



Jesus in the Temple

Revelation of the Son of Man

Note for leaders about this extended guide:

As many small groups do not meet during the time between Christmas and New Year's, this guide is designed to be used flexibly. If you do meet both weeks, there are enough components, and the components are slightly more involved, so they will easily extend over two weeks. Some sections of this guide are separated into two different weeks. If you are covering both stories in one meeting, either choose one of the two or do both.

About the Story

The Gospel of Luke tells more of Jesus' early life than the other Gospels. After the nativity story, Jesus is circumcised, named, and presented at the temple, all in faithful obedience to the Torah (Law). Years later, Jesus and his parents travel to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, also following the Torah. But surprising information is revealed in each visit.

Luke 2:21-38:

Today, we read the last of Luke's great hymns, Simeon's song of praise (Luke 2:29-32). Like Luke's other great songs by Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and the angels (Luke 2:14), Simeon praises God both for the mercy shown in the past and the promises that will now be fulfilled through Jesus. The people of Israel were greatly oppressed by the Roman Empire who ruled their lands. The Israelites could not make their own laws, were burdened with heavy taxes and were often surrounded by soldiers and other armed guards who were ready to dish out brutality at the slightest provocation. It was a hard life in dark times.

Into that darkness comes the revelation that God is doing something extraordinary. Simeon and the prophet Anna declare that it will be through this infant, born to a young peasant girl, that God would transform the world, rescuing not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles, from suffering and oppression. And we know that this Messiah will deliver, not with dominating power like the Romans, but as a man who shows the love of God through his work in the world.

Luke 2:41-52:

Luke then skips forward 12 years to a Passover pilgrimage when Jesus, his parents, and a great crowd of friends, relatives, and neighbors travel from Nazareth to Jerusalem. The Passover was one of the

The Point:

At the temple, Jesus is announced as the savior of the world. As an infant, the prophets Simeon and Anna marveled at Jesus. Even as a child, Jesus showed wisdom. Through these events at the temple, he is revealed that he is the savior of the world. The story confirms this when it says that Jesus continued to grow in wisdom and God's favor.

Last Week/Next Week

At Christmas, we heard the story of the proclamation to the shepherds—the angels’ promise that a savior was born in the city of Bethlehem. In the two weeks’ readings after Christmas, we hear more proclamations and promises, more wonder and joy at what this child has been brought into the world to do. Next week, Jesus begins his adult ministry after being baptized by John the Baptist. A voice from the heavens proclaim that Jesus is God’s Son, the beloved.

three main pilgrimage festivals—the other two being the Festival of Booths (Sukkot) and the Festival of Weeks (Shavuot). The Passover is a commemoration of God delivering the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. After this celebration, Mary and Joseph travel home with their crowd, assuming that Jesus was spending time with other friends and family. But after a full day’s journey, they could not find Jesus. Frantic, they returned to Jerusalem and finally found Jesus in the temple among the teachers, asking questions that amazed all around him. Once again, the Gospel of Luke uses other people’s reactions to Jesus—in this case, the teachers at the temple—to reveal more about Jesus. The teachers were amazed as Jesus’ wisdom. His parents scolded Jesus, but his reply to them is out of character for a typical twelve-year-old child, and the text says that they “did not understand what he said to them” (Luke 2:50).

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together with this or another prayer:

Lord of all nations, God of heaven and earth, you have brought us here in this time and place to begin our new year with celebration, with hope, and with wonder. Open our eyes and ears today, that we may see and hear your Holy Spirit working in the word and in us. Amen.

Alternate Opening:

A pillar or other large candle and a collection of tea lights may be set out. Once everyone has gathered, one person may light the large candle, and each participant may light a tea light, expressing a hope for the new year.

Into the Story*Week 1:*

Go around the circle and share with one another your thoughts on the following questions: What does the word “spiritual” mean to you? What about the word “Spirit-led”? How would you explain these two phrases to someone who had never heard them? During the holidays, when would you say you experienced something spiritual or Spirit-led?

Week 2:

Go around the circle and share with one another your thoughts on the following questions: Was there ever a time in your childhood when you got lost or separated from your parent? How did you feel when you noticed you were lost? How did your parents react when they found you?

Learning the Story

When Jesus was an infant his family went to the temple, and prophets Anna and Simeon declared Jesus as the Savior.

Later, when Jesus was a youth, his family returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. On the way home, his parents could not find him. After a long search, they found Jesus in the temple learning from and instructing the teachers.

If this lesson is used over two weeks, Read Luke 2:21-38 the first week, and Luke 2:41-52 the second.

Read Luke 2:21-26 – The Presentation of Jesus

- ❓ Jesus is circumcised and named, then presented in the temple. What traditions does your family, your community, and your faith celebrate around the birth of children? Which traditions are important to you?
- ❓ What do you think “the consolation of Israel” means? Why were they unhappy?
- ❓ Who else in the Bible has things revealed to them through unusual or miraculous means?

