



# Young Jesus Visits the Temple



Scripture Reference: [Luke 2:40-52](#)

**Suggested Emphasis:** As Jesus grew, he continued to develop mentally (wisdom), physically (stature), socially (favour with men), and spiritually (favour with God.) We should also grow in these areas.

**Memory Verse:** “This is my prayer for you: that your love will grow more and more; that you will have knowledge and understanding with your love;” [Philippians 1:9, ICB](#)



## Story Overview:

While visiting the temple in Jerusalem at age twelve, Jesus became separated from his parents and was inadvertently left behind. Upon returning to Jerusalem three days later, his worried parents found him at the temple listening to the teachers and amazing those around him with his understanding.

## Background Study:

Joseph and Mary had kept Jesus in Egypt to protect him from King Herod. Matthew tells us ([Matthew 2:19-23](#)) that the angel came to Joseph in Egypt and told him to take Mary and Jesus back to Israel. They ended up back in the town of Nazareth. This fulfilled prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene (verse 23).

Jesus was raised as a normal Jewish boy of his time. He was known as Joseph’s son and learned his “father’s” trade of carpentry.

Jesus would have attended synagogue school and would have observed the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days. When Jesus was twelve years old, it was time for him to take his place as an adult male in the religious community. He was now old enough to take part in the observances of the Jewish faith.

Jewish men were required to attend the religious celebrations surrounding the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem.

Sometimes their wives and children accompanied them. Jerusalem was just over 100 kilometres (approximately 64 miles) south of Nazareth. People travelled in groups for safety reasons. This may or may not have been Jesus' first trip since he was a baby.

Joseph and Mary stayed the full seven days of the festival, although they were required to stay only two. The day they left Jerusalem, they probably thought Jesus was with the other members of their family who had also attended the feast. When night came, they anxiously looked for him. After searching the caravan they knew they had to return to Jerusalem.

The city would have been full of people so it must have been quite a job finding Jesus. It seems they travelled one day away from Jerusalem and one day back. The third day was spent searching Jerusalem for their son. They finally found him in the temple courts totally absorbed in listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Others were amazed at Jesus' understanding but his parents were just worried about their son.

As a teacher you might use this time to talk about how important it is to tell your parents where you are going to be. Parents need to know where we are at all times. As parents we can imagine how Joseph and Mary must have felt.

This seems to be the first time that Jesus struck out on his own faith. This would have been difficult for his parents to understand. Jesus still needed to mature and grow before he was ready to begin his ministry in the full sense. He returned home to obey his parents and grow in all of the areas humans must grow in.

Wisdom: education. Stature: physical growth. Favour with God: spiritual growth. Favour with men: social growth.



## Way to Introduce the Story:

Attach a long strip of adding-machine tape (or any long strip of paper) to the wall. Mark off measurements. Measure various people (older and younger than your class) before the children arrive and mark the heights on the paper. As children arrive measure them and mark their heights on the paper. Show them how they are taller than children younger than them. Point out how much they will probably grow by the time they reach the age of the older children or adults you have measured. You could do the same thing with scales and weigh the children in class.

How else do we grow? We grow in how much we learn and how much we know. We grow in our understanding of God and Jesus. We grow in the way we get along with other people.

Jesus was a baby but then he grew. Today we are going to learn about something that happened to Jesus when he was twelve years old.

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## The Story:

When Jesus was a little boy his family moved to the town of Nazareth. Jesus grew up doing the things that little boys do. He played games with his friends and he went to school. Joseph was a carpenter so Jesus learned how to help him make things from wood.

Every year Jesus travelled to Jerusalem to attend the Passover Feast. This was a religious holiday and a special ceremony. Joseph always took part in the celebration. Jesus knew that someday he would be a grown man like Joseph. Someday he would go to Jerusalem and visit the temple where the teachers were.

Finally, the time had come. Jesus was twelve years old. This meant that he could go to the temple and take part in the

Passover Feast like the other men.

