

Lesson #4

Teaching Outline

“Jesus Grows in Wisdom”

Luke 2:22-42; Ephesians 6:1-2

Principle Truth: Wisdom is choosing to make Christ central in all things.

I. The Training of Parental investment

- A. Training
- B. Teaching
- C. Trusting

II. The Testing of Parental Release

- A. The Pain of Letting Go
- B. The Pleasure of Recognizing God’s Calling

III. The Triumph of Fulfilling the Call of God

What makes a man or woman great is the call of God upon that life.

Story 4

Birth and Early Life

Jesus Grows in Wisdom

Luke 2:40-52; Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55-57

PREPARATION IS THE PROCESS BY WHICH ONE IS EQUIPPED TO ACCOMPLISH THE FATHER'S WORK.

Story Outline:

- I. Prophecy Fulfilled
- II. Preparation Begins
- III. Passover Pilgrimage
- IV. Panic Ensues
- V. Pondering Reflections

Life Application Principles:

1. The fulfillment of prophecy proves the truth of the Bible.
2. We are to train our children in the knowledge of God so that they may grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.
3. God uses life experiences to prepare His servants for future service.
4. God is honored when we acknowledge His faithfulness, protection and provision.
5. We must be willing to go to great lengths to obey God's commands.
6. We must release our children to God's care.
7. Serving at God's pleasure may cause others pain but we are still to please God alone.
8. Joy is the reward for our obedience to our heavenly Father.
9. A teachable spirit pleases our heavenly Father.
10. Fear produces panic while faith produces peace.
11. The pure in heart will see God.
12. The most challenging times in life are the greatest opportunities for God to display His power.

NAME OF JESUS
Devotional Reading
“WISDOM OF GOD”

Beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation, Jesus Christ, the greatest man who ever lived, has been assigned many names to help us gain a greater understanding of WHO He is and WHY He came. Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, is such a name. Apart from knowing Jesus, we simply cannot understand God in all His fullness, glory and majesty. Yet, through Him we can know the mind of God and the will of God, “for Christ is the **WISDOM OF GOD**” (1 Corinthians 1:24, NKJV). He is the One “. . . in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3, NKJV). Through Jesus Christ we can also know God’s incomparable character. “As to His essence, God is invisible. We can see God revealed in nature and in His mighty works in history; but we cannot see God Himself.” Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, helps us “see” God. He explains God to us and interprets Him for us both through both His words and the life he lived on earth. As Colossians 1:15 declares, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” Likewise, the writer of Hebrews shares further light into the character of Christ, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, as he states: “He (Christ) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Hebrews 1:3, ESV).

As the **WISDOM OF GOD**, Jesus came to earth to reveal to man all God’s truth and wisdom as it is found in His Holy Word. “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our father’s through the prophets, but in these last days,” says the writer of Hebrews, “He has spoken to us by His Son. . . ‘the exact imprint of God’s very being.’” This prophetic role of Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, to speak God’s words and to reveal God’s heart for His people, was a vital part of His ministry. Throughout the Old Testament, God raised up men called prophets to speak His words to the people of God. Likewise Jesus, although not a prophet but the very SON of God, came to do the same. He came as “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). Therefore, when He came to earth, Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, spoke everything revealed to Him by His Father. Jesus Himself affirmed this by saying to His disciples, “All the things that I heard from My Father, I have made known to you” (John 15:15, NKJV).

Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, knows the mind and will of His Father perfectly. Eternally present with God from the foundation of the world, Jesus knows the end of all things from the very beginning and everything in between. Through God’s imparted wisdom, He sees clearly all of history - past, present and future. Nothing is hidden from His eyes and nothing takes Him by surprise. Therefore, as A.W. Tozer acknowledges, “Jesus is able to work toward predestined goals with flawless perfection.”

By His endless knowledge, Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, is intimately acquainted with His all children. The Psalmist declares:

“Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written every one of them. The days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” (Psalm 139:16, ESV)

“No creature is hidden from His sight . . . all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13, NKJV)

He knows every thought before we think it, every word before we speak it and every act before we do it. (Psalm 139:1-4, NKJV)

Jesus knows everything about us, and precisely what the future holds for each of us. He alone knows the steps we will take and must take to reach the end of all things where the glory of heaven and eternal life with Him are found. We can trust His wisdom to guide us to that eternal destination.