Read Luke 2:27-38 – Simeon and Anna’s Prophecies

- ❓ What does Simeon mean by “a light for revelation to the Gentiles”?
- ❓ After all that has happened in the first two chapters of this Gospel, why do you think Joseph and Mary are still amazed at predictions about Jesus?
- ❓ Why does Simeon say “and a sword will pierce your own soul too” to Mary?
- ❓ Anna never leaves the temple. What would it be like for you to live at church day in and day out?

Note: Break here if you are splitting this lesson into two weeks.

Bible Connections

- ✚ Samuel, an important figure in Israel’s history had a childhood story similar to Jesus. (1 Samuel 1–3).
- ✚ God promises many times that God’s loving presence will not be limited to the people of Israel but one day will be for the whole world (Isaiah 42:5-9; Isaiah 49:6-9).
- ✚ As an adult, Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples in Luke 22:1-27.

Bible Nuts & Bolts: Jewish Religious Leaders

Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and priests were the various religious leaders in Jesus’ time. Pharisees were religious scholars who cared for the synagogues in their own towns, were dedicated to following the Torah carefully, and sometimes served as scribes (well-trained interpreters of Jewish law). Sadducees, in contrast, were a group of religious elite who cared for the temple and kept peace in Jerusalem by working with the oppressive Roman Empire. Chief priests in Jerusalem were often aligned with the Sadducees, and as were some scribes. In addition, many Sadducees served as “elders,” who helped lead the community because of their experience and wisdom.

The Pharisees were more like Jesus—out among the people, applying the Scriptures to the world. Because they were alike, the Pharisees and Jesus debated often. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he came into conflict with leaders of the temple, many of who were Sadducees.

Read Luke 2:41-52 – The Boy Jesus in the Temple

- ❓ If you have time, read Luke 2:39-40. Why do you think Luke skips over these years of Jesus' life? What stories from Jesus' childhood would you wish would have been included?
- ❓ The distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem was about 65 miles, or a five-day walk. Why do you think Mary and Joseph made this journey every year? How would you feel about having to take a five-day walk with a child at different ages?
- ❓ Why do you think Jesus remained in the temple?
- ❓ What do you make of Jesus' response in verse 49? How would you respond if you were Mary in this situation?
- ❓ What does it mean that Mary "treasured all these things in her heart"?

Living the Story: Worship

As one large or several small groups, reread the lesson for today, writing down words and phrases that apply to Jesus. What do the characters at the temple say about who and what Jesus will be? *This activity can be repeated with each passage if this guide is used over two weeks.*

Supplies

- ✚ Paper
- ✚ Pens or pencils

After your group has created a list, choose one word or phrase that you want to focus on. Write it in large letters across the center of a new piece of paper. Around the large words in the center, write your group's responses to the following questions:

- ❓ What does this phrase mean to you?
- ❓ Why does it stand out?
- ❓ What does it say to you about Jesus?
- ❓ How would you reword it if someone did not understand it?

Take your group's thoughts and work together to compose a prayer. It may take some work knitting them all together! Think about what the phrase says about Jesus and what you want to ask for in the prayer. When you are finished, pray the prayer together. If there are multiple groups, come together at the end of this time to read all your prayers aloud together. Optional: Make copies of each other's prayers and take them home for praying throughout the week.

Closing Prayer

God, you are the one who prepares us for all things: for the surprising, the ordinary, the wonderful, and the painful. You work in us to shine light on a weary world, and make struggling paths into safe ways. As we go from here, may we be prepared to see your work in the world and to speak with joy and hope of your Son, our Savior, Christ Jesus. Amen.

At Home

- ✝ One of the most powerful things a prophet can do is speak the truth in a specific situation. Sometimes when we see something that is worrisome, awkward, or painful, we brush it off and try to move on quickly. This week, try taking a breath and finding a word to speak that will help a person in need.
- ✝ Pay special attention to the children in your life this week. Perhaps send a card to a young relative or someone else you know. If you have young children, do a fun activity with them as a family.
- ✝ Take a moment to read Luke 1:57-80. What themes does Zechariah's song share with Mary's and Simeon's songs?

Daily Readings**Sunday—Read Luke 2:41-52**

After staying behind in Jerusalem after Passover, the boy Jesus learns and teaches in the temple. Say a prayer for all teachers and students

Monday—Read Genesis 17:9-14

God creates a covenant with Abraham. God makes covenants with a few other people in the Old Testament, share what you know about them.

Tuesday—Read Exodus 13:1-2

God calls for the firstborn to be consecrated. What rituals or traditions do you follow to help remember those who have gone before?

Wednesday—Read Leviticus 26:3-6

God will reward Israel for following God's commandments. Pray for someone going through a difficult time.

Thursday—Read Leviticus 26:7-13

God will look with favor upon Israel. Pray for all nations that are in conflict.

Friday—Read Malachi 4:4-6

God will send the prophet Elijah ahead of the Messiah. Say a prayer for the environment.

Saturday—Read Isaiah 62:10-12

The prophet Isaiah proclaims the coming salvation. What does salvation mean to you?