



7: JESUS WAS NOT A TWELVE YEAR OLD HOOLIGAN! Luke 2:39-52

When my daughter Madi was nine months old, she would constantly observe her six and nine year old sisters (at the time) walking around, running, jumping, doing gymnastic cartwheels, somersaults, splits and flips. She would sit and watch intently, loving the excitement she was observing.

Many believers in Jesus sit and study the Bible, even regularly. Some come regularly to Sunday gatherings though statistically less and less so, (unless Gen Z really ups the commitment level of Jesus followers in their generation!) Believers in Jesus might pray, and might come to be a part of some sort of discipleship group.

But ultimately, believers in Jesus often feel like Madi. They don't know how to walk, run, jump and do splits yet. They observe disciples of Jesus truly living out their faith, and maybe even read about disciples of Jesus in the New Testament living out their faith, and they feel like they're on the sidelines. They wanna jump into that excitement and vibrancy but just don't know where to start!

Jesus, at a very young age, defied the norms of what "spiritual maturity" was in His time, and the narrative of Him at a young age also defies what we think it is in our time.

Jesus, in all we see about Him, invites us to move towards spiritual maturity from wherever we find ourselves!

ENGAGE FOR A MOMENT... WHAT AREA OF YOUR WALK WITH JESUS DO YOU DESIRE TO GROW IN? MORE CONSISTENT PRAYER? BIBLE READING? SHARING YOUR FAITH? GIVING MORE GENEROUSLY? BEING MORE CONSISTENT IN COMING TO SUNDAY GATHERINGS OR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS? PATIENCE? SELF-CONTROL? ADDICTION? LAY IT BEFORE GOD RIGHT NOW!

We pick up Luke chapter two again in verse thirty nine, which states;

³⁹ When (Joseph and Mary) had completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The boy (Jesus) grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him. (Luke 2:39-40)

Joseph and Mary's home in Nazareth of Galilee was about 65 miles north of Jerusalem, where Jesus grew up. The preparation for His ministry took place in that town as He continued to grow up. Luke noted that He became strong and was filled with wisdom (*sophia*). Jesus had the grace or favor (*charis*) of God ... upon Him.¹

Then we get into Luke 2:41–52, which is unique to Luke's Gospel, and shifts from the birth narratives to Jesus' early adolescence. It shows that Jesus was devout and understood His role from even the age of 12.²

In v. 41, we jump ahead, flashing forward in time, to when Jesus was an adolescent...

⁴¹ Every year his parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the festival. (Luke 2:41-42)

What Jesus and His parents were doing referred to the time that many Jewish people made pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Jews' annual commemoration of the exodus—God's deliverance of their ancestors from bondage in Egypt (Exod 12–13; Deut 16:1–8). Passover was considered the most important feast of the Jewish calendar.

¹ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 209–210). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:41–52). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

To celebrate Passover, Jews traveled to Jerusalem and offered a lamb as a sacrifice (Exod 12:21; Deut 16:2, 5–6). The meal began at sunset—the time of Israel’s departure from Egypt (Exod 12:29–32, 42; Deut 16:6).³ The annual trip for the Passover was one of the highlights of the Jewish year, one of three annual festivals that were celebrated in the capital (Ex. 23:14 - 17; 34:22 - 23; Deut. 16:16; Tabernacles and Pentecost were the other two). Most families that lived some distance from Jerusalem, such as Jesus’ parents, went to only one feast a year.⁴

⁴³ After those days were over, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴ Assuming he was in the traveling party, they went a day’s journey. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. (Luke 2:43-45)

Mary, Joseph and Jesus were probably part of a caravan traveling from Nazareth to Jerusalem. At this time, traveling in groups was common because it offered protection from bandits and allowed people to distribute resources. Given the communal nature of rural first-century Palestine, Joseph and Mary were right to assume that their son was in the group; this passage was not intended to reflect poorly on them as parents.⁵ Culturally, it would have been assumed that Jesus, at the age of twelve, would’ve been responsible enough for Himself to stay where He was supposed to! Also, Jesus would’ve been overseen not only by Mary and Joseph but by the **village** of people that were a covenant community of faith around Him.

We are meant to be a village. The Church is meant to be a community that takes care of each other.

I’ll say it again and again- we’re not to be independent like most Americans, who operate on a very individualistic, self-centered basis. When this mentality is brought into faith people silo themselves and begin to think that they’re uniquely hearing things from God which aren’t from God at all. We were meant to test our thoughts, convictions, feelings, strengths and weaknesses in the safety of a healthy, discipleship focused community and open, wisely vulnerable relationship with one another.

I’ll also say it again and again- we’re not to be codependent like people in cults and unhealthy families. We’re not meant to put one another on pedestals or to demonize

³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:41). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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⁵ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:44). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

one another. We're meant to relate in a healthy way with healthy boundaries, where we have a good mixture in all our individual lives of;

1. intimate solitude with God,
2. healthy, transparent community with disciples of Jesus who nurture us in faith and challenge us to grow, and
3. An outward focus of sharing the gospel with people who don't follow Jesus yet and using our passions and talents to build the Kingdom of God to be an influence in culture.