Jesus wants the very best for us. That is why He came. He left the splendor of heaven to live among us so He could reveal to us the way back to God. As David Jeremiah states: *“Since He knows every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could exist anywhere in the universe anytime and in the ages to come, the wisest thing we can do is to seek the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and follow Him all the days of our lives.”* As we listen to Jesus, the **WISDOM OF GOD**, and obey His perfect instruction, He promises to direct our paths. Because He knows all things, we can trust Him with every part of our lives. We do not need to fear or be anxious about anything, for by God’s great wisdom, Jesus has the answers, knows the solutions, resolves the difficulties, and carries us perfectly and victoriously through this life and into the eternal life to come.

The **WISDOM OF GOD** therefore, as modeled through the life of Jesus is to

**“Trust in the Lord your God with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will direct your paths.”
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)**

THE DOCTRINE

The CALLING OF GOD

I. Understanding the Nature of a DIVINE CALLING

The birth of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem not only fulfilled hundreds Old Testament prophecies but set into motion the fulfillment of the Father's divine calling upon the life of His only son, our Lord Jesus. Even in his early years, fulfilling the Father's will was Jesus' purpose, and that purpose drove his every action. What little the scriptures record of Jesus' youth, it is clear that his inner compass always pointed to pleasing His Father and being about the Father's business. When his parents finally discovered him in the temple sitting at the feet of the rabbis, Jesus words to them leave no question about his life's mission. After being "lost" and separated from them following the Feast of Passover, Jesus words to his parents express in no uncertain terms his overriding devotion to accomplishing His Heavenly Father's will:

"Did you not know that I had to be in my Father house – doing the things of my Father? There has been no need for you to worry. I have been about my Father's business." (Luke 2:49)

Before embarking upon his short 3 year public ministry, Jesus understood his purpose. He knew why he had come. He knew what had to be accomplished during his time here on earth. All that he did was preparation for that specific task for which he had been sent by God. He realized the "CALLING" upon His life to fulfill the Father's will. Jesus' purpose was to bring redemption to lost mankind, and this would be accomplished through his sacrificial death for us on a cruel Roman cross. The Father's will was that Jesus' death would become the pathway to man's freedom. This was Jesus' "CALLING."

In modern English, one's "CALLING" is understood to be the selection of a specific leader or an especially chosen representative. An element of choice is involved, since (usually) there are several candidates out of whom one must be chosen as the "CALLED." In the Old Testament the concept of "CALLING" is used for God's choice of the nation Israel to be His chosen people. Israel was "called out" from among all other nations in order to be God's light to the world that all might know the truth of the Most High God. It is important to note that Israel became God's people, not because they decided to belong to Him, but because He took the initiative and chose them. Nor did God's choice rest upon any particular virtue that his people exemplified, but rather on His divine promise to their forefather Abraham.

"It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Deuteronomy 7:7-8)

Not only did God choose (**CALL**) the nation of Israel for His purposes, He likewise called out the nation's leaders as well. Kings and prophets are examples of those "**CALLED BY GOD**" to lead God's people (1 Samuel 10:24; 2 Samuel 6:21). Both King Saul and King David were **CALLED** by God alone, not by popular vote of the people. The word "**CALLING**" thus indicates God's prerogative in deciding not only what will happen but through whom it shall happen, independent of human choice. When it comes to making spiritually significant impact in this life, the "**CALL OF GOD**" is always the essential starting point.

II. **King Saul: An Old Testament Example of One Who REJECTED the CALL OF GOD**

Although God calls, one must accept the **CALLING** as Jesus' life clearly demonstrates, but there was a huge price to pay for Jesus to fulfill the Father's will. Often, even though the call is clear to many men and women, the cost may seem too great, and we miss the mark of what God intends our lives to be. Israel's first king Saul stands out in the scriptural record as a powerful example of how we can be **CALLED** by God to accomplish a particular task, but undermine that **CALLING** through compromise, distraction, and disobedience. There is always a cost to fulfilling the call of God, and for Saul, it was simply too high. He was in many ways a great man with natural gifts and tremendous potential in the eyes of men, but there were also fatal flaws in his personality that became visible in his later years. His kingship was God's choice, **GOD'S CALLING**, and in the beginning, God's anointing, but with time, like the nation of Israel, Saul's kingship was compromised through his own disobedience, and the favor and empowering of God was removed, eventually leaving the nation and this king to their own demise. Neither the nation nor its first king fulfilled the **CALLING OF GOD** upon them.

