

Read: Luke 2:22-38 and Isaiah 40:28-31

ANNA Long widowed, Anna was faithful - clinging to the hope that she would see the Messiah. She fasted and prayed in the temple during the dark times of the intertestamental period when God did not speak to the Jewish people, and when the coming of the Messiah seemed hopeless. She waited, steadfast in her prayers, for 84 years. When Anna encountered the infant Jesus in the temple, her hopes were fulfilled.

1 The Old and New Testaments both have much to say about widows. Look at Exodus 22:22-24, Psalm 68:5, Proverbs 15:25, Isaiah 1:17, Psalm 146:9 and Zechariah 7:10. What is God's heart toward widows? What does this say about God's character? Now turn to James 1:27 and Mark 12:38-40 for New Testament perspectives. How can the church carry out God's plan for widows?

2 What does the scripture say was Anna's role in the temple? Many times in the Bible, fasting and prayer seem to be attached to some big situations in Bible characters' lives. In the following passages, who fasted? What was the reason? What was the result? You may need to read more in these chapters to understand why the characters were fasting. Esther 4:15-16, Daniel 1:12, Acts 13:2-4 and Matthew 17:20-21 (not NIV). Why do you think God calls us to fast?

3

Anna was a prophetess. This week’s scripture assignment also contains the story of Simeon (Luke 3:22-38). Mary and Joseph arrived at the temple with the baby Jesus to satisfy the Old Testament law. They needed to make the purification offering (see Leviticus 12:6–8) and to present Jesus as their firstborn before God (see Exodus 13:2, 12–15). While they were there, a man named Simeon cradled the Lord Jesus in his arms, praised God, and uttered a prophecy concerning Jesus and Mary. At that moment, Anna entered. She immediately recognized Jesus as the long-awaited Savior and began thanking God. God used her to beautifully confirm Simeon’s ministry to Jesus and His family. How is prophecy used in the Bible as a witnessing tool? See 2 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Timothy 5:19, and Deuteronomy 19:15. Have you ever had the Lord use a second witness to confirm something for you or to send someone “just in time”? Explain.

4

There were many things in Anna’s life that were disappointing. She lost her husband at a very early age and she had no children (implied). But she didn’t look back with regret, she looked forward with hope. How long did Anna wait while serving the Lord in the temple? Read Isaiah 40:25-31. What is the byproduct of waiting on the Lord? Can you think of a way to claim this as a promise in your own life?

5

What are some of the ways Jesus gives hope in this account? To Simeon? Mary and Joseph? To Anna? To you?
