and sent plague after plague, but he would not budge. Finally, God sent the angel of death as the final warning. On that night, there was death in every house in Egypt. But the angel of death “passed over” the houses of the Israelites, because they had smeared their doorposts with the blood of a lamb. God had promised to save them if they smeared the blood on them and he kept the promise. The next day, the Israelites left Egypt and traveled toward the Promise Land.

Why did God deliver his people from their slavery in Egypt? Exodus 19:5-6 says the following: *“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* God had a wonderful purpose for his people. He wanted to bless them to become a shepherd nation for the world. God wanted them to share the message of salvation with the peoples of the world. After the Exodus, the people of Israel made their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to remember God's grace of deliverance. It was important for them to remember the grace of God. It is also important for us to remember God's grace. God delivered us from our own slavery to sin and death through the blood of Jesus Christ. We are saved, not because we are good, but because of our faith in the blood of Jesus. We must remember our own personal Passover. We also must know that God saved us for a purpose. He did not save

us so that we may continue to live a selfish life. God saved us through his Son's precious blood so that we may fulfill his purpose, doing the good work he prepared for us to do (Eph 2:10).

Verse 41 says that every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. Joseph and Mary were good parents to Jesus. They traveled more than 70 miles of winding country roads every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. We can imagine this was not easy. They had no SUV to drive. When Jesus turned 12, they took the boy Jesus with them to Jerusalem.

Preteen and early teen is a tender age. Boys and girls of this age are curious about many things, but still pure and sweet. They have great learning potential. Dreams and hopes in life are also born during this period. When Napoleon was a teenager, he tried to catch a rainbow by chasing after it, riding on a horse. Preteens are also mischievous, doing things that would not make their parents happy. But we should realize that young people have great potential to grow and blossom.

Look at verses 43-45. *After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.* After the festival, Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem. For their return trip, it was customary for women to go on ahead with younger children, and men to follow with older boys. The boy Jesus was in between. So Mary thought that Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph thought that he was with Mary. At the end of a day's journey, they began looking for him among relatives and friends. But they could not find him. He was missing. They began to panic.

Joseph and Mary went back to Jerusalem, a day's journey on foot, to look for him. When they arrived there, it was already dark. It was too late to look for him. On the third day, they finally found him in the temple courts sitting among the teachers, *listening to them and asking them questions* (46). Verse 47 says that *everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.* The temple courts were a place of learning. During Passover, many Bible scholars would gather there to discuss the Scriptures. And the boy Jesus joined them. It was already the third day since the end of the festival. But the boy Jesus was still very much into the discussions. He was eager to listen and to ask insightful questions. His eager learning mind as well as the depth of his wisdom astounded the scholars. We learn from the boy Jesus the secrets of spiritual growth.

First, Jesus loved the word of God. The Feast was over and everyone had gone home. But the boy Jesus remained in the temple to study the Bible. He was so much into learning the word of God that he even forgot about going back home with his parents. The boy Jesus loved the word of God and was eager to learn the truth. In fact, the word of God was in the center of his entire life. His top disciple Peter learned this from him

and said later, “*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation*” (1Pe 2:2).

We respect Abraham Lincoln for his honesty and courage. But few people realize that his characters were formed during his childhood when he studied the Bible with a burning desire to know the truth. He educated himself by studying the Bible. He came to know the truth about humanity through his Bible study. As a result, he knew that slavery was wrong even though many of his contemporary political and religious leaders deemed it necessary. The fruit of his Bible study was remarkable.

Unfortunately, in our society, many young people grow up in a moral wilderness. In their sensitive ages, they are exposed to many relative ideas from school, media and their peers rather than learning the truth from the word of God. As a result, many of them have ungodly perceptions towards important issues in life such as abortion, homosexuality, premarital sex, and so on. They don't know who God is, who they are, and what the world is. We have the responsibility to teach them the word of God so that they may know the truth.

Second, Jesus listened to the teachers. Some people would not listen to others carefully. They can't wait to say what is on *their* minds. In my teaching experience, I find that good students are those who listen carefully in class. Some students would daydream or doze off during class and try to study on their own later. Rarely do they do well when they do that. It is the same with the Bible study. When we prayerfully prepare our hearts for our 1:1 studies or Sunday messages and listen carefully, we can receive much grace and encouragement from the word of God. We must remember that Jesus listened to the teachers.

