

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 1: Session 4 – Jesus' Childhood

Class 12: Luke 2:41-52 – *Jesus the student*

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Highlight Jesus' aptitude as a student (he definitely seems to have talent)
- Discuss one of the understandings of how the rabbi / disciple model worked
- Look at the theology in story regarding where Jesus is found -- not with family, not with friends, and not in the city, but in the faith community

Materials needed

- Video clip from "The Pursuit of Happiness" (video clip is on rfour.org)
- Electronics that show the video clip
- One copy of the board game of Boggle
 - Timer
 - Paper and writing utensils for each student
 - A dictionary

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* What is something that you think you should be or need to be really really good at? It doesn't matter if you ARE really good at it, just whether or not you feel like you should be.

INTRO TO VIDEO CLIP

- We're going to watch a video clip from the movie, "The Pursuit of Happiness"
- The story is set in the early 80s and a father is trying to make a life and living for himself and his son
- He has a chance to get a really good job, but to get that really good job, he's going to have some tough tasks to complete while competing with other people

- Let's watch the video and see what kind of tasks and competition he is going to face to get the job

VIEW VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- At the start of the video clip, who is the "boss" talking to? (interns)
- From the clip can you tell what the overall goal is for the interns? (to get a real/fulltime job with the firm – that aspect of the clip is not super-clear so don't feel bad if you didn't catch that – this is why the "boss" says, "There's one person in here who is going to *be* somebody" In other words, only one person out of all those people will get the job.)
- What does the boss tell the interns that they are supposed to do? (call as many employees in the Fortune 500 companies as possible and then turn that number of prospects into 800,000 commission dollars for the company.)
- In addition to making \$800,000, what kind of score should the interns get on the board/written exam? (100% to be safe)
- Why does the boss say that? (Because an intern from last year got 96.4% on the exam and was not hired)

TELL

- So, that's some pretty tough competition that's going to take place between the interns, don't you think?
- It's a high pressure situation that most everyone who tries is going to fail at.
- So why do you think those interns should even try? (Because the possible reward is worth it)
- And what's the possible reward? (the clip doesn't say it clearly, but the reward is a very well-paying job at a prestigious company)
- Keep this type of competition (trying to be the best so that you will be picked for a prestigious job) in mind as we read today's scripture story of Jesus as a 12-year-old boy.

READ Luke 2:41-52 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse, including teachers*)

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." 49 He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

ASK

- Verse 41 – What do you think the festival of Passover is celebration of? (remembers and celebrates how God with help from Moses led the Israelites out of captivity from Egypt)
- Verse 41 – And where is this festival held? (In Jerusalem – which is about 60 miles from where Joseph, Mary and Jesus lived – Capernaum, Galilee which is a three day walk/journey)

- Two notes about verse 42 – “...they went up...”
 - “they” includes more than Mary, Joseph and Jesus – it includes everyone who went from their village. The festival was a big deal – so everyone who could go, did go. And they went together.
 - Jerusalem is south of Capernaum, so the usage of “up” might confuse us. However, the “up” refers to actual height. Jerusalem is higher up, elevation-wise, than Capernaum.
 - Bonus fun fact: It is thought that Jerusalem’s population would increase upwards of 400% during the celebration of the Passover festival (from 25k to as high as 100k)
- Verse 44 – On their return trip, why did Jesus’ parents not immediately notice that Jesus was missing? (they assumed he was with friends/other family – at first, this might seem like irresponsible parenting, but remember the entire village was traveling together and it would’ve been inconceivable to Mary and Joseph that Jesus would’ve stayed behind. Also, Jesus is only one year away from being considered an adult. As far as Mary and Joseph are concerned, he doesn’t need helicopter-like parenting at this point.)
- Verse 44 – So where do Mary and Joseph first look for Jesus (with friends and family)
- Verse 45 – Then where do they look for him? (in the city)
- Verse 46 – Where do they eventually find him? (In the temple)
- Verse 47 – Does it sound like Jesus knows his stuff? (yep – sounds like he has a fantastic aptitude for God-stuff)
- Verse 48 – Do you think that what Mary says to Jesus in this verse is unreasonable? Why/Why not?
- What would your parents say to you if you’d been missing for 3 days without any communication from you about where you would be?
- Verse 49 – Jesus seems perplexed because he knows where he belongs and therefore where he can be found. And where is that place, according to his answer? (the Temple / his father’s house)
- Verse 50 – Does Jesus’ answer make sense to his parents? (No).
- Do you sometimes think your parents don’t understand you? (Yes). Well, guess what? Jesus knows your pain! His parents didn’t always understand him, either.

