Young Jesus Visits the Temple



Scripture Reference: Luke 2:40-52

Suggested Theme: 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.xxx

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 writes (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 the prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene.

Jesus was raised as an ordinary 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 observed the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days. When Jesus was twelve, it was time for him to take his place as an adult male in the religious community. He was now old enough to participate 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 to find 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, absorbed in listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Others were amazed at Jesus’ understanding, but his parents were just worried about their

©2011-2026 Mission Bible Class, used by permission. Not to be sold. Find more free lessons at https://missionbibleclass.org/

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 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 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 the children you teach) 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.

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.

The Story:

When Jesus was a little boy, his family moved to 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 he could go to the Temple and participate 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 to Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary would probably have also seen many of their friends in Jerusalem. 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 noticed that someone was missing. They had been travelling for a whole day before they finally realised it. At first, they probably thought he was walking with his friends. 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?

©2011-2026 Mission Bible Class, used by permission. Not to be sold. Find more free lessons at https://missionbibleclass.org/

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:

He grew in wisdom. That meant that he learned about God and the world and how to live a good life in the world.
He grew physically. That means he ate good food and exercised so he could grow big and strong.
He grew spiritually. That means in the way he knew and loved God.
He grew socially. That means he learned how to make friends and treat people respectfully.
Jesus grew in all these ways, and He knew that someday, He would do a special job for God.

top

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various 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 or other group participation.

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.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

top

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

Review:

- Why were Jesus' family and other Jews travelling to Jerusalem? (To celebrate the feast of the Passover)
- How old was Jesus when his parents travelled with him to the Temple? (Twelve)

©2011-2026 Mission Bible Class, used by permission. Not to be sold. Find more free lessons at https://missionbibleclass.org/

- What city was the temple in? (Jerusalem)
- What are the four ways that Jesus grew?
  - physically
  - in wisdom-mentally,
  - in knowledge about God-spiritually,
  - in getting along with other people-socially)
- Where was Jesus when his parents were looking for him? (In the Temple)
- What was Jesus doing when his parents found him? (Talking with the teachers of the law in the Temple)
- What did Jesus' parents learn about Jesus that day? (possible answers: He was growing up, wise, understood the Law, wanted to learn, knew God was His father, etc.)
- What did you learn about Jesus or God from this story?

Reflection:

- What do you think the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem was like? What did people do as they travelled?
- How do you think Jesus felt about going to the Temple and getting to participate in the Passover Feast for the first time?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they couldn't find Jesus? What about when they found him?
- Why do you think Jesus stayed in Jerusalem at the Temple instead of following his family home?
- How would you react when you realized Jesus was missing if you were Mary and Joseph?
- What do you think Jesus and the teachers of the law talked about during their discussions?
- How are you similar or different from Jesus?
- What in the Bible do you want to learn more about?
- How are you different from when you were a younger child? How have you grown or changed?
- What is something you want to improve in or understand more? Do you have something you'd like to be able to do with God or feel more confident in?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day
- Crayon Song
- I am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N (Song)
- He's Still Working on Me Song

©2011-2026 Mission Bible Class, used by permission. Not to be sold. Find more free lessons at https://missionbibleclass.org/

- Goodbye World Song
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

top

Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Hide a picture of Jesus, play “hide and seek,” and search for Jesus.
- Use bible encyclopaedias or commentaries to discover 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 will pretend 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 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 Jerusalem.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

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 group. Discuss ways we know we are growing in these areas.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

top

Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Colouring page of Jesus speaking with teachers (Christian answers)
- Understanding life in Bible times:

©2011-2026 Mission Bible Class, used by permission. Not to be sold. Find more free lessons at https://missionbibleclass.org/

- 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.” The YouTube video is just under 2 minutes.
- Video to show children: Virtual Reconstruction Of Second Temple Temple Mount (7 minutes 46 seconds) from YouTube

top

Date
2026/11/02

©2011-2026 Mission Bible Class, used by permission. Not to be sold. Find more free lessons at https://missionbibleclass.org/