

Jesus Increases in Wisdom and Stature

Luke Series #7

Luke 2:39-52

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One of the things that we enjoyed as a family over our holidays as we got together was looking at family photos. It's always interesting to try to figure out what people were like when they were younger. We like to look at photos of people when they were kids. So my kids got a big kick out of looking at photos of when I was younger, pointing out how much darker my hair was back then, making fun of my '80s mullet hairstyle and all. I also enjoyed looking at pictures, as we all did, of my parents. At one point during the holidays, my dad and I were driving around and we went right past the house where he was literally born. I took a picture of him standing outside that house so now I have a photo of my dad in front of his birthplace.

We were talking with my mom, asking her about and looking at some of the photos of when she was younger. She was telling us what it was like to grow up in the Netherlands during World War II, what the voyage over to Canada was like, how they showed up in Ontario. They didn't know anybody and didn't speak any English. Then eventually they immigrated to the United States. It's just fascinating to try to put the pictures together and have a feel for the important people in our lives and what they were like when they were younger.

In our study of the Gospel of Luke, we want to know what Jesus was like as a child. As we look at the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—the other three Gospel writers don't tell us anything about Jesus' childhood at all. We don't know anything about Jesus from Matthew, Mark or John. Luke only has one really brief story. It's about two sentences and 18 words in our English Bibles. That's all we have about Jesus' childhood in the Gospels.

If we think about Luke and why he wrote his Gospel, we know he was a careful historian. We know his choice of stories about Jesus' life was strategic toward his purpose of providing his readers with *"certainty concerning the things you have been taught"* about

Jesus Christ (Luke 1:4). So if he only tells us one story about Jesus' childhood, we can be sure that story must be crucial to understanding Who Jesus is and why He came. We ought to pay careful attention to it. So that's just what we're going to do now.

We're going to go to God's Word and this story about Jesus in Luke 2 when He was a child. We're going to pay careful attention to it and observe what it teaches us about Jesus and about His mission. What I want to do is read through the text and walk through it together, then come back and talk about three pictures or snapshots of Jesus that reveal His identity and mission.

Before we turn to God's Word, let me pray.

God, we want to walk by faith and not by our sight. We want to stand on Your promises, the sure promise and truth of Your Word. So God, we pray that by Your Holy Spirit, You would help us do that as we go to Your Word. Lord, we profess that we believe Your Word is truth. We ask that You would lead us into truth. I pray that You would help me speak things that are true and have no error in them. God the Holy Spirit, I ask that You would help us hear things that are true and that they would impact our hearts and lives and that we would be changed because of them. We pray that we would be transformed more and more into the image of Your Son as we look at Him in Your Word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to pick up the story of Jesus' early life in Luke 2:39. If you remember our message from last week, we observed Jesus as an infant as His parents brought Him to the temple to do what the law required in terms of dedicating Him and going through the purification ceremonies that Jews were required to fulfill. We pick our story up right after that in verse 39. Luke 2:39-42 says:

³⁹ And when they [Mary and Joseph] had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth [they had been in Jerusalem at the temple, so they traveled north which is downhill about 80 miles to return home]. ⁴⁰ And the child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.

Last time we observed that Jesus' parents were devoted followers of God and pious Jews. They had done everything according to the Law as it had been prescribed to them. We see again here in verse 39 that they did "*everything according to the Law.*" One of the

things the Law required of faithful Jews was to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—the central capital of religious life for God’s people—three times a year for three feasts: the Feast of Tabernacles, Pentecost and then the most important feast, the Passover Feast which pointed to God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt in the Old Testament.

As things progressed over time—or maybe we could even say regressed—the expectation had become that really faithful Jews would come to Jerusalem from all around the then-known world one time a year at Passover. We observe that Jesus’ parents are faithful, pious Jews. It says they make this pilgrimage “every year” to celebrate the Passover. The truth that both Joseph and Mary—and in this case Jesus as well—make that pilgrimage demonstrates their devotion even more because it was really only the men over the age of 13 who were required to be there. But we read that Mary makes the trip with Joseph every year, and presumably so does Jesus. He does this year at least.

