

## Jesus at the Temple

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Luke 2:40-52

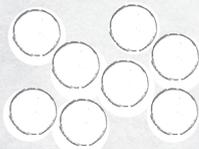
**MAIN POINT:** Jesus came to earth to do His Father's plan.

**KEY PASSAGE:** 1 Timothy 1:15

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

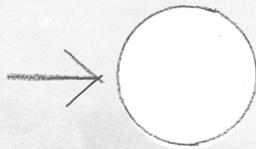
**SMALL GROUP OPENING**  
(10-15 MINUTES)

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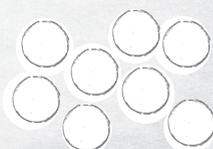
**LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY**  
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**SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES**  
(25-30 MINUTES)

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## Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Luke records just two narratives about Jesus' childhood: His dedication (Luke 2:21-40) and His time at the temple when He was 12 years old (Luke 2:41-52). Both stories set the stage for Jesus' ministry on earth as an adult.

Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews. They had dedicated the baby Jesus according to the law of Moses, and they traveled to Jerusalem each year to celebrate Passover. God had commanded the men to appear before Him three times a year to observe certain festivals. (See Deut. 16:16.) Once a year, those who followed God's law would travel to Jerusalem—often in large groups—to celebrate Passover.

In Bible times, a Jewish boy became a man at 13. His father would train him to take on all the responsibilities of adulthood, social and spiritual. Joseph was a carpenter, and he likely trained Jesus in his trade. When Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem, Joseph might have taken Jesus around the city to teach Him the significance of the temple and explain the purpose of the Passover feast.

Jesus' parents started the journey back home after the feast. They assumed Jesus was among their traveling companions, but He wasn't. Jesus had stayed behind at the temple. Mary and Joseph traveled for a day before they noticed Jesus was missing. They went back to Jerusalem and found Him at the temple.

When Mary asked why He had done this, Jesus answered Mary's question with a question: "Didn't you know that I had to be in My Father's house?" Mary and Joseph did not understand. But Jesus is God's Son, and it was necessary that He honor His true Father. In all this, Jesus did not sin.

The Bible does not give many details about Jesus' childhood, but we do know that as Jesus got older, He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people. Jesus carried out God's plan to reconcile the world to Himself. (2 Cor. 5:19)



**MINISTRY GRID**  
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at [gospelproject.com](http://gospelproject.com). For free training and session-by-session help, visit [www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

# The BIBLE STORY

## Bible Storytelling Tips

## Jesus at the Temple

*Luke 2:40-52*

- **Act it out:** Invite a female leader to portray Mary and a male leader to portray Joseph. As you tell the story, they will pantomime frantically looking for Jesus. If you use a PowerPoint, display the Bible Story Picture as if Mary and Joseph “found” Jesus in the temple.
- **Shout it out:** Invite kids to shout “God’s Son!” every time you say the word *Jesus*. Pause after each time you say *Jesus* until kids catch on.

Every year, Jesus’ parents traveled to Jerusalem for the **Passover feast**. Passover was the biggest holiday for the Jewish people. Many people would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate and remember when God saved His people from slavery in Egypt.

**When Jesus was 12 years old, Jesus and His family went to Jerusalem together. When it was time to go home, Mary and Joseph began traveling to Nazareth with a large group of people. They did not notice that Jesus was not with them; they thought He was among the group of travelers. But Jesus was not with the group. He had stayed behind in Jerusalem.**

**Mary, Joseph, and the other travelers had been walking for a whole day when they began to look for Jesus. They looked among their relatives and friends, but they could not find Him.**

**So Mary and Joseph went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus.** They searched everywhere for Him, but they could not find Him. The city was so big, and Jesus was just a boy.

**Finally, they found Him.** Jesus was in the temple complex, sitting among the teachers. Jesus was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Jesus could hardly believe how much Jesus understood.