TELL

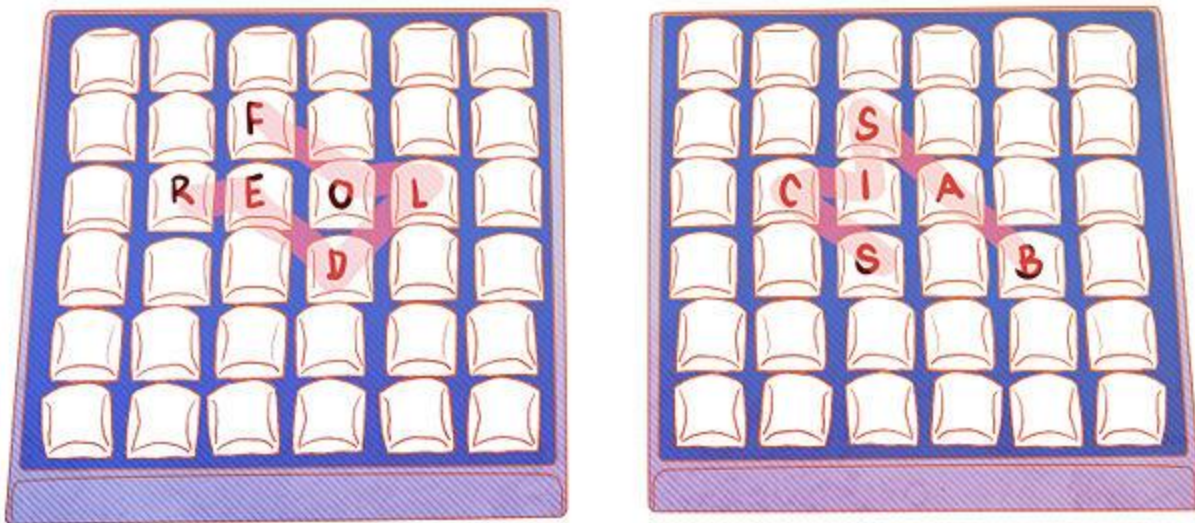
- There are two things we are going to pay attention to in today’s story.
- First thing is how the teacher / student thing worked in Jesus’ time.
- Especially in the Temple, there would be different rabbis/teachers who would be teaching there. And what you would do as a student is go listen to them. Usually you would listen to one and then go listen to another. You would ask them questions, etc.
- But, depending on who you were, you didn’t just go to learn. You also went to get selected / accepted by a rabbi. If you were a really good student, like REALLY good, like best of the best, then you might petition a rabbi to allow you to be a dedicated student to just that one rabbi. The rabbi would be pretty picky about who to say yes to.
- This meant there was a great amount of competition among students to get noticed. Think back to our movie clip. It was sort of like that.
- So, the fact that Jesus was getting the recognition that he was getting from the folks in the temple is a *very* big deal. To get noticed like that during the busiest time of the year (as a stranger, no less) means that Jesus had an exceptionally notable mind even among the best of the best.
- Later, when Jesus is a rabbi himself, it is interesting to see the similarities and differences between the usual rabbit/student approach and Jesus’ approach. Anyone who wants to follow him is allowed to, just like in the temple,

but *he* actually asks individuals to be his students (instead of vice versa). And, the people he asks are not the best and brightest, but just everyday, regular people.

