



Whose Business Is It?

Luke 2:41-52

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It's not uncommon for children to follow the example of their parents when it comes to choosing a profession. I remember progressing from wanting to become a police officer to a fire fighter to a dentist after I realized what my father's profession was. He worked for a dentist and made dentures and was not content with me just doing what he was doing. He was hoping for me to go beyond what he was doing to achieve a more financially rewarding position. I liked the idea and I could see myself becoming a dentist.

As I grew older though, the concept of a profession needed to also match the internal drive of a vocation. I needed to do more than simply make a good living. I wanted to help people with my profession. My vocation oriented me towards people. I wanted to become a dentist for others. The idea of going overseas to less developed countries to offer my services was beginning to form in my mind. After listening to the testimonials of priests returning from the mission field, my vocation slowly morphed into becoming a missionary priest.

I remember my parents' distress and anxiety at the thought that I'd be traveling far away to unknown and potentially unsafe countries. They clearly protested my decision. I also remember my biblical smart aleck answer that I needed to be about my

Father's business. I can only imagine that my reply did not give them any reassurance of safety and only communicated a stubborn and unmovable matter-of-fact arrogance against which was useless to file an opposing view.

My parents were left with the only choice of accepting my independent decision of how I was planning to spend my life. Reluctantly and with resignation, they drove me to the train station where they entrusted me to God's protection and to Mary's accompaniment.

Luke tells us that Mary "treasured all these things in her heart." (Luke 2:51) She has pondered the angel Gabriel's greeting (Luke 1:29) as well as the words of the shepherds (Luke 2:19). She comes across as a thoughtful person. She doesn't say much, and her longest speech, the Magnificat, is her elaborate understanding of God's plan for the lowly of the world.

Since her "Yes" (the *fiat*) to Gabriel's announcement, she has demonstrated readiness to trust and explore her role in God's plan. She does not claim to understand all that God is doing in the life of her child, but she accepts that God is at work in him, in her, in Joseph and in the world.

Trust, courage, hope, perseverance, faithfulness, and justice: these are all virtues that one learns to develop when pondering. Wisdom is a habit that can be cultivated.

Mary has understood from the start that her life is intimately interconnected with her son's and God's salvific plan for all people.

But today's gospel is not about her spiritual aptitude.

Jesus is the focus of the gospel: a young Jesus at the cusp of adulthood and, just as any other child of his time, not really the center of the adults' life.¹ Although the biblical wisdom is favorable to children, the contemporary social landscape did not value children other than considering them a commodity.

Why would the temple priests be interested in him unless he started the conversation? He must have attracted their attention with his questions and comments, with his desire to know God and to learn from wise leaders.

Here we have a window into Jesus' youthful years, into what must have been for him to grow in his devout family. How much must Joseph, as a good Jewish father have raised him in the faith of his people? How many times must Jesus have heard Mary praise and glorify the God of heaven interested in the lowly and poor? How often must she have told Jesus bedtimes stories that included her conversation with the angel Gabriel at the time of his conception? Jesus surely must have heard from Joseph how much God cares for him specifically as God has protected them from Herod's fury and accompanied them as refugees in a foreign land?

Jesus must have been well versed in the stories of his people, Israel, and in the faithful and providential assistance of Yahweh, a caring and liberating God. Mary and Joseph spiritual preparation of young Jesus was very evident as Jesus spoke to the sages of the temple.

¹ [Then and Now: Early Christianity's Radical Reshaping of Childhood - Family & Parenting Articles - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America \(goarch.org\)](#) and [How Christianity invented children | The Week](#)

This was not a child prodigy; this was a well-trained child in the ways of the Lord. Mary and Joseph were in love with God, and it showed through the excitement and wisdom of Jesus as he spoke to the elders.

But the event at the temple is also a window into Jesus' future. That event reveals where Jesus' heart is: God is Jesus' treasure. He'll walk the earth preaching and teaching, caring and healing in the name of his Father, whose love for all creatures he will make known. His life, passion, death, and resurrection are a testimony to his total trust in the God who saves. Jesus trusts in Yahweh who is ready to call him beloved and will do so at his baptism.

“In the birth narrative, Luke has already made it clear that Jesus is God's son (see 1:32, 35). But here, for the first time in Luke's narrative, near the end of his childhood, Jesus claims that relationship for himself and his sense of purpose. Jesus' role will extend far beyond the piety in which he is raised.”²

Jesus is certainly growing in his understanding of self and of his vocation. All his divine knowledge, what he learned from his parents and what he grasped from the Scriptures, his personal meditation, and the mentors in his life were not sufficient for shielding him from childhood imprudence and naivete.

Was he not aware of the heartbreak he was giving to his parents by just disappearing as he did while his parents started their journey back home?

Certainly, Joseph and Mary must have felt so worried to have lost the child God had entrusted them. Did they doubt their

² O. Wesley Allen, professor of homiletics, [Commentary on Luke 2:41-52 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)

competence and adequacy as parents? Did they know what they were doing? Did Jesus?

Sometimes, we feel that way too. And we walk by faith. We do not always have readymade answers. We do not always see clearly in the future. We do not always trust we have what it takes to make wise decisions. We must trust and, once we ponder our best response to the challenges of life, we make our best choice, always ready to correct course if needed.

It's our orientation that is paramount. Let it always be for us as it was for Jesus: Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business? At the end of this year, let us learn from past mistakes and let us keep our eyes on the God who has created us, sustains us in our life, and blesses us with grace and mercy. Amen.