



SHEROES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
ANNA – The Woman That Recognized The Messiah
Women's Discipleship Group - Terri McFaddin
Series #1 Lesson #2

Scripture Focus: *Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about 84 years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day (Luke 2:37).*

Key Words: **Fasting:** (Greek) – Nesteuo: To abstain from eating. Self-denial.
 Prayer: (Greek) – Deomai: To beseech. To call out for aid. To make request.

OPENING STATEMENT:

Perhaps you're wondering why I chose Anna as a *shero*. Her name means grace or favor but from the tone of the scriptures it appears that Anna was nothing more than an old woman that spent her days and nights in the temple praying and fasting. The only significant thing that is said about her is that she lived long enough to witness the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

But if we explore the facts located within the story of Anna, we will find a completely different view of this great woman of God. It is not uncommon that in the Bible, stories about women are often *understated*. Limited information is given and therefore we must do some digging to get to the facts. Let me also say that if Luke took time to tell the story of Anna, then it is because she was a very important woman.

1. Anna was a prophetess. In all of the four gospels, Anna is the only prophetess of the Lord that is mentioned. As a prophetess, she was no doubt highly respected and carried great responsibilities. The role of a prophet or prophetess was to proclaim God's word in teaching, reproving, correcting and training in righteousness. As a resident of the temple, she lived among men for 84 years and therefore began her ministry as a young woman. The fact that she is the only prophetess mentioned in the gospels and that she survived among religious male leaders that were legalistic and extremely biased against women, made her a *shero* in her own right. According to Jewish tradition, she probably spent a great deal of her time ministering to people and mentoring the upcoming religious leaders. As a prophetess, she also predicted future events and more than likely prophesied the coming of the Messiah. The evidence that a prophet or prophetess was truly sent from God was measured by the fulfillment of their prophecies. It took Anna many years, but she lived long enough to see the fulfillment of the birth of Jesus, the promised Messiah.
2. Anna was the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. In middle-eastern culture family connection or genealogy is linked to status, wealth, honor and respect. Even though Anna was once married, the scriptures do not mention the name of her husband but rather her father, Phanuel. This could be an indication that Phanuel was a man of wealth and influence and that is why he was mentioned as the father of Anna. The tribe of Asher was known for being a very prosperous tribe of people. Perhaps it was her father's wealth that sustained her after she became a widow. Finally, the mention of Anna's family and tribe could also be a way of honoring her as a woman that was held in high regard in Israel.

3. Anna was of great age. If we attempt to calculate Anna's age we would find that she was a very old woman on the day when baby Jesus first came into the temple at Jerusalem and she recognized him as the Messiah. I believe that because of the spiritual authority and anointing of Anna (Luke 2:33-38) that on-lookers marked her words that indeed the Messiah had come. In ancient times older people were highly respected and not thought of as incompetent. No doubt because of Anna, people continued to monitor this child even to the time when he became a boy of twelve and came back to the temple at Jerusalem *sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at his understanding and answers (Luke 2:46-47).* Anna may have been in heaven when Jesus stood in the temple twelve years after his birth, but I am certain that her influence remained and the crowd whispered, "Isn't this boy Jesus the one that the prophetess Anna called the Messiah?"
4. Anna was a woman of prayer and fasting: She set the example for faithfulness to the Lord in prayer and fasting. When prayer is added to fasting the result is always power and revelation. Every believer should practice fasting and prayer. Anna was a woman of spiritual power that included patience and faith. How else could she have survived living in the temple? Before the gospels were written, the legend of Anna was already firmly entrenched in Jewish oral traditions that were carried from one generation to the next. In order for her words to have such an impact concerning Jesus, she must have already demonstrated the fruitfulness that came from of lifetime of prayer and fasting.
5. Anna lived to see the Redeemer. Sometimes we are not certain what plan the Lord has for our lives. We live from day to day sometimes feeling like we're drifting through life without a clear purpose. Perhaps even Anna questioned why her life was prolonged. After all, she had spent her days as a faithful servant, so what more could the Lord want from her? Anna soon learned that each day we live is a part of God's divine purpose. For Anna, it was to confirm that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God. According to Jewish historians, there were rumors that the real father of Mary's baby was a soldier or a merchant. But things changed when Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to dedicate Jesus. Along with Simeon, a devout Jew that was in the temple, Anna's witness of Christ was so important that it gave Jewish believers a new respect and reverence for Jesus and his parents.

OBSERVATIONS: Read Luke 2:36–38 and try to calculate Anna’s age.

INTERPRETATION: In Luke 2:38, what is meant by the phrase: “...to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem”?

PERSONALIZATION: Have you ever had an experience where you felt that you were waiting in vain for something great to happen in your life? Then, one day the Lord showed you what the delay was all about? Tell us about your experience. If you are still waiting, how has the story of Anna helped you?

APPLICATION: Find a scripture that will encourage you to wait on the Lord to unfold his plan. Make a commitment to fast and pray for clarity from the Lord.