



SENDTHEFIRE.CA

theme: Where's Jesus? (Luke 2:41-52)

materials: Bibles, news story

welcome

What is your "duty" to your parents? Does it change as you get older? What is a parent's "duty" to his or her children? Does it change with age?

Bring in a news item about your neighbourhood, city, country or world that you can discuss with the cell. Where do you see God in this story? Ask other members of cell to bring in stories to discuss in subsequent weeks.

worship

Where have you seen God this week? Where have you experienced community this week? What are you hoping for at the beginning of this year? What are you dreading? Share this with each other, and then pray for one another, that we would give all of our hopes and fears over to the Lord, trusting Him and following His guidance.

word

Read *Luke 1:26- and then 2:41-52* – (this second passage will be our focus.)

How are these two passages about Jesus related?

Why does Luke include this story about Jesus' childhood? What point is he making?

Why were Jesus and his family in Jerusalem?

Why is it significant that Jesus is portrayed as this wise this young?

Why is it significant that he is shown here in the Temple?

What do you make of Jesus' response to his parents? Is he being rude and disobedient?

Why is it important that Jesus understands this early that he is the Son of God?

How does he understand this?

What does it mean for Jesus to call God Father? Does it mean the same thing for us to call God Father?

What does it mean when Jesus says he has to be about his Father's business?

Why would Jesus *have to* do anything?

witness

Continue reading through the entire books of Luke and Acts with one other person. If the other person is a fellow believer, read them through in a public place, like a café (not yelling it out or anything, just reading it to one another). Make a regular time to come in and read together, and more likely than not someone will eventually ask you what you are reading and why.



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If the other person is not a fellow-believer, perhaps choose a less public place to read, but again set regular times, daily if possible, to get together and read the Gospel. You don't have to read it all at once. Read two to three chapters at a time, and then meet another day to read some more.

action points

What is your duty towards God? Do you have one? See what you can find out through Scripture this week as far as your duty towards God, and share your findings at your cell next week.

The Salvation Army sponsors children around the world who are living in circumstances of poverty and oppression. Any offerings given at cell meetings go towards covering the costs of these sponsorships. Please challenge your cell to bring loose offerings each week, and bring a container to collect any such offerings that are given. Cell is also a great time to bring your cartridges or tithes to the Church.

leader's guide

Luke is the only one of the gospel writers who included any stories from Jesus' childhood. It could be that he was the only one to uncover reliable information (other would-be gospels contained stories from Jesus' childhood, but these "gospels" were eventually rejected as unreliable). Or it could be that he was trying to communicate something with this story that the other writers were not, or were content to communicate in other ways. Both this story and the story of the angel's announcement to Mary in chapter 1 tell of Jesus being God's Son in a unique way. Jesus is not merely the child of God in the same way that any human could be said to be, nor even as a follower of God might be described. These two stories indicate that there is something different going on here, that Jesus shares a relationship with God the Father that is new and distinct, and should prepare us for the role he is about to play on the stage of history. Significantly, Luke makes the point through this story that Jesus, still a boy but on the cusp of adulthood, was at least in some way aware of this special relationship and of the role he was destined to play.

The story tells us that Jesus' family was in Jerusalem because it was the time of the Passover, the celebration of the Lord's deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt, and the "passing over" of the first born sons of Israel, who were not killed in the final plague. There were three annual festivals in Jerusalem that were to be attended by all pious Jews, but only the Passover was strictly observed in those times. Jesus' family are portrayed as pious observers of the Law, as it was their custom to attend the festival yearly. The festival would last for seven days, but pilgrims were only required to stay for two days. The other thing that could be going on here is that at the age of twelve most Jewish boys were brought to the Temple to prepare for their entry into adult religious life at the age of thirteen.

