

# Where Are You Found?

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*Luke 2:41-52 and Colossians 3:12-17*

The summer after I graduated from college, I worked at a camp leading outdoor adventure activities like rock climbing, and caving, and hiking. One of the weeks, two leaders and I were assigned to take a group of youth backpacking for a few days in the Dolly Sods Wilderness. For those of you unfamiliar with outdoor stuff, the Dolly Sods is a 10,000 plus acre wilderness area in West Virginia full of hardwood forests and beautiful vistas. Dolly Sods is primitive, and I mean primitive. There are no cabins, no bathrooms, no amenities. The trails are unmaintained. That means that they're rough and rocky and there are few trail markers, if any. If you've ever hiked anywhere, you know that trail markers are lifesavers. If you get off course, all you have to do is find one of those colored markers spray painted on a tree and you're good to go.

We had planned to hike a few miles to our campsite, but since the trail wasn't well marked, we got lost. We hiked and hiked and hiked some more. Up a hill and down a hill, up another hill and down another hill. I began to think... "Just one more hill to go. Our campsite is just over the next hill, I'm sure of it."

The kids were getting really tired and I was getting really tired and the sun was starting to set. Finally, we found intended campsite, or at least we hoped it was. It looked great, except it was on the other side of a fast-moving river. And of course, there wasn't a bridge – or even a log to walk on. So the whole group had to cross the river. Some of them got wet on the way across. That wasn't so bad, except in the Dolly Sods, you aren't allowed to make any campfires, and when you're hiking, campfires dry things out and keep you warm. So that meant that everyone who had wet socks and hiking boots when they went to bed had wet socks and boots in the morning.

Searching for our campsite was exhausting and stressful and it wasn't easy. We thought we would never find it and we were beginning to give up. I'm sure that's how Mary and Joseph felt as they searched for their twelve-year-old son.

## Where Are You Found?

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After realizing Jesus wasn't with them, his parents returned to Jerusalem to search for him. They looked frantically for him for three days. I'm sure they looked everywhere. Maybe they even retraced their steps in their heads, wondering if they had left any place unchecked. His parents finally found him in the Temple, sitting with the teachers of the law, listening and asking questions. Those of you who are parents know exactly how Mary and Joseph are feeling at this moment. Mary blurts out, "Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you." They are relieved to find their son, but they are extremely disappointed in his behavior.

Jesus' response to his parents always intrigued me... he says, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" He assumes that Mary and Joseph would know where he was. I would have loved to have seen the looks on Mary and Joseph's faces at that answer. Can you just imagine? After searching for three days, their 12-year-old says, "Didn't you know I was here?" Jesus' parents don't have a clue what he is talking about.

Since the answer is so intriguing to me, I took a closer look and found the phrasing of the Greek to be ambiguous. Maybe our author, Luke, does this deliberately. Some translate the phrase "I must be in my Father's house". Others would say it reads "I must be about my Father's business." The Greek reads, "I must be about my Father". The nouns for "house" or "business" don't appear in the Greek.

Translating this phrase, "in my Father's house" makes sense because Jesus' parents found him in the Temple, in God's house. The other translation, "about my Father's business" also fits because Jesus' parents found him among teachers of the law, listening and asking questions. For today, I'm going to use the translation "about my Father's business."

Let's look again at Jesus' answer. We should certainly pay attention to the tone of Jesus' words...he says, "I **MUST** be about my Father's business"...as if he couldn't possibly be doing anything else. It was necessary for him to be about his Father's business. Jesus was beginning to become aware of the special relationship he had with God. He was beginning, at age 12, to become aware of God's purposes for him. I wonder, are we that aware? Do we know what God has asked of us?

Some of us have known God for a long time, perhaps since childhood. We are confident of what God has asked of us and are trying our best to serve God

with our whole hearts and with our whole lives. Others of us are just beginning to become aware that God is moving in our lives. We are just beginning to be able to recognize how much God loves us and that He has a purpose for us. If you are just beginning to recognize how much God loves you and is moving in your life, take heart! God has amazing things planned for you. In time, you will be able to identify where God has called you to serve and the gifts and talents God has given you to serve him with.

On my backpacking trip, we were searching and searching for our campground. As I reflected on our passage for today, I wondered, "Have I ever been searched for?" Have you ever been searched for or went somewhere without telling anyone? If people were searching for us, where would they look? Would they be able to predict where we would be? Think for about that for a moment. Where would people look if they were searching for you? Work? Home? The gym? At church? Volunteering or serving somewhere? Maybe on the golf course or at the mall? Wherever they would find you, what does the place you would be found say about who you are? What does it say about your priorities and values? And do you like what is being said?

Here's the question...when we are found, what are we found doing? Are we found doing the Father's business? Wherever we go and whatever we do, are we like Jesus in that we must be about the Father's business? Being about the Father's business in our lives means that we are in tune with what God has called us to do. We know God and love God and have a relationship with God through Jesus. We spend time with God. We know what our gifts and talents are and we are actively trying to use them for God. We try to live our lives doing the Father's business.

Doing the Father's business isn't always easy, is it? In fact, doing the Father's business is pretty tough. It can be draining, both mentally and physically. Doing the Father's business is something we are all called to do, but we're human aren't we? And sometimes we get frustrated. We lose patience and we become angry. When that happens, some words from Colossians 3 that Tammy read can help to encourage us and keep us going. When we get frustrated, we are to clothe ourselves with compassion. When we lose patience, we are to be kind. When we become angry, we are to be gentle. If people get on our nerves, we are supposed to be patient with them and bear with them and forgive them. Above all, when we are doing the Father's business, we are to clothe ourselves in love. As we go about our Father's business in our homes, at our workplaces and in our communities, let us remember these encouraging words and be

## Where Are You Found?

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guided and uplifted by them.

As we continue our search for the path God would have us to walk, may we always be found doing the Father's business to the best of our abilities.

Thanks be to God.