

The Boy at the Temple: Beyond religious rituals, what patterns of behavior can we establish in our homes that communicate the love of and for God? Jesus' parents appear to have taught him rituals of sitting, listening, and asking.

Luke 2:41-52 (NRSV)

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

Reflections

What is "it" that we take home, and how?

Imagine the condition of your teeth if you only ever got them cleaned every six months when you went to the dentist for a check-up!! Yuk! Instead, a good dentist teaches people how to brush and floss daily so that people can care for their teeth themselves. People can pass along healthy teeth and personal hygiene to others if they believe it is important and if they actually care for their own teeth.

Likewise, imagine the condition of a relationship if you only saw and talked to that person once every six months!! It would probably be shallow or weak. Instead, relationships are nurtured through regular (daily) interactions with, affection toward, and caring for the other person.

Now, imagine the condition of a relationship with God if we only rely on the warm-glow of TV specials and songs at Christmas

to keep that relationship alive throughout the rest of the year!! Nope, instead, we have to take it home daily, just as research today echoes the teaching of the Old Testament some 3,000 years ago.

After promising the Jewish people to be their God alone (Deuteronomy 6:4), God taught them to love God with all their heart, soul, and might (Deut. 6:5). Then, they were to keep God's commands and, finally, teach it to their children throughout the day (6:6-7). How can you pass along something which you neither love nor do?

During this 4-week "Take It Home" series, we will highlight the Four Keys to Nurturing Faith, (see *Search Institute* and *Vibrant Faith*): Rituals & Traditions, Devotions, Caring Conversations, and Service. These four keys will help us pass along faith to anyone with whom we have regular contact, be they adults or children.

Today, we focus on Rituals and Traditions. Just as daily brushing

is good for teeth, so, too, do rituals and traditions give rhythm, shape, and order to our faith lives. These regular actions connect us with others, give us an identity and sense of belonging. Finally, they reflect and enact values, reminding us of and teaching others what we hold to be important. Today, we reflect on some of the rituals in Jesus' life and traditions that shaped his life.

—Pastor Mike McQuaid

Resources

<http://www.search-institute.org>

<http://vibrantfaith.org> formerly The Youth and Family Institute.

Readings

Sunday, January 3

Luke 2:41-52

Every year, Jesus celebrated the season of Passover in Jerusalem with his an extended family. What seasonal rituals and traditions do you have with your family and friends? How do these times help to strengthen relationships and build common values?

Monday, January 4

Psalms 78:1-4

Many parents feel inept at sharing faith with their children. Many adults feel unprepared to share their faith with others in general. Assess factors that affect your comfort in faith sharing—sincerity, knowledge, openness to growth, humility? Be realistic about what you are willing to do and focus on why it is important to you. How will you increase your readiness?

Tuesday, January 5

Deuteronomy 6:1-12

Examine this passage in detail as it applies to your household. What does it tell you about obedience to God, sharing faith to the next generation, and living your life? You may want to discuss some or all of this passage with your spouse and children. Or use it for personal prayer time. How will you live this word out in 2010?

Wednesday, January 6

2 Timothy 3:14-17

How were you introduced to faith in Jesus? With whom will you share your faith in the coming year? All scripture is useful for teaching. If studying scripture is new to you, focus on the aspects of scripture which build you up in faith, rather than aspects that confuse you at this point. Where will you begin and with whom will you share your learning?

Thursday, January 7

1 Peter 3:15; Luke 2:46-47

Asking and answering questions was a common teaching strategy in Jesus' day. What can you do to elicit faith questions from your children and others around you? What do you think they expect from your answers?

Friday, January 8

Proverbs 22:6; Luke 2:48-50

The boy in the temple was becoming a man of God. What had Jesus' parents taught him about faith? In what ways are you "passing along the faith?" How could your efforts be more effective?

Saturday, January 9

Luke 2:51-52; Proverbs 23:22

A maturing Jesus demonstrates a balance between self determination and obedience. How would you talk to your children or teens about these passages? What lesson would you draw out from them?

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.