CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Obedience, Trust & The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Sunday School activity • Ages 14+
Five branching role-play scenarios for pairs. Each pair plays a parent and child, makes choices, follows the consequences and discusses what they learned.

How to play

• Divide the class into pairs. One student is the Parent; the other is the Child.

• Give each player only their own role sheet. Print Parent and Child sheets separately or have players cover the other role.

• The Parent reads the opening line. The Child chooses a response. Follow the matching instruction and go only to the named choice or ending.

• Do not read ahead to the endings. Keep the outcome a surprise until you reach it.

• After each scenario, discuss the questions. Emphasise that the goal is thoughtful discussion, not simply finding a winning player.

Learning objective
Students explore how respectful questions, listening, trust, good judgment and obedience work together. Connect the scenarios to Luke 2:41–52, especially Luke 2:51.

Suggested timing: 30–40 minutes for selected scenarios, or 50–60 minutes for all five with debriefs.

Scenario 1 — The Party You Cannot Attend

Theme: Trust and understanding **Time:** 5–7 minutes

Your friends are going to a birthday party. Your parents say no, but you don't know why.

PARENT — Role Sheet A

You have decided your 14-year-old cannot attend a Saturday-night party. You know there will be no adult supervision and have heard older teenagers may bring alcohol. You want to protect your child while helping them make responsible decisions.
Say: "I'm sorry, but you cannot go to the party on Saturday."

If the child says A — "This is so unfair!"

• P1: "I don't want to hear another word. Just do as I say." → Ending 1.

• P2: "I know you're disappointed. Let me explain what I'm worried about." → Child Choice 2.

If the child says B — "But all my friends are going!"

• P3: "I don't care what your friends are doing." → Ending 1.

• P4: "I understand. I have concerns about the party. Can we talk?" → Child Choice 2.

If the child says C — "Can you tell me why?"

• P5: Explain the lack of adult supervision and concern about alcohol. Ask, "What do you think we should do?" → Child Choice 2.

CHILD — Role Sheet B

You've looked forward to the party for weeks. Your parents suddenly say no. You don't know their reasons. Choose one response:

• A. "This is so unfair! You never let me do anything!" → Parent's A instruction.

• B. "But all my friends are going! I'll be the only one who doesn't go!" → Parent's B instruction.

• C. "Can you tell me why? I really want to understand." → Parent's C instruction.

Child Choice 2 — After hearing the reason

• C1: "I understand. Could I invite my friends here, or could you speak to the other parents?" → Ending 2.

• C2: "You're just paranoid. I know how to take care of myself." → Ending 3.

• C3: "Fine," but secretly decide to sneak out later. → Ending 4.

Endings

Ending 1 — The Argument — The parent ends the discussion. The child feels unheard and resentful; the reason for the rule is never understood.

Ending 2 — The Compromise — The parent contacts other parents or hosts a gathering at home. The child doesn't get exactly what they wanted but feels respected and understands the concern.

Ending 3 — The Standoff — The parent refuses to change the decision. Both feel frustrated and trust is weakened.

Ending 4 — The Secret — The child sneaks out. The parent discovers the child is missing and is frightened. Even if nothing bad happens, trust is damaged.

Discuss: Was the parent right to say no? Would understanding the reason change how the child felt? Does asking for an explanation mean refusing to obey?

Scenario 2 — The Phone That Never Sleeps

Theme: Obedience and self-discipline **Time:** 5–7 minutes

Your parents tell you to hand over your phone at 10 pm every night.

PARENT — Role Sheet A

You've noticed your child staying up late, struggling to wake up and getting distracted from schoolwork. You decide the phone must be handed over at 10 pm.
Say: “From tonight onwards, I want your phone downstairs at 10 pm. No exceptions.”

If the child says A — “You don't trust me!”

• P1: “If I trusted you, I wouldn't need to do this. Hand it over.” → Ending 1.

• P2: “This isn't about whether I love or trust you. I'm concerned about sleep and schoolwork.” → Child Choice 2.

If the child says B — “I need it to talk to my friends!”

• P3: “Friends can wait until tomorrow.” → Ending 1.

• P4: “I understand. Finish your conversations before 10. Let's agree on a routine.” → Child Choice 2.

If the child says C — “Can we agree on a trial period?”

• P5: “Let's try one week, then review your sleep and schoolwork.” → Child Choice 2.

CHILD — Role Sheet B

You enjoy gaming and chatting with friends. Your parents want your phone downstairs by 10 pm. You think they are treating you like a little child. Choose one:

• A. “You don't trust me! I'm not a baby!” → Parent's A instruction.

• B. “I need my phone to talk to my friends. Everyone else is online at night!” → Parent's B instruction.

• C. “Can we agree on a trial period? I'll show you I can manage my time.” → Parent's C instruction.

Child Choice 2

• C1: Agree to the trial and hand over the phone at 10 pm. → Ending 2.

