

1 Sam. 2:18–20, 26

Ps. 148

Col. 3:12–17

Luke 2:41–52

A Questioning Jesus

Goal for the Session

Children will discover the joy of asking questions, as Jesus did, to grow in faith.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 2:41–52

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Paul J. Achtemeier

The Jesus who appears in this narrative thus recalls the roots of Christianity in the history of Israel. The story shows Jesus to be fully human in his maturation in wisdom and in stature, anticipating his total dedication to the mission with which his Father has entrusted him. This temple story also portrays the resulting necessities under which Jesus fulfills that mission, from this early announcement of the necessity of being in his Father’s house to the subsequent necessities of his ministry: preaching the kingdom of God (4:43), casting out demons and performing cures (13:32–33), and finally suffering many things, being killed, and being raised from the dead (9:22; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” William J. Danaher Jr.

That the incarnation took this shape in the life of the holy family gives hope for families of all kinds and conditions on this day. The model of living that the holy family offers is not, as is sometimes depicted in romantic paintings and portraits, that of a family perfectly ordered and without division or differences. Rather, it is of a family that lives into messy moments with the confidence that God in Christ Jesus has entered and redeems them from within.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Stephen Bauman

Yet no congregant is truly like Jesus, and his uniqueness seems the seminal aspect of this story. Just as Luke’s birth narrative revealed Jesus’ special position, this story provides a transitional marker emphasizing his growing self-knowledge of his need to be in his “Father’s house” (v. 49). Later, when visiting Jerusalem at the end of his life, Luke reports that Jesus returns to the temple to drive out those who were selling things, saying, “My house shall be a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers” (Luke 19:46). His Father’s house is his house too and demands his attention. Where is our attention?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Barbara Brown Taylor

On this Sunday after Christmas preachers might find parallels in the local church, where those who are not our kin sometimes see things in us that our kin cannot. What young person will not welcome the good news that parents do not know everything? Parents may also profit from the reminder that there are other adults in the community of faith to look after their children when those children seem lost to their own families. Finally, there may be Simeons or Annas sitting there just waiting for permission to say what they see when they look at the children of this congregation.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:41–52

Focus on Your Teaching

Jesus moves quickly from a baby in Bethlehem to a young man in Jerusalem. Younger children may be momentarily confused by this rapid growth. Older children are usually caught up in the idea that this is a story about Jesus at their age. Jesus was talking with the teachers in the temple, asking questions and telling them what he knew. Curious children have many questions. They ask them when it feels safe to do so. Your role in this session is to assure the children that the church is a safe place for their questions.

God of the universe, I want to awaken my curiosity so that I am as filled with questions as the children I teach. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- white cloth
- white battery-powered candle
- offering plate
- Bible
- copier paper
- markers
- colorful napkins
- Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 9, 29
- 1" x 8½" white paper strip, paper chain started Dec. 2
- tape
- Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on white card stock, newsprint, markers, scissors, envelopes
- option 2: Color Pack 10, 29; *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player
- option 3: coffee filters, washable markers, spray bottle of water
- option 4: copies of Resource Sheet 3

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, make three signs that say: *temple, Jerusalem, road to Jerusalem*. Post these in three different places in your learning area.

Greet each child and ask about his or her Christmas vacation. Invite early arrivals to help you set up the worship space with a white cloth, a white battery-powered candle, the paper chain started December 2, an offering basket, and a Bible open to Luke.

When everything is ready, gather around the worship space. Point out the white cloth, a sign of a new church year season. The church is now in the Twelve Days of Christmas, the time between Christmas Day and Epiphany. Light the candle as a reminder of Jesus' presence. Teach the "All" response, and then lead the following litany:

Leader: Jesus has come.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: Today we light the white candle, a symbol of Jesus.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: The waiting is over and we cry out,

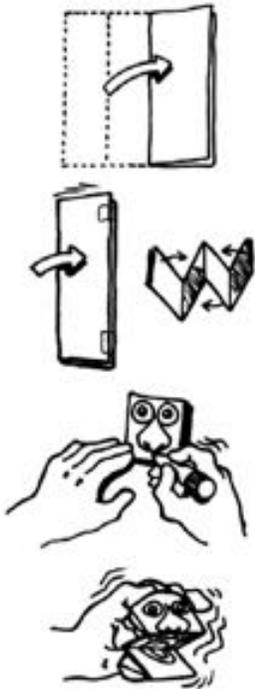
All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: We pray for the light of Jesus to show us the way. Amen.

