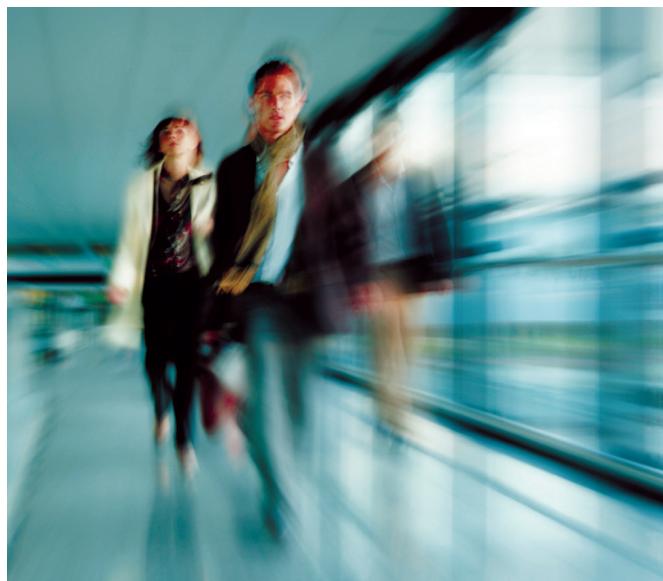# Losing Track of Jesus

Just as Mary and Joseph did, it's easy for us to lose sight of Jesus   **BY FRANK VIOLA**

The story of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus in the temple is a unique, intriguing gospel account that contains a surprisingly appropriate message for believers today.

According to Luke 2:42-50, the 12-year-old Jesus went up to Jerusalem with His family to celebrate the Passover feast, as was the Jewish custom of the day. After a day had passed on their journey home, the Lord's parents suddenly realized that

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Jesus was missing. They searched for Him among the caravan of relatives and friends, but He was nowhere to be found.

Frantically worried, Mary and Joseph headed back to Jerusalem to search for Jesus. After three days of searching, they finally found Jesus in the temple courts. They were astonished and asked Him why He didn't return with them. In answer, Jesus essentially said: "You should have known where I was."

I believe this story offers a piercing lesson for the body of Christ in this hour. The lesson is simply this: It's all too easy to lose sight of Jesus Christ, even while one is engaged in good, religious, spiritual undertakings. It's possible to perform acts of worship and yet miss Christ in the process.

In the story, the Lord's parents were doing something good, something noble, even something spiritual. They made the hike from Nazareth to Jerusalem to worship God for the religious festival of Passover. Their return home was also a positive act. But they got distracted and unknowingly lost Christ.

So many things are vying for the attention of God's people today. I'm not speaking of the "cares of this life" or the "deceitfulness of riches" which choke the Word (Matt. 13:22). Those are obvious. I'm speaking of good, religious, spiritual things.

Let me offer an example. Over the years, I've been to countless Christian conferences and seminars. It never ceases to astound me how little Jesus Christ gets mentioned by the speakers. Ministers will wax eloquent for an hour on such themes as church multiplication, the gifts of the Spirit, God's mission, etc. and the Lord Jesus will not be mentioned even once!

The Lord said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (see Luke 6:45). What we talk about most is a good index of what we are consumed with. Just count how many times Paul refers to Jesus in his letters—it's arresting.

In Philippians 3:8, he says, "I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

It's possible to be occupied with the things of God and yet lose God. It's possible to put something else on the throne—whether it be church multiplication, evangelism, discipleship, spiritual warfare, mission or even the mighty gifts of the Holy Spirit—and lose Christ in the temple.

It's one thing to preach holiness; it's another to present Christ as our holiness (see 1 Cor. 1:30). It's one thing to discuss redemption; it's another to present Christ as redemption. One is a religious thing; the other is the Lord Himself. Jesus should never be replaced by things *about* Him.

May the Spirit of God give us eyes to see that the Father's chief passion and pleasure is Jesus (see Matt. 3:17); that the light of the Holy Spirit exclusively shines on the face of Christ, revealing and glorifying Him (see John 15:26); and that the testimony of holy Scripture always points to Christ (see John 5:39). If we will put the Lord Jesus in His rightful place, then we'll never suffer the peril of missing the main point of our faith, which is Christ alone. ◀

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