



CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613
(319) 277-0924

INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG
WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

Lessons from the Young Life of Jesus

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Pr. Tim Boettger

Luke 2:40-52 (ESV)

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

I have had the distinct privilege or honor for several years now—almost five years—of being a grandfather and watching my first grandson come into the world. Now, I have a granddaughter. And I was just told the other day that I have another grandchild on the way.

I can't even describe to you what that has done in my own heart and soul. To see a child come into the world from this perspective, at this stage in my life, just reiterates to me the miraculous wonder and marvel of life itself. There is no chance that this is just a random occurrence. There is a design, a Creator behind the scenes—the gift of life, the nature of life, the way life works, and how it's sustained. The world is designed exactly to sustain life.

I mean, King Solomon was right when he said, *The fool says in their heart, "There is no God."* But to think not only about a child being born in the way God designed it but also about God Himself becoming a child—being born into our world, the very world that He created, in the way He created a

child to be born—to come into our world to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves... Friend, it's mind-boggling.

It is something that is mysterious and miraculous, something the human mind can only grasp and understand through spiritual revelation.

This is the good news of Jesus' arrival. In our Bible overview, we've gone from the creation in *Genesis*—how God created all things and worked in human history—up to the point where we now measure our calendar by. Some 2,025 years ago, God entered the world as a baby, as a young child. This is that pivotal moment in human history where God invades His creation.

The whole Old Testament points toward this time. The Jewish people, the people God claimed for Himself, were waiting for this promised Messiah. Many of the prophets who went before foretold the coming of this child:

"For unto us a child is born... The government will be upon His shoulders... He shall be called Emmanuel... A virgin will conceive..."

There were so many messages given by God before the time of Christ that all of God's people were anticipating, waiting, and longing for their redemption—for their Savior to come. They didn't recognize Him when He came, but He came nonetheless.

The Bible tells us—Galatians 4:4, which we mentioned in last week's CC broadcast—*"When the time had fully come..."* When the time had fully come, just at the right time, by God's sovereign will, by God's plan, by God's design, and in His way...

We weren't there. We weren't voting on this. This is the sovereign rule and authority of God. *When the time had fully come, God sent His Son.*

Why? Why did He send His Son?

John tells us in another place: because He loved us. *"For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son."* When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman.

Now, what do we know about Jesus' young life? What can we glean from it?

Well, we don't know a whole lot. But we do know that when He was born, in the unseen realm, the devil was waiting there to devour Him. The devil understood that this was not good for him—for the forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The Bible has these two congruent narratives: what happens in the biological, physical, created world, and what happens in the spiritual world behind the scenes. God is at work in both. But there are also demonic forces that affect the created world.

We see that Jesus was hunted from the time He was born. King Herod was evil, and he was threatened by the idea of another king being born in his province. So he sent out an order for all the young boys, two years and younger, to be killed in the area where Jesus was supposedly born.

His young family was on the run for some time. But we know that this child was miraculously born. The Holy Spirit was upon Mary. The child was conceived because the Holy Spirit came upon her, and somehow she became pregnant with this child—this God-child.

Joseph was told about this in a dream. Mary's relative, Elizabeth, had also conceived a baby—miraculously. And when Mary and Elizabeth interacted for the first time, the Holy Spirit caused Elizabeth's baby, John, to leap in her womb.

There was something supernatural happening. The Holy Spirit was anointing this family—this very simple, poor family.

There were unique challenges. Mary and Joseph weren't married yet. Joseph had considered divorcing her quietly to save face for both of them. But God sent an angel, telling him to marry her anyway. And so he did.

They started this family together. Then, they went on the run. Eventually, they returned to their hometown of Nazareth.

The Bible tells us that Jesus grew there—just as a normal human being would grow. And from the growth of the Christ-child, we can learn what it means for us to grow, what it means for us to raise our children, and what God is looking for in the nurturing, development, shaping, and molding of children.

And the Bible tells us this: Jesus grew.

First of all, it mentions wisdom. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write this—Jesus grew in wisdom. Not just knowledge, not just education, not just worldly understanding, but *wisdom*. We know from the Scriptures that wisdom is to be pursued. It's like a woman in the streets that we should go after, as King Solomon said.

Jesus, as a young child, grew in wisdom. One of the things we ought to deeply desire for the children in our lives is for them to grow wise. *Those that walk with the wise become wise, but the companion of fools comes to ruin*, Solomon said.

There is this pearl of wisdom that God exalts and has told you and me to pursue in life. Jesus grew in wisdom. I want you to understand this, friend: In the heart of every human being, God has placed a capacity for the development and learning of wisdom because He wants us to grow in wisdom over the entire course of our lives.

The beauty of this is that we never need to stop growing in wisdom. Year after year, we can mature in wisdom. The Bible tells us this: *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom*.

A deep reverence for our Creator—the One who made us—and what He reveals to us about Himself, as well as what is plain to see in creation, is the starting point of wisdom. *The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”* But the fear of God, a reverence for God, is the beginning of wisdom.

I just want to remind you, friend—no matter how old you are or where you are today—there is still room for the development of more wisdom in your heart and in my heart. We can always be growing in wisdom. We are designed to grow this way. And as we do, we feel more and more alive. We should never stop growing.

But it also says Jesus grew in wisdom, and it says He grew in stature—which means He physically grew taller. In fact, verse 40 says He became strong—physically strong.