Third, Jesus asked them questions. To ask good questions, one must think. For example, many thinking people have questions about the origin of the universe, where we come from, and where we are going to, and about purpose and meaning of life. When we have these questions in our minds, we discover that the word of God provides answers to these important questions and we have the joy of learning truths from our Bible study. On the other hand, some people are satisfied with eating good food daily and enjoying some pleasures in life. They have no sense of problem for important questions in life. They don't ask questions because they don't have learning minds. But Jesus grew in God's wisdom by listening carefully and asking questions. He had a humble learning mind.

A father wanted to help his daughter to become a famous pianist. So he was disappointed that she did not make progress after several years. One night, he was startled to hear a fantastic piano playing coming from his daughter room. He was even more amazed to find that it was his little son who was playing the piano. His son had a great desire to learn, but all the attention was given to his sister. So the young boy made a paper keyboard and practiced himself on it. That night, thinking that his parents and sister were out, he slipped into his sister's room and played his songs. He became a

famous pianist at the age of twelve and finally one of the masters of piano composition. His name was Frederic Chopin (1810-1849).

As I said earlier, God has given us great potential to grow in him. We must grow in God as the boy Jesus did. This is what Luke says in verse 52: *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.* May God help each of us to love the word of God, as the boy Jesus did, and listen carefully and ask good questions as we study the Bible, as Jesus did!

II. "I HAD TO BE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE" (48-50)

Now, let us look at verses 48-49. *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." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* These verses teach us two important truths about Jesus: (1) who he is, and (2) what he came to do.

Jesus answered to his mother, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" He called God "my Father." Joseph was probably sorry to hear that. But his answer indicates that from his boyhood Jesus had a clear identity as the Son of God. What does this mean to us? Jesus is the Son of God. All of us were condemned to eternal death because of our sins. There is no one righteous. No exceptions. But in his love and mercy, God sent his Son to save us. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The Son of God came to this world to save us. How? He died for us on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). If you come to Jesus, confessing your sins, he forgives all your sins, and welcomes you to God's family.

Now the second point about Jesus—what he came to do. Up until now, the boy Jesus had worked hard in his human father Joseph's carpentry shop in Nazareth. But for the first time, he did something without permission from his father Joseph. So Mary asked, "Why have you treated us like this?" Jesus answered, *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* According to the King James Version, it meant, "Didn't you know I must be about my Father's business?" It was not until after the age of thirty Jesus launched his Messianic ministry, but the boy Jesus already had a holy desire to do God's work--the saving work for the dying humanity. At that time, Jesus had a regular job as a carpenter's apprentice. But Jesus did not think that it was his main job. He had in mind the work of God even when he was so young.

This episode reminds us the truth that each of us was created in God's image to do the holy mission of God. We were created to live for the glory of God (Lk 1:74-75). We cannot be truly happy if we only work hard to satisfy our stomach. Everyone must have God's mission in his or her life. God's mission defines one's purpose in life. When we find this mission in God and devote our lives to it, we can be truly happy.

When Albert Schweitzer was young, he prayed to God, “Lord, bless me to study well so that I may serve you all my life after finishing my school.” As he studied various subjects such as theology, music, and medicine, God’s high calling was always in his heart. After his study, he went to Africa as a missionary to do God’s work there. When he died in 1965, even Communist newspapers recognized him as the light of the 20th century.

III. THE BOY JESUS WAS OBEDIENT TO HIS PARENTS (51-52)

Look at verses 51-52. *Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.* These verses teach us how the boy Jesus was different from some rebellious teenagers of our generation. Jesus was obedient to his parents. Look at verse 51 again. *Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.* The boy Jesus returned to his father’s carpentry shop and was obedient to his parents. At that time, carpentry was a very demanding job. Carpenters built houses, made all kinds of furniture, wooden tools, and agricultural equipment. The boy Jesus had to work hard in the shop. But he didn’t complain. He was obedient to his parents despite the hard work. Jesus had a nail mark on his hands even before he was crucified for our sins on the cross. Mary didn’t quite understand what the boy Jesus had told her in Jerusalem. But she knew that God was with him. So she treasured all these things in her heart (51).

From today’s passage, we learned that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and men. Let’s help our children and other young people in our society to grow in God, as the boy Jesus in this scripture did. Most of all let us pray that each one of us may have a learning mind like the boy Jesus so that we may grow in God’s wisdom.