

JESUS' MODEL FOR GROWTH AND SERVICE

Overview Statement:

Luke teaches us that Jesus grew physically, spiritually, socially and in wisdom. He became all God intended Him to be as the ultimate, obedient servant. He is our model for growth in our personal lives and for serving others to help them grow into all God intends for them.

Main Ideas:

1. Jesus grew in four areas – wisdom, physical, spiritual, and social. This is also a good model for wholistic growth in our lives.
2. He developed perfectly despite less-than-ideal conditions.
3. Jesus' purpose in development was to become an obedient servant – serving God's agenda and moving toward God's full intentions.
4. Ideal human development is moving toward God's intentions in all areas of life.
5. Our purpose is to serve God's agenda which includes helping others grow toward God's intentions for them in all areas of life.

Outcomes:

1. Now:
 - a. To grasp and express the main ideas of the lesson in their own words.
 - b. To plan and carry out one new step in response to a main idea of this lesson in order to grow in all areas of life and develop as a servant.
2. Beyond:
 - a. To recognize that Jesus grew wholistically to become a servant of God's intentions, and commit to intentionally to grow in the same four areas of their lives.
 - b. To commit to serve others helping them also grow as Jesus did in all areas of life and live as a servant.

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Participant Outline

I. Review

II. Introduction

III. Key Verse: Luke 2:52

- A. Who is the most developed person?
- B. What are common terms for Jesus' growth?
- C. Is God concerned with these areas of our growth?
- D. Was Jesus' development immediate or a process?
- E. What are the implications for the Church?

IV. Conditions of Jesus' Development?

- A. Political
- B. Economic
- C. Employment

D. Educational

E. Social Status

F. Family

G. Spiritual

V. Basic Requirements for Growth

VI. Definition of Human Development

VII. The Purpose for Jesus' Development

John 12:49-50; 14:31 Luke 4:18-19 Matt. 4:23-24;9:35-36 Matt. 20:25-28

- What was Jesus' goal or purpose in His life and ministry? Who set it?
- How did Jesus' own growth (Luke 2:52) prepare Him for His ministry?
- How did Jesus move toward God's intentions for His life?
- Why is being a servant so important to Jesus' life purpose and ours?

VIII. Purpose for Jesus' Disciples' Development

Matt. 10:5-8

Mark 9:35

John 14:15, 21,23,24

John 13:34-35

- What did Jesus send His disciples out to do?
- How does Jesus describe the way the disciples become great?
- According to John 14, the more we grow, the more we must _____
- What are some of the commands we must obey?

IX. Development Begins with Me

X. Key Ideas Reinforcement

XI. Application Plan

A. Personal Reflection:

- Think about some ideas of how you take small steps to grow in each of the areas of growth from Luke 2:52 – Jesus' Model

B. Session Action Plan:

My Personal Development Ideas	
For each of the following areas, list one step you could take to grow in that area.	
Wisdom	
Physical	
Spiritual	
Social	

My Personal Action Plan and Commitment	
Choose one area, <u>circle it</u> and make a specific plan for one step you will take this week to grow in <u>one</u> of the four areas.	
Wisdom	What:
Physical	
Spiritual	
Social	
	Who:
	When:
	Where:

Development Needs in My Family				
For each of the following areas, prayerfully identify one example of a development need in your family.				
4 Areas of Development	Wisdom	Physical	Spiritual	Social
Family				

Serving for Other's Development Plan and Commitment	
Choose one area, <u>circle it</u> and make a specific plan for one step you will take soon to serve a family member to help them grow (move toward God's intentions for them) in <u>one</u> of the four areas.	
Wisdom	What:
Physical	
Spiritual	
Social	
	Who:
	When:
	Where:

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Narrative

Jesus' life on earth gives us a model of growth radically different from a secular view of human development—and it can serve as a clear biblical pattern for our lives. What is the secular view of development? Secular society defines development in educational and material terms. Education, science, and technology are seen as the principal mechanisms by which poverty will be alleviated, human need will be met, and peace and happiness will be found.

Higher education, advanced technology, industrial production, growing national economies, and high GDPs are prized by secular development. While it is true that education, technology, and other benefits of Western culture are often helpful in raising the material and intellectual quality of life, they are not basic requirements for growth toward God's intentions.

Unfortunately, many Christians from the Two-Thirds World have unconsciously accepted the secular model through the seduction of materialism. They have believed the lie that Western education and technology are the ships that carry them and their people into the harbor of happiness. They are not at fault. Their Western brothers and sisters were seduced first, and then missionaries from the West carried a message that was often wrapped appealingly in a shroud of Western materialism. Two-Thirds World believers often "caught" a materialistic view of development.