Now, oftentimes, in religious groups, we don’t talk much about our bodies. But you know, the Bible says a lot about our bodies. It definitely tells us that our bodies are not something to worship or be overly focused on. They are part of creation. But they are also a very important part of creation—designed by God Himself, where He placed our soul and spirit to live.

The Bible speaks about the redemption of our bodies, about how He purchased our bodies for Himself, and how our bodies are not our own. When we know Christ, our bodies are bought and paid for by Him. Then, once we believe in Christ, our body becomes the temple of the Most High God.

So, it’s not unusual that God mentions young Jesus’ physical body—His growth and development. He stewarded it well. He grew in stature and in strength.

We also know from Scripture that Jesus was a carpenter. After He started His ministry and went into His hometown, they referenced Him as a carpenter. So, we know He didn’t sit around. He wasn’t lazy. He engaged in physical work. He exercised. They walked everywhere at that time. I’m quite sure Jesus ate a good diet. He rested. He slept.

Oftentimes, He spent time in prayer as well. And in that meditation, reflection, and prayer time, our bodies can be rested and nourished from our spirit and soul.

But Jesus grew strong.

So, I want to remind you again today, friend—God gave you a body to take care of, to nurture, to feed well, to give good fuel to, to stress so that it can continue to develop strength over the course of your life. Why? So that you can accomplish all that God sent you here to accomplish.

I’m encouraging you today—learn this from Jesus’ life.

You and I are designed to continue growing in wisdom, knowledge, and depth of insight—to never stop being curious about what we might learn. And we are designed to nurture, care for, and take care of our bodies as best we can so they don’t get in the way, so they don’t disqualify us, so they don’t slow us down from accomplishing what God has for us.

So, I'm asking you today to reflect:

Would God be speaking to you about not being lazy in your growth, your development, and your maturing as a person in wisdom before Him? Would He be speaking to you about taking care of and disciplining your body?

As Paul said, *buffeting your body, making it your slave*, so that it doesn't slow you down or disqualify you from accomplishing everything God has for you in this life.

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature—and then in favor with God, which means He grew closer in His connection with God.

And he found more and more of the flow of God in his life.

We know that Jesus was touched by the Holy Spirit in His conception—that is, the Trinity coming together to bring this child into the world. But we also know that as Jesus grew, the Holy Spirit and the grace of God were upon Him, carrying Him along and empowering Him in His growth.

It's interesting—when young Jesus was just starting His ministry and went to be baptized, the Bible says the Spirit of God descended on Him in the form of a dove. And it *settled* on Him, which means it *stayed* upon Him.

So, Jesus found this anointing with His Father.

I just want you to understand this—John says that not only was Jesus anointed, but you and I are *made* for an anointing of the Holy Spirit. You and I are made for the Holy Spirit to *fill* us, to *lead* us, to *guide* us, so that we might grow in harmony in our relationship with God.

It is often said that we are to have a *personal* relationship with God—that Christianity is not a *religion* but a *relationship* with Almighty God. Yes, that's true—it *is* a relationship with His Son, Jesus. But I want you to think about it in terms of an actual relationship with His *Spirit*, because that is who we commune with.

That is who we *hear* from in our spirits. That is who *takes up residence* in our spirits when we believe.

So Jesus—this young Jesus—is showing us how God made us to operate. He made us to operate with a *growing wisdom* in life. He made us to live with a *growing discipline*—caring for our bodies, developing strength and stature, as long as we can, in a fallen world.

Yes, we live in a world full of challenges. But we are designed to *live strong*. Now, because of the curse, our bodies won't last forever. Thank God, we will one day receive *resurrected* bodies. But for now, God has made us to be strong—to live strong—to take care of this *temple*.

And beyond that, He has also called us to walk more and more in *harmony* with Himself, so that we might walk in His favor, in His blessing, and in His anointing.

So, Jesus did this.

He grew in *wisdom*. He grew in *stature*. He grew in *favor* with *God and with man*.

His relational life matured.

You and I were not made to be *lone rangers*. We were made to be in *fellowship* with others—to be in *community* with other people. We see this in the text—Jesus grew in His connection with people.

But He also knew how to set *boundaries* with those who were not good for Him—those who tried to mislead Him.

In His wisdom, He knew *who* to relate with, *how* to relate with them, *when* not to relate with people, when to *cut people out* of His life, and when to *bless* people.

And you and I are the same.

As we grow spiritually, God will give us insight into how we relate with those around us. He invites us into *deep community* with those who are mature in faith as well.

Friends, when you think about being a parent or a grandparent—or even just about your own life—I want you to think about these characteristics being developed:

- Your *wisdom*.
- Your *physical well-being*—how you care for your body.
- Your *walk with God*.
- Your *relationships*.

These are all things that *God Himself* cares about.

He wants to shape us. He wants to mold us.

So, can I encourage you to evaluate your life in these four areas today?

Just ask God to speak to you. Say, *God, what are my next steps?*

- How do I develop myself *physically* and keep myself as strong as possible?
- How do I *grow in wisdom*?
- How do I *deepen my connection with You*?
- And what do I need to do to keep *maturing in my relationships*?

Father, help us with these things.

Thank You for showing us that You care about them through the life of Your Son, Jesus. May Your Spirit work good in us in *all four* of these areas.

We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.