

# THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Exercising The Mind || Igniting The Heart || Preparing The Hands  
A free quarterly paper for rural pastors.

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*St. Paul's Church, Rabai, Kenya. Photo by Aaron Dunlop*

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## **WELCOME TO *THE PASTOR'S STUDY***

Welcome to the last 2024 issue of The Pastor's Study. This magazine is designed to help pastors in the study of the Word and in subjects that are helpful for a broad, instructive and effective teaching ministry. We begin with the editorial and Paul's exhortation to prepare the heart and mind for preaching (pages 6-8).

In this issue, we are considering the life of Christ and the event that occurred in the Temple recorded in Luke 2:40–52. The commentary on this text is found on pages 15-23, and a preacher's workshop in the centre pages (pages 27-34). Other articles related to this passage include the devotional (page 55), a consideration of the "teenage years of Jesus" (pages 9-14), and advice for parents raising children to grow in wisdom, by pastor Dan Huffstutler (pages 51-54). We have also

included a short theological article on the two natures of Jesus (pages 24-26).

In our Pastoral and Practical Theology section, we are thankful to have Dr. Beeke again, on the pastor and the world (pages 35-38), and Dr. Haykin brings us part 2 of his article on friendship, looking particularly at the relationship between Paul and Timothy (pages 41-45). Rev. Calvin Goligher brings us an interesting look at the life of one of the North African Church Fathers: Cyril of Alexandria (pages 46-50).

May this Lord bless this issue to the glory of his name.

Sincerely, Aaron Dunlop

### ***UPCOMING ISSUES***

- The Suffering of Job
- The Story of Obadiah
- Jesus: The Bread of Life

## **EDITORIAL: PREPARING THE HEART AND MIND FOR PREACHING**

One of the burning desires of the apostle Paul was that his preaching and work among the churches would be effective—that he would not work in vain (Galatians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:1; Philippians 2:16). This desire motivated Paul and enabled him to work harder than the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15:10).

For Paul, an essential part of his public ministry included his own personal spiritual warfare—the preparation of his own heart and mind. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul exhorted the young pastor to keep a “close watch” on himself and his teaching. Paul was impressing upon Timothy the truth that there is a close connection between the inner life of the preacher and the lives of his hearers (1 Timothy 4:16).

## **A heart prepared for preaching**

The first area of preparation for ministry is the heart. The heart is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), and the head is always more orthodox than the heart. Isaiah was aware of this; and before he could preach, he knew that he needed a heart that was right with God (Isaiah 6:7).

Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” This can be either good or evil, or it can be empty, indifferent and powerless (Luke 6:45; 1 Corinthians 13:1). For instance, what the Preacher in Ecclesiastes said in the pulpit or wrote in his book came from his heart (Ecclesiastes 1:13, 16, 17; 2:1, 3, 15, etc.).

As I prepare to preach then, it is important to come with humble selfsearching and confession of sin. I need my heart to be right with God, to be filled with good and to be warm and affectionate towards God, so that my preaching reflects Christ from the heart.

## **A mind exercised for preaching**

Paul told Timothy that three things characterise the mind of a preacher; labour-intensive study (2 Timothy 2:15), prayerful meditation (1 Timothy 4:15) and immersion in the Word (1 Timothy 4:15). It is a struggle sometimes to get the mind engaged, or “into gear.” Sometimes we must wrestle with a difficult text, and so we need to pray and often to plough our way through the text until we are rewarded with a sufficient understanding to preach it—others will be rewarded by our labours (1 Timothy 4:15).

If we desire to be preachers, we desire a good thing, but we need to know that along with the needed mental activity there is serious spiritual warfare.

May God help us.



# THE TEENAGE YEARS OF JESUS

The teenage years are referred to as the “formative years” — the development and maturing of adolescence (Latin: *adolescere* meaning “to grow up”). These are important years; and yet in the few biographies that we have—Joseph, David, Samuel, and perhaps Miriam and Daniel—with the exception of Joseph, age is ignored. Even more surprising is the fact that when we come to the life of Jesus, we have no record of his teenage years. There are eighteen years of absolute silence veiling that time that, by all accounts, is considered the most difficult period of life—the “formative years.”

