

## **Jesus came as a baby? Big deal... I am a teen with adult-sized problems!**

This is adapted from the title piece in [God Knows What It's Like to be a Teenager](#) by Mark Marshall.

God. A lot of people think about how powerful, infinite, and big God is. You might think about how God knows everything. Or how perfect and holy God is. Maybe you think about God's love, how God cares.



But do you ever think of God as understanding? As someone who can relate to us? Do you think of God as someone who understands teenagers and can relate to them?

Most people don't see God that way, either because they just haven't thought of it or because they see God as so far above us that He just doesn't relate. Many wonder if He's there at all, much less there for us.

Then, of course, there are some funny ideas around about God. Like a few people think He gets up in the morning, stretches, then thinks, "Hmm. Who am I going to zap today?" They don't view God as very understanding.

Well, God isn't that way -- thank God.

God is high above us. Yet He knows us, far better than we know ourselves. Parents and other adults might not be able to figure you out, especially if you're a teenager, but God is able to. God understands us because He knows everything. He knows everything about you. After all, He created you. He knows your difficulties. He knows all your thoughts -- there's a scary thought. He knows and understands you like no one else can.

He's proven that to me in the Psalms. From my teen years on, no matter what I was feeling or thinking, no matter what I was going through, I've always been able to find a psalm that related to where I was at. I don't know how many times when I needed some encouragement from God or needed help to pray where I was or just needed to know He cared, that I found what I needed in the Psalms.

All the open emotions and experiences of Psalms show God understands what it's like to be human. And with their being so intense, like being teen, they show He especially knows what it's like to be a teenager.

But what's even better is God more than knows... and he's not far away. He's experienced being one of us. In Jesus, God came down and became one of us.

And He didn't take any shortcuts. He gave up all He had in heaven, came down here, and became a baby. And not some royal baby in a silk crib in a palace, although being King, He had every right to that. He was born in a barn, even in a feeding trough (That's what a "manger" is in the Christmas carol.) Although He was the Son of the King, He was born a carpenter's son.

He went through the humility of being a little child. He had to obey His parents like any other kid, and He did (Luke 2:51), even though He was the one who possessed all authority.

Jesus had to be different, and that made Him a target. So He perhaps got picked on and maybe beat up by other kids, though He had the power and the right to wipe them out.

But then, being an awesome friend, Jesus surely had close friends. Who wouldn't want to have the kid Jesus as a friend?

He experienced the joys of childhood and appreciated them more than the average kid. But those were nothing compared to the joys of heaven He gave up.

### **Then Jesus became -- a teenager.**

Now the Bible doesn't say a whole lot about His teen years. One thing I definitely want to do in heaven is go back in time and see what the teenage Jesus was like.



But the Bible does give us a look at what Jesus was like right before He went teen. Luke 2: 41 - 52 tells us something that happened when He was 12.

*41 And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; 43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. 46 And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. 48 And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." 49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (a more literal translation: "in the things of My Father?") 50 And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. 51 And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

He and His family went to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Passover was the biggest Jewish holiday of the year. Now the custom was that a Jewish boy would first go up to Jerusalem for Passover at 12 or 13. His family lived a long journey away in Nazareth, so this was probably Jesus' first time to see the capital of Israel and the Temple. This was a big time for Him, like a kid's first visit to Disney World or Washington, D.C.

At the end of Passover, Jesus wasn't in a big hurry to go back home. He stayed behind while His parents began the journey home.

So Jesus had an independent streak that comes along near the beginning of the teen years. He doesn't want to be around mom and dad all the time. He honored His parents and obeyed them perfectly (yet more proof He was God). But He wants to do His thing, too. For Him, that meant being into "the things of My Father."

**Do you want to do your thing? Do you have an urge to go beyond being just your mom's kid?**

Jesus can relate.

It took a day's journey for His parents to figure out He wasn't with them in the caravan. That's like your parents driving all day before they figured out you're not in the minivan and they left you behind.

**Do your parents seem clueless sometimes?** Jesus has been there.

When they finally found Him in the Temple and asked Him what He was doing there, He gave an honest answer -- which His parents didn't get at all.

**Do your parents ever misunderstand you?** Jesus really knows what that's like. Not only was He a twelve-year-old, He was God. So you can imagine how much His parents didn't understand Him.

And not just as a twelve-year-old, but His whole life, people didn't get Jesus. Even His brothers and disciples didn't get Him. Check it out in the gospels. He was probably the most misunderstood man who ever lived.

**Do you feel misunderstood?** Jesus knows where you're at -- because He has been there like nobody has.

Pretty soon after that Passover, Jesus became a teenager. Luke says in verse 52 "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Then we don't hear much else until he's around 30.

**Still, Jesus was a real live teenager.**

And He doesn't forget what it's like to be one like some adults do. He knows where you're at. He's been there, and He remembers.

Do you find your emotions are more up and down than they used to be back when you were just a kid?

**Are your emotions a real roller coaster sometimes?** Well, that's something teens usually go through. Jesus experienced teenage emotions, too. He understands.

**Do you want to be more independent? To have more freedom? And sometimes with those desires come conflict with parents and other authorities?** Jesus had those desires, too. We saw even before 13 there was a little friction with his parents about what freedom is appropriate and what isn't. Jesus never sinned against his parents, but part of being teen is eagerly wanting more freedom when others are not eagerly giving it. Jesus has been there.

**Have you ever had a zit?** Well, Jesus probably did, too. He knows what that's like.

Jesus also experienced -- hormones. That's right. And He experienced all the craziness, emotion, energy, and yes, temptation that goes along with hormones.

What's amazing is He had a full set of teenage guy hormones -- and never sinned, not even in His thoughts. You might say, "Get out! Only God can do that." Well -- you're right.

Something important in the Bible to remember is in Hebrews 4:15. It says Jesus is not someone "who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." So Jesus didn't sin in any way, but He was tempted. And that includes sexual temptation, along with all the other temptations that come with being teen. If anything, Jesus's temptations may have been more intense because He was a target of Satan. (Check out Luke 4:1-13 for starters.)

So if you've got teenage hormones and the craziness and temptations that come with them, Jesus can relate. He's been there.

And as you go through all the fun, intensity, hope, and difficulties of being teen, Jesus understands -- because He once was a teenager, too.

**This is what is awesome about Christmas.** God came down and became human. He became one of us. That's what Immanuel means: "God with us" -- He became one of us and lived with us. He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to love us like that. But He did. And He does.

There might be times when you feel nobody understands you. Times when your parents don't get you. **Times when your friends look at you like you're a space alien.** There may be times when even your dog doesn't understand you.

But you can know God understands what it's like to be you. Because He knows, not just in His head. He knows first hand what it's like to be one of us. Because in the person of Jesus, God became one of us.

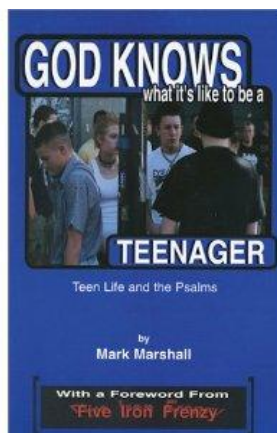
In Jesus, God became one of you. He became a twelve-year-old. He became a teenager. That's how much He understands you. That's how much He loves you.

God knows what it's like to be you.

God knows what it's like to be a teenager.

Because He was one.

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You can find the book on Amazon.com, new or used, for not a lot of money!