

1 Sam. 2:18–20, 26

Ps. 148

Col. 3:12–17

Luke 2:41–52

It Takes a Village

Goal for the Session Youth will acknowledge that, like Jesus, they are nurtured by the whole congregation and give thanks.

■ 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

There is an African proverb that states that it takes a village to raise a child. This notion is brought to life in Luke 2:41–52 when Jesus frightens his parents by staying behind at the temple in Jerusalem after the Passover festival. Though his parents are worried about him, Jesus is at ease with teachers in the temple. Through the ups and downs of adolescence, a community of faith that nurtures young people in the faith is vital. Having a safe place that offers Christ's love helps young people become the persons that God created them to be.

Holy God, strengthen me to do my part in nurturing the young people whom I am blessed to teach. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- newsprint
 - markers
 - index cards
 - tape
 - Bibles
 - copies of Resource Sheet 1
 - paper
 - pens
 - copies of Resource Sheet 2
- For Responding:
- option 1: newsprint, markers
 - option 2: construction paper, pens, markers, scissors, glue sticks
 - option 3: video recorder, computer with Internet access
- For Film Connection:
- Home Alone* (1990; PG) and movie-viewing equipment

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Write *What does it mean to nurture someone?* on a posted sheet of newsprint. Pose the question to the group and record their responses on the newsprint. Give each person three index cards and a marker. Have each person write one way that your congregation nurtures children and youth on each of their index cards. When all are finished, have participants tape their index card onto the newsprint. Review the information on the posted index cards together.

Tell the group that today's Scripture passage explores how Jesus was nurtured by a group of faithful people.

Pray:

Loving God, thank you for gathering us together today to explore your holy Word. Amen.

EXPLORING

Explain that today's Scripture story is the only one in the New Testament that refers to Jesus as a youth. Have participants find Luke 2:41–52 in their Bibles.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 2:41–42. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Passover Journey) and review the information on the page together.

If you have fewer than four participants, brainstorm one list together on a sheet of newsprint.

Read together Luke 2:43–44. Form groups of two or three. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pen. Give groups ninety seconds to create a list of things that a twelve-year-old would need to survive for five days in the city without his or her parents. Then, have groups take turns reading aloud one item from their lists. If the other groups hear an item on their lists read aloud, they must cross it off their lists. Declare the group that was able to read the most items aloud the winner. Ask: Which of the items on our lists would Jesus have needed as a twelve-year-old living alone in Jerusalem?

If you have a large group, consider forming small groups and having each group create and present a skit.

Have the group work together to create and present a skit that brings to life Luke 2:44–52 in a melodramatic way using one of the following styles: western, soap opera, reality TV, or crime show.

Explore the following questions together:

- ✧ What might Jesus' motive have been for staying in Jerusalem without his family?
- ✧ What specific things might Jesus have been talking about with the teachers?
- ✧ How were the teachers in the temple nurturing Jesus?

Call participants' attention to the newsprint from Gathering with examples of how your congregation nurtures children and youth. Discuss:

- ✧ How was Jesus' life affected by the nurturing that he received from the teachers at the temple?
- ✧ How are the lives of the children and youth in your congregation affected by the nurturing received from your congregation?
- ✧ What is an appropriate response to this nurturing?

**EASY
PREP**

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

1. **Thank-You Sign** Participants respond with thanks to the congregation by creating a sign for the congregation. Using a sheet of newsprint and markers, have the group work together to create a sign of thanks for the congregation's love and nurture. Have participants sign their names to the sign. Display the sign in a prominent location in your church building.
2. **Thank-You Notes** Participants respond with thanks to specific people in the congregation. Make available construction paper, pens, markers, scissors, and glue sticks. Have each participant create a card of thanks for a specific member of your congregation who nurtures children and youth in the faith. Encourage participants to write a note in the card that offers thanks for the ways in which the person offers nurture. Have participants give the cards to the church members after the session.

- 3. Video Response** Participants respond with thanks to the congregation by creating a video for the congregation. Have the group work together to create a short video that thanks the congregation for nurturing the children and youth of the congregation. Begin by brainstorming a concept for the video and then assign parts and record the video. After the session, upload the video to your congregation's Web site.

CLOSING

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Litany of Thanks). Read the litany together.

Then, send the participants with this blessing:

As you leave this place, pay attention to and give thanks for the people in our congregation who nurture children and youth in the faith. Amen.

■ ENHANCEMENT

FILM CONNECTION

In the film *Home Alone* (1990; PG), an eight-year-old boy, Kevin McCallister, is accidentally left behind while his family flies to France for Christmas. If your church has a viewing license, begin watching the scene where the family is frantically trying to get out the door and catch their flight and end watching with Kevin's mother realizing that Kevin is not with the group.

Discuss:

- ✿ How is Kevin getting left behind at the house similar to Jesus getting left behind by the band of travelers?
- ✿ How do you imagine Mary's reaction might have been different than that of Kevin's mother?

Passover Journey



The journey from Jesus' home in Nazareth to the Passover festival in Jerusalem.