- So that's one of the things to pay attention to: Jesus' aptitude is appreciated by the system, but in his own ministry, Jesus does not support the status quo, even though the status quo favored him.
- The second thing to pay attention to is where Jesus is located/found by his parents.
- Character-wise, Jesus acts rather irresponsibly and insensitively to his parents in this story, which really doesn't fit the characterization of Jesus in general.
- So it is possible that Jesus was a typical teenager: Fantastically gifted when away from his parents, but having just a little bit of an attitude when interacting with his parents.
- But, more likely, this part of the story is meant to be thought about at a more symbolic level.
- That symbolism would be this: Jesus is not lost, nor does he need to be found because he's exactly where he's supposed to be – at the center of the faith community (which in the story, Jesus refers to as "My Father's house")
- In other words, here's what the story shows us about looking for Jesus: That Jesus is not located among our friends or family or civilization (aka the city). Instead, Jesus is located where the people are gathered together to seek God.
- Sometimes people will say that they "found Jesus" – but that usage of words is quite confusing. As we can see in this story, Jesus is VERY CLEAR that he is not lost. In fact, he says he's exactly where he is supposed to be. Instead, it's a basic lack of understanding by Jesus' parents about who Jesus is that causes them to look for him in the wrong places (at first).

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- So to help us think about how someone or something is right there in front of us, but we can't always see it, we're going to play a board game called "Boggle."
- The game is very simple: I'll shake these letters on the board and then put the board down.
- At that point, we'll all look at the board and try and find as many words as possible.
- This is how you find a word on the boggle board: Letters in the word must be sequentially touching each other vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Like this (*refold* in the first pic and *basics* in the second pic):



picture from <http://www.wikihow.com/Play-Boggle>

- You cannot use the same dice/letter in one word. For example, in the second pic the word “basics” is correct. But only because there are two s’s available. If there had only been the top “s” available, you would only be able to spell “basic” – you would not be allowed to use that top “s” a second time.
- Words can go in any direction.
- A word within a word counts, you just have to see it to count it. So if you saw and wrote “basics,” you would have to write “basic” to get that second point. Or if you found “children,” you’d have to write “child” to get that second point.
- Names and contractions are not allowed. Any other type of word that is in the dictionary is allowed.
- Each round is timed (three minutes). Write down as many words as you see.
- Scoring: After the timer goes off, we will go around the room and read the list of words that we saw. If anyone saw the same word as you, you have to cross it off your list – no one gets any points for the same words
- Point system: Of the words that you saw that no one else saw, here’s the point system (note: This is a simpler scoring version than regular Boggle rules)
 - 1 or 2 letter words = 0 points
 - 3 or 4 letter words = 1 point
 - 5 letter words = 3 points
 - 6+ letter words = 5 points

DO ACTIVITY – do two or three rounds. Note: The scoring at the end of each round can take a LONG time.

ASK

- So did any of you get points?
- What does it mean if you got points? (It means you saw a word that no one else saw)
- Do you find it at all interesting that on a board of 36 letters, you could see a word that no one else in the room could see?
- Once someone said a word you hadn’t seen, could you then find it on the board? (usually – but sometimes needed the person to point it out)

TELL

- Sometimes we’ll use the term, “Hiding in plain sight.”
- That’s what this board game is based on: Words hiding among letters, right there in front of our very eyes.
- And based on my own Boggle scoring average, let me tell you: It is NO EASY THING to find that which is hidden in plain sight.
- The same thing can be said about Jesus. Even if he’s right where he’s supposed to be, it can be tough to see him.
- But that’s why these stories about Jesus are helpful and why talking about these Jesus stories can be so helpful.
- Just like when someone saw a word that the rest of us did not see, so it is with Jesus and the Jesus stories. There are things about Jesus and the Bible stories that we *can* see on our own. But when we look at the stories together, we’ll see *more* things.
- This is why the faith community is so important. This is one of the ways we help each other see and know Jesus, God and ourselves better.

- And, this is one of the reasons why the story tells us that Mary and Joseph don't see/find Jesus until they are at the center of their faith community, the Temple, because that's exactly how seeing Jesus happens: In faith communities, when we choose to look at and read the stories together.

CLOSING PRAYER