

New Testament Life Lesson 5
The Boyhood of Jesus
Text: Luke 2:40-52

Introduction

Do you ever wonder what life was like for Jesus when He was a boy? We don't know a lot about Jesus' life when He was growing up, but we know that He was once exactly your age. We also know that, even as a child, He knew He was the Son of God. In our story today we will see what Jesus was like when He was growing up

The Story

We'll look in on Jesus at an especially exciting time. It was the time of year to go to the temple in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. That was the custom. Everyone who was old enough and could go would travel to the big city of Jerusalem and go to the temple. There would be sacrifices and feasting. Crowds of people would fill the streets. Probably there were people there selling treats and things. Maybe other boys would be there playing games.

Jesus was 12 – old enough to go with Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem for the great, exciting, feast days. Many of the other people in Nazareth went too. His cousins and friends and their families traveled together in a big group. Can you imagine how much fun that must have been?

The most exciting thing happened after the feast days, though. The group from Nazareth started home. Mary and Joseph didn't see Jesus, but they assumed He must be with the other boys, so they didn't worry about him, until night time. When He didn't turn up that night, they got worried and went to look for him.

They checked with all their relatives and acquaintances. No Jesus anywhere. They were probably worried sick! They went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

They probably looked in all the places boys are likely to be, like the marketplace and the places where the boys had been playing. Maybe they checked with family and friends who lived in Jerusalem. For three days they looked for him. Can you imagine how worried they were? Maybe they thought about kidnappers and people who stole children to sell as slaves. Maybe they thought He fell in the river and drowned or hurt himself out in the hills.

Then they went to the temple – and there He was! He was sitting there talking to the priests and the religious leaders. He was hearing them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Jesus was amazed at the understanding He had at just 12 years old.

When Joseph and Mary found him, Mary said, “Son, why have you done this to us? We’ve been looking everywhere for you. We’ve been upset and sorrowing because we couldn’t find you.”

Jesus answered, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know I would be about My Father’s business?”

They didn’t understand what He meant, but Mary thought of these words many times later on. Perhaps later she understood that He meant that God was his father. He had come to serve God and the natural place for him to be was in God’s house – the temple.

Do you think that meant He was ready to be on his own and could make his own decisions?

No, the very next verse in the Bible tells us that He went with them to Nazareth and was subject to them. That means He obeyed his parents. He increased in wisdom, and grew taller. He also increased in favor with God and with other people.

We know that Jesus had younger brothers and sisters. He probably had to watch them and help his mother with chores around the house. His house wasn't fancy, since they were poor people. It probably was just one room with a dirt floor. There wouldn't have been much furniture in it. They slept on mats and ate from a low table in the middle of the floor. He probably didn't have many toys and not many changes of clothes to wear.

The boys went to the synagogue, which was sort of like a church, to school. They would learn the Old Testament by heart. Twice a week the whole family would go to services to learn about God. Jesus would sit with Joseph and the other men while Mary and his sisters would listen from behind a screen.

Do you think Jesus paid attention in his classes – which were sort of like Sunday School classes? Do you think He listened to the preaching and teaching? He must have, if at 12 He surprised all the teachers with His great knowledge and understanding.

We also know that Jesus helped Joseph in the carpenter shop and learned the trade from him. People later spoke of Jesus as “that carpenter from Nazareth.”

Bible scholars say that Joseph probably died when Jesus was just a young man. We don't hear of him anymore after the story of the trip to Jerusalem. Probably Jesus had to help support his mother and all his younger brothers and sisters.

All during that time, He was getting ready for the job God had for him to do. He had come to save his people from their sins. That must have seemed unlikely at times when He was working away in the carpenter shop, burdened down with family responsibilities and tucked away in a small, unimportant town. But Jesus trusted his Father and waited until the time came to fulfill his destiny.

The Life Lesson

Jesus was a child – just your age. Because of that He knows just what it's like to have to obey your parents, to do chores around the house, to have to wait for good things to come.

Because He was a child, He understands how you feel. That's why you can come to him about all your problems. He is kind and caring, because He knows what it's like to be a kid. You can come to him without fear.

Review Questions

What was the most exciting time of year for a boy in Jesus' day?

The time of the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem.

Who went to the feast?

Everyone who was old enough and able to go.

How old was Jesus when he went to the feast for the first time?

Twelve years old.

Why didn't Mary and Joseph notice that Jesus wasn't with them on the way back?

They thought he was with relatives.

What did Mary and Joseph do when they realized Jesus wasn't with them?

They went back to Jerusalem and looked for him.

Where did they find Jesus?

He was in the temple talking to the priests.

What surprised the priests about Jesus?

They were surprised that he had such a great understanding of Scripture.

What did Jesus say to Mary and Joseph when they told him they had been worried and looking for him everywhere?

He said, "Didn't you know I would be about my Father's business?"

What trade (job) did Jesus learn?

He learned to be a carpenter.

Were Mary and Joseph rich or poor?

Poor

What was Jesus' home like?

It was small, poor, dirt floor, low table in the middle of the floor. etc.

Did Jesus have younger brothers and sisters?

Yes

Does Jesus understand how you feel?

Yes, because he was once a child, too.

