

**THE PROGRAM: CROSS-TRAINING**  
**Luke 2:40-52**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Mayflies don't live very long. It takes almost a year from the time the female lays her eggs before they hatch and develop from the larva into an actual mayfly. Once the mayfly emerges, it lives such a short time that it doesn't even feed. It doesn't feed but it does breed and within about 30 minutes, the female lays her eggs and dies.

While mayflies mature within a matter of minutes, quahog clams take an incredibly long time to mature and reproduce...as much as 60 years. Unlike the mayflies, quahog clams live a long time after they reproduce. In 2007, researchers dredged up a 405 year-old quahog clam off the coast of Iceland. They named it "Ming" in honor of the Chinese dynasty that was in power at the time that individual first settled into the sediment. (For perspective, that was about 3 years after the death of Queen Elizabeth I and about 6 years before the King James Bible was produced...and that creature is STILL alive!

All living things go through a lifecycle of stages of maturity. Humans are no different.

It may be difficult for some people to grasp but Jesus grew through stages of development into maturity. As one of my favorite authors wrote:

*Do you think baby Jesus crawled over the side of the manger with the law and prophets memorized? No! He couldn't walk, he couldn't talk, or read, He learned everything the same as every other child in history has. He didn't come complete with all knowledge. No, he studied. And the Bible says he grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man. I might paraphrase it this way: "As Jesus matured physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, people liked him, and his Father was proud of him."*

Jesus developed a balanced life. He matured in all areas of his life.

Wise athletes will go to the gym and work out on a circuit that involves a variety of equipment so they can develop the full range of muscles in their bodies. That varied workout is called cross training and it leads to balanced strength. Physical cross training is a great illustration for the Christian. We must develop spiritually in all areas so we have balanced strength in the Lord.

As I stated before, Jesus developed a balanced life. He matured in all areas of his life and he is the example from whom we must learn.

Christians are “Christ-ones.” Disciples of Jesus are followers of Jesus. If we are going to truly follow Jesus, we will develop balanced lives like he did. In Luke 2:52, the author of the third Gospel teaches us that Jesus developed a balanced life because he grew in wisdom, in stature, in favor with God and in favor with men. I want to look at the balanced development that Jesus exhibited.

**I. JESUS GREW IN WISDOM (His intellectual development)**

Please allow me to set the context for Luke 2:52. At this time, Jesus was twelve years old. In keeping with the tradition of the Jews, Jesus’ parents took him to the temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. While there, Jesus became separated from his parents and it was a few days before they found him. When they did, they found him in the temple, sitting among the Jewish teachers, listening and asking questions. The Jewish teachers were astounded at Jesus’ understanding.

The Bible says that Mary and Joseph took Jesus back home with them and he was obedient to them. He, who was the Son of God, humbled himself to be the Son of Man. He, who was God living among us, obeyed his earthly parents like any other twelve-year-old is expected to.

Having said that, Luke then observes that Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men.

So let me ask you a question: Where did Jesus grow in his wisdom? Who taught him? From whom did he gain his knowledge? Where did he get his increased understanding? He got it AT HOME! It was Mary and Joseph who taught Jesus. It was at their feet that he learned his earliest lessons about God, about people and about life.

They must have taught him well, don’t you think? He must have learned well, don’t you think? He is a great example to all of us, don’t you think?

Jesus would not have been able to learn from Mary and Joseph if he had not been willing to humble himself under their instruction. That is always true. No one can learn from others unless and until he is willing to humble himself in their presence.

This is a Youth Sunday. School has just begun for the year. And this is an ideal time to benefit from Jesus’ example that we must humble ourselves in the presence of our teachers if we are to learn from them.

Although Jesus was God among us, he had to learn: he had to grow in wisdom...and he did so under the tutelage of Mary and Joseph.

## II. **JESUS GREW IN STATURE (His physical development)**

Jesus was so fully human that he not only had to grow in wisdom, he had to grow in stature. Jesus' physical development is yet another evidence that he was a real boy who grew to become a real man.

It is very important that we grasp the fact that Jesus was just as much human as any of us here. If he were not, his example would be irrelevant, immaterial and meaningless. So what if he resisted Satan in the wilderness? So what if he lived without sin? So what if he died on a cruel cross? What difference does it make if he wasn't really a human being anyway?

It wouldn't make any difference if Jesus was not a real man, fully human and just like us. But he was just like us. He was born as an infant. He had dirty diapers as a baby. He, who never fell spiritually, wobbled and tumbled as a toddler. He, who was the Word made flesh, had to learn to talk just like any of us did. Jesus probably had adolescent pimples, endured puberty and faced peer-pressure just like the rest of us.

The Bible says that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are yet was without sin. His sinless life is a mere curiosity unless he was really and truly tempted to sin.

The fact that Jesus grew in stature is a tremendous encouragement to all of us to live holy lives, set apart for God. He did...and since he was fully human, we can, too. His example is relevant to us.