This points us to the fact that the Bible is not age-specific. It forces us to search for the biblical principles that apply to the different circumstances of life at any age and in any generation. There are a number of lessons we can learn from the early life of Jesus, if we

look below the surface of the four biographies.

**First**, there is his obedience to his parents. The single recorded glimpse into his childhood (almost teenager) shows Jesus in the same tension with teenagers of every generation—misunderstanding and mistrust. Jesus expected his parents to understand him, but he was misunderstood and mistrusted and sharply rebuked by his mother. The sequel to this incident is amazing and written for twelve-year-olds and teenagers today—Jesus went back to Nazareth “and was submissive to them” (Luke 2:51).

**Second**, Jesus displayed the dignity of contentment and humility. Jesus knew that his parents were descendants of the royal line of David, and that he should have been brought up in the palace. Even so, the sneering words of the synagogue crowd—“is not this the carpenter” (Mark 6:3)—show us that Jesus

continued in the family trade, doing business in the community as a carpenter. In this, Christ added dignity to manual and menial work by his diligence and contentment with his lot in life.

In a world where both peer and parental pressure is powerful, it is easy for a young Christian to get overwhelmed, discouraged and discontent with his or her own lot in life. Remember, Christian teenager, that Jesus was “just” a carpenter—and despised for it, but it was the will of his Father to do it and it was with this trade that he labored in obscurity for over fifteen years.

**Third**, Jesus learned well. As a poor carpenter and a despised “Nazarene,” Jesus, whose native language was Aramaic, would not have been expected to read or write. We know that he did not attend the schools in Jerusalem. The Jews were surprised at his learning; “How

is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” (John 7:15).

Despite his “informal” learning, Jesus was educated, either at home or in the village synagogue. In the years of his ministry, he quoted directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, wrote “with his finger on the ground,” conversed with the Roman centurion, most likely in Greek, and was familiar with different interpretations of the Old Testament. Furthermore, he often argued with the educated Sadducees and Pharisees with the caustic words “have you not read?”

This impressive academic ability was not acquired miraculously—he “increased in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:52), naturally, as you and I do. We can safely assume then, that his teenage years were not wasted in frivolous pursuits, but in reading and learning from the Scriptures.

One final thought about our Lord's teenage years is his hidden life of prayer. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that in his humanity ("the days of his flesh") Jesus "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." The wording is important, It does not say, "during his years of ministry." It says "in his humanity..." which includes his teenage years.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah (50:7), Jesus knew that "the Lord God will help me." He depended on help from his Father. He knew that his ability to overcome temptation, to suffer, to escape the wiles of the devil, and to conquer his enemies, depended on asking for that help (i.e. on prayer). He remembered the promise of the Father, "ask of me ..." (Psalm 2:8) and this is what Christ did—"with strong crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7).

In Jesus then, the teenager has a faithful friend, sympathizing counselor, confidant and a model to admire and follow.

## **COMMENTARY: JESUS IN THE TEMPLE (LUKE 2:40–52)**

The gospel writers are silent on most of the childhood and adolescent years of Jesus. In his Gospel, Luke gives us a glimpse into the life of Jesus on the threshold of adulthood. This story ties Jesus' childhood and adulthood together.

Luke introduces this event with a summary of Jesus' life to date (vss. 40–41). He concludes with a similar summary, looking forward across the eighteen years that would follow (vs. 52; Matthew 3:15 looks back over those same eighteen years).

These two summary statements were not unusual in the Jewish Scriptures (Genesis 21:8, 20; Judges 13:24; 1 Samuel 2:21, 26), but here they form two bookends, and identify the focus of the story; the self-

understanding of Jesus as the God-Man and his divine mission.

This window into the inner life of Jesus is opened for us through a routine event in the life of his family (vss. 39, 41). It was essentially a family crisis which in the end was filled with life lessons for those who would treasure the life and sayings of Jesus, as Mary did (vs. 51, see also Luke 2:19).

### **The Crisis (vss. 40–46)**

From the beginning, Luke has been showing us the piety of Mary and Joseph and the ethos of their home (see 2:21–24, 27, 39). This story continues that theme. The law of Moses commanded that all males should go up to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate three feasts; Passover, Weeks (Pentecost) and Booths (Deuteronomy 16:16). It was customary however, in Jesus' home for both parents (likely the entire family) to make their way to Jerusalem for the Passover, along with



a company of like-minded friends and family (vs. 44).

There was nothing new in this. They had been through this routine in the past. This year, however, marked Jesus' twelve years. This was an important turning point in the life of all Jewish boys, when they were preparing for entrance into the religious community and adulthood (Bar Mitzvah at 13 years).

The feast occupied a period of seven days (Exodus 13:6; 12:15; Leviticus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:3), and when the festivities were over and the family prepared to return home. As they left the capital they would have travelled in a large caravan—men and ladies in two separate groups. This would certainly have been a time of sweet fellowship and joy (Psalm 122:1), and it is easy to see in such an arrangement how a child could have been left behind.

Perhaps Joseph assumed that Jesus was with his mother, and his mother assumed he was with his father, or perhaps among the other children. At the end of the first day's journey, however, perhaps as they set up camp for the night, they discovered that he was not among them.

It is most likely that Mary and Joseph camped that night there, and made their way back to Jerusalem the next morning—on the second day, in “great distress” (vs. 48 ESV). Luke tells us that they found Jesus on the “third day” sitting among the teachers (vs. 46).

### **The Confidence (vss. 47–50)**

So often in life, a crisis brings us to a point of evaluating or reevaluating life, a place of clearer vision or a point of reckoning. Mary will certainly take something from this event (vs. 51). In contrast to the crisis in the life of his parents, Jesus displayed a disposition of complete confidence.

First, he had confidence in himself as he sat among the Jewish teachers. The usual practice was for the pupil to sit at the feet of the teacher (Acts 22:3), but the text moves us away from thinking this and places Jesus “among” or on equal footing with the teachers. He is asking them questions, but they are also asked him questions, and they were amazed at his answers (existēmi, vs. 47).

Second, Jesus had confidence in his parents. Luke tells us that his parents were also astonished (different word, ekplēssō, vs. 48). We are not told what astonished them. Perhaps it was that he sat among the teachers, or perhaps they overheard some of his interaction with the Jewish rabbis. Or, were they astonished that he sat so comfortably while they were in such distress—that he could treat them such (vs. 48)? This rebuke from his mother, and Jesus’ response bring us to the heart of the story.

In this human nature and consciousness Jesus grew and developed like other children around him. He was truly human. His education, including his knowledge of religion and spiritual matters came through his home life and the teaching of his parents. Having been instructed by them then, he expected them to understand and to anticipate that one day he would be about his Father's business. Jesus clearly expected Mary to know this.

In these words—his first recorded words—Jesus accomplished two things; he affirms his relationship with the Father and he establishes his commitment to the purpose of the Father (see John 9:4).

This event is a watershed in the life of Jesus—it concludes the nativity story and opens the door to the remainder of his life. As the story of the nativity concludes, Jesus becomes the subject of the verbs and the action shifts from

his parents and others around him to Jesus himself—he “said to them” (vs. 49), he “went down” and he “increased” (vs. 52). This change in the subject of the verb prepares the reader for the story that follows.

### **The Continuing Story (vss. 51–52)**

The story is very natural, and Luke stresses the humanity of Jesus, presenting Jesus simply as a virtuous, zealous and judicious Jewish boy. While his questions and answers amazed the teachers, and his sitting among them astonished his parents, there is nothing miraculous here. He grew and developed in ways that all normal children do.

Luke the doctor speaks of a fourfold growth of the child Jesus; physically (maturity either in years or height, or both), intellectually (in wisdom), spiritually (favour with God) and socially (with men)—and in every stage of his development he was perfect.

But the story invites us to follow him (vs. 52). There is an expectation of something in the future as Luke advances the story of Jesus' life. He has made a clear distinction between his earthly parents (and his dependence on them), and his heavenly Father—he has come to do his “Father’s business.”

These words, “my Father’s business,” not only identify Jesus as the Son of God, they also provide a clue into his mission on earth. The Father’s business is the business of salvation, and the Son has come to do that—to make all who believe in him sons of God.

Luke is saying the same as John did at the beginning of his gospel, “but as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

On us then, who have believed, the Father has bestowed his love and has called us his sons (1 John 3:1). He has given us his Spirit (Romans

8:14), and we will one day be like him, as his is (1 John 3:2). This, then, should stir us to be like Christ here on earth, and be about “our Father’s business” also.

# JESUS THE GOD-MAN AND OUR SALVATION

The first recorded words of Jesus were spoken in the temple at Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. These words reveal how Jesus understood himself as the God-Man—his relationship to the Father and his mission on earth. Theologians speak of the theanthropic person of Jesus—from the Greek; *theos*, “God,” and *anthropos*, “man.” The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it simply; “God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever” (WSC, 21). But why is this so important?

## **The human nature of Jesus**

Jesus used the phrase “son of man” (i.e. human being) repeatedly when he referred to himself, (e.g., Matthew 8:20; 12:8; Mark 2:10, 28; Luke 6:5; 9:22; John 8:28; 12:23; 13:31). As a self-conscious man, Jesus thinks like a man,



reasons like a man and feels like a man in every way that does not include sin.

The divine nature does not change the human nature into a super-nature, otherwise he would not be truly man. The gospels illustrate the limitations of this true humanity over and over again in his thirsting and weariness and the limitations of his knowledge, as when he asked, “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45–46).

### **The divine nature of Jesus**

Jesus is also truly God; along with his human consciousness, he has a divine consciousness. He did not lose anything by becoming man. He was still divine with all the attributes of divinity: omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc., and life-giving (Mark 5:21–43). The Gospels illustrate this divine–human person well when he sat thirsty by the well, and yet spoke of himself as the one who is the water of life (John 4:14).

## **The mission of the God–Man**

Jesus knew that he must be about his Father's business. The Father sent him from heaven for this purpose (John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23, etc.). His unique person in two natures and his mission are necessarily bound together. Only as man could Jesus offer himself for sinful men and, sustained by a divine nature, absorb the full weight of divine wrath and finish the work (John 19:30). Only as God could Jesus give divine value to the sacrifice for sinners. In his humanity he earned life for us by his death, and by his divinity he restored life for us through his resurrection.

# PREACHER'S WORKSHOP

## EXEGETICAL NOTES (Notes on text, words, and grammar)

**Vs. 40:** the verb shows that he was constantly being filled with wisdom. This corresponds with vs. 52 where he was increasing in wisdom, according to his age. He was perfect in every stage of his life.

**Vs. 42:** “custom”—the Greek word is *ethos*, from where we get the English word *ethos*. Attending religious services was the “disposition” and “characteristic” (the *ethos*) of the home.

**Vs. 46:** teachers / doctors (*didaskalos*). Luke uses this term for John (3:12) and Jesus (7:40; 8:48; 10:25), but only here for the Jewish leaders.

**Vs. 48:** “astonished” or “amazed”— (different word from vs. 47) the parents were overwhelmed, or “blown away.”

**Vs. 48:** The fathers of Jesus. Joseph was his earthly father who taught, trained, protected and provided for him, but it is to his heavenly Father, whom he had by eternal generation (John 5:17–18), that he owes obedience (see John 8:29).

**Vs. 49:** “must”—he bound himself from the beginning with a divine constraint (see Luke 9:22; 13:33; 19:5; 22:37; see also Hebrews 10:7).

**Vs. 51:** “was submissive” (subject)—the verb shows that this was habitual (present tense).

# PREACHER'S WORKSHOP

## PREACHING NOTES (Points for explanation and application)

- This story comes at the end of the birth story. Luke wants us to think of this occasion as the end of the birth story (childhood), and the beginning of adulthood.
- Only males were required to go up to the feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16). Mary went up out of love for Yahweh (see 1 Samuel 1:23).
- Was Mary at fault in losing Jesus? There may be context that would have meant Mary expected him to be among the travelers. Scholars say that the men travel with the men and the women with the women; perhaps his father thought he was with his mother or vice versa.
- At twelve years old Jesus shows his parents that he is not dependent on them, but on the Father—he could live without them (see Matthew 10:37).

- There are “customs” (vs. 42) that we need to incorporate into our family life. Verse 49 contains the first recorded words of Jesus; words that identify his divine mission, his zeal and self-denial.
- Jesus’ heart drew him to his Father’s house in Jerusalem, but duty called him to his home in Nazareth.
- See how the Creator of the world became an obedient child (Isaiah 9:6; 1 Corinthians 15:25). Jesus was subject to all authorities; teachers (vs. 46), and parents (vs. 51), etc.

# QUESTIONS

*Asking the text questions will help you a lot, not only to understand the meaning of the text but also to apply the text to your hearers.*

**1. What does the story teach about God?** This story teaches us that God has provided for our salvation in Jesus Christ who took on flesh like us. Also, God works out his will in us through the normal, routine and the mundane affairs of this life.

**2. What does the story teach us about ourselves?** We learn that we are dull of hearing (vs. 50, see also Hebrews 5:11), like Mary and Joseph who should have known him better. We need to seek to understand life's spiritual realities.

**3. What does the story teach about Christ?** The extraordinary meekness of Jesus in his

humiliation (in the days of his flesh). Jesus submitted not just to the will of the Father (John 6:38), the Mosaic Law (Galatians 4:4), the governing Roman authorities (Matthew 22:21), and the authority of the teachers (vs. 46), but also to the authority of his parents. Although he was the creator, he rebelled against no earthly authority.

**4. What does this story tell us to do?** We learn here that as parents we need to be diligent and loving. We need to set the ethos (custom) of our home (vs. 42). As children and adolescents, we learn to be respectful and obedient (Ephesians 6:1–4). But most of all, this story tells us to look to Jesus who lived out a vicarious righteousness for his people (Matthew 3:15), and he offers that to me in the gospel.



# APPLICATIONS

Application is an important part of every sermon (see pages 13–14). The Bible demands a response and we need to show our hearers how the teaching of the Bible affects us personally. Show them what God wants them to do and how God wants them to change. Apply your sermon specifically to different kinds of people.

## **The lost**

We should show the unbeliever how the eternal Son of God humbled himself and put himself under all authority for our sake. We can also point unbelievers to the graciousness and the meekness of Jesus in this story and find examples in other places.

## **Parents**

There are important lessons here for parents; the customs and routine of the home, and their care and diligence in searching. Parents

are also learning (vs. 51b), and parents should not provoke anger in their children (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4).

## **Teenagers and young people**

There comes a point where teenagers know more than their parents (as Jesus did here). As followers of Jesus, however, teenagers need to graciously submit to authority.

## **Believers**

Believers should learn that the Father's house should be our regular resort, our happy place, a place where we can learn from our teachers and in fellowship with other believers. Like Jesus, however, while our hearts might draw us to the Father's house, we still must "go down to Nazareth" and not neglect other responsibilities.

## THE PASTOR AND THE WORLD, PT. 2: USE THE WORLD AS GOD'S GOOD GIFT

*Dr. Joel R. Beeke*

A stunning truth revealed in the Garden of Eden is that God not only created the world to meet our needs but also to give us pleasure. The Lord God did not feed Adam and Eve with dry crusts of bread but surrounded them with luscious fruit, beautiful trees, sparkling rivers, and land containing gold and gemstones (Genesis 2:8–15). So Paul declares that the living God “giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17).

John Calvin (1509–1564) said, “God provided food... not only to provide for necessity but also for delight and good cheer.” He then asked whether God would make flowers so beautiful and fragrant if he did not intend us to enjoy them with our eyes and noses. Pierre Viret (1511–1571), a friend of Calvin, wrote,

“God has not only provided in these things for the necessities of mankind, but also for their desires and pleasures, and has desired to join together an excellent beauty with profit and usefulness.”

So, if you are a believer, how are we to use the world as God’s good gift?

First, we can use the world with a heart of gratitude. Paul’s words to Timothy give us practical directions on how we are to use this beautiful, profitable, pleasurable world. In 1 Timothy 4:4 Paul says, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.” If we view the world as God’s creation, then every good thing is a gift from heaven above (James 1:17). So we should always look beyond the gift to the Giver.

Calvin said, “All things were created for us so that we might recognize the Author and give thanks for his kindness toward us.” Gratitude

understands the giver to be a greater treasure than the gift. We must not use God to get more of what we want; we must use the world to get more of God.

Psalm 148 calls upon every part of the world to praise the Lord because he made it. The psalmist provides us with a catalog of God's creation: the heights of heaven and the hosts of angels dwelling in them; the sun, moon, stars, and clouds above us in the firmament; sea monsters in ocean depths or the fire, hail, snow, vapors, and storms that sweep over the dry land; mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars; wild beasts and cattle, creeping things and flying birds; kings, generals, and judges of the earth; young men and maidens, old men and little children.

He says, "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven" (vs. 13). Creation moves us to praise the Creator

because the cause is always greater than the effect. God's glory transcends everything the world can offer us.

Gratitude is love returned for love bestowed. True thankfulness is a childlike response of love to the Father who has so greatly loved us in Jesus Christ. It views all of creation through gospel eyes, seeing the world as the handiwork of the God who "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). We respond by saying: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). In this, as John Owen (1616–1683) explained, God's children have communion with their heavenly Father. They receive His gifts by faith in Christ, and "they make suitable returns unto him." They use the world with a heart of gratitude.

*To be continued in upcoming issues.*

## WORD STUDY

We could think of studying a passage in three steps.

- First, you need to understand the big picture. What does the passage mean?
- Second, break the passage down into sections. This is not a sermon outline, but some sort of outline will help you get a better handle on the passage.
- Third, once you have the big picture understanding of the passage and you have broken the passage up into sections, it is helpful to zoom in on key words.

Understanding the key words will help you develop the meaning of the passage further and provide significant and deeper material for your sermon.

A “key word” is a word that is crucial to the story, such as “feast” (Luke 2:43), and you will want to understand something of the feasts in

Israel, and why Jesus was in Jerusalem. It may be a word that is repeated, such as “amazed” (vs. 47) “astonished” (vs. 48).

A key word may also be a word that has a more complex meaning, such as Mary “treasured up” these things in her heart (vs. 51).



# THE FRIENDSHIP OF PAUL AND TIMOTHY, PT. 1

*Dr. Michael Haykin*

There is a common stereotype about Paul: he was one who preferred to work by himself. The fact is, however, that Paul is rarely found without companions. Paul “delighted in the company of his fellows.” And of his companions the dearest must have been Timothy. Though he was probably twenty or so years younger than Paul, Timothy became the Apostle’s closest friend. In the words of F. F. Bruce, the Bible commentator, Timothy

*“readily surrendered whatever personal ambitions he might have cherished in order to play the part of a son to Paul and help him in his missionary activity, showing a selfless concern for others that matched the apostle’s own eagerness to spend and be spent for them.”*

Timothy had joined the Apostle Paul's ministry team early in what is termed Paul's second missionary journey around 48 or 49 AD (Acts 16:1–3). As they travelled, Timothy saw first-hand Paul's "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions" (2 Timothy 3:10–11). Timothy grew to know the details of Paul's theology and doctrinal convictions.

He learned that at the heart of all genuine Christian theology is God: the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. He came to be grounded in the fact that the gospel is centred on the death and resurrection of Christ, the only way that men and women can come into a relationship with this God, the one true and living God.

Timothy also saw the way that Paul lived, how he made decisions and determined the best use of his time. And all of this came together

with Paul's purpose for living, namely, the glorification of God and of his Son, Christ Jesus.

He observed Paul's love for the church and compassion for those who were held in the darkness of sin. He saw the way that Paul responded with patience and perseverance in difficulties and the fact that the Apostle did not waver in his commitment to Christ despite persecution and affliction.

As Paul and Timothy spent this large amount of time together, Timothy's soul began to mirror that of Paul and his mind became increasingly attuned to the wavelengths of the Apostle's thinking. Thus, Timothy's friendship with Paul would have been a means by which God sanctified the younger man, giving him an ever-increasing richness of thought about God and the gospel, and an ever-growing desire for holiness and conformity to Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15:33 Paul urges the Corinthians to recognize that “evil company corrupts good habits.” Intimate friendships with evil characters will invariably have a negative effect on our lives. Likewise, one can say that “good company promotes good habits.” This was the effect that Paul would undoubtedly have had on Timothy.

This was the effect that friendship with the eighteenth-century Baptist Samuel Pearce (1766–1799), a man of great personal holiness, had on the Congregationalist William Jay (1769–1853). Jay, was an influential minister in Bath, England, and made this comment about the last time that he saw Pearce alive: “What a savour does communion with such a man leave upon the spirit.”

Probably the clearest text that outlines what Timothy meant to the Apostle Paul is Philippians 2:19–22: “...I have no man like-minded.” The Philippian church had been

evidently experiencing some measure of disunity. Paul mentions it explicitly in chapter 4 when he urges Euodia and Syntyche “to be of the same mind in the Lord” (vs. 2). In chapter 2 Paul devotes a lengthy section of this letter to resolving this problem, and he begins by urging the Philippians to be “likeminded”—the same phrase that he uses in Philippians 4:2—“having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2–4).

To illustrate this, Paul encourages the Philippians to meditate on the example of Christ, whose mind and heart were focused not on his own personal interests but on those of fallen humanity (Philippians 2:6–8), and he illustrates it further from the life of his friend Timothy (Philippians 2:19–22).

# CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

*Calvin Goligher*

Cyril was born in Egypt, around the year 378. He was well educated through his teenage years, followed by a course of study in the Bible and theology in his twenties. His uncle, Theophilus, was the bishop of Alexandria, and when he died in October 412, Cyril was elected to succeed him.

Cyril devoted much of his time to study and writing. He published major biblical commentaries on the Old Testament, and he wrote on the doctrine of the Trinity. He was also a busy pastor, preaching and leading worship every week, and overseeing evangelism in large parts of Egypt.

## **Controversy with Nestorius**

In the years 428–429, Nestorius, the new bishop of Constantinople, preached a series of sermons on the incarnation. In these sermons,

he insisted that Mary was not the “mother of God,” but only the mother of Jesus’ humanity. This might sound all right, but if you think carefully about the implications, this means that Jesus is not really God. Instead, Nestorius believed that the man Jesus was in a very close relationship with God.

Cyril recognized the problem immediately, and began writing and preaching about the incarnation. He taught that God the Son did not merely have a relationship with a human person, but actually became human himself. Because of the incarnation, the divine person who was already called “the Word” and “the Son of God,” could now also be called “Jesus,” “Christ,” and “Son of Mary.” The Gospels do not tell us about two persons. Rather, they show us the human actions of God the Son in one person.

Nestorius asked the emperor to call a council to settle the disagreement. The emperor

agreed, and called for a council to be held at Ephesus starting on June 7, 431. Nestorius was good friends with the leading Syrian bishop, John, and hoped for his support.

But the bishops from Syria were delayed and after much delay, Cyril (the senior bishop) decided it was time to start the council. With about 200 bishops present, the council summoned Nestorius, who refused to attend. Then the council read the writings of Cyril and Nestorius. They approved Cyril's views, and condemned the teaching of Nestorius.

The council removed Nestorius from his position as bishop. The result was definitive, but things were about to get complicated. John's party from Syria arrived two days later. He was furious to discover that the council had met without him and removed his friend from office. He and Nestorius decided to call their own council.



With forty-three bishops present, they condemned Cyril, and when news of the two councils reached the emperor, he was furious. He had hoped the council would bring unity, but instead it had caused chaos.

He ordered his soldiers to put Nestorius and Cyril under house arrest until things were worked out. Over the summer, the emperor became convinced that Cyril's larger council was correct, and he sent Nestorius away. John and Cyril also began some discussions, and for two years, they continued discussing the matter, until in 433 they publicly declared their agreement against Nestorius.

## **Death and Legacy**

Cyril died on June 27, 444. He had lived for about 66 years, and served as bishop of Alexandria for 32 years. In that time, he had written commentaries on most of the Bible, numerous doctrinal treatises, pastoral and

theological letters, and extensive investigations of the tradition.