During the course of Saul's leadership, a troubling pattern of rebellion gradually transformed him into a tragic, pitiable person – one who attempted to do God's work his own way through his own strength rather than in the power of his **CALLING**. Unfounded suspicions and irrational jealousy marked by depression, anxiety and paranoia marked Saul's kingship revealing the sad truth that scripture confirms: "*The Spirit of the Lord left him.*" Although still holding the office of king, the power (God's anointing) to perform the task became tragically absent. The biblical writers describe this change in words that are all too sobering: "*Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and 'an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him'*" (1 Samuel 16:14).

Serious character flaws and a pattern of outright disobedience got in the way of **GOD'S CALLING** for King Saul which led to his eventual elimination from God's intended purpose. Overcome by mixed motives and a shallow faith in the One who appointed and anointed him to such awesome responsibility, King Saul ended his days in godless idolatry and tragedy.

GOD'S CALLING of a servant doesn't come because one is qualified. **One is qualified because God's calling comes.** (Please take time to meditate on this principle)! The **CALLING OF GOD** qualifies the servant for the task! But make no mistake. God's personal **CALL** upon

an individual for a certain task graciously challenges every aspect of that person's life. There is always a cost involved. Essentially we are offered an entirely new life with a transformative God-given purpose. God's calling of Saul presented him with the opportunity to find his true self and rely on the ultimate security that comes from trusting God alone. To fulfill a **CALLING** from God such as this means living a "*big life*" – not just routinely living life, but living a life of greatness, purpose and eternal meaning. Therefore, **what makes a man great is the call of God upon that life.** Likewise, what creates life –transforming impact upon a generation is the power of God that always accompanies the call of God. The **CALL OF GOD** therefore, is where meaning in life begins – where life really becomes distinctive, different, and full of potential impact.

III. Abram: An Old Testament Example of One who ACCEPTED GOD'S CALL

In contrast to one who rejected the call of God, the account we find in Genesis 3 – 11 records the downward spiral of the human race as it became more corrupt, violent, broken and oppressed. Found within these woeful chapters however, is a ray of hope – a single family tree – one family line in the midst of all the chaos and violence who made the choice to continue their worship of the one true and living God. According to the record, the knowledge of the true God was preserved and passed on only through the family of Seth from whom Abraham, the father of the faithful, descended. Spiritually speaking the last little candle of God's light had almost flickered out, and even Abram's wife Sari was barren with no hope of descendants. The human race and mankind's history had reached a dead end, or so it appeared – **APART FROM THE CALLING OF ALMIGHTY GOD TO HIS SERVANT ABRAHAM!**

Although Abraham was born into the best family on earth at this time, apart from hearing the call of God personally, he was nevertheless, spiritually dead. Spiritual progress is made only because of the **CALL OF GOD** upon a life. "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (THE CALL) of God*" (Romans 10:17). The **CALL** is an absolute necessity for salvation, for sanctification, and for making eternal impact. It disturbs, convicts, disrupts "*normal life*" and grabs you, pulling you out of all that is familiar and comfortable. It comes even though one may be unqualified and often because one is unqualified. The **CALL OF GOD** is an absolute act of God's grace! **It doesn't come because you are qualified, you are qualified because it comes.**

IV. THE CALL Must Be Answered

Just what does the call of God accomplish in a person's life? Once again Abraham's example shows us in Genesis 12:1-3. God spoke to him saying, "*Get out of your country, your people, and I will make your name great and all people will be blessed through you.*" This was the call of God to Abraham. God spoke and Abraham had the choice to listen and obey. Abraham's father Terah and his uncle Nahor had all set out for the land of Canaan answering the **CALL OF**

GOD over Abraham's life, but they stopped short of their God ordained destination in Haran. That is the reason God spoke once more, "*Get out, Abraham!*" (You have journeyed only half way – you must go all the way. This is **MY CALL** to you personally). (*Author's paraphrase*)

Therefore, at the heart, God's **CALLING** to a believer is a personal **CALL** to surrender the will. This is an acceptance of God's purposes over your life in regard to your salvation, your sanctification, and your potential impact for the kingdom of God upon your generation. It is the relinquishing of your plans for God's plans – "*Get out and go to the land I WILL SHOW YOU!*" God says. The elements surrounding the **CALL OF GOD** are most often unknown – that's why it takes faith to answer the call and to go. This is the cost that is involved in the call. Often we simply do not know where God is leading or what we might face. We so often struggle with this aspect of the **CALL**. We want to know where, what, when and how, but God says, "*Get out! Go!*" Where we ask? "*Just go, and I will show you!*"