When Mary and Joseph finally find Jesus in Jerusalem, they discover him sitting with the teachers and discussing matters of faith. This in itself is not unusual. Rabbis would teach by asking question and receiving answers from students, who would sit at their feet. They could correct answers or expound upon themes that came out of such discussions. This is the picture we are given of what Jesus is doing here: sitting at the feet of the teachers, engaging in discussion, answering questions as other students would. There is no indication that the twelve year old Jesus is either teaching the teachers or disputing with them in any confrontational way. What *is* unusual is the level of wisdom he displayed. The teachers were amazed by this knowledge. Isaiah 11:2 prophecies that the Messiah would be filled with wisdom, and Jesus is shown here to be incredibly wise even before adulthood. This does not even need to be seen as a supernatural wisdom; a perfectly un-fallen and un-corrupted human wisdom such as Jesus possessed would amaze the teachers in Jerusalem. But it does all stem back to his conception by the Holy Spirit, that he unites within himself both the divine nature and the



perfected human nature.

Exactly how Jesus knows about his Sonship is unclear. We see in the story of Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:21-22) that the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus as a voice calls out to him, declaring him to be the Son of God the Father. This is a supernatural confirmation of Jesus' divine nature and messianic role, but it happens *after* the story of Jesus as a child in the Temple. So Jesus did not learn about being the Son of God at the baptism, nor did he suddenly *become* the Son of God at the resurrection or at any other time later in his life. According to Luke's Gospel, Jesus was the Son of God from his conception, and he knew about it at least as early as twelve years old. Given Luke's emphasis on the Holy Spirit in his Gospel and in the book of Acts, and on the Holy Spirit's role in revealing the identity of Jesus to various characters throughout the first two chapters (Zechariah, Elisabeth, John, Simeon), one might presume that the Holy Spirit was communicating to Jesus about who he was. But we don't know the details of this. We do know that Jesus' Sonship is unique. While Jesus gives us the opportunity to call God "Father", we are not the Saviour, we are not the Lord,

So Jesus knew, at least to some degree, who he was, and he also knew some of what this meant. In particular, Jesus knew that his duty to God his Father transcended his duty to his earthly parents, as important as that was. Mary and Joseph were perhaps understandably shaken and surprised by losing Jesus, especially if Jesus had been a perfectly obedient child his whole life. When they did find him, and asked where he had been, Jesus' response contains a mild, but clear, rebuke. These are his first recorded words in Luke, and they set the tone for the rest of the gospel. These words, the assertion that his parents should have known that he would be in his Father's House, remind his parents what they already knew about him: that he was not simply their child, but also their Lord. He owed them honour and obedience as befits a son to his parents, but his ultimate allegiance lay with God the Father, and he had to be about his Father's business. Closing in on adulthood, Jesus was establishing his identity and priorities, showing his parents that his will not be a conventional life, but rather one that is utterly dedicated to the will of his Father in heaven. Jesus *has to be* about the business of his Father, because his Father in Heaven requires absolute obedience from him, and Jesus is prepared to give it. All of this leaves Jesus' parents in a state of awe, and perhaps even some fear. It is strange to say but Jesus' parents very much owed Jesus their honour and allegiance. This story serves as a contrast between Jesus' earthly parents / responsibilities and his Heavenly Father / responsibilities. But he is not yet starting his ministry, and he does continue to obey his parents and return home with them.

Some scholars see this entire story as a foreshadowing of the resurrection, in that Jesus is lost by his parents, and rediscovered after three days, and it all takes place during the celebration of the Passover (which is also when the crucifixion takes place). This story can also be connected to the one found in Luke 24, wherein two disciples are walking the road to Emmaus after the resurrection, and meet Jesus along the way. They are unaware that it is the resurrected Jesus walking with them, as they believe he is still dead. They talk about the crucifixion, and Jesus explains that this was *necessary*, in the same way that he tells his parents that he has to be about his Father's business. Then he opens up the Scriptures to them, once again displaying his wisdom and how his life is fitting into the very Jewish story of salvation. The fact that he is found as a child in the Temple reinforces his role as the Jewish Messiah, and it serves to set the intimate relationship of Jesus with the Father right in the centre of the Jewish religious life.