

"Are We Growing Like Jesus"

Luke 2:39-52

The Bible only gives us 13 verses about Jesus' childhood, which may not sound like much but its more than the Bible tells us about Paul's childhood, Solomon's childhood or Moses' childhood or many Biblical characters' childhood. When the Bible does give us information about someone's childhood (like Samuel's) its usually something extraordinary or unusual. So, what was unusual about this incident in Jesus' childhood? It was so normal; that's what was unusual!

Take His home town of Nazareth. Nazareth is never mentioned in the Old Testament. There is nothing significant about it. When Philip told Nathaniel that they found the Messiah and He was in Nazareth, he responded 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46). Nazareth had nothing special about it. They didn't host a 'skate-the-lake' or a Music festival or a Garlic festival; it was small town in the middle of no where's Ville. And God chose for Jesus to grow up in relative quiet and obscurity. Like many of us; growing up and living in a rural environment. So then there should be lots we can learn from Jesus' childhood.

This lone episode of Jesus' childhood during the Passover when he was 12 begins and ends with the same theme.

2:40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

The most amazing and obvious fact about Jesus' humanity here is that

Jesus Matured **(2:40, 52)**

Jesus grew like all of us grow. This was part of becoming human like us. He emptied Himself of His glory and took on the form of a servant being made in human likeness (Phil. 2:6). He was born as any other human. He grew from childhood now moving towards adolescence. There was nothing about Jesus that would have made you think He was anything but an average 12-year old boy raised in a God-fearing Jewish home. As He grew older, He matured. The focus here is not s much on His physical growth but His maturity. Jesus matured ...

In Spiritual qualities **(v.40)**

"the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him".

Luke writes that all these qualities were continually increasing in Him. No doubt Jesus was growing physically stronger too as He drew near to His teens but all these words are used in a spiritual sense not physical. It's interesting to note that the verbs for strengthening and filled with wisdom are in the passive sense; meaning someone was doing these to Jesus. No doubt a work of God's Spirit in Jesus. It's easy to skip past this verse and not reflect on how Jesus completely allowed

Himself to grow like any other human being; even spiritually allowing Himself to reveal to those around Him that He was no different than any other human; even though He was vastly different than any other human being. Yet this was all intentional, a part of the humbling process He chose to endure in accordance with the Father's will for Him.

How did Jesus grow? Are there ways in which He grew that will help us grow spiritually? Since we have a Saviour with whom we can completely relate to and who sympathizes with us, we should be able to learn from Him even in how to grow in grace, wisdom and spiritual strength. How did Jesus allow Himself to grow in spiritual maturity? Jesus grew ...

Through the Example of Godly Influencers **(2:41-45)**

The people that influenced Jesus the most towards godliness were His earthly parents. Joseph and Mary were godly people. We know this already from Matt.1 and Luke 1. That's why God chose them. Joseph and Mary also grew spiritually. They followed the Law when Jesus was born. They continually observed the Law as Jesus grew. Every year His parents went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, an 8-day observance. The Law said that only males were required to go but here we read both parents went regularly. So if Mary went every year, then so did Jesus and His step-siblings.

Nazareth is 150 km from Jerusalem. People travelled by caravan and could cover 20-25 miles a day. A two-day journey for sure. Which means if you stay for all 8 days it's at least a 12-day absence from home. It was a big sacrifice of time and energy to go to an extra worship service, a special conference so to speak. And Joseph would go again at Pentecost 50 days later and at Tabernacles in early fall 5 months later.

Joseph and Mary modelled obedience to the Word and that following God means making sacrifices of time, energy and resources. All this was modelled to Jesus. Children are keenly aware of the sacrifices parents make in life. Maybe not right away but as they get older and understand more, you appreciate more what your parents did.

There are other godly influencers here. Jesus interacted with the teachers of the Law in the temple. During the Feasts it was common practice for the teachers of the Law to hold public debates in the temple courts about the Law and spiritual matters. And the public were allowed to interact with them. Jesus obviously does.

We understand that as the Son of God Jesus did not need any of these people to help Him grow. But here's the important part for us to understand: He allowed it. He was so normal, so ordinary, so like any other 12-year old Jewish boy that He humbled Himself by allowing others to impact His life. Because if He didn't, He would have acted arrogantly and obnoxiously - which is sin. So He couldn't act that way. And, we know He didn't because the chapter ends saying Jesus grew in favour with God and man. God was pleased (same word) with how Jesus exhibited Himself and the people were pleased by this smart and not arrogant, well-behaved and polite young man. So maybe part of Jesus modelling humility to be taught by others is an example for us to grow as Jesus did; humbling ourselves to be taught by others - even if we know the answers? Knowing the answers is not a sign of spiritual maturity. Jesus grew in wisdom not knowledge. Knowledge is facts, information; wisdom is the ability to act on the information we understand.

The Feast ends and the entourage of family and friends from Nazareth get ready to go because it's safer to travel in groups. Jesus is 12. 13 is the age for His Bar Mitzvah, as any Jewish

reader would understand. But the Rabbis encouraged 12-year boys to come to the Feasts with their fathers/parents the year before their Bar Mitzvah to see what will be expected of them. So that 12-year old boys from the sticks of Nazareth and Godfrey and Ompah and Tincap won't be scared to death when they come to Jerusalem for their Bar Mitzvah. We'll come back to this in a minute.

So, Jesus, on the brink but not quite being a man, could have travelled with the men or with the women (they travelled separately) so Joseph and Mary assumed Jesus was with the other or other family. When they reconnected in the evening for their meal and settling down for the night, they both realized Jesus was Home Alone in Jerusalem! The next morning they head back which takes them all day and then the next day they find Jesus in the temple with the teachers of the law. Here's where we learn more on how to grow like Jesus. Jesus grew...