**When Jesus’ parents saw Him, they were surprised. Mary said, “Son, why have You done this? Your father and I were worried. We’ve been looking everywhere for You.”**

**“Why were you looking for Me?” Jesus asked them.**

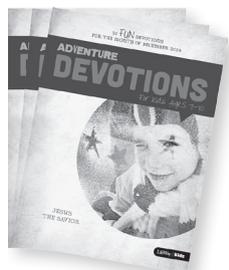
## “Didn’t you know that I had to be in My Father’s house?”

But Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus was talking about.

Then Jesus went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. Jesus was always obedient to them. Mary remembered all of these things.

Jesus grew taller and wiser. God was pleased with Him, and so was everyone who knew Him.

*Christ Connection: Even as a child, Jesus wanted to do His Father’s plan. As Jesus grew up, He became strong and wise. God blessed Jesus as He got ready to follow His Father’s plan: to die on the cross and rescue people from sin.*



**WANT TO  
DISCOVER  
GOD’S WORD?  
GET  
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that people were amazed at Jesus’ understanding of God’s Word. Jesus can help us love and understand God’s Word with a whole heart. (Ps. 119:34)  
Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out [www.lifeway.com/devotionals](http://www.lifeway.com/devotionals).

# Small Group OPENING

**SESSION TITLE:** Jesus at the Temple

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Luke 2:40-52

**MAIN POINT:** Jesus came to earth to do His Father's plan.

**KEY PASSAGE:** 1 Timothy 1:15

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.

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## Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them about a time they got separated from their family in a public place. Ask them how they felt and how they were reunited.

**SAY** • Getting lost in a public place can be one of the scariest experiences, both for kids and parents. In today's Bible story, we will learn about a boy whose parents left without Him and where they found Him again.

## Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Find Jesus" activity page. Kids will search the crowds to find and circle the figure of Jesus as a boy in the temple.

**SAY** • In our story today, we will see what happened when Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem and His parents left to return to their home in Nazareth. Do you think Mary and Joseph found Jesus? Where do you think they found Him?

- "Find Jesus" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Hot and cold

Select a toy to hide in the room. Direct kids to find it by telling them they are getting warmer as they approach it or cooler as they stray away from it. When the kids find it, discuss if it would be hard to find without clues.

**SAY** • Jesus' earthly parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover festival each year. One year, they left without Him! When they went back to find Him, they forgot about the biggest clue that would have helped them find Him sooner. That clue was the identity of His Father!

### OPTION 2: Grow, growing, grown

Use a tape measure to find the height of the kids in your group. Ask them to guess how tall you are, then measure your own height. Allow kids to stand safely on a step ladder or stool to measure how tall they think they might be when they grow up.

**SAY** • Each of you will grow taller than you are now. Some of you may even grow taller than I am! Jesus grew up too. Last week we learned about when Jesus was born, but in today's story, He was 12 years old! He grew up like us, but He was also different from us. He never sinned His whole life!



• toy

• tape measure  
• step ladder or stool

Tip: You may also do some research to find the heights of famous people or athletes to give kids a reference.

## Transition to large group

# Large Group LEADER

**SESSION TITLE:** Jesus at the Temple

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## Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

## Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire  
• glasses

*[Large Group Leader enters wearing a cardigan, gray wig, with thick glasses perched on his or her head. He or she sits in the chair on stage, squinting at the kids.]*

**LEADER** • Hello there. Is that you, children? I can't seem to find my glasses, which makes it difficult for these old eyes to know for sure what I'm looking at. As you might imagine, it's hard to find your glasses when you need your glasses to see where you left them! Can any of you see my glasses? I really do need them. *[Wait for kids to shout the answer.]* Oh, goodness me! You are right! I've left them right here on my head. *[Move glasses to face.]* There we go. Much better! It's funny to think something could seem lost when it's sitting right where it's supposed to be.

You know, this reminds me of our Bible story today! It's about a boy who stayed right where He belonged, but His parents thought He was lost!

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • In fact, the boy we will learn about was Jesus!

Most kids belong with their earthly mother or father, but we will learn that Jesus was not like most kids.