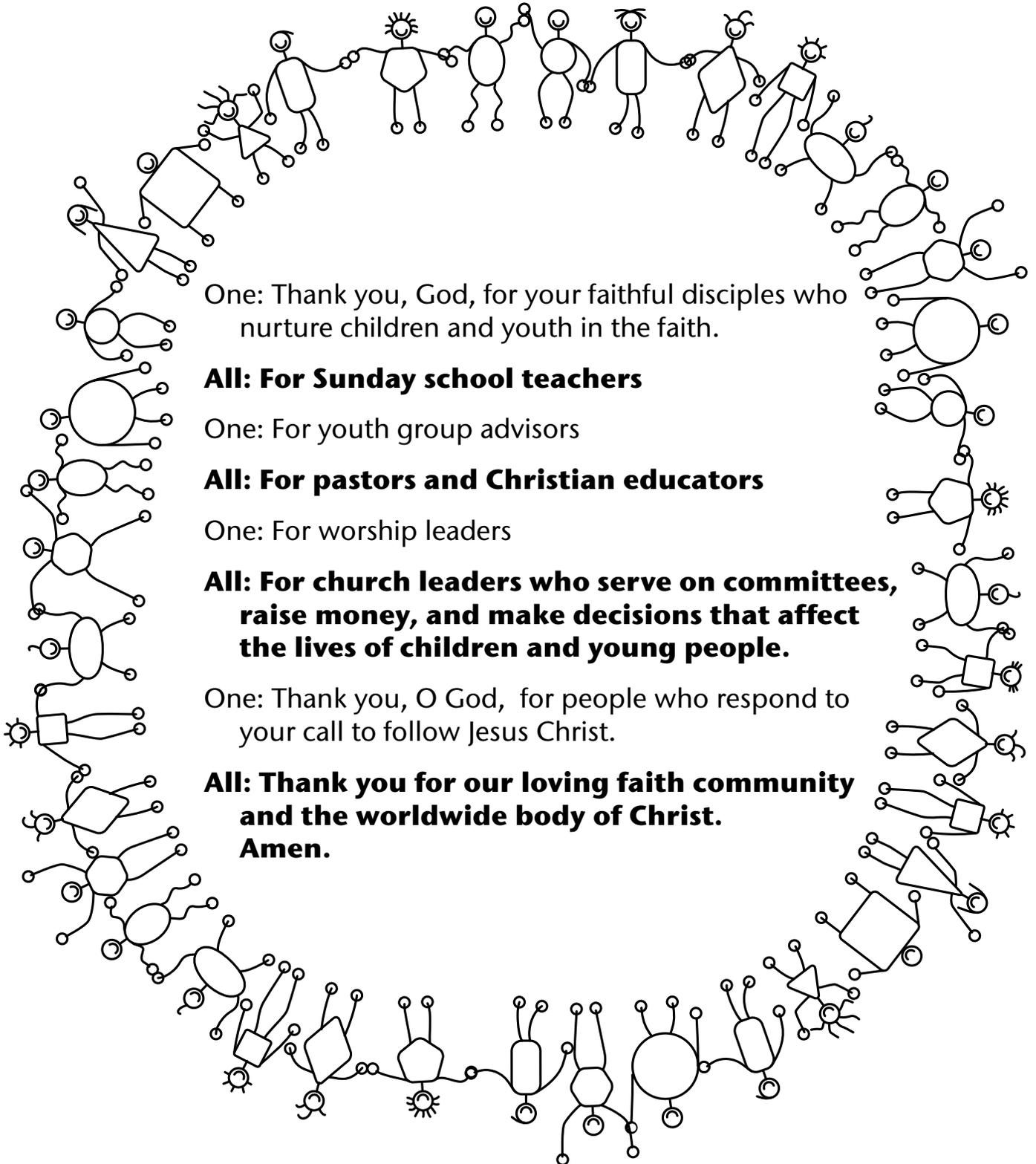
Passover Festival

Known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Hebrew Scriptures, this festival was held each year to remember God leading the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. Since Jewish men were obligated to go to Jerusalem for the Passover festival, Jerusalem and the roads to Jerusalem were crowded.

Traveling in Biblical Times

Traveling in biblical times was very different than our contemporary understanding of traveling. Groups of pilgrims would travel together to Jerusalem and back as a means of protection from thieves and to support one another. Hundreds of travelers walked for days in large groups on dusty roads to get to the festival. There were plenty of opportunities to be attacked by robbers or wild animals. Without hotels, the travelers would camp overnight in relatively safe locations.

Litany of Thanks



One: Thank you, God, for your faithful disciples who nurture children and youth in the faith.

All: For Sunday school teachers

One: For youth group advisors

All: For pastors and Christian educators

One: For worship leaders

All: For church leaders who serve on committees, raise money, and make decisions that affect the lives of children and young people.

One: Thank you, O God, for people who respond to your call to follow Jesus Christ.

**All: Thank you for our loving faith community and the worldwide body of Christ.
Amen.**