



Life Group Study Notes

“Covenant of Blessing: The 18 Years of Silence”

Ps. Carol Fidler - May 8, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What is one of the most important lessons your mother taught you?
- What do (or did) you admire most about your mom?
- What was your first job? How old were you when you started working?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

If any life was blessed, it was Jesus'. Yet the Bible says nothing about more than half of Jesus' life! One verse sums up his life from the age of 12 to 30. Luke 2:52 (ESV) states, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” One sentence to describe *eighteen years* of Jesus' life!

When the Father sent his Son into this world, he didn't send him to grow up in Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish nation, but to Nazareth, a small obscure village. Nazareth is estimated to have been a few hundred people, with houses scattered over 40-50 acres. It was so inconsequential that it is not mentioned in any other first century documents other than the Bible.

Joseph, who raised him as his father, was not an important political, military, or religious man, but a carpenter (*tekton* in Greek). A *tekton* was a worker in wood, metal, or stone, and commonly meant a builder. Such builders could build stone homes, doors, yokes, ploughs, walls, furniture, or wine presses. Such builders were respected craftsmen of the day.

It is in this context as the son of a builder in a small, inconsequential village that Jesus "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" over an eighteen year period.

1. Jesus increased in wisdom.

Joseph would have been careful to teach Jesus his craft. Jesus would have learned much about building things with excellence as an expression of godly character. Many of his later teachings in the forms of parables and metaphors drew from lessons learned while living and working as a builder in an agrarian society, such as taking the plank out of one's own eye before criticizing another for a speck in their's, or not looking back when putting one's hand to the plow, or exhorting his disciples to take his yoke upon them.

2. Jesus increased in (physical) stature.

Jews had a high regard for manual labor, as opposed to Greeks, who despised manual labor and left it to their slaves. In Nazareth, where houses were made mostly of stone, Jesus would likely have gone with Joseph to carry stones to fit for houses. He would have been strong and had callouses. Jesus ennobled the concept of work and the duty of labor. Even though he was aware of his mission, he was content to be in an obscure place doing a menial job for 18 years! The hard work prepared Jesus for the strenuous years of his ministry.

3. Jesus increased in favor with God.

Joseph would have also been careful to teach Jesus in the faith, for a Jewish father was to ensure his son was educated in the Jewish faith. There was also a synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus would have gone with Joseph. Jesus practiced obedience and faithfulness in the little things during his silent years. When the time came for Jesus to be baptized, the Father's voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." Some have said Jesus had not yet done anything, but actually he had passed a lot of small tests by that point! This prepared him to be launched into his public ministry and his eventual crucifixion for our sins.

4. Jesus increased in favor with people.

Working as a builder, Jesus would have learned of people's needs as he helped around the village and surrounding area. He probably would have gone into most people's homes, much like a doctor making house calls. He would have heard the trials of ordinary life, such as "my wife is ill; I don't know how I will manage the home and the children," or "my ox went lame; how will I ever get the crops in now?" He must have seen basic human suffering and pain, and most likely injustice as well. Proverbs 3:3-4 teaches that love and faithfulness will win favor with people. Jesus must have helped people with kindness and compassion as he was able to do so.

During these 18 obscure years he lived patiently, ennobling normal human life, understanding it was all part of his necessary preparation to fulfill his purpose. Although he was sinless as a child and as a teenager, he wasn't destined to die for our sins at those times of his life. His maturation during the 18 years of silence were necessary to enable him to become our great high priest.

Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16 (ESV) *(H)e had to be made like his brothers 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. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted... 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. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Is there anything in your life that makes you question God's purpose and plan for your life?
- How has your upbringing prepared you for what God has called you to do?
- In what ways do you struggle to live for God and see his character formed in you?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God to give you his perspective on your life as you entrust yourself to his purposes.
- Ask God for strength and help from the Holy Spirit to live for God and grow in character.
- Ask God to strengthen your faith as you wait on him to fulfill every good promise he's made to you.