*What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.*

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

**LEADER** • Last week, our story was about Jesus while He was a baby. We learned that **Jesus was born to be God's promised Savior**. This week, Jesus is a few years older in the story—12 years old, to be exact—but He was still growing. Our story is called “Jesus at the Temple.”

• Giant Timeline

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 2:40-52. Tell the Bible story using the Bible Storytelling Tips on the Bible story page, or show the Bible story video “Jesus at the Temple.”

**LEADER** • Remember that Passover was a very important festival to the Jewish people. Each year, Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and remember how God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt hundreds of years before.

In the year our story took place, Jesus was 12 years old. In Jewish culture, that meant He was not quite old enough to be considered a man but still a bit too old to be considered a child. It's possible that this is why Mary and Joseph lost track of Him. When the festival ended, they began to travel home. Mary and Joseph thought Jesus was with the other people traveling with them. Mary and Joseph traveled

• Bibles  
• “Jesus at the Temple” video  
• Big Picture Question Poster  
• Bible Story Picture Poster

for a whole day before realizing that Jesus was not traveling in the crowds with them.

It's very scary for a parent to suddenly realize that he or she is unsure where a son or daughter is. I can only imagine the fear is even greater when the child is God's Son! Do you think Mary and Joseph may have felt like failures for losing track of God's promised Savior? [*Allow responses.*]

The two of them hurried back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. The Bible tells us that they found Jesus after three days! A lot can go wrong in three days, and they were worried sick. Where did they finally find Jesus? [*Allow responses.*] They found Jesus in the temple, asking and answering questions with the religious teachers! The teachers were astonished at how much Jesus knew and understood about God and the law. Mary and Joseph were worried, but Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. He said He had to be in His Father's house. Mary and Joseph didn't understand, but Jesus was talking about God.

## Christ connection

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

**LEADER** • Even as a boy, Jesus understood His mission and His identity as God's Son. **Jesus came to earth to do His Father's plan**, and nothing would keep Him from obeying perfectly. Mary and Joseph did not completely understand what Jesus meant, but as Jesus grew up, He became strong and wise. God blessed Jesus as He got ready to follow His Father's plan: to die on the cross and rescue people from sin.

When we trust in Jesus, God sees us as righteous like Jesus. God forgives our sin and gives us the Holy

Spirit as our Helper. He changes our hearts to love God more and gives us power to obey Him. Because of Jesus, we too can grow up wise and follow God’s plan—to tell the world the gospel.

### Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Timothy 1:15. Then sing “This Saying.”

- Key Passage Poster
- “This Saying” song

**LEADER** • **Jesus came to earth to do His Father’s plan**, and He showed that He knew this even as a boy. Our key passage reminds us that God’s plan was for Jesus to die for our sin, and Jesus was preparing to do so all along.

### Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

**LEADER** • Our big picture question and answer help us remember something very important about Jesus.

*What makes Jesus different? Jesus is fully God and fully man.* Even as a 12-year-old boy, Jesus was preparing to obey God’s plan for salvation. What does that tell you about how we can live our lives?

- “Unit 19, Session 4” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 19, Session 4” discussion starter video.

Discuss with kids whether they set aside time to spend with God daily and whether they take advantage of opportunities to serve the church regularly. Discuss ways they can do those things.

**LEADER** • God created us to bring Him glory. One way we do that is by telling others about Jesus. **Jesus came to earth to do His Father’s plan.** When we trust in Jesus, He gives us power through the Holy Spirit to follow God’s plan too.

• “The Savior We Need”  
song

## **Sing (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • Thinking about Jesus’ obedience and faithfulness to obey God’s plan, even as a child, makes me want to sing and worship God. Let’s do that now.  
Sing together “The Savior We Need.”

## **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

**LEADER** • Father, we know that Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. Thank You for that amazing gift. Help us to live for You and to follow Your plan. Remind us each day that because of Jesus’ sacrifice and the Holy Spirit’s help, we can live for You and glorify You above all else. Amen.

## **Dismiss to small groups**

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. You may provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

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## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- pen

Write each word of the key passage on a separate index card. Distribute the cards evenly among the kids. When you say go, kids will work together to put the key passage in order. Then allow kids to take turns saying the verse from memory.

