



**Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church**  
Sanford, North Carolina

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**About Our Father's Business**  
**Luke 2:41-52**

Talk about a tough job . . .

Can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph raising Jesus?

Of course they didn't have to worry about most of the things that parents often have to deal with—misbehavior, disobedience, disrespect, and such.

But how do you bring up the Son of God? He had to grow and learn to do things like every other child. After all, He was fully human. But He was also fully divine. And while His mind developed over time just as His body did—as Luke puts it in our text, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature” (2:52),<sup>1</sup>—still from a very early age, Jesus was developing a keen sense of His identity and mission as the Son of God. Luke puts it this way in 2:40, just before our text: “And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.” And that describes Him *before* He was twelve years old, as He was in our text for today.

***Going to the temple . . .***

In the Old Testament, the law prescribed that every Jewish man was to go to the temple to worship at three of the great feasts each year—Passover and Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. In Jesus' day, for practical purposes (distance and such) most devout Jewish men who lived some distance away from Jerusalem usually tried to attend *one* of the feasts each year.

That's what Joseph did. Every year he and Mary would go to Jerusalem for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. That was their custom.

Luke doesn't tell us whether this was the first time Jesus went with them, but he does emphasize that Jesus went with them in this year when He was twelve years old.

Now whether He usually went with them for Passover or not, this wasn't His first trip to the temple. Luke tells us earlier in chapter 2 that when Jesus was a baby, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the temple to do everything the law required, dedicating Him as her firstborn son to the Lord and offering the sacrifice for her purification following His birth. At that visit, they marveled when an old man named Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God that he had seen God's salvation. It must have only added to their amazement when the elderly prophetess Anna also gave thanks to God for their baby and began to tell others about Him.

Now Jesus was twelve. At thirteen, He would become “a son of the law” according to Jewish practice, and in terms of accountability for His obedience, He would then become a man.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

But this was the year before that rite of passage. And He had come to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph for the Passover.

### ***Missing . . . not really . . .***

They were there for a week, and when the Feast of Unleavened Bread was over, they started the journey back home to Nazareth. They were traveling together with relatives and friends in a caravan. It was a lot like it was in an earlier time in our culture—you didn't worry much if your child wasn't around, because you knew that other family and friends would watch out for them and even discipline them if they needed it.

So they started back home that morning and traveled a day's journey on the three-day journey back to Nazareth. In the evening when they stopped for the night and all the family units began to reassemble, *Jesus wasn't there*.

They began to search for Him among their relatives and friends, but He was nowhere to be found. So they went back to Jerusalem—another day's journey, probably through the night.

They searched Jerusalem that day and into the next, looking everywhere. Finally on the third day, they decided to go back to the temple to look for Him.

And there He was, "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (2:46). Everybody who heard this conversation was amazed by His understanding and by the answers He gave.

Mary and Joseph were astonished at the whole situation. In all the normalcy of watching Jesus grow up, to see Him in this situation no doubt brought back fresh all those ponderings and perplexities they had experienced in the events surrounding His birth.

Despite all that, like any good mother, Mary started to correct Him. "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" (2:48). But Jesus gently and respectfully corrected her: "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" (2:49). As important as Mary and Joseph's claims were on Him as His earthly parents, He was answering to a higher authority, and reminding his mother of what she already knew about who He really was—as the angel Gabriel had told her, "the Son of the Most High . . . the Son of God" (Luke 1:32, 35).

Mary and Joseph didn't understand it all, but they all went back home to Nazareth. Jesus submitted to them as His parents and was obedient to them, growing "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (2:52).

### ***Being like Jesus . . .***

This is the only story we have in the New Testament about Jesus as a child. But it's an important one.

There's a lot in this story about Jesus that we should strive for to be like Him—being obedient children, answering to God as our ultimate authority, spiritual growth.

But I want to focus in on one particular statement for a minute, where Jesus said, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

The phrase that most translations render (as does the NIV) as "my Father's house" is literally "in the things of my Father." Now in this context, "my Father's house" is probably the correct sense. But the translation in the KJV and the NKJV captures a different aspect of it too: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (NKJV). *Jesus had to be about His Father's business.*

And brothers and sisters, that's another way, an extremely important way, that we should be like Jesus. If He is our model, if we are to become like Him, *we must be about our Father's business.*

But what does that mean?

Well, think about what Jesus was doing here in our text. He was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. As He did, He displayed astonishing understanding for a twelve-year-old. He was growing and developing spiritually.

Certainly *spiritual growth and development* is our Father's business. Being in a right relationship with Him is an ongoing thing. It's something that God nurtures in us as we seek Him and seek to know Him more and know more about Him. We should be about this kind of spiritual development in our own lives and helping others experience it in their lives.

Think about what the other passages that have been read in our service today tell us. The passage from Isaiah 43:1-7 is about redemption and salvation and restoration. The LORD says to His people Israel that He has redeemed them, and that whatever they face, He will be with them as their Savior to deliver them and to restore them. That's God's business.

If we're to be about our Father's business, then shouldn't we be focusing on *redemptive ministry*, reaching out to people who are hurting and in need of God's touch, who need deliverance and restoration?

And in Acts 1:7-9, when the apostles ask Jesus just before He ascends back to the Father if the time has now come for Him to restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus tells them that that's a part of the Father's business that's none of their business. The part of the Father's business they were to be concerned with was that He was going to send the Holy Spirit on them, and that when the Spirit came, they would receive power to be Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth!

Surely *to bear witness to Christ* in our own community and throughout the world is to be about the Father's business!

But *how?* *How* are we to do all these things?

When we focus on our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, truly seeking to grow and develop spiritually in that relationship, we'll see God at work around us.

And when we see God at work around us, we get involved in what He's doing! Henry Blackaby, in his *Experiencing God* study, calls that *joining God* in His work in the world.<sup>2</sup> Jesus called it *being about His Father's business.*

The question is, will *we* be about *our* Father's business?

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<sup>2</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).