Codependency treats people like messiahs. That's not good y'all!

I say this all the time. As the Body of Christ, we're meant to have healthy **interdependency**. Mary and Joseph knew that other people were looking out for Jesus as much as they were. They weren't abdicating their responsibility as parents but were leaning into the village to create a culture of flourishing around their kid. And heck man, it's conjecture, but maybe Jesus had been so dang obedient to them up until this point that they *really* didn't worry about losing sight of Him! Maybe they were truly shocked that He had disappeared because it was uncharacteristic for Him!

But finally, Mary and Joseph found Jesus...

⁴⁶ *After three days, (Mary and Joseph) found (Jesus) in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.* ⁴⁷ *And all those who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. (Luke 2:46-47)*

The "three days" refer to the time since they had left the city. They had traveled one day's journey away from the city (Luke 2:44); it took them a second day to get back; and they found Him on the following day.⁶

When I was twelve years old I was getting D's and F's in school, and starting to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol, and seeing how many days I could go without brushing my teeth. I wore Chuck Taylor high-top black sneakers and broke them in by asking my Dad to run over them with his car multiple times. I bought a new pair of Levi's jeans and immediately took scissors to the knee areas, cutting big holes in them. This was the era of Seattle grunge rock in 1993 and I was determined to be a miscreant.

I certainly wasn't sitting in a Church, talking to theologians about the things of God at age twelve!

⁶ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 210). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

But here was Jesus, sitting among the teachers, hungry for the things of God, asking good questions, and giving answers that astounded people. Later, it would be the teachers who question Jesus (e.g., 6:2; 10:25; 20:2, 22, 33).⁷ Right now, it was an inquisitive little Messianic adolescent boy blowing their minds.

And granted, we're human, and this was Jesus. But certain things are accessible to all. Jesus's divinity, His miracles, His perfect obedience, and His defeat of sin, death and hell were **certainly** a product of His unique sonship with God. Jesus' attitudes about his walk with God, his call to serve him, and his pursuit of intimacy with him were **not** a product of his unique sonship with God. They picture how all of us should prioritize our lives before God. Sometimes, like Jesus, we have to make choices that others do not understand, for God has called us to set priorities that differ from people who go through life without any reference to him.⁸

I wish we all looked at pursuing God like eating and drinking. We need food, nourishment, and liquids to survive. But, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4) Oh that we would be hungry for God's presence like twelve year old Jesus was!

Now I'm close to forty-two years of age. I've had faith in Christ for about twenty-two years. I'm much different than I was at twelve. But how many of my priorities are centered around;

- My comfort?
- My pleasure? and,
- My fun?

I can tell y'all- I'm learning as I get older to really engage in "recreative" rest instead of just selfish forms of self care that don't replenish anything! I'm learning more and more the power of refueling by meditating on scripture, reading a really good book, listening to a really good podcast, taking a really good hike on some terrain in the woods, having a really good conversation with a fellow disciple of Jesus, getting a really good yoga, recumbent bike, or weight lifting session in, or having some really good quality time with one of my family members.

⁷ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:46). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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Jesus's example as a committed twelve year old should challenge our commitment to God the Father and to the community of Christ followers that He's put around us!

The narrative continues;

⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." ⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked them. "Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them. (Luke 2:48-50)

A frustrated mother naturally asked her budding adolescent how he could have behaved this way, leaving his parents with a major anxiety attack (odynomenoi, v. 48). This term "astonished" in Luke 2:48 referred to deep mental anguish and pain (16:24 - 25; Acts 20:38).⁹ Elsewhere, Luke used the Greek verb here for "astonished" (ἐκπλήσσομαι (ekplēssomai))¹⁰ to indicate amazement at supernatural events, such as the reaction to Jesus raising a girl from the dead (8:56), the disciples speaking in tongues (Acts 2:7, 12), Saul's conversion (Acts 9:21), and the Holy Spirit coming upon Gentiles (Acts 10:45).¹¹

Big point? It's ok to be astonished. It's ok to freak out. It's ok to feel anxiety, pain, depression, and turmoil in our bodies.

It's taken me a long time to believe this is true. I think our culture and my upbringing made me feel as if I should always be feeling good, and acting happy, and if I wasn't feeling good and acting happy then something must've been wrong with me. Go figure, being a child of parents who partied in the sixties and seventies then pursued comfort and security from the eighties on it all makes sense! But man, it can lead to a lot of denial and self-deceit to live like only for those things!

I'm comforted by the fact that Jesus' Mother Mary was freaked out by losing Jesus. I'm glad she wasn't all pious and calm, acting all godly and perfect in this situation. Any parent would freak out upon losing their kid for three days! They probably thought He'd been kidnapped, or was wandering around lost. Even though He was the Messiah I'm sure thoughts like these entered Mary's human mind.

⁹ NIV Application Commentary Copyright © 1996 by Darrel L. Bock.