**SAY** • Jesus' earthly parents lost Him for three days before they found Him in the temple. Jesus remained in the temple because it was His true Father's house.

**Jesus came to earth to do His Father's plan**, to save sinners like you and me.

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Read the following statements about the story, challenging kids to find the verses that explain the detail you just read. Whoever finds it first will read the verse or verses for the class. For an added challenge, read the statements in a different order than they occur in the story, and require kids to shut their Bibles between statements.

Statements:

- Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem every year.

(Luke 2:41)

- Jesus was 12 at the time of this story. (Luke 2:42)
- Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:43)
- Mary and Joseph traveled a whole day before realizing Jesus was not with the group. (Luke 2:44)
- Jesus was found in the temple. (Luke 2:46)
- The religious leaders were amazed at Jesus' knowledge and wisdom. (Luke 2:47)
- Jesus had to be in His Father's house. (Luke 2:49)
- Jesus grew in strength and wisdom, and God blessed Him. (Luke 2:52)

**SAY** • Great job finding those facts in the Bible. Jesus stayed behind at the temple because it was His Father's house. It was where Jesus belonged. Our story shows us that Jesus knew His purpose even as a kid. **Jesus came to earth to do His Father's plan.** Jesus grew up perfectly obedient and then died on the cross for our sin. But He did not stay dead! He rose again to defeat death. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and made the way for us to be forgiven and transformed into people who love God and want to obey Him. We don't obey perfectly, but Jesus' obedience was perfect, and through Him we can glorify God and tell others about the gospel. That's God's plan for us!

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

## Activity choice (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Group travel

Assign each kid in your group a number and teach them to count off to ensure the whole group is there. Then, lead your group to travel together to another part of your church's meeting space. If you visit another class, make sure the leaders of that class know to expect you. Consider



Tip: Leave a note explaining where your group will be in case a parent or leader shows up to find a kid.

singing a worship song for the people there. Then count off again and travel back to your room, making sure you do not leave anyone behind.

**SAY** • It's a lot easier to count off and make sure you have not accidentally left someone behind with a group as small as ours. When the group gets very large, it is too difficult to count each person before leaving. Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem thinking that Jesus was somewhere in the group, but He was really in the temple, His Father's house. **Jesus came to earth to do His Father's plan**, which meant dying on the cross for our sin and rising again on the third day. Because of Jesus' perfect obedience to God's plan, we can be forgiven and live forever with God.

#### **OPTION 2:** Growth tag

Play a game of tag with a slight twist. Before the game, select a child to be *It*. All children other than *It* will have to scoot around on their bottoms to avoid being tagged. When *It* tags a kid, she may "grow" to her knees to continue avoiding *It*. Any kids who are tagged while on their knees will "grow" to run on their feet as normal. Kids tagged while on their feet are out of the game. The game ends when all kids have been tagged out. If time permits, reset the game with a new kid as *It* and play again.

**SAY** • The Bible tells us that Jesus grew in strength and wisdom as God blessed Him and prepared Him to do His plan. Without Jesus, we can grow physically, but not spiritually. Because Jesus obeyed God's plan perfectly and died on the cross for our sins, rising from the grave on the third day, we can be forgiven and grow spiritually too. As we grow spiritually, God

Tip: Instate a rule that *It* cannot tag the same person twice in a row.

transforms us to better obey His plan for the world:  
to give Him glory and tell everyone about Jesus!

## Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a way they have grown over the past year. Remind them that people grow physically but also emotionally (outgrowing temper tantrums), mentally (learning new things at school), and spiritually (trusting God more in difficult times).

**SAY** • We all grow up at different rates, but because of Jesus, we can all grow up in God's family. As we grow in the Lord, we trust Him, love Him, and obey Him more. We can grow in the Lord by reading our Bibles, going to church, and praying. God loves us and wants to use us in His plan to glorify Himself and tell the whole world about His great love.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray, asking God to bless your group and grow boys and girls into men and women who love God and honor Him with their lives.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.