

Daily Discipleship

First Sunday of Christmas (C) – Luke 2:41-52

Imperatives of Discipleship – *Increase in Wisdom*

Focus Question: How might you increase in wisdom during the coming year?

word of life

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.” Luke 2:52 (NRSV)

Read Luke 2:41-52

There are not many stories in the Bible describing Jesus as an infant, child, or teenager. The Gospels of Mark and John begin with Jesus as an adult ready for ministry while the Gospel of Matthew describes the genealogy of Jesus, the visitation by the wise men, and the escape into Egypt.

The Gospel of Luke gives a glimpse into the early years of Jesus, describing his birth in a manger, the visit by shepherds, and his presentation at the temple. Afterwards, his family returns to Nazareth. It is in Nazareth that “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.” (Luke 2:40 NRSV)

1. *How do you imagine Jesus as a young child?*
2. *Why do you suspect there are so few childhood stories about Jesus?*

The Gospel of Luke jumps from Jesus as an infant to a story when Jesus was twelve years old at the annual Passover festival. This story depicts his family as devout Jews, participating in the religious festivals of those times. All is well until the festival ends. Jesus stays in Jerusalem to learn at the temple, but those who return to his hometown of Nazareth are unaware of his plans. Once his parents realize Jesus is not with their group, they immediately return to Jerusalem and search for him. Their search for Jesus lasts three days. Three days!

3. *What surprises you about this story?*
4. *What might have gone through the hearts and minds of Mary and Joseph?*

Jesus spent his three days learning from the teachers of the faith. Those who were around him were amazed at both his understanding and his answers. Yet, there is no mention about the questions of Jesus. Instead, Jesus is depicted as one who is wise beyond his years.

His parents somewhat miss the point. They are anxious and worried from their days of searching. At first, Mary and Joseph believe Jesus is being disrespectful - until he clarifies. Jesus seems surprised that his parents would not come to the temple to find him. Where else would he be? What else is important to Jesus? Of all people, Mary and Joseph should understand.

5. *Can you understand the reaction of Mary and Joseph? How so?*
6. *Why does it make sense for Jesus to be in the temple?*

Yet, Mary and Joseph do not understand the words spoken by their son Jesus. Perhaps they are weary from their worry and search. Perhaps they have forgotten the unique events surrounding the pregnancy and birth of their son. Perhaps they do not grasp the fullness of their son’s identity. Yet, all of these events are treasured in the heart of Mary. And Jesus continues to grow in wisdom.

7. *How do you explain the reaction of Mary and Joseph?*
8. *What does it mean for Mary to treasure “all these things in her heart”?*

word among us

Gregory was a whiz at numbers and loved science. He had four graduate degrees and was pursuing another one. Nevertheless, Gregory would be the first to admit he was not a wise man. His broken relationships with family and friends brought much sadness to his life. He regretted some of his choices in his adult life. He needed to take a course in Wisdom 101, but couldn't figure out where the class was offered.

1. *What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?*
2. *How might Gregory achieve wisdom?*

Beatrice never completed 8th grade. She dropped out of school to help at the family farm while she nursed her mother back to health. Many would say she lived a hard life, but Beatrice might not agree with that. She lived in the same house her whole life and never traveled more than 60 miles from her home. Yet, everyone in the area trusted Beatrice's words and knew she was the wisest person in their area.

3. *How do you suspect Beatrice got to be so wise?*
4. *Do you know a wise person? Describe him or her.*
5. *On a scale of 1(weak) to 10 (strong), how would you rate yourself concerning your wisdom?*

Imagine yourself at age twelve. Remember where you lived at that time of your life. Remember your interests and passions. Now imagine yourself at a festival with your family. Imagine wandering off from your family.

6. *Where would you have gone?*
7. *What would have happened if you would have stayed there for three days?*
8. *Who in your life has helped you to increase in wisdom?*

Scripture says wisdom comes from God. A wise person stays close to God's Word, allowing it to shed light on daily life. It is not directly connected to intellect or academic training. By spending time studying God's Word and being with others who are devout in their faith, we can be blessed and increase in wisdom. Fill the following blank with your own name: "_____increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor." How does that sound?

9. *Imagine you have three days without commitments. You decide to devote these days to increasing in wisdom. Design those days. Where would you go? Who would be your instructor? Would you spend time in solitude or in a group?*
10. *How can you set aside the coming year to grow in wisdom?*
11. *How much time would be needed each day or week to grow in wisdom?*

Consider making a new year's resolution allowing time for God to bless you with wisdom and divine favor.

Prayer

Source of all wisdom, grant us wisdom on this day. Teach us to walk in your ways and increase our wisdom.
Amen

Dig Deeper

Colossians 3:12-17

last word

Throughout the day, make an intentional effort to pause and pray for God's wisdom.

Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship