

Bible Study Teaching Plan for December 31, 2017  
Lesson 3: Luke 2:21-52 & Matthew 2:9-23  
Jesus' Developmental Journey

Before class, find a jig saw puzzle (that you wouldn't mind losing the pieces to), and bring it with you. Also, write the following scripture assignments on a marker board:

Luke 2:21-24	Matt. 2:19-23
Luke 2:25-32	Luke 2:39-40
Luke 2:33-35	Luke 2:41-45
Luke 2:36-38	Luke 2:46-50
Matt. 2:9-12	Luke 2:51-52
Matt. 2:13-18	

#### CREATE INTEREST

1. Distribute one or two pieces of the jig saw puzzle to each person present. Ask the class to guess what the puzzle is going to "be" by looking at their pieces. (Obviously not). SAY: It's fun when we put the pieces together and begin to see the bigger picture. Today we are going to see God reveal more and more "pieces" to what must have been a "puzzle" in some ways to Mary and Joseph about what it would mean to be the earthly parents of God's child, Jesus.

2. SAY: Our Scripture focuses on Jesus' childhood and his developmental journey. We don't often study these verses. It is a very few number of verses, right after the Christmas story. Often at this time of the year we are studying through another book of the Bible, so we interrupt for the "Christmas lesson," then we move back into our previous study. On the other hand, our preschoolers and children study these verses every year! (It's very important to our children). The reason we study these verses today is because they are a part of our study of the book of Luke.

3. Assign readers (or volunteers) to each of the passages listed on the marker board. SAY: Today we're going to see what we can learn from Jesus' growing up years. To see the "bigger picture," we are going to include what Matthew writes about Jesus' childhood as well.

#### GUIDE BIBLE STUDY

4. Have reader 1 read Luke 2:21-24. ASK: How do you think God chose Mary and Joseph for this once-ever event? Discuss. SAY: Mary and Joseph were "chosen" by God to be the earthly parents of Jesus because they were such wonderful, God-fearing individuals. This truth is evidenced by the fact that they immediately did what their Scripture--our Old Testament--required. They had Jesus circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, they presented a sacrifice at the temple, and they named him "Jesus" at this time. Mary & Joseph did EVERYTHING the Law required and Jewish tradition called for. This simple act reveals part of the nature of who Mary & Joseph were.

Like all new parents, we want to do things "right." Mary and Joseph did too. (Although their situation was unique!) Imagine raising God's child--they certainly didn't want to do anything wrong while bringing up God's special son! That's the way it should be for parents today. The early years of the child are so important. Childre learn to love and trust the ones who are caring for them as little babies. Educational Psychologists say much of a child's personality is shaped by the age of two.

5. Have volunteer read Luke 2:25-32. SAY: As we said earlier, it's fun to see the "pieces" come together so you can see the bigger picture. That's what God was doing for Mary & Joseph. Mary & Joseph had

come to the Temple to consecrate and name Jesus--following the laws and customs—but look who showed up: Simeon, with a promise and a blessing! Mary and Joseph had no idea this would happen! But God was putting the puzzle pieces together! And look at the first part of Simeon's blessing: He was saying the destiny of Israel would be upon this little baby! What a great thing for Mary & Joseph to hear! It confirmed what the angel had told them. And what parents don't want to hear how wonderful their little baby is! Let's keep going.

6. Have next reader read Luke 2:33-35. SAY: The blessing is wonderful...until the last part: "And a sword will pierce your own soul, too!" Mary and Joseph probably had no idea what these words of Simeon meant at the time. It was only when Jesus was arrested, and beaten, and finally crucified, that Mary most likely remembered these words. Again, the "puzzle" is coming together.

7. Have reader 4 read Luke 2:36-38. SAY: Anna had lost her husband as a young woman. Death at a younger age was much more common in those days. Anna turned to God in her time of loss and sorrow. What a wonderful example for us, and for Mary. In addition, we can tell Anna lived a life of thankfulness. Notice Anna's words: "She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to ALL who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." That's another great lesson we can learn from this story.