Missionaries and Christian relief and development workers also promoted a materialistic view of development, though unintended, by the way they live. If a poor man comes to Christ through the witness of a "rich" man (one with a watch, camera, computer, car, or nice clothes), what might the poor man perceive about being a Christian and having material things? If a Christian development agency uses technology in a community that costs more than the combined annual income of the residents, what impression will the community understand about the relationship between Christian faith, high technology, and development?

Luke 2:52

Christians need to compare their beliefs about development with Scripture. In Luke 2:52, we observe one of Scripture's clearest and most concise presentations of a biblical view of human development: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Jesus was the first complete example of what God intended when He made people in His image. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the perfection in which they were created. In Jesus, we can now see the perfect human example of the image of God. We can see, for the first time since creation, what we were meant to be. Because Jesus was perfect, He is our model; and His development can serve as a model for our own growth.

Consider some of the staggering implications of Luke 2:52. First, it points to God's concern for the whole person. Doctor Luke described four areas in which Jesus grew. He grew in wisdom, and He also grew physically, spiritually, and socially. Most Christians agree that Jesus was the most developed person in all of history. The Bible records Jesus' physical and social development as well as His Spiritual development. Clearly God was concerned that Jesus grew in each of these areas in order to achieve the purpose for which He came into the world. If Jesus' growth is a model for our own, we can assume that God is also concerned about our development in each of these areas.

Since Jesus is our model for development, there is something else we need to recognize. The very word “grew” implies that Jesus’ growth was also a process. He *increased* in each of these areas. Imagine this – Jesus, the Son of God went through a process of growing. God’s plan for us is also to grow, to increase. Today, all of us are still in this process of growing and developing. Considering these ideas, what are the implications of Luke 2:52 for your personal development and for the Church?

It is possible to classify most or all areas of human development under one or more of these four categories in Luke. There is a genius not only in the comprehensive nature of these categories, but the simple way they allow us to look at the whole person and their usefulness as a way to consider service to others. These categories have become the foundation for all of Harvest’s ministry tools and a new model for growth for communities all over the world. In the early 1980s, while traveling in Honduras, Bob was walking through a squatter community and a man walked up to him and said, “Jesus grew in wisdom, physically, spiritually and socially, and we should grow in the same way.” He reported that he had attended a class two years earlier and was taught this truth. That is one of many encounters that confirmed to us that Luke’s paradigm for growth would be a useful tool.

Conditions for Jesus’ Development

Jesus achieved His full human potential in these four areas of life in the context of relative material poverty. He was born in a stable. He was a political refugee in Egypt. He grew up in the home of a skilled laborer in Nazareth, an insignificant town that was oppressed by Rome. His family was moral but due to the unusual nature of Jesus’ conception his family was looked upon with some suspicion and judgment. Since we don’t hear about Joseph after their visit to Jerusalem, he probably died at a young age, and Jesus most likely became the primary provider as a carpenter for his family. Jesus did not have a formal higher education, but His education was adequate by local standards—he could read and write and he knew the Scriptures well. In Jesus’ home, there was no running water, flush toilet, electricity, or television. He had no watch, automobile, or computer.

Jesus achieved His full potential in the absence of material abundance, higher education, or technological advantages. He told his disciples that “a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Jesus may have been poor by our standards, but he was not destitute. Destitution is *not* God’s intention. Jesus had sufficient love, support, educational opportunities, and material possessions necessary to reach God’s intentions. The material context that God provided for Jesus’ development was not one of affluence—or destitution—but one of adequacy. Adequacy implies that resources are sufficient to meet basic needs. Adequacy is beautifully articulated in Proverbs 30:8-9, which reads: “...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

The material conditions of Jesus’ development give great hope to many people throughout the world who will never have the blessings of modern material conveniences. It demonstrates that people can reach God’s intentions for them in all areas of life without an abundance of the “things”—running water, electricity, high-paying jobs, technology, or higher education. To believe that affluence is a requirement for development is to believe in the idolatry that has crippled the spiritual vitality of many Western Christians. This worldview often embraces a dependence on “things” for happiness and fulfillment, but a biblical worldview expresses a dependence on *God*. “Things” can be great aids to development, but if they are seen as *the* path for development, then our focus and expectations are wrong. God is our source and provider, just as He was for Jesus. Those who have material adequacy but are poor, like Jesus, *are* able to develop and reach God’s full intentions for them in every area of their lives, just as He did. Again, higher education or material things can be good, but they are not necessary as basic requirements for development. This biblical perspective can be liberating! If people have adequacy but lack the “things” in Western nations, they *are not* hindered from being all that God intends them to be. Biblical development

can help move people toward the fulfillment God intends, and people's energy *can* be directed toward becoming what God wants them to be, not in striving to possess more "things."