¹⁰ Swanson, J. (1997). [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [*Faithlife Study Bible*](#) (Lk 2:47). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

But in the face of this anxiety and frustration, Jesus, as an adolescent, gave an equally astonishing response in a different sense of the word. In verse 48, Mary mentioned Joseph, Jesus' earthly father; in contrast, Jesus referred in verse 49 to His heavenly Father.¹² Jesus drew a sharp distinction between His parents and God, His true Father (2:49). His statement confirmed that He knew His mission and that His parents also should have known about His mission. However, His parents did not understand this.¹³

And I want to tell you today that no matter what your family, old friends, new friends, peers, coworkers, neighbors, or fellow community members think of you, live fully for Jesus. Be a stinking Jesus freak. Don't be obnoxious. Don't be hypocritical. But don't be ashamed of Him. He is good. Be like adolescent Jesus and be about your Father's business. Be smart. Use wisdom. Allow God to guide you in all decisions and don't be a fool. But be passionate about Christ, keep growing, and let people know that your allegiance is to Him!

And on a lighter note, like Will Smith said;

*You know parents are the same
No matter time nor place
They don't understand that us kids
Are going to make some mistakes
So to you, all the kids all across the land
There's no need to argue
Parents just don't understand*

Sometimes kids are going to engage and live out their lives in a way that their parents don't get.

My Mom is 73 years old, and up until the last year or so she just didn't get texting. She would text me stuff like:

"Here in Myrtle Beach. Great time. Life is short. ROHKLYF Say hi to kids."

I'd be like **wuuuuuuut????** Learn how to text Mom! Like for real! And dang Mom get your acronym game in check! What does ROHKLYF mean anyways???

¹² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 2:49). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹³ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 210). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Mike and the Mechanics' song "The Living Years" puts the tension between parents and kids so beautifully and poetically, it always makes me cry when I hear it.

*Every generation
Blames the one before
And all of their frustrations
Come beating on your door
I know that I'm a prisoner
To all my Father held so dear
I know that I'm a hostage
To all his hopes and fears
I just wish I could have told him in the living years*

May we try and "get" each other, no matter what generation we're from! No matter what differences we have! That goes from the older generation to the younger and the younger one to the older! And may we take the advice of this song- If possible, as far as it depends on us, to live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18) May we take every moment while we're alive, and while those around us are alive, to seek both to understand and be understood, peacefully, lovingly, and truthfully!

Another application this interaction between Jesus and His parents brings out is the fact that we, as readers of this text, are in a similar dilemma as the one Jesus' parents faced. Who is Jesus, and is His authority such that even the most basic human relationships, like the parent-child relationship, are transcended? We can identify with Joseph and Mary's response to Jesus in this incident. Yet the issue he raises in his reply is that the unique call He possesses and the unique relationship to God he has makes his parents' indirect rebuke of him irrelevant.¹⁴

In moving from Jesus to us, the text also suggests another common tension: the choice between community and family tensions. Prioritizing God, family, and ministry is not always easy.¹⁵

Sometimes we feel guilty if we sense a closeness with followers of Jesus that does not match what we have with our families, but we need not feel this way. It is only natural in relationships where we share the deepest level of commonality by sharing the same God that we feel a kinship of the soul that we might not have with biological kin.¹⁶

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¹⁵ NIV Application Commentary Copyright © 1996 by Darrel L. Bock.

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Again y'all- God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are really truly worth putting first in our lives, and from those relationships we then relate to one another. The love and truth of God is meant to fuel and inspire all that we say and do as we interact with one another. As we grow in our faith in Christ we develop new ways of thinking, new ways of feeling, new boundaries, new standards, and we can't go back to what we were when He has completed something in us. So may we continue to grow in the Trinitarian relationship, and may all our relationships flow out of that beautiful, heavenly bond with the Godhead!

The section of text concludes, after Jesus was missing, found, and had this unique interaction with His parents;

⁵¹ Then (Jesus) went down with (Mary and Joseph) and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people. (Luke 2:51-52)

It's likely that Luke received these details about the early years of Jesus from Mary herself or from someone in whom she had confided.¹⁷ One thing was sure, Luke was careful to point out that Jesus was obedient to Joseph and Mary in case his readers would think otherwise from the previous paragraph.¹⁸

When I was twelve, I was lighting stuff on fire, smoking, drinking, being a bully, doing bad in school, mouthing off to adults, Staying up till' 3am watching softcore porn, and allowing a tuft of hair to grow over my left eyeball so that the intimidating scowl on my face would carry more weight as people interacted with me.

Jesus was in no way being a rebel here. He was having a moment where His obedience to God was shown as being more important than His obedience to parents. Like the young prophet Samuel, at a young age, Jesus was showing His devotion to the King and Creator of the Universe.

Jesus' ministry also had its proper timing, so Jesus would wait to launch what he was destined to do. He was not impatient about starting His ministry and would wait until the time was right. He had to, of course, wait for the forerunner before beginning his own task. Thus, the next chapter in Luke recorded the ministry of John the Baptist some seventeen years later. Jesus did not seek to run ahead of God or drag his feet behind His timing; rather, he sought only to do what God called him to do, when God called him

¹⁷ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 210). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁸ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 210). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

to do it. The best timing is God's timing. We too must be about God's will, seeking his timing.¹⁹ May we wait on the Lord of Heaven and Earth to move us and when He says move, may we go!

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