



## On your marks

After the events in Bethlehem at Christmas, Luke's first and second story about Jesus take place in the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, Luke's Gospel starts and ends with events in the temple, and also includes several visits there in between. It was here that Jews believed that God was especially close to his people, so by associating it so often with Jesus - as a baby, as a boy, as an adult and in the final week of his life - Luke is making the point that Jesus is now the new temple and therefore the place to come close to God - and not just for Jews but for everyone in the whole world. This outline has ideas for exploring the story of Jesus when he was taken to Jerusalem as a twelve year-old boy for a Passover festival. Mary and Joseph lost Jesus, but eventually found him in the temple.

## Get set

You can find the story in Luke 2:41-52. There is a retelling of this story for Key Stage 2 in The Barnabas Children's Bible (story 253).

## Go!

### Opening up the story

Losing something is always distressing, but losing someone you love and for whom you are responsible is a terrible experience. Invite the group to share any lost and found experiences - this may include lost objects, lost pets or even times when they lost touch with whoever was looking after them.

- What happened?
- How did they feel?
- What memories have stayed with them?

### Telling the story

Here is a call and response poem that covers the story with lots of repetition. You could divide your group up for individuals or small groups to read, taking a section each.

*We went to Jerusalem and what did we see?  
A city remembering the day they went free.*

*We went to Jerusalem and what did we hear?  
Singing and praising God who was near.*

*We went to Jerusalem and what did we do?  
We joined in with parties, with wine and lamb stew!*



*We went to Jerusalem and where did we go?  
To the temple, the markets and people we know.*

*We went to Jerusalem and after the feast,  
We set off home with all of the rest.*

*We have been to Jerusalem but what did we find?  
That Jesus was missing; we'd left him behind.*

*We went back to Jerusalem and what did we do?  
We looked and we looked, the city right through.*

*We were back in Jerusalem and what did we say?  
'Have you seen Jesus?' day after day.*

*We walked through Jerusalem and what did we hear?  
'Not seen him'... 'Not heard him'... 'He's not been here'*

*We went to the temple and what did we find?  
Jesus with leaders and teachers all round.*

*We stood in the temple and what did we hear?  
His questions and answers with wisdom so clear.*

*We stood in the temple and what did he say?  
'Didn't you guess, that here I would stay?'*

*We walked from Jerusalem, what was it we'd seen?  
Jesus lost but then found... just what could it mean?*

Here's a slower, more thoughtful poem that covers the same story but connects it to the greater 'lost and found' story of Easter:

*So,  
Jesus went up to Jerusalem, for  
It was the feast of the Passover, when  
All who were pilgrims came, to  
Crowded streets so full, that  
It was easy to lose the ones you love, and  
Leave them searching in fear and tears, 'til  
On the third day, he was found again, as  
Suddenly he appears in the temple, with  
So many questions, and answers too, yet  
Listening intently, there in the midst, and  
Doing what God has sent him for, simply*

*At home in his Father's place for an Easter, which Happened then and will do once again.*

### **Talking about the story**

This story must have been of particular importance to Mary who remembered it clearly and passed it on to Luke for us to read. It is the one story from Jesus' childhood that has survived in the gospels from the many other apocryphal stories that there are.

I wonder what Mary felt about what happened. Perhaps in some strange way it was the first time she really began to understand what it meant that Jesus was God's son - even though the angels had said as much to her back at the time of his birth. Did she see in this incident a pattern of how it must be for us all - to be doing our Father's business and listening to Jesus at the centre of all our questions and discussions?

- What did this story say to Mary?
- What does it say to us?

### **Playing with the story**

This story easily lends itself to drama. Ask everyone to take a part in the story as you retell it in your own words. Then, at various points, stop to interview people randomly as they become:

- part of the party travelling south for the Passover
- people among the crowds in the busy streets of Jerusalem
- those who are enjoying the Passover celebrations
- a group of friends setting off home again
- part of the initial search party when they discover that Jesus is missing
- his parents and relatives looking frantically for Jesus in all the likely places in the city - what would be the likely places in your own church and neighbourhood?
- those sitting with Jesus in the temple
- friends listening to Mary as she tells them of Jesus' strange reply when he was found (Luke 2:49)

Children are quite familiar with this sort of role play from drama lessons in school, so if you try this in an all-age setting, they can often lead the way and encourage the adults to join in. This can be a very powerful way of stepping into the story and stimulating the imagination to discover what God is saying to us from this story.

### **Reflecting on the story**

Reflect and pray about the following four questions that arise as different parts of the story come into focus:

- Have we, like Mary and Joseph, left Jesus behind as we set out in a new direction, start at a



new school, take on a new task, begin a new job or develop a new friendship?

- Are we looking for Jesus in the right place, as we try and reconnect with his love and what he means to us?
- Are we still willing to learn, as we grow as Christians, and to go on to discover more about God's kingdom (God's way of doing things)?
- Are we growing in wisdom and not just knowledge, whether that's about faith, ourselves, God or the Bible?