8. Say: In Mary's version of the birth of Jesus, Dr. Luke records the family going back to Nazareth in vs. 39. In Matthew's version (which was probably provided by Joseph), Matthew takes us on a detour. Since we very rarely study the childhood of Jesus, let's include these few verses, too. We don't know the exact timeline, but we know it is after the dedication of Jesus. Mary and Joseph also evidently moved to a house in Bethlehem. Have volunteer read Matt. 2:9-12. SAY: Matthew's version includes this awful story about Herod's actions, as well as a trip to Egypt. Luke did not include this part of Jesus' growing up years. We don't know why Luke (& Mary) didn't include them. Maybe these next few verses hint at the reason.

9. Have volunteer read Matt. 2:13-18. SAY: Maybe Mary (or Luke) didn't want to include this "horrible" part of the story. For that matter, maybe Joseph didn't tell Mary what the angel told him, or what Herod had done. Sometimes we protect the ones we love from some of the "horrible news." It's possible that Mary was heart-broken because the birth of her child caused the death of so many other babies, that she simply chose not to include this horrible story.

10. Have volunteer read Matt. 2:19-23. SAY: At this point, Matthew's gospel merges with Luke's gospel as both gospels account for the family moving to Nazareth. It's in Nazareth where Jesus spends the next approximate 18 years of his life.

11. Have volunteer read Luke 2:39-40. SAY: Once again, we are reminded that Mary & Joseph did EVERYTHING following Jewish law and customs.

12. SAY: Living in Nazareth, there would have been a synagogue. Young Jesus—like all Hebrew boys—would have gone to school at the synagogue. He would have been taught our O.T. Scripture. Joseph and Mary would have also instructed Jesus at home. This was a huge responsibility of Israelite parents. The families, according to Jewish laws and customs, were also required to travel to Jerusalem three times each year: for the Feast of Tabernacles; the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost); and the Feast of Passover.

The families often traveled in groups, with the women and children traveling together (and earlier, because it took more travel time with children), and the men traveling together, starting later. Jesus was 12, sort of an "in-between" age. At 13, Jesus would officially become a man. At age 12, he

could have traveled with either group. (Have volunteer read Luke 2:41-45). SAY: Notice again, Mary and Joseph followed the Israelite law and customs. "Every year...his parents went to Jerusalem." One of the reasons for the feasts was to teach the children God's working in history, and to pass on the Israelite teachings and heritage. As an aside, children learn more by observing their parents (and teachers), vs. what we "SAY."

13. ASK: Has anyone ever lost something really important? If you remember losing something, what did you lose, and what did you do? Allow 2 or 3 to share answers. Have any of you ever temporarily lost one of your children? (Allow volunteer to share).

Say: That's what happened with Jesus. Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph thought Jesus was with Mary and the children. They traveled a full day, close to 20 miles, before they realized Jesus wasn't with either one of them. There is a frantic-ness in losing a child! Mary & Joseph were no different.

14. Have volunteer read Luke 2:46-50. Say: For THREE days they didn't know where Jesus was! We would have been beside ourselves. (We probably would be turned in to CPS today!) Think of the movie, "Home Alone," and how frantic the mother was to get home to her son, Kevin.

SAY: "Asking" and "answering questions," called the "Didactic" or "Socratic" method of learning, was how the Jewish men and priests often taught the boys. It probably wasn't that Jesus was giving the teachers and priests "new" information; what probably "amazed them" was that a 12 year old boy knew so much about God and the Scripture.

15. ASK: The big question: Do you think Jesus got in trouble by his parents once they found him? Discuss. Afterwards, have volunteer read Luke 2:51-52. SAY: "Mary treasured all these things in her heart."

#### APPLY TO LIFE

16. Say: When preschoolers study these verses in our Bible study classes, this story is ALWAYS tied to "Honoring our Father and Mother." As adults, what are ways we can "honor" our parents today? Discuss.

ASK: As parents, what are things we can do to teach our children how important it is to honor Christ? Discuss.