

The Perfect Student

Every teacher must be a student first. Jesus, well known as the Master Teacher, was also a student.

The Bible is fairly silent about the years between Jesus' birth and public ministry - with one exception. In his orderly account of the life of Jesus, Luke includes a unique story in his gospel. He must have had a reason.

His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41).

Jesus' family had a custom of traveling to Jerusalem yearly to observe the feast of the Passover. There is no other occasion where Jesus' exact age is given, but here Luke makes a point to tell Theophilus that on this journey to Jerusalem Jesus was twelve years old.

And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast (Luke 2:42).

The twelfth year was very important to Jewish boys. At the end of that year, Jesus would go through a ceremony where He would become a *bar mitzvah* or "son of the commandment". At age thirteen, he would have the same rights and responsibilities as an adult.

His heavenly Father had been preparing Jesus for this day. *"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49).* Jesus was already aware of His role in the Godhead to provide salvation for sinners. He had voluntarily *emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:7-8 NASB).*

Jesus went through the human process of learning just as we all do. He had to learn to walk, talk, feed Himself and how to apply what He was taught in His home and in the synagogue to His life.

And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:40).

On this trip, Jesus sought out the teachers in the temple, listening to them, asking questions and responding to theirs. They were so engaged in conversation that they sat together for several days. As His family had traveled to Jerusalem in a large caravan, it was not unusual that He had not stayed by their side. When the caravan left the city, His parents supposed He was with their group. When they realized He was not, they searched for Him, finding Him sitting in the midst of the teachers - absorbing all they had to say.

When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:43-47).

The type of conversation Jesus engaged in with the teachers was common then and is a great teaching style even today. If you have ever taught a lesson of any kind, you know that when your student listens intently and asks questions that he is interested and is "getting it." The interchange between teacher and student helps cement the lesson material in the student's mind. It is also very gratifying to teachers when they observe this depth of understanding.

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:51-52).

Just as others grow and learn, so did Jesus. He grew and He increased in wisdom.

Later in His adulthood, the Jews marveled because of His teaching, wondering aloud, "*How does this Man know letters, having never studied?*" (John 7:15).

Jesus' reply to this query was similar to the psalmist: *I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me* (Psalm 119:102). God the Father taught Him.

Jesus answers them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him (John 7:16-18).

Jesus, as the Son of Man, was always a student of the Father. *And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal* (Philippians 2:7-8 J. B. Phillips New Testament).

...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9).

There should never be a time when we stop learning. Even teachers need refresher courses; professors need to study to keep abreast of current affairs; doctors and scientists must be aware of the latest research; preachers and Bible teachers can always discover something new as they study. Throughout life, we are students.

Jesus was the perfect student and gave us an example of how to be one as well. He was humble, obedient, and totally focused on knowing and doing the will of the Father.

Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] (Philippians 2:5 Amplified).

If Jesus, who was God and perfectly fulfilled the law, learned obedience from the things He suffered and stayed focused on the will of God the Father, how much more should we be determined to be humbly obedient to God and do His will?

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Unless otherwise indicated, scripture references are from the New King James version.