This is a very important year for Jesus to make this journey because He is 12 years old. At his 13th birthday, He will become a “son of the commandment” which is the term for *bar-mitzvah*. As a son of the commandment, He will be considered responsible before the Lord. He will be an adult—a young man and part of the synagogue. Often during the year that a young man was 12, there would be an intense amount of study God’s Word, preparing him to become a man at age 13, within the religious life of the Jews.

So this is a very important trip for Jesus to make at this point in His life. They make the trip to Jerusalem as we read. Now we’ll pick it up in verse 43:

⁴³ And when the feast was ended [they had been there for the whole seven days of the feast, not just for the Day of Passover], as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day’s journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

It’s one of every parent’s nightmares, right? “Honey? I thought he was with you.” “No, I thought he was with you!” I won’t ask if you’ve ever left a child behind. I trust I’m not the only one. But that’s what happens here. It really isn’t all that surprising that it happens. As we learn in the text, Jesus’ family is traveling with a caravan, probably several families and friends from the Nazareth area. They would have done that, not just for the fun of traveling with others, but also for protection in terms of danger along the journey.

The men and the women often traveled in separate groups and with Jesus being a “tween,” you can see Mary thinks maybe He is with Joseph and Joseph maybe thinks He is with Mary and the smaller children. Besides that, you can see how this would happen because Jesus—after all—is a perfect child. You can imagine that His parents are willing to give Him a lot of responsibility and leeway because He has always shown Himself faithful and trustworthy. Maybe they just assumed He understood when they were leaving and He would be right there with them, but He isn’t. Our text says He *“stayed behind in Jerusalem.”*

After they couldn’t find Him, Mary and Joseph decide to go back to Jerusalem, as we see in verse 46:

⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

So it takes them three days. They traveled out from Jerusalem on their way home—that’s one day. Then they traveled back to Jerusalem—that’s another day. Then the third day is spent searching around in Jerusalem looking for their 12-year-old boy. Apparently the very last place they look is the temple and there’s Jesus. He’s not just in the temple, He’s mixing it up with the religious leaders—these learned teachers of the Law and these great theologians. He’s right in the middle of it. He’s asking them questions and they’re answering Him. And they’re asking Him questions and He’s answering them as well. He’s learning. What theologian wouldn’t like for some 12-year-old to start asking him questions about the things of the Lord? This is all going on and they’re amazed at His answers.

His parents don’t seem to be quite so amazed. They seem more than a little bit upset—I suppose understandably so—when they find Jesus. Jesus replies in this really strange way, “Didn’t you know this is where I was going to be? Didn’t you know that I had to be in My Father’s house, about My Father’s business?” The answer just doesn’t make sense. The text says that *“they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.”* They do not understand it but the text says Mary takes it to heart. Verse 51 tells us she *“treasured up all these things in her heart.”*

The passage finishes with verses 51-52 saying:

⁵¹ *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them [He was an obedient child]. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.* ⁵² *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*

There are three snapshots I want to look at from this text to help us better understand Jesus' identity and mission, even from these pictures of Him as a young child.

Snapshot #1 – True Humanity

The first snapshot we see of Jesus here is a picture of true humanity. Jesus was a child. He was an immature human being Who had to grow and become more mature. We see that in verses 40 and 52. Verse 40 says that *“the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.”* Verse 52 sort of bookends the whole story and says that *“Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”* He grew in stature. He became strong. He physically matured. He increased with wisdom—that is, He grew intellectually. God's favor was upon Him. Jesus knew God's grace. He was growing morally and spiritually. There were things Jesus did not know that He had to learn. I think we tend to forget this, or maybe have never grasped the extent of Jesus' incarnation—His becoming fully and truly human.

I found myself rebuked this past week as I read these words from Philip Ryken. He writes, “Many Christians think they believe in the Incarnation when what they actually believe is that Jesus had the mind of God with the body of a man.” He goes on to say that such a belief is not only unbiblical, it is downright heretical. We need to realize and embrace the truth that the second Person of the Trinity—God the Son, fully divine, eternally one with the Father and the Spirit—became a real human being. In doing so, He voluntarily set aside the independent use of His divine attributes.