Implications for the Church

The model of Jesus' growth implies that Christians who are concerned about development must work toward a context of adequacy in which people can grow. It also implies that the church has responsibility for adequacy. We believe God intends that all people have the resources necessary to grow toward maturity. This is not completely possible in a sinful world, but God's desire is that human beings not be deprived of the things they need to grow toward the intentions for which He made them. We note that Jesus had loving and God-fearing parents and, likely, extended family. Like most Jewish boys, He probably attended synagogue school, where He learned to read and memorized large passages from the Law and the Prophets. He had meaningful work that contributed to His community and family. He had shelter, food, and clothing. They were simple but, as far as we know, adequate.

If these examples from Jesus' life represent God's concerns for all humans, then they should be reflected in the concern and ministries of the church. Physical destitution is clearly *not* God's intention—and all Christians should work against it, remembering that it is God who provides both naturally and supernaturally. What are our churches doing to ensure adequate resources for people's development in our congregations and communities? Christians who have a surplus are responsible for coming to the assistance of their needy brothers and sisters, but even poor churches are not exempt from biblical mandates. Materially poor churches need to know that destitution is not God's intention and that God promises to provide so as we live the way He calls us. God almost always calls us into partnership with our own healing. Therefore, churches among the destitute need to do what they can, while trusting God to intervene and provide what is needed in response to their obedience.

Development Has a Purpose

Growth is not simply for growth's sake. Development has a purpose. Jesus grew for a purpose—He developed toward God's purpose for Him. Scripture describes that purpose in several ways: "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but *to do the will of him who set me*" (John 6:38; emphasis added). "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to *preach good news to the poor*. He has sent me to *proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*. (Luke 4:18-19; emphasis added). "I must *preach the good news of the kingdom of God* to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (Luke 4:43; emphasis added) "For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, *but to save the world through him*" (John 3: 17; emphasis added). ". . . Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as *the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve*, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28; emphasis added).

There is one word that beautifully summarizes Jesus' purpose—service. Jesus grew, or developed, in order to serve. Since we were made to reflect the character of Christ—the image of God—we have also been placed here to serve. Service is the mark of greatness, maturity, and true human development. It is important to note that there are two kinds of service. One is involuntary, or slavery. Cultures with a history of slavery may have a difficult time seeing service in a positive light. However, the servanthood of which the Bible speaks is totally different. It is the voluntary service of Philippians 2. It is an attitude of willing obedience that reflects the heart of God, puts others first, and treat them as we would want to be treated.

How do we know people are moving toward development, in the biblical sense? It is when we see them sacrificially serving in their worlds as Christ served in His. But, let's take this a step further. If our purpose is to serve, what is the purpose or goal of our service? It is to help others move toward God's

intentions for them. What are those intentions? To become like Christ—to serve. When God’s people are servants, He is glorified. And that is the ultimate goal of all Christians—to glorify our Heavenly Father.

Biblical Definition of Development

Since we are looking at human development from the paradigm of Luke 2:52, we can define ideal human development as moving from where we are now toward God’s present and future intentions for us. Moving toward God’s intentions is a life-long process! It does not happen all at once, and it will not even be completed in our lifetimes, until we see Christ face-to-face. Until then, we are to s be always in that process—moving toward God’s intentions. What are God’s intentions for us? We know that they include service—serving others.

Where do we begin? Christians are to reflect their Lord’s character. Therefore, we want to help others grow toward God’s intentions for them. However, there is a step that must also be occurring before we can encourage growth in others—and that step is our personal growth. Jesus told us that those who are great in His Kingdom are those who first practice and then teach (Matthew 5:19). The effective disciple will be one who models the growth he or she is encouraging in others. We cannot completely finish growing before we encourage and assist others to move toward the destination God intends for them, but we do need to be in the process, ourselves, before we can effectively encourage and assist others in their growth.

We have a saying: “Development begins with me.” Let us ask the Holy Spirit to point out areas in which He wants us to grow. When He illuminates an area of our need, we need to make a decision to move toward His intentions. The area and speed of change will vary for each believer. However, movement toward development will always be in the same direction—toward the model we see in Christ.

May God give us grace and strength to move toward His intentions—especially service to others. But may we beware of serving others if we are not also continually moving toward His intentions for us, in every area of our lives.

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Suggested Resources:

Moffitt, Bob, Tesch, Karla. *If Jesus Were Mayor: How Your Local Church Can Transform Your Community*. Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2006, pp. 75-86; 242-243.

Harvest Foundation. *Leadership Develop Training Program Level I*, Section 8-1, pp.?: *Level II*, Section 2-1, pp.78 – 107, pp.128 - 135. (Free download at www.harvestfoundation.org: Section: Material. Lesson is also called Luke 2:52.

On Earth??

Disciple Nations Alliance online course: www.disciplenations.org/resources/course. Section: Wholistic Ministry