What does it mean to answer **THE CALL**? It means to get out – to go forward – to leave all behind – not knowing where you are going but trusting that God does! Hebrews 11:8 states it best: "*So he (Abram) went out NOT KNOWING WHERE HE WAS GOING.*" Unless you say "yes" to God unconditionally (without knowing), you have not truly surrendered to **THE CALL**. You will never find your life's purpose and fulfill it by God's grace until you willingly take your hands off your own life and give it fully and completely to God. **THE CALL** of God upon the life of a believer means you must meet Him for yourself, personally heed His voice, and fulfill His will. You must relinquish your own stubborn will and your "*need to know,*" for God's will and His wisdom. By doing so, you will become a blessing to the world, for as God said to Abraham – "*Through you, all people will be blessed.*"

To be a genuine follower of Christ is to be changed completely! It means getting out of the familiar – leaving what is routine, convenient, and comfortable. Therefore, to the degree that you are willing to get out of the place of safety and security, God says: "*I will bless you – so that you may be a blessing to others.*" Abram had to LIVE IN FAITH that God's promises would indeed come to pass – whether he saw them fulfilled in this lifetime or not. So must we! Answering the call of God brings radical change into the life of a nation and the life of an individual. The **CALLING OF GOD** upon a life makes that life unique – different – distinctive. The call of God upon the nation of Israel meant that she was to be different from all other nations. **The CALLING OF GOD** upon Saul and Abraham meant that their lives were not be lived for themselves but for God's purposes alone, and the call upon the life of Christ Jesus meant that he would willingly give up his life through a horrendous death on a cross for the sake of sinners like you and me (answering **THE CALL** of God, His Father) Although costly, the call will however, if answered, always give one tremendous opportunity to make powerful eternal impact upon a generation - impact that we cannot begin to understand, see or imagine. "*No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him*" ("*loving Him*" means answering **HIS CALL!**) (1 Corinthians 2:9).

God never sets us up for failure. His calling always comes with His sufficiency and grace to meet every need that may face us. With Him alone, we have a future and a hope. Through the **CALLING OF GOD**, we have an incredible opportunity to set into motion the very plans and purposes of our God for our generation. God is looking for hearts that are open to **HIS CALL**, willing to take the risk, and through obedience to His plans, become part of what He is doing in the world today.

In the city of Nazareth a young boy grew into manhood, strong in spirit, full of wisdom, preparing himself daily to fulfill the sovereign calling of His Heavenly Father. Praise God, our Savior Jesus Christ willingly submitted to the Father's purposes and in so doing answered the **CALLING** upon his life. Because of His obedience, you and I have so great a salvation! True wisdom in this life is listening to God's voice and answering **HIS CALLING**.

Questions for Reflection

Read Luke 2:22-42

1. From these verses, list some facts you learn about Jesus's early life.
2. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Jerusalem every year? Who went with them on this particular trip? How old was He? (see vs. 41- 42)
3. How did Mary and Joseph know of this feast and the laws of God, particularly regarding children? (see Deuteronomy 6:6-7 and Proverbs 22:6 for help)
4. How did they model obedience to this law with their own child? What does this teach you about how you are raising your own children?

Read Luke 2:43-52

5. When the feast ended, where was Jesus? Why do you think He was there?
6. From v. 46, what was Jesus doing that showed He was teachable and eager to learn?
7. Examine Mary and Joseph's reaction upon finding Jesus. What do you learn about Jesus from His words and subsequent actions? (see Exodus 20:12). What important lesson did Mary and Joseph discover from this exchange?
8. How has being about your heavenly Father's business brought meaning and joy to your life?

9. Take a few moments to reflect on your life. How have your life experiences and the study of God's word prepared you for the work God has called you to accomplish?

10. In order to increase in wisdom and favor with God, we must be taught and trained in the word of God. What are you doing on a regular basis to grow in wisdom and knowledge of God? How are you helping others grow spiritually?

11. What impact has understanding Jesus, **WISDOM OF GOD**, had on your thoughts, beliefs and actions this week?

A SALVATION CHALLENGE:

Have you discovered the beauty of what it means to grow in wisdom and favor with God and man? It is never too late to begin that journey of growth, no matter what age you may be. Ask God to open your heart to His merciful love and free gift of salvation. It is the most important decision you will ever make.