• C2: Agree, but hide a spare device in your room. → Ending 3.

• C3: Explain a genuine school or family need and propose a specific exception. → Ending 4.

Endings

Ending 1 — The Power Struggle — The parent imposes the rule without listening. The child obeys reluctantly, but both feel frustrated.

Ending 2 — The Trial — The child follows the agreement. After a week, the family reviews the routine. The child learns that trust grows through responsibility.

Ending 3 — The Hidden Device — The parent discovers the second device. Screen time becomes a bigger issue of honesty and trust.

Ending 4 — The Responsible Exception — The parent agrees to a reasonable exception for a school deadline or urgent family message while keeping the general rule.

Discuss: Does obedience mean following a rule even when it seems unnecessary? How can a child show readiness for more freedom?

Scenario 3 — The Shortcut Home

Theme: Obedience when you don't know the whole story **Time:** 5–7 minutes

Your parent tells you to take the usual route home, but your friends have a shortcut.

PARENT — Role Sheet A

Your child is walking home from a friend's house. Insist they take the main road and avoid a shortcut through a construction area. A neighbour recently reported a dangerous incident nearby, but you haven't explained it yet.
Say: “Take the main road. Do not use the shortcut through the construction area.”

If the child says A — “That's ridiculous. The shortcut is faster!”

• P1: “I don't care. Just obey me.” → Ending 1.

• P2: “I know it seems unnecessary, but I'm concerned about your safety. Let me explain.” → Child Choice 2.

If the child says B — “All my friends use that shortcut!”

• P3: “You're not your friends. Do what I said.” → Ending 1.

• P4: “I understand, but I have information your friends may not have.” → Child Choice 2.

If the child says C — “Is there a reason I shouldn't use it?”

• P5: Explain the recent incident and possible danger. → Child Choice 2.

CHILD — Role Sheet B

Your friends use a shortcut through a construction area that saves 15 minutes. You've been told to take the main road. Choose one:

• A. “That's ridiculous. The shortcut is faster!” → Parent's A instruction.

• B. “All my friends use that shortcut. Why can't I?” → Parent's B instruction.

• C. “Is there a reason I shouldn't use it?” → Parent's C instruction.

Child Choice 2

• C1: “I didn't know that. I'll take the main road.” → Ending 2.

• C2: “I can handle it. I'll use the shortcut anyway.” → Ending 3.

• C3: “Can you show me a safe alternative that doesn't take so long?” → Ending 4.

Endings

Ending 1 — Because I Said So — The child follows the instruction but remains annoyed. The parent protects the child but misses a chance to explain.

Ending 2 — Trust Before Understanding — The child follows the instruction after hearing the reason and realises the parent had information they did not.

Ending 3 — The Unseen Danger — The child takes the shortcut and encounters a dangerous situation. It reinforces why listening to guidance matters.

Ending 4 — Understanding Together — They find a safe alternative. The child learns that questions can lead to a better solution without rejecting parental guidance.

Discuss: Can parents know things children don't? If a reason isn't immediately clear, should we assume a parent is unreasonable?

Scenario 4 — Where Is Jesus?

Theme: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple — Luke 2:41–52 **Time:** 8–10 minutes

This scenario is based directly on the Gospel. There is no simple villain; both sides have understandable reasons.

PARENT — Role Sheet A (Mary and Joseph)

Your family has travelled to Jerusalem for Passover. On the journey home, you assume Jesus is among relatives and friends. After a day, you discover he is missing. You search for three days and finally find him in the Temple, listening to the teachers and asking questions.
Say: "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

If Jesus says A — "I didn't think you would be worried. I was interested in the discussion."

• P1: "You should have known better! You're coming home immediately." → Ending 1.

• P2: "We're relieved to find you. But you should have told us where you were going." → Ending 2.

If Jesus says B — "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

• P3: "What do you mean? We don't understand." → Ending 3.

• P4: "We don't fully understand, but we're your parents and were worried. Come home with us." → Ending 4.

If Jesus says C — "I'm sorry you were worried. I wanted to learn about my Father's work."

• P5: "We understand this is important, but you must tell us where you're going." → Ending 4.

CHILD — Role Sheet B (Jesus)

You are 12 and have travelled to Jerusalem for Passover. You are deeply interested in the Temple and your heavenly Father. While your family starts home, you remain, listening to the teachers and asking questions. You do not intend to hurt your parents; you are focused on something important.
Choose one:

• A. "I didn't think you would be worried. I was just interested in the discussion." → Parent's A instruction.

• B. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" → Parent's B instruction.

• C. "I'm sorry that you were worried. I wanted to learn more about my Father's work." → Parent's C instruction.

Child Choice 2 — The Journey Home

• C1: "I understand. I will come home with you." → Ending 4.

• C2: "I have more to learn. I'm staying here." → Ending 5.