Ask a child to pass the offering plate and then place it next to the candle.

Tell about a time in your childhood when you were lost or when a child of yours was lost. Invite the children to tell about being lost. After hearing some of their stories, note that you are glad that everyone is safe. Today's Bible story is about a time when Jesus' parents thought he was lost.

Ask older children to lead the group of teachers and the group of travelers.



EXPLORING

Ask a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, keeping it open to Luke. Tell the children that the story today occurs after Jesus was born but before the stories they heard about John the baptizer. Explain that they are going to make puppets to help tell the story. Give each child a sheet of copier paper. Set out markers. Demonstrate each step, and pause until each child is ready to move to the next one.

1. Fold the paper in thirds lengthwise. Tape the long edge closed at the top and bottom, using two small pieces of tape.
2. Fold the paper in half crosswise and bring the two ends up to meet in the middle fold, so it looks like a “W” from the side.
3. Draw eyes and a nose on the top fold with markers.
4. Draw a large “U” in the center fold for a tongue in the puppet’s mouth.
5. Tape a colorful paper napkin above the eyes for a biblical times headdress.
6. Wear the puppet on one hand. Use the other hand to hold the headdress in place.

Explain that there are no speaking parts in this play, but everyone will have a role to act out with their puppets. Help them determine the cast: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, teachers, and travelers. Teachers and travelers can be large or small groups. Have the children stand as described on Resource Sheet 1 (Jesus Is Missing). Then tell the story from the resource sheet as the children move from place to place. Switch parts and repeat the story.

After the story, show Color Pack 9. Ask the teachers:

- ✂ What surprised you about this twelve-year-old Jesus?
- ✂ What questions did he ask?

Ask the travelers:

- ✂ What did you think when Mary and Joseph couldn’t find Jesus?
- ✂ What did you think when they said they found him in the temple with the teachers?

Ask Mary, Joseph, and Jesus:

- ✂ What did you think when you saw Jesus in the temple?

Have the children put down their puppets and return to their own identities. Ask:

- ✂ What do you think Jesus meant when he said he was in his Father’s house?
- ✂ Who do you ask when you have questions about God or the Bible?

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

1. **Jigsaw Puzzle** This option will help children bring Jesus’ questions and their questions together. Ask:
 - ✂ What would you like to ask someone about God or the Bible?

**EASY
PREP**

Write their questions on newsprint. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Jesus in the Temple). Have the children color their pictures with markers. On the back of the puzzle, they are to write two or three questions they have about God or the Bible. Direct them to the newsprint list. Tell them to write large so the questions will be spread across more than one puzzle piece. After they cut their pictures into puzzle pieces, they can put their pieces in envelopes. If there is time, have them trade puzzles and work them.

Shalom Havarim

Shalom, havarim! Shalom,
havarim! Shalom,
shalom;
Lehitraot, lehitraot, shalom,
shalom.

- 2. Hebrew Song** Jesus would have learned to read the Bible in Hebrew. Many Jewish children learn Hebrew today. Show Color Pack 10. Ask the children to tell you what they think is happening. (*A man is teaching a boy Hebrew.*) Teach the children the Hebrew lyrics for “Shalom Havarim” (Color Pack 29; track 14 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019).

“Shalom havarim” (*shuh-LOM khah-vair-EEM*) means “Peace, friends!”

“Lehitraot” (*luh-heet-rah-AUT*) means “Hope to see you soon.”

Listen to the song. Then sing it together.