The great achievement of his life was leading the Church to see its shared life in Christ and the confession enshrined in the Nicene creed that the one who was born of Mary and who suffered for our sins was indeed “true God of true God” who “came down from heaven.”

# RAISING CHILDREN WHO GROW IN WISDOM, STATURE, AND FAVOR

*Dan Huffstutler*

The story of Jesus' visit to the Jerusalem temple is a fascinating picture into the childhood of Jesus. While there is much we do not understand about the Lord's early life, there are some helpful principles we can take away from this text. For every parent interested in helping children grow in wisdom, stature, and favor, Luke offers principles from the life of Jesus that can help.

**First**, wise parents involve the whole family in worship. The Law of Moses commanded only the males to be present for the Passover feast (Deuteronomy 16:16). However, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus are going with many others. During this period, devoted followers of Yahweh were bringing their wives and older children to the Passover feast to expose them

to the teaching and proper worship of YAHWEH. Jesus grew up in a home then, where his parents engaged him in joyful and meaningful worship of YAHWEH. Wise parents involve their children in joyful and meaningful worship.

**Second**, wise parents earnestly love their children. While modern parents might think Joseph and Mary were neglectful parents because it took a whole day for them to notice Jesus was missing on the way home, it is likely that there is much we do not understand about the context of this event. Whole families traveled in joyful caravans, and children easily intermixed with other families to and from Jerusalem.

What we need to see is that Joseph and Mary demonstrated their love for Jesus by their frantic searching once they realized he was absent.

**Third,** wise parents raise informed children who know what their mission is. Jesus was on a mission, and even in his childhood, he was wholly interested in intense dialogue with the best minds of his nation. All who heard Jesus were “astonished” at his knowledge (vs. 47). Jesus knew what he must do whether his parents were present or not, and he was evidently well taught for he had a knowledgeable conversation with these scholars.

**Fourth,** while Jesus taught his parents on this occasion, we should also learn that wise parents help their children understand who their Creator is, what their responsibilities to him are, and how they are to live in this world. Jesus knew who he was. He is very aware of his heavenly Father by the age of twelve. While the means of his knowledge and relationship with his heavenly Father are not revealed, he is aware of his uniqueness and is aggressively pursuing his Father’s plans.

While our children are unlike Jesus in many ways, the Scriptures reveal who they are, and how they should live, and parents need to cultivate this in the home.

**Fifth**, wise parents teach their children to honor and obey them even when the child knows more than the parents. There comes a point in the growth of a child, when he or she knows more than the parent, yet Jesus submitted himself to his earthly parents. The response of Jesus to his confused parents provides an example for all children. Jesus obediently “went down with them” (vs. 51) and honored his parents.

This unique incident in the life of Jesus is simultaneously interesting and puzzling. Nevertheless, we find help for both parents and children. Consistently practicing these simple principles and actions like Jesus and his parents will help a child to grow in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and men.

# DEVOTIONAL: LEARNING TO LOVE GOD'S WORD

*John Dyck*

Luke 2:40–52 gives us the only information about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ during the time between his birth and his public ministry. Even though it is a short passage, it reveals a lot about him. For instance, when he told his parents that he was involved in his “Father’s business” he showed that he understood himself to be the very Son of God.

Luke tells us that he increased both in wisdom and stature. We can easily understand that he would have to grow physically as he developed from a baby into an adult, but it’s very interesting that he also grew in wisdom. There were things that, in his human nature, he came to understand more clearly.

Not only did he learn, he loved to learn. He made it his business to continually learn more

about God and about God's law. He understood very well that God's commandment is exceeding broad (Ps. 119:96). He took the opportunity while he was in the temple to listen closely to what the doctors of theology taught. He asked questions so that he could understand the truth more clearly. Because of his pure mind, unaffected by sin, he was even able to provide answers to some of their questions, showing that he had more understanding than all his teachers (Ps.119:99).

We are very unlike the Lord Jesus when we think that we know enough about the true and living God. Paul knew the pleasure of studying God and his Word when he said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33). Is your desire to know God greater than your desire for gold? Is God's



Word sweeter to you than honey and the honeycomb? (Ps. 19:10)

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