• C3: "Can we talk about it on the way home? I want to understand." → Ending 4.

Endings

Ending 1 — The Angry Reunion — Mary and Joseph are relieved but respond only with anger. Jesus returns home, but little understanding is reached.

Ending 2 — The Missed Explanation — Jesus recognises their worry. They explain why he should tell them where he is going, and the family returns home.

Ending 3 — The Unanswered Question — Mary and Joseph don't understand Jesus' words. They remain concerned and ask him to return.

Ending 4 — The Gospel Ending — Jesus returns to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and is obedient to them. Mary treasures these events in her heart.

Ending 5 — The Unfinished Journey — Jesus refuses to return. His parents remain worried and the family is separated. This is not the ending described in the Gospel.

Teacher's reveal
Read Luke 2:48–52. Ask: Was Jesus wrong to be interested in His Father's work? Did Mary and Joseph fully understand? What did Jesus do, even though He understood something they didn't? What can we

learn from His return to Nazareth?

Teaching note: The Gospel does not say Jesus was disobedient and then corrected himself. His divine mission and his obedience to Mary and Joseph are both present in the story.

Scenario 5 — The Sunday That Clashes

Theme: Faith, family commitments and respectful disagreement **Time:** 6–8 minutes

Your closest friend's birthday outing is on Sunday morning. Your parents say the family will attend Mass and Sunday School as usual.

PARENT — Role Sheet A

Your family has a longstanding plan to attend Sunday Mass. Your child also has Sunday School. You know the friend's birthday outing is important, but you want your child to understand the importance of worship and family commitments. You are willing to discuss practical options, but not to treat faith commitments as meaningless.
Say: “We're going to Mass and Sunday School on Sunday as usual. You can't skip both for the birthday outing.”

If the child says A — “Church is boring. My friend matters more!”

• P1: “That's disrespectful. End of discussion.” → Ending 1.

• P2: “I hear that the outing matters. Tell me what you're worried about missing, and let's talk.” → Child Choice 2.

If the child says B — “Everyone else gets to go. Why do I have to?”

• P3: “Because I said so. Don't compare yourself with others.” → Ending 1.

• P4: “Families make different choices. Let's discuss our commitment and whether there's a way to join your friend later.” → Child Choice 2.

If the child says C — “Could we attend Mass and then I join them afterwards?”

• P5: “Let's check the timing and transport. If it works, you can join after our commitments.” → Child Choice 2.

CHILD — Role Sheet B

Your best friend's birthday outing is Sunday morning. You really want to go because the whole group will be there. Your parents say Mass and Sunday School come first. Choose one:

• A. “Church is boring. My friend matters more!” → Parent's A instruction.

• B. “Everyone else gets to go. Why do I have to?” → Parent's B instruction.

• C. “Could we attend Mass and then I join them afterwards?” → Parent's C instruction.

Child Choice 2

• C1: Accept the plan to attend Mass and Sunday School, then join the outing if timing permits. → Ending 2.

• C2: Pretend to agree, then leave for the outing without telling your parents. → Ending 3.

• C3: Explain respectfully why the event matters and ask whether there is another way to celebrate with your friend. → Ending 4.

Endings

Ending 1 — The Shut Door — The child is told what to do but feels that their feelings and questions do not matter. The family attends, but the conversation has not helped the child understand the commitment.

Ending 2 — Commitments and Compromise — The child honours the family and faith commitment, then joins the outing if possible. The child learns that keeping a commitment can coexist with enjoying friendships.

Ending 3 — The Broken Agreement — The child leaves secretly. The issue becomes dishonesty and damaged trust, rather than simply a disagreement about Sunday plans.

Ending 4 — A Respectful Conversation — The parent and child discuss alternatives, such as calling the friend, joining later or arranging another celebration. The child practises expressing a desire without dismissing the family's values.

Discuss: How can you show that faith and family commitments matter without pretending you aren't disappointed? What is the difference between respectfully asking for flexibility and simply ignoring a parent's decision?

Whole-class debrief

After the scenarios, invite pairs to share one ending they reached and one choice they might change. Write these four words on the board:

> **ASK • LISTEN • UNDERSTAND • OBEY**
> Respectful obedience is not the absence of questions. It is the willingness to listen, learn and respond with love and respect.

Closing reflection: “Mary and Joseph did not understand everything Jesus said. Jesus knew He had a special mission from His heavenly Father, but He still returned to Nazareth and was obedient to Mary and Joseph. We too may not always understand why our parents make certain decisions. We can ask questions respectfully, listen to their reasons, and learn to trust their guidance.”

Optional closing prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to listen with open hearts, speak respectfully, and grow in wisdom and obedience. Bless our parents and families, and help us follow Your example of love. Amen.

Facilitator tip: Print Parent and Child role sheets on different coloured paper, or distribute them separately. Ask players not to read ahead. The surprise of the consequences is part of the activity.