I think Kent Hughes summarizes this mystery of the incarnation very well in his book [Luke: That You May Know the Truth, Volume 1](#) when he says, “God the Son placed the exercise of His all-powerfulness and all-presence and all-knowingness under the direction of God the Father. He did not give up those attributes [He did not cease to be God], but He submitted their exercise in His life to the Father's discretion. Though He was sinless, He had a real body, mind and emotions—complete with their inherent human weaknesses.” This means that what would enable Jesus to amaze the teachers of the Law in the temple was not that He came all pre-programmed with all the knowledge of the mysteries of God, but that He was learning at such an accelerated pace, especially for a boy His age.

We need to understand that Jesus did have advantages as a student. He was sinless and He was motivated. It's clear from the text that He was definitely the student here; He was not the teacher. It was not as though He was teaching the teachers of the Law. He was learning from them in this sort of dialogical, disputation method that was common in the Near East during that time where teachers ask questions and students respond. It's not unlike the idea of a catechism. The student could also ask questions of the teacher and so on, and so they would go back and forth.

Without the limitations of sin, Jesus was able to use His mind to its full capacity. Can you imagine that? He had no lazy study habits! He was always humble and teachable. What's more, He had every motivation one person could possibly have to learn everything He could about God, about God's Law, about the prophecies that pointed to Himself and about the sacrificial system and the Jewish feasts—like the Passover—that would find their culmination and fulfillment in Him. We see from the text that Jesus was fully human and that He was truly human.

I want to point out two implications for us of Jesus' full and true humanity:

1) We have a Mediator Who understands us in every way. Jesus Christ became human so we have a Mediator Who understands us. The writer to the Hebrews says in Hebrews 2:17, *"Therefore he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers [and sisters] in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."* Jesus needed to become like us in order to be our High Priest. The sacrifice He offered up as a High Priest was Himself, which was a full propitiation and satisfaction of God's wrath against our sin. He had to become human in order to become a perfect human sacrifice for sin.

Jesus continues to be our High Priest and our Mediator between God and man, so the writer to the Hebrews goes on to say in 4:15, *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."* He understands us. The reason He could do that and understand us is because Jesus set aside the rights and privileges of divinity.

Paul writes about it this way in Philippians 2:5-8:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God [He truly was God], did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [or held onto], but made himself nothing [set aside His divine rights and privileges], taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human

form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

When Paul says that Jesus *“made Himself nothing,”* He doesn’t mean that Jesus gave up His divinity or stopped being fully God when He took on human flesh. He means that Jesus voluntarily gave up His rights and privileges as the Son of God while He was on earth carrying out His mission. That means He had to learn things. The writer of Hebrews says that He *“learned obedience”* in chapter five. *“Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect [or complete], he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:8-9).

In his commentary on Luke, John Calvin put it this way, “[Jesus] voluntarily took upon him everything that is inseparable from human nature.” This means that He can sympathize with us. Jesus truly understands. He understands our struggles, our heartaches and our distresses. There may be times when we would say with the Psalmist in Psalm 142:4, *“...no one cares for my soul.”*

Do you sometimes think, “I can’t find another human being who cares about me right now!” Jesus does. He can sympathize with us in our weakest, most distressful moments. He understands. He knows what it’s like to be tempted nearly beyond our ability. He knows what it’s like to live in a fallen world because He came into it fully human.

2) We have a Model Who shows us what it means to be truly human. What does it mean to be human? What is the essence of human nature? I was pleased to see the revival of a song from the ‘80s in a recent insurance commercial. It’s the song “I’m Only Human,” and this is the chorus:

I’m only human,
Of flesh and blood I’m made,
Human,
Born to make mistakes.

(“I’m Only Human” by The Human League)

It’s clear from the context of the whole song that mistakes are transgressions—sins. “I’m only human...born to make mistakes.” It’s absolutely inevitable. Or is it? Does being human equal being sinful? No. Don’t shoot me down here. I believe in the doctrine of original sin—that is, because of Adam’s sin, our natures are tainted from conception and birth and we are sinners before birth. I also believe in the doctrine of total depravity, which means that there’s no part of human existence that hasn’t been tainted by sin.