- 3. Filter Art** Jesus sought answers and conversation with the teachers in the temple. This activity will help children think about from whom they might seek answers and conversation. Give each child a coffee filter and smooth it out. Provide washable markers. Have the children write one question they have about God or the Bible in the middle of the filter. Around the edge of the filter, have them write names of people who might talk with them about their questions. Encourage them to use more than one color marker to write the names. Gently spray water on their filters. As the markers run, beautiful abstract designs will be created. Display the filter art in the learning area.
- 4. Examen** To grow in faith, we can ask questions of others and we can ask questions of ourselves. In the spiritual practice of examen, the children ask questions of themselves. Demonstrate this practice by having the children answer the questions in light of what they did yesterday. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 3 (Examen). Talk together about how they can do this practice on their own or with a family member at home.

CLOSING

Gather the group around the worship space. Add a white paper link to the church year paper chain. Note that white is the color for the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Play the song “Shalom Havarim” (Color Pack 29; track 14 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019). Encourage the children to sing or hum along. Pray aloud:

Thank you, Jesus, for teaching us that questions are important. Be with us as we grow in faith and look for answers. Amen.

Invite the children to respond: *Thank you, Jesus.* Say good-bye to each child with this blessing: “(Name), may God bless you with curiosity and questions.”

Jesus Is Missing based on Luke 2:41-52

Cast: Mary, Joseph, Jesus, teachers, travelers

Teachers sit by the temple sign. Travelers, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph stand by the road to Jerusalem sign.



Many Jews were on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, an important Jewish holiday. Mary, Joseph, and twelve-year-old Jesus were among the crowds of travelers walking the dusty roads to Jerusalem. When they finally got to Jerusalem, they went to the temple. *(All travelers, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus walk slowly to the temple sign.)* At the temple, they prayed *(travelers pray)*. They sang *(travelers sing)*. They gave offerings *(travelers act out giving an offering)*. They listened to the temple leaders read the Scriptures and teach about them *(teachers read; travelers listen)*.

When the festival of the Passover ended, the travelers left the city. They scattered in all directions to walk back to their homes *(travelers leave Jerusalem and go in different directions)*. Mary and Joseph were in that crowd of travelers returning to Nazareth. They thought Jesus was too. *(Jesus stays at temple with teachers; Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem.)*

When it was nearly time to stop for the night, Mary and Joseph began to look for Jesus. They had supposed he was with his friends. "Have you seen Jesus?" they asked the travelers. *(Mary and Joseph go from traveler to traveler.)*

No one had seen Jesus since they left Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph hurried back to the city. *(Mary and Joseph walk quickly to Jerusalem.)* For three days, they searched for Jesus. *(Mary and Joseph look all around.)* Finally, they found him in the temple talking with the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at the boy.

"Jesus," Mary said, "why did you do this? Didn't you know we would be looking for you?" *(Mary and Joseph scold Jesus.)*

Looking at them, Jesus said, "Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?"

The teachers looked puzzled at his words. Then Mary, Joseph, and Jesus started the long walk home to Nazareth. *(Mary, Joseph, and Jesus walk away from Jerusalem.)*

But Mary thought about what had happened all the way home and for many days. After that, Jesus obeyed Mary and Joseph. Jesus grew as God had planned and everyone liked him.

December 30, 2018
A Questioning Jesus

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 2

Jesus in the Temple



Examen

Examen is a way of praying that invites a person to examine the day in the light of God's presence. To guide yourself in examen, use the following steps:

1. Find a quiet place to sit. Keep silent for a moment.
2. Give thanks to God for the gifts of life and love.
3. Think back on your day, answering the following questions:
 - What were the high points of my day? What were the low points?
 - For what parts of my day am I most grateful? For what am I least grateful?
4. Recall when you felt most grateful. Thank God for the goodness of that moment.
5. Recall when you felt least grateful. Ask God for healing in that situation.
6. Thank God for being with you always, in times of joy and in times of pain.