In How He Related to People **(2:45-51)**

We grow more in community, and Jesus was no different. He grew in favour with God and man. He related well to people. How so?

He listened (v.46a)

Before I studied the text this week, I had it in my head that Jesus taught the teachers of the Law. No, it says "*He listened and asked questions*" (v.46). People were amazed at His understanding and answers. Jesus placed Himself in the role as a learner. He grew because He listened to people and then digested the information thoughtfully and asked good questions in His desire to show He wanted to learn. What did He ask them? It was Passover. Maybe He asked about the sacrifices? Maybe He asked how does Is. 53 fit in with the talk of the Messiah being led like a lamb to slaughter? Jesus would have shown by His questions how much knowledge He had of the Old Testament. Because He was 12 and one year away from His becoming a 'Son of the Covenant' (one who now is responsible for His own decisions) they would have let Him speak to them.

Spiritual maturity comes from being a good listener. If you want to learn and grow ask who speaks highly of the Word? Who writes God-glorifying and well thought through material that will help us grow spiritually?

Jesus grew because as He listened He also asked questions. Which means

He respected (v.46b)

... The teachers who were older than He. Jesus knew all the answers yet He chose to act completely like a smart 12-year-old who asked the teachers questions after He listened first. And didn't embarrass them with His knowledge. Instead He asked questions to give them an opportunity to be taught and learn in such a way that they didn't realize that's what He was doing. Who wants to be embarrassed by a know-it-all 12-year old (or any adult either by the way!).

Some of these teachers may have been the same ones Jesus would encounter 18 years from now and challenge with more authority because He wouldn't have been respected before He turned 30. In Num. 4 we read that Moses asked that all those Levites who serve in the temple between ages 30 to 50 be counted. The assumption being that that was the age for ministry. In Luke 3 we read that Jesus was 30 when He began His ministry.

Here's another way Jesus models for us how we grow in spiritual maturity. We grow in ...

Patience (v.47)

Jesus intentionally humbled Himself to act maturely as a 12-year old without telling these teachers off or how little they knew of Scripture. He knew He had 18 more years before they would even start to listen to Him. *‘Everyone who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and answers.’* But Jesus didn’t allow pride to get a hold of Him and start acting as if He knew more (even though He did) and wanted the admiration of the crowd (which He knew was fickle).

Jesus would have returned to the boonies of Nazareth, living in obscurity for another 18 years patiently waiting for God’s timing. What did He do for those 18 years? What’s the text say? *“He was obedient to His parents and He continued to grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.”* Isn’t it interesting that we read about this the year before He became a Son of the Covenant? Which means when He returned the next year for His Bar Mitzvah nothing extraordinary happened. Wouldn’t that have been a good time to reveal Himself and show those teachers off? No, because He wouldn’t have been respected. He learned to be patient. He continued to grow spiritually where God planted Him, allowing the spiritual influencers in His family and community to continue to mold and shape Him into who God wanted Him to be. Which means He also grew in ...

Trust in God (vv.48-51)

That He returned home and lived in obscurity for 18 more years before God revealed Him and John the Baptist to the community of Israel meant He kept trusting in God’s plan for His life by growing spiritually and relationally.

But weren’t those people lost and going to hell? Shouldn’t Jesus have used every opportunity and every encounter to get the gospel out and lead them to the Lord? Jesus had to trust God’s timing for when and where He ministered to people. We don’t know how He lived His life for those first 30 years other than in perfect obedience to God’s will trusting God that through the life He lived He could model the truth in action which probably led to people asking Him questions about God and the Scriptures. I’m guessing He shared truth naturally as He interacted with people in His day to day routine in a rural environment.

I hope that encourages you as you live a somewhat routine and perhaps not-as-exciting as you’d like life because that’s the normal for most of us. God wants us to model spiritual maturity in our homes, in our jobs, where we travel and interact with people in a way in which we glorify God and live counter-culturally. This invites questions. This earns respect when we do it like Jesus, humbly not arrogantly, trusting God’s timing instead of offending people in arrogance because ‘we got them saved’! God’s a big God. He doesn’t need us to save anyone but He chooses in His grace to use us.

The passage began in v.39 after Jesus arrival to the temple as a baby saying that He grew in strength and wisdom. Then it ends when He’s 12 saying essentially the same thing; Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men. We also learn from Jesus that He matured

As He Aged (v.52)

How many of you are aging? How many of you are more spiritually mature this winter than last winter? More spiritually mature in your 80’s than 70’s or 60’s than 50’s or 40’s than 20’s, etc. How do you know, how do you measure that? Am I a better listener? Do I show more respect to people? Am I more patient? Am I trusting God better?

If you're struggling to answer that question maybe its because your making very few sacrifices to be with God each day let alone making sacrifices to do anything extra? Perhaps your closest friends are not Godly influences? Perhaps you're more concerned about finding favour with people through Facebook or Twitter than you are about finding favour with God?

The word for favour is the same as grace. God's undeserved blessing. Peter ends his first letter telling us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Jesus showed grace to all those people in His growing up years who knew God and who didn't know God equally, being patient, listening, respecting and trusting God for His timing. He humbly showed He was growing in wisdom when He already knew everything. I would think it is fair to say that Peter understood through watching Jesus Himself that to grow in spiritual knowledge should result in growing in grace. Because the more we understand who God is and who we are, the more humbled we should be by His grace to us that it should result in showing grace to others. And when we do that we will also grow in favour with God and people.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at
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