Is that what it means to be human though? Jesus was the most truly and authentically human Person Who ever lived, yet He lived without sin! Maybe I should say He was the most truly human Person Who ever lived because He was without sin. He was human in the way God intended for men and women to be human from the very beginning—the way that Adam and Eve were in Genesis 1 and 2 before the Fall into sin in Genesis 3. They were perfectly glorifying God in all they did, bearing God's image flawlessly. They glorified Him in everything they said, did, thought and felt. What is more, the Son of God—the second Person of the Trinity—became human in order to suffer as a sinless man in a sinful world and to die in order to secure God's transforming grace for all who trust in Him.

God does not save sinners like you and me in order to put us on a shelf in storage until Jesus returns. We're saved in order to be transformed to the God-glorifying likeness of Jesus Christ. We're saved in order that this distorted image of God in us might be restored. We're saved so we might become truly human, a new creation in Jesus Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [or she] is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* He goes on to say in verse 21, *"For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin [that's the Incarnation; that's the cross], so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* That's what it would mean to be truly human—to be the righteousness of God and glorify Him in all that we say, do, think and feel.

God has begun the work of restoring His image in His people and He has pledged that He will complete the project. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are God's workmanship and He plans to absolutely, positively finish the project. It ought to give us great encouragement in our own lives that if we are trusting in Christ, God is going to finish the work He has done to restore His lost image in us. It also ought to give us great encouragement in our relationships with one another because sometimes we can look at one another and frankly be a little bit discouraged. "Is she going to get it?" "Is he ever going to get it?" But if that person is in Christ, God will finish the work. There is grace there and we ought to be quick to point out God's grace in one another's lives. We ought to be looking for evidences of God doing His work in one another's lives. Point it out and give God praise and glory for it. Let it be a means of encouragement to one another.

Snapshot #2 – Holy Intimacy

The first picture we see is that of Jesus' true humanity—what it means to be truly human. The second snapshot is a picture of holy intimacy. In Jesus' response to His mother in verse 49, He does something that is absolutely unprecedented. He calls God His Father. Jesus says He is in "...*my Father's house.*" She had laid a sort of guilt trip on Him, informing Him that she and His father Joseph had been worried sick about Him. Literally it says, "Distressing, we have been looking for you." But Jesus' response to Mary clarifies who truly is His Father.

Jewish people had always considered the temple as God's house—the place where He dwelt. So what Jesus says here is crystal clear, "God—the Creator of the Universe, the One Who called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and established the nation of Israel as His own treasured possession is My Father." It was rare—though not unprecedented—in the Old Testament for God to be called the Father of His people in sort of an impersonal, general way. But no one had ever spoken about God in such intimate, personal terms as to say, "My Father," not just "our Father."

Here for the first time Jesus reveals what His relationship with God will look like throughout His ministry. We see it throughout Luke's Gospel. In Luke 10:21-22, Jesus prays to His Father and says:

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

We see it in Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son later in Luke, or maybe it would be better to call it the "Parable of the Lost Son." It is a picture of what God's Fatherhood looks like as the lost son returns to his father. We read that the father saw him while he was still a long way off, that he felt compassion on him and that he ran, embraced and kissed him. We see this picture of love and family intimacy.

Then we hear Jesus calling out with a loud voice in Luke 23:46, breathing His last breath and saying, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!*" In Jesus' relationship with His Father, we see a picture of holy intimacy, deep connection and loving fellowship. I think it has great implications for each of us in how we relate to God as our Father.

How do you envision God? Do you see Him as glorious, exalted, completely other, holy and the uncaused cause? Or do you see Him as near, compassionate, embracing and tender? Of course this is the paradox of God's transcendence—His otherness—and His immanence—His nearness. We know that God is equally both and we want to uphold both equally. We want to relate to God and sing songs that incorporate both truths.

The fact of the matter is that often—based on our personality and other things—we tend to lean one way or the other. We either see God as very transcendent or very near and close. We reformed-types who are zealous for God-centeredness and God's sovereignty are—speaking from personal experience—typically better with the transcendent aspect of God and His glory and majesty. Then as a result, we are often weaker in terms of God's nearness and tenderness.

