

3. Promise Fulfilled

38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.
- Luke 2:38 NIV

*39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. ...
42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."*
- Luke 10:39, 42 NLT

Anna's name means grace or favor, and her father's name translates as face of God. Anna indeed had favor to see and recognize the face of God in Jesus. She had faithfully sought God through difficult circumstances and her calling as a prophet of God was fulfilled when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the Temple that day.

What was Anna's response at that moment? How does that demonstrate her love for God and for her people?

As Mary discovered (Lk 10:39) there is only one thing that is important, and that is sitting at the feet of Jesus. In this season of busyness and distraction, remember to follow the examples of Mary and Anna and sit at His feet.

WRAP-UP

Anna is a little-known yet powerful example of faithful waiting in the Christmas story. Widowed for decades and living in a difficult, faithless world, she devoted her long life to worship, fasting, and prayer in the temple. At 84, her perseverance and trust in God were rewarded when she recognized the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah and proclaimed the redemption of Jerusalem. Anna's life teaches us that faithful, active waiting—marked by devotion and hope—positions us to recognize God's hand when it comes.

MEMORY VERSE

37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. - Luke 2:37 NIV

Challenge –

In this week of Christmas, spend time with the one who came to us that first Christmas. Let your experience in His presence be a personal encounter with the one who loves you.

INTRODUCTION

Anna is an often-overlooked figure in the Christmas story. She is only mentioned in 3 verses but if we are looking for someone who demonstrated faithful waiting for the Messiah, we can find no better example than Anna. Stripped of everything the world finds valuable; she likely spent more than half a century as a widow. When we find her in the temple in Luke's Gospel, she is 84. But Anna led a faithful life in a faithless world. And she was rewarded with the honor of announcing "the redemption of Jerusalem's arrival" when Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple to offer sacrifices in accordance with Jewish law. Let's consider what we can learn from Anna's life of faithful waiting.

Ice Breaker

If you were asked to try to guess when 60 seconds had passed, are you more likely to guess too early or wait too long? Ask someone to be your timer and give it a try.

Key Passages

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. - Luke 2:36-38 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Don't Depart, go Deeper

Anna was a remarkable woman. As a widow she had known pain and loss, but she had not become bitter. She lived under Roman rule, and so the land that should have been a welcoming home was bristling with hostility. She had no family and so she lacked financial security and physical protection. And she was "very old". The term used to describe her was "probainō polys en hēmera" which can be translated as advanced in many years or stricken with

age. At 84 she had walked a long road of life, and undoubtedly, she suffered the common ailments of an aged body.

What circumstances in your life have challenged your faith? What has helped you to remain, or return, to your faith in God despite those circumstances?

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. - Psalm 23:6 NIV

7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. - Psalm 32:7 NIV

*5 The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.
- 1 Timothy 5:5 NIV*

37b She never left the temple,... - Luke 2:37b NIV

As we read the 23rd Psalm we might see the conclusion as a reference to living out our eternity in heaven. But Anna began her stay in the house of the Lord while still in this life. She never left the temple. As Paul wrote to Timothy, she put her hope in God and prayed and asked Him for help. In the midst of deep darkness she had been drawn to the light of God's presence.

Where is the place you go to spend time in God's presence? Is it a quiet room in your home, a walk on the beach, or the church sanctuary? Have you spent time there recently, and if not, when can you return there?

2. Active Waiting

37b ...She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. - Luke 2:37-38 NIV

The brief account we read about Anna is filled with significant information. The first thing we are told is that she is a prophet. A prophet is one to whom God reveals future events or God's hidden truths. They carry God's messages to the people. But in Anna's day, there had been no prophesies for over 300 years. Just as Simeon had been moved by the Spirit to declare Jesus as God's Salvation, a light to the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel, Anna was given eyes to see that Jesus was the redemption of Jerusalem. We see three ways she prepared herself to have eyes to see and ears to hear God.

What activities was Anna involved in during the time she waited in the Temple for God to move? What do you notice about her diligence in their practice?

•Worship - There are seven different words in the Greek which can be interpreted as worship. In Luk 2:37 it is the word *latreuō* -and means, to render religious service or homage, to worship. Anna expressed her worship of God through honoring and serving Him.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, - Hebrews 12:28 NIV

Worshiping God demonstrates a transformed perspective. Let us choose to approach God in reverence and awe with thankful hearts of worship.

Although worship does not require music, we often use music as a means of expressing our worship. If you are able, pause to express a moment of worship, possibly through song.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. - Galatians 5:22-24 NIV

• Fasting *nēsteia*- For Anna this would have been a voluntary abstinence from food. We deny our flesh to strengthen our spirits through fasting. It allows us to devote ourselves to seeking God rather than satisfying our flesh. It is not a means of manipulating God's will but rather an opportunity to depend on the Spirit and develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

• Prayer- Anna was in constant communication with God through her prayers. She depended on Him to provide for all her needs, and in return she received God's blessing and peace.

*16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV*

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

If you are feeling anxiety this holiday season, remember to follow Anna's example and Paul's instruction to pray, petition and give God thanks.