



### What stages of growth do we see living in Jesus?

*Luke 2:6,7*

*Luke 2:27-40*

*Luke 2:42-49*

*Luke 3:21,22*

Luke gives us insight into how Father God deals with His Son. We recognize three phases of growth in this. Bonding, letting go and getting closer. In order to maintain healthy relationships with others, it is important to learn these three phases over and over again. It will help us to have healthy boundaries and to respect the boundaries of others. It is a recurring principle in all relationships.

### Attachment

*Matt 2:1-6, 13-15*

Jesus was born in a very difficult time. Mary was pregnant, yet she and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem. There was no hotel available there. The delivery had to take place in a stable.

It is so special how God the Father takes care of His Son. Three times we see how the Father shows that He loves His Son and what the plan is for His life. First, angels come to the shepherds, proclaiming the good news that the Son of God has been born. No one had paid attention to this special event. But the Father does. Shepherds then went to the stable to worship Jesus. God also sent Magi from the East to bring very precious gifts. God the Father gives Joseph a dream, so that he will bring Mary and Jesus to Egypt in time, where the mad king Herod cannot kill this child, God's Son.

### What is attachment?

*Eph 3:17-19* (rooted in love)

*Col 2:7* (rooted and built up in Him)

During the first period of something new, such as with a newborn baby, a newly married couple or becoming a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, it is important to bond. As a baby to the parents, as a partner to your other half, or as a new follower of Jesus to God the Father.

This attachment lays the foundation of the relationship and will provide for the development of healthy boundaries.

The attachment starts with unconditional love. A mother's first affection for her child is the glue that "sticks" the relationship together. Recognition of your existence provides the value you need. You feel welcome.

A baby feels that mother and baby are one, or a newly married couple wants to be together, or a new Christian is totally absorbed in the love of the Father. This sense of attachment is the beginning of being rooted in love.

### Unconditional love?

*1 John 4:9,10*

When one of my daughters was 10 years old, she really liked my son's boyfriend. I thought she was too young for this at that age. My wife disagreed. Still, I decided to say something about it. My daughter's reaction was quite intense. She hardly spoke to me for three days. I decided to talk to God about this. Every day I bombarded Heaven so that my daughter would change her rigid attitude. The third day God asked me if He could say what He thought about it. Of course I wanted to know. His answer was: Love her unconditionally! I immediately understood what was going on. I had made a condition of my love for her. She needed a father at the time who would love her unconditionally. As a parent, I had to learn that lesson.





## Letting Go

At one point in the life of Jesus, we see that as a teenager He wants to know more about His Father. Not Joseph, his earthly father, but God, His heavenly Father. This was such a moment of letting go for Joseph and Mary.

We also see such a moment of letting go with the disciples. Jesus tells them that He will leave them temporarily.

We see at least three times for such a period in the upbringing of children. The first period starts between the first and second year of life. Babies grow up, start walking and discover that there is much more than that sweet mother. They are going to explore their world and learn to say NO. They want to discover for themselves what their limits are. That sweet child suddenly becomes a difficult toddler. This toddler learns the power of the word no, and if it doesn't get its way, it can lie on the floor screaming and crying to add extra power to that word no. This is a crisis for the relationship between mother and child. But a very important one. The child will learn to detach and must rediscover the boundaries in his larger world. It is going to learn what his / her property is and take care of it. It will discover who he/she is not (you cannot do everything you would like) and therefore precisely who he/she is. Discovery is good for the child. When parents say no too much or intervene too much, the child does not learn to determine his boundaries.

Parents can withhold love by saying, "If you do this or that, I don't love you anymore." This will not help the child learn healthy boundaries. After all, the child wants that unconditional love, but also wants to discover it.

God makes people that can make wrong choices because He wants a relationship from the heart. A free choice for Him, not based on the law.

*Luke 15:11-13*

When the child subsequently falls, the challenging world suddenly is less fun and the same child again seeks the love and protection he needs from the parent.

In this phase, the child learns that mother and he are not the same, which leads to interest in others. The child has been given safety and is well attached, now it dares to look outside. It feels safe. By letting go, it starts to try everything, but then finds out that it cannot do everything. Then the next phase, rapprochement, the reestablishment of the bond, follows.

*Luke 15:17-20*

These periods are also important in our relationship with God, in marriage, between friends.

When Adam and Eve ran away from God, God was looking for them. Jesus restored Peter when Peter denied Jesus. Jesus could do this because Peter went back to Jesus.

Other periods of letting go in parenting are teenagers and adolescence.

In puberty comes the discovery of gender identity, the discovery of talents, interests and gifts. This creates a competition with others. Discovering what you can say yes to and what you say no to, and especially to whom you say no.

Adolescence is the beginning of an independent life and the beginning of a career. You enter into your own relationships and try out your own values and standards.

## Rapprochement

*Luke 15:20-24*

*John 20:19-22*

If there has been a good healthy attachment between a child and a parent, a new rapprochement will come after the period of letting go. There is a clear mutual respect for each other's boundaries. Recognizing the other is then an important part. The child is less dependent on the parent and will grow towards independence. The child is no longer immature, but an adult. This deserves the

parent's respect. The relationship has changed and in some ways is similar. But an interdependence will be born from independence.

### **What does Paul say about adulthood?**

*Heb 6:1 (not sticking to the rudiments, growing to maturity)*

*Eph 4:11-15 (grow fully together to Him, Christ)*

Attaching through love gives a value and recognition of who we are. The intention is that by letting go we will explore the world around us. We learn norms and values, what is good and what is evil. Growing to maturity helps us make the right decisions. After that, we can respect ourselves and others in relationships.

### **GROUP EXERCISE:**



*Discuss with each other the three phases of unconditional love and attachment, letting go and finally getting closer. Discuss how this can function in this group. Watch together how Jesus loved, sent them out, and eventually received them back.*



*When does a person become an adult in Jesus Christ?*

