

... THAT YOUTH MAY GROW  
IN WISDOM, STATURE,  
AND FAVOR WITH GOD AND MAN

## **Luke 2:52**

52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

### **Reflection**

For a long time now, I've loved this verse of Scripture. I've prayed it for myself. I pray it for my children especially. And I've begun to pray it for my church. It is a verse well worth committing to memory, and measuring your life against. Let me read

it to you. The last verse of Luke chapter two, and the only word in Scripture about Jesus' teenage years and twenties. Luke 2:52,

52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

As the image of twelve-year Jesus fades, astounding the teachers of the law and his parents in the heart of the Temple after Passover with his knowledge and insight into the character and teachings of God, the next eighteen years of his life are encapsulated by Luke in a single verse,

52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

In 3:23 Luke will tell us that Jesus is about thirty when he begins his public ministry and so for the eighteen intervening years it is likely that Jesus worked with his hands, as a carpenter, taking on the trade of his father and providing for his mother, brother and sisters when Joseph passed away. Luke's mention of Joseph in yesterday's passage is the latest in the Bible very likely meaning that Joseph dies sometime in Jesus' teens or twenties leaving Jesus (as the eldest) to provide for his mother and siblings. Yes, that's right, the God of the universe spent only 3 years in public ministry and the greater part of the rest of his life – twenty years or more – working with his hands; swinging hammer, carting wood, working on building sites to provide for his single mum, brothers and sisters.

And in today's verse, Luke describes the character development of the teenage Jesus and young man,

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature,  
and in favour with God and man.

So today, four points: wisdom, stature, favour with God and favour with man. It is not for nothing that Jesus is often called the representative man. Not only did he represent us when he died taking our sins upon himself; but being God incarnate (God himself taking on human form) in his humanity Jesus provides us with the perfect image of what God is like. This means that in Jesus we see who we were created to be, having been originally made in God's image ourselves before the Fall tainted our behaviour and desires. So

when we look at Jesus we see the person that God designed us to be; and the person that the Holy Spirit is slowly changing us into. And the key word in that sentence is 'changing'. God would have us grow, just as Jesus did, in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

So firstly, God would have us grow in wisdom. And by this, Luke does not mean that Jesus grew in knowledge although he certainly did. Jesus grew in wisdom. What then is wisdom? How do we grow in it? Well thankfully the Bible has a whole collection of books known as Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Each cite the beginning of wisdom as fearing God – in the sense of holding God in deep reverence and awe. And so to grow in wisdom is to grow in

appreciation of the character and teachings of God and their interaction with the world around us. To grow in wisdom is to increasingly see our world through God's eyes as did the boy Jesus in preparation for his public ministry.

Secondly, God would have us grow in stature. Now this word may mean physical growth but I also take it to mean Jesus' standing in his family and his community – his integrity, his reputation, his love and service of his mother and brothers and sisters, his neighbours in Nazareth and at synagogue and in the community. God would have you grow in stature through a continuous outpouring of love, service, wisdom and grace in the relationships that he has placed around you.

And our third and fourth points flow out of this second. As we grow in stature amongst those we love and serve so too do we thirdly grow in favour with God and fourthly grow in favour with humankind. But we'll still treat each in turn.

Thirdly, God would have us grow in favour with himself. At the end of the eighteen years God said of Jesus at the outset of his ministry,

‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ Matt 3:17

And as followers of Jesus, God too would have us grow in his favour. How do we do this? Well again, we take our cue from Jesus who obeyed his Father with perfect obedience even in the toughest moments

of his life, like Gethsemane, the night before the cross, when Jesus said,

42 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.'

So thirdly, God would have you grow in his favour through perfect obedience to his Word. Which, incidentally, can often result in...

Fourthly, God would have us grow in favour with humankind as well. But of course this one is a double-edged sword which Jesus ultimately felt the pointy end of. But equally Jesus' goodness, his self-giving nature, his generosity, wisdom and love also at points in his life won him great favour amongst man. It seems to have



characterised his teenage years and his twenties and certainly the second, hugely successful year of his public ministry in Galilee. Perhaps Paul says it best in Romans 12,

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Or Peter in 1 Pet 2,

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

So fourthly, God would have us grow in favour with humankind through our good character and good works. This does not

mean for a second that we should hold back in proclaiming a full gospel of sin, death and judgment, and hell, grace, repentance, renewal and eternal life – and as often as not a message like this will result in persecution. But it does mean that God would have us (and him through us) grow in favour with those outside the church through good character and good works in our world, just as his Son missed sleep and meals to heal the sick and socialise with the vulnerable.

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52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

**Think & Pray**

Wisdom; stature; favour with God and favour with man. Meditate over these words this morning and the work the Holy Spirit is performing in your life as he re-creates you in the image of Jesus. Are you growing in wisdom? To what degree do you see our world through God's eyes and how can you do so more and more? What about your integrity, your personal standing in your family, workplace and community? What can you do to grow in stature for God's glory and his purposes on earth? And what about favour with God and humankind? Are you obedient to God's word? What parts of your life might you be turning a blind eye? Is it a relationship, is it alcohol, is it your taxes or the way you speak about your colleagues at work? And finally is your good character

and good works impacting our world? If not, start something small today. Is there a cause in your community or in the life of a friend that you can begin to support? How can you grow in favour with those around you so that they might look in favour on our God?

A simple prayer to close today. Pray that God would transform you by the power of his Holy Spirit ever increasingly into the likeness of his Son. Wisdom. Stature. Favour. With God and humankind.