We need to learn from Jesus' example how to relate to God as our Father. We need to learn how to say, "God is *my* Father." Scripture talks about addressing Him as, "*Abba*" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). That is the way little children would have addressed their fathers. Jesus would even have addressed His own earthly father this way. Everything that is good about our earthly father is exponentially true of God. Everything that is not good about our earthly fathers that we wished was good, we find in our heavenly Father—His patience, kindness, longsuffering, compassion, protection and being 100% for His children. Yes, He disciplines us but He doesn't punish us because all of that was spent on His Son Jesus Christ.

One specific and very practical way that we can learn from Jesus' close and loving relationship with His Father and our Father is in the area of prayer. When Jesus teaches His disciples to pray later on in Luke 11, He teaches them to address God as "Father." Luke 11:2 says, "*Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.*" In that same chapter He goes on to let them know how willing, ready and desirous God is to give His children good gifts if they would only come to Him and ask. Luke 11:13 says, "*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*"

Jesus gives us this picture of the Fatherhood of God, what it means to be a child of God and to call Him our "*Abba*" Father. Jesus' mission was to secure that kind of relationship with God as our Father.

Snapshot #3 – Missional Clarity

There's a third picture here of Jesus and it is a picture of missional clarity. Jesus only speaks two short sentences in this story. Actually, in the original Greek it's one 15-word sentence. What does this lone story about Jesus' childhood reveal about what kind of boy He was?

At first glance we might conclude that it reveals He is a disobedient—and a little bit sassy—child. After all, He answers His mom's very logical question with a question. She says, "We've been looking for you. Why have you treated us this way?" He answers it with two questions. Speaking from parental experience, there aren't too many greater ways to arouse the ire of a parent than answering a question with a question. But that's exactly what Jesus did here. Is He being disrespectful or disobedient? No.

Think of it this way—what would you say to your teenager or your tween if they came in the house at 5:00 in the morning after you've spent a solid six hours worrying about where he was? Your first logical question is, "Kiddo, where were you? What have you been doing?"

"Oh yeah, we were at Alex's house. He got this new worship CD and we were all listening to it. Then after we listened to it, we wanted to sing some of the songs so he pulled out his guitar and we started singing worship songs and had a little worship session together. We were talking about how these songs were so focused on the gospel so we pulled out our Bibles and we were studying Romans. That got us thinking about the righteousness of God so there was a little debate about Martin Luther and who was the greatest reformer. Then I revealed that I'm infralapsarian and then someone said that they were supralapsarian, and then..."

What would you say—after you regained consciousness—to your child? Would you be upset? Would you be angry with your son or daughter? I mean, isn't that exactly the kind of heart a Christian parent wants to see in their child—that they are so caught up in the worship of God and things of God that they just lose track of time and are fully engaged in seeking the Lord?

Jesus has every right to be in the temple. It is His Father's house and it is the place where He could be filled with wisdom and grow in favor with God and man.

Leon Morris, an Australian New Testament scholar, speculates that the boy Jesus had such a thirst for knowledge and spiritual truth that He had soaked up everything He could from the small-town teachers in Nazareth and now He is taking full advantage of the oceans

of theological knowledge that He could draw from the prestigious teachers in Jerusalem. It's sort of like giving a boy from a small Alaskan village who loves everything mechanical the opportunity to visit the Museum of Science and Industry. You can't blame him if he's lost in wonder. Only in Jesus' case, He isn't lost in any sense of the word. His parents presume He is lost but the text makes it clear that His actions—even as a 12-year-old—are focused and intentional. Verse 43 says that *“the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.”* In other words, He knows exactly what He is doing. He has purpose. His response to His mother reveals Whose purpose. Verse 49 says, *“Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”*

Those words *“I must be”* are critical in understanding how Jesus views Himself and His mission. Those three words *“I must be”* represent one even shorter Greek word that can also be translated “it is necessary.” When we see this word in Luke, it speaks of God carrying out His sovereign plan to redeem a lost people through His Son. It's there several times.