## III. **JESUS GREW IN FAVOR WITH GOD (His spiritual development)**

Luke also tells us that Jesus grew in favor with God. That is a phrase that would be easy to misunderstand. If we aren't careful, we could get the idea that, as time went by, God loved Jesus more than He had before.

I want you to listen to me very carefully. That is not true. It cannot be true. God cannot grow to love Jesus more because there are no degrees of God's love. God loves everyone the same.

- God loves Osama bin Laden as much as He loves Billy Graham.
- God loved Adolph Hitler as much as He loved Mother Teresa.
- God loves you as much as He loved Jesus.
- And God loved Jesus as much when he was 3 as He did when He was 33.

God cannot grow to love you any more than He already does. He is crazy about you. As I've said before, He thinks you are to die for.

So what does it mean to say that Jesus grew in favor with God? I think I can illustrate it better than I can explain it.

Last Sunday evening, we hosted the Worship Band from Flora First Christian Church. And I think they did a fantastic job of leading us in praise for the ages and praise for all ages.

After the program, I stood on the parking lot and visited with Rob Clifton. Rob has a son who is quite a baseball player. I have watched Hunter play for North Clay's junior high team when they were here against Clay City. And Rob watched his son play here, too. Rob tries to attend all of Hunter's games to support and encourage him.

Hunter has graduated from junior high and is now in high school. Hunter's first high school baseball game was Sunday. Sunday afternoon. At Busch Stadium after a Cardinal game. And Rob didn't go see him play. Because Rob had made a commitment to Clay City Christian Church and to our young people to be here for our Youth Kick-off. You have to admire that kind of dedication on Rob's part. He had made a commitment to us and he kept it. I've always liked him. I truly admire him.

I have to speculate. Because Rob was with us instead of with his son, Hunter, I have to speculate but I'm sure I am on secure ground to say that I'll bet Rob would have been a proud dad to be sitting in the stands watching Hunter play his first ever high school baseball game on the field at Busch Stadium. I'm sure he would have poked people, pointed to Hunter and said, "That's my boy." I'm sure he would have done that because that's what he did to me when Hunter played junior high ball here in Clay City.

I'm sure Rob doesn't love Hunter any more now than he did when his son was an infant; or when he was a toddler; or when he went off to grade school; or when he played in Little League. Rob's love for his son does not come and go. But his pride in his son can grow. His satisfaction with his son can increase. Hunter can grow in favor with his father as he develops into the mature man of God that Rob longs for him to become.

That is what happened between Jesus and God. God always loved Jesus but as time went by, He became more and more proud of him. On a couple of different occasions, as people were standing around Jesus, they heard an audible voice from heaven that said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well-pleased." A couple of times, God said out loud, "That's my boy and I sure am proud of him!"

Can I ask you something intensely personal and extremely important? Are you growing in God's favor? Is He becoming more and more proud of you? He already loves you with all of His heart. He cannot possibly love you more than He already does. But He can become more and more

proud of you. You can grow in His favor. Are you? Are you growing in His favor?

#### IV. **JESUS GREW IN FAVOR WITH MEN (His social development)**

Jesus also grew in favor with men. That is, people liked him. Oh, not the stuffy religious leaders. They didn't like Jesus very much. In fact, the Jewish leaders hated him. But the common people liked him. They liked him a lot. The family in Cana of Galilee wouldn't have invited Jesus to their daughter's wedding feast if they didn't like him and if they thought others would be uncomfortable around him.

From the time Jesus was twelve years old, he grew in favor with other people. Except at home. Matthew 13:54-57 says that Jesus came to his own hometown of Nazareth and taught in the synagogue. The people were amazed and asked, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? We know him and we know his family and he's nothing too special." But then the text says they took offense at him.

They liked him. What he said and did amazed them. But they were still offended at his teaching because he told them the inconvenient truths about sin and the need for repentance.

People haven't changed much since Jesus' day. There are still people who say they like Jesus. They admire him. They are amazed at his miracles. But they take offense when they are confronted with what Jesus taught about sin and the need for repentance.

Jesus was a likeable guy. People flocked to see him, to hear him, to have him touch them. And except in his home town among his own people, Jesus grew in favor with man. His development into adulthood was balanced growth to maturity.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Most of us are familiar with 4-H clubs. The four H's stand for Head, Heart, Hands and Health. Those four H's come right out of Luke 2:52. Wisdom is the Head. Stature is Health. With out hands we reach out to others and with our heart we love the LORD and receive His love for us. This is the pattern for a life of well-rounded wholeness that reflects God's blessing.

It is an arresting thought to realize that when God became a baby, He humbled Himself to such an extent that He had to develop intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially before He could fulfill His mission on earth. It seems to me that we ought not to be too troubled that we all have some growing to do, too. Today, right now, we should make it our goal to grow in all areas so that our lives will become as balanced in our maturity as Jesus was.

08/29/10

**INVITATION:** #561 – *“I Would Be Like Jesus”*