



My Father's House

(based on Luke 2:41-52)

When Jesus was twelve years old, he went to Jerusalem with his parents. They went to celebrate Passover. Jesus loved Passover. He loved remembering the wonderful things God had done for God's people. He loved sharing special meals. He loved worshiping and thanking God. Jesus loved to celebrate with friends and family.

At the end of the festival, everyone packed up and got ready to go home to Nazareth—everyone, that is, except Jesus. He stayed behind in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph didn't miss Jesus at first, because they were walking with a large group of people. They thought Jesus was in the crowd with his friends.

That evening, Mary and Joseph started to look for Jesus, but they couldn't find him anywhere. Where was he? Mary and Joseph checked with all their friends and relatives, but no one had seen Jesus since they had left Jerusalem. Nobody knew where he was. Nobody.

"We must return to Jerusalem and find him!" cried Joseph. So back they went. For two days, Mary and Joseph went up and down the streets of the city searching for Jesus. Still they could not find him. He was nowhere to be seen. Nowhere.

Finally, on the third day, Mary and Joseph went to the temple. The temple was the most holy place in Jerusalem. It was God's house—the place people went to worship and pray. Mary and Joseph remembered that Jesus loved worshiping and thanking God. And what do you know? They found Jesus sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening and asking questions about God. The teachers were impressed at how much Jesus knew.

"My son, what are you doing here?" cried Mary. "Your father and I have looked all over Jerusalem for you. We were so worried."

Jesus was surprised. "Why did you look all over Jerusalem for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?"

Mary and Joseph didn't really understand what Jesus meant. "It's time to go home," they said.

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus said goodbye to the Jewish teachers and started their journey home. Jesus went with his family. He still had a lot of growing and learning to do.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story together—imagine and wonder.
- Imagine what it was like for Mary and Joseph looking for Jesus. Invite someone to be the boy Jesus. Send that person out of sight. Ask others to search for Jesus, saying what most adults would say when a child is lost and found. Invite Jesus to respond to the searchers when found.
- Wonder together about the faith questions Jesus asked the Jewish teachers. Think about your faith questions. Write or draw the questions and put them in a basket. Take turns choosing a question and trying to answer it together. Use a Bible or other tools to help find answers. Take the faith questions to someone at church who can help find answers.
- Part of growing up is discovering that some questions do not have answers. Some things in life and faith are a mystery. Invite people to finish this statement: "It is a mystery to me . . ."



Responding to God's Grace

- Jesus grew and learned the way we grow and learn. Make a growth chart or timeline for each child in the family. Tape several sheets of paper together end to end. Turn the paper vertically for a growth chart or horizontally for a timeline. Add a title: "(Name) Is Growing and Learning."
 - Add physical growth markers, such as height and weight; include milestones for tasks or skills learned or in progress, such as crawling, walking, skipping, or swimming; add firsts, such as lost tooth, haircut, or day of school. Include knowledge that comes from growing, such as the alphabet, multiplication, or the Lord's Prayer.
 - Decorate the chart(s) together with drawings or photos of the skill or stage of development. Remind everyone that people develop at different rates and abilities. Thank God for growing and learning.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- In gratitude for growing and learning, celebrate milestones as they happen by adapting this litany:

One: We celebrate (Name) for learning to (skill).

All: Praise God.

One: Help (Name) use this new skill for God's glory.

All: Amen.

- Pray this prayer each day this week:

*God, by your grace, we grow and learn.
Thank you, God. Amen.*