- In Luke 4:43, Jesus says to His disciples, *“I must [or “it is necessary that I”] preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”*
- Then in Luke 9:22, Jesus says about Himself, *“The Son of Man must suffer [it is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer] many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”*

That's His mission. It's absolutely necessary. It had to be this way. It was part of God's sovereign plan. Jesus is letting us know here that He is increasing in His wisdom about His mission to seek and save the lost.

Think of the gravity of what Jesus is learning about Himself and what He has come to do here in the temple.

- The temple represents the presence of God in the midst of His people and Jesus is learning that He is Emmanuel, God with us.
- The Holy of Holies in the temple is the throne room of God and Jesus is learning that He is the Anointed One, the Messiah and the Great King.
- The temple is where the high priests make intercession for the people and Jesus is learning that He is the great High Priest.
- The temple is the place where thousands of Passover lambs are being slain before his 12-year-old eyes and Jesus is learning that He is the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world—the final Passover Lamb, the one-time-for-all-time sacrifice.

Is it any wonder that He is in the temple? Is it any wonder that His highest priority—even as a 12-year-old boy—is His mission to seek and save the lost? We should be grateful to God that Jesus was where He was that day and that He was about His Father's business.

So what can we learn from this picture of Jesus' missional clarity and His focus? I think it speaks much to our priorities. What are our priorities? Do I have a clear understanding and a resolute commitment to God's mission for my life? Jesus said that it had to be this way and that He must be in His Father's house, about His Father's business. He was absolutely committed to the mission His Father had given Him. He understood what that mission was—to seek and save the lost.

What do our priorities look like in respect to God's call in our lives? Do you have a clear understanding of what God is calling you to do? You know, it's really not very complicated. I think it can be summed up in one word—discipleship. Jesus summarized His mission clearly and succinctly in the Great Commission. Matthew records it this way in Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We need to ask ourselves some questions regarding discipleship:

1) Am I a disciple? Am I someone who has responded to Jesus' call to follow Him? Have I been baptized into the fellowship of God's disciples and people? I think that's primarily what baptism means here. It also means water baptism but you're not baptized with water until after you've been baptized into God's family by trusting in Jesus as your Savior, repenting of your sin and embracing Him in faith. That's what it means to be a disciple. Are you a disciple?

2) Am I growing as a disciple of Jesus and is it my number one priority? Is it your priority in life to grow as one of Jesus' disciples? Do you have a thirst for God's Word? Do you have a desire to be taught the things Jesus taught His first disciples? This applies to all of us, everyone in this room.

Teens and children, Jesus is especially an example for you here. So kids, how are you spending your time? What are your priorities? Is it Facebook, movies and sports? Or is it the things of God—pursuing Christ, meeting Him in His Word and seeking God through prayer? Where do your priorities lean? What is most important in your life?

As adults, what do our priorities look like? Are we intentional in feeding our souls on the things of God? How do we spend our time? What does our involvement in the body of Christ look like? Are we on the sidelines as spectators? Or are we fully engaged in the body life of God's people?

3) Am I an active disciple-maker? Are we going and making disciples of all people? Who are the people God has sovereignly placed in our lives and are we looking for opportunities to speak the truth of the gospel to them? Are we in relationships with others, rooting one another and grounding one another in God's truth, teaching one another to obey everything that Jesus commanded? Is there someone we're learning from who is discipling us? Is there someone we are discipling and building into with God's truth?

This is the mission for which Jesus came. He became human in order to carry out this mission Himself and then to give us this mission. It's a glorious mission, one for which He receives all glory. So we say to Jesus, "All glory to You for becoming human and becoming like us that we might become like You." He's shown us this infinite connection with the Holy Father and so we say, "All glory be to You, Jesus, for showing us what it means to be a child of God." He was absolutely focused on the mission that God gave Him and so we say, "All glory be to You Jesus. You came and fulfilled Your mission. God, help us carry it on by Your grace and for Your glory. Amen."

Lord Jesus, we do need Your strength and Holy Spirit to carry on the mission that You've given us. Lord, we worship You. You are glorious and all glory belongs to You. You became like us so that we might become like You. God, strengthen us today. Help us to have this picture of Who You are that leads us to relate to God as our Father and leads us to join You boldly in Your mission. We pray this in Your name. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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