Jesus and his family travelled all the way to Jerusalem. It took many days to get there. Sometimes there were robbers on the roads so Jesus' family travelled along with lots of other families to be safe. Jesus probably liked walking with his friends and cousins. He might have played games and talked with them as they walked along the way to Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary would have seen many of their friends in Jerusalem too. It was a beautiful city and everyone was there to worship God.

After the festivities it was time to go back home to Nazareth.

But as they headed home Joseph and Mary began to notice someone was missing. At first they probably thought he was walking with his friends because they had been travelling a whole day when they finally realised he was not there. After looking everywhere, they knew that he must still be back in Jerusalem.

Where was their son, Jesus? They searched for him and finally found him. Can you guess where Jesus was?

Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the temple courts. He was with the teachers of the Law and he was asking them questions. It seems Jesus had enjoyed learning and listening so much that he had stayed to hear more. Everyone there was amazed at how much this boy understood God's word.

Mary told Jesus they had been searching and searching. She wanted to know why he was still there at the temple. Jesus surprised them with his answer. "Why were you searching for me?" he asked, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Jesus knew that God was his father and that the temple was God's special house.

When Mary and Joseph heard this they knew that Jesus was growing up. He was understanding more and more about his heavenly father. They knew that it would not be long before he was a man. But he was not a man yet! He was only twelve years old.

Jesus travelled back to Nazareth and he obeyed his parents in everything they said. Jesus helped the family and was a good son.

Jesus worked along with Joseph and learned to be a carpenter. He made his mother and Joseph very happy.

Jesus was indeed growing but not just in his body. Jesus grew in four ways: 1) He grew in wisdom. That meant that he learned about God and the world and how to live a good life in the world. 2) He grew physically. That means he ate good food and exercised so he could grow big and strong. 3) He grew spiritually. That means in the way he knew and loved God. 4) He grew socially. That means he learned how to make friends and how to treat people nicely.

Jesus grew in all of these ways because he knew that someday he would do a special job for God.

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## Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

# Review Questions:

1. How old was Jesus when his parents travelled with him to the temple? Twelve
2. What city was the temple in? Jerusalem
3. What are the four ways that Jesus grew? 1) Physically, 2) in wisdom-mentally, 3) in knowledge about God-spiritually, 4) in getting along with other people-socially

# Song Suggestions:

- [Read Your Bible Pray Every Day](#)
- [Crayon Song](#)
- [I am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N \(Song\)](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

# Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

*Activities:*

- Hide a picture of Jesus and play “hide and seek” and search for Jesus.
- Use bible encyclopaedias or commentaries to find out what Jesus might have done as a boy. At the end of the discussion, provide a birthday cake. Pass out twelve candles. Tell the children that you are going to pretend that it is Jesus’ twelfth birthday. Let each child name one thing they know about Jesus as a boy. As they do this they can put a candle on the cake. Then light the candles and sing “Happy Birthday”. Now eat!
- Play “hangman” using words from the story.
- List all of the different types of chores Jesus might have done as a child. Compare that with the chores your students do.
- Older children can use a bible atlas to trace Jesus’ trip from Egypt to Nazareth and then to Jerusalem.

*Crafts:*

- Jesus was a special child. He grew in four ways. Divide children into four groups and have each group make a poster showing one way that Jesus grew (physically, in wisdom, in knowledge about God, in getting along with other people.) Have each group present their poster to the rest of the class. Discuss ways we know we are growing in these areas.



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

# Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Colouring page of Jesus speaking with teachers \(Christian answers\)](#)
- Understanding life in Bible times:
  - [Life and times of Jesus of Nazareth](#)

- [Ancient games.](#)
- [Jesus at play](#)
- [Fun and food in Bible times.](#)
- [Video to show children: "Jerusalem Temple at the Time of Jesus" by "Messages of Christ". Youtube video just under 2 minutes.](#)
- [Video to show children: Virtual Reconstruction Of Second Temple Temple Mount \(7 minutes 46 seconds\) from youtube](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-birth-youth/>  
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