

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

21 Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. 22 Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. 23 The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord." 24 So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

The Prophecy of Simeon

25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, 28 Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

29 "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace as you have promised. 30 I have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared for all people. 32 He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

33 Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. 35 As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."

The Prophecy of Anna

36 Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. 37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. 38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

39 When Jesus' parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. 40 There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.

Luke 2:21-40 (NLT)

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word."

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- When growing up, what teacher, coach or relative made you feel special or challenged you to grow?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

NOTE: There are a lot of directions one could take with this passage. Try and focus the group on how this Christmas we should/can worship Jesus instead of being distracted by our surrounding culture.

v.21-24 - Background

- O: What is going on as a background to Simeon and Anna's stories?
Note: Key here is that while this context is foreign to us, it was typical in the time of Jesus.

v.25-35 - Simeon

- O: How could Simeon possibly know this baby Jesus was the long-promised Messiah (v.25-28)?
- O: In Simeon's prophecies (v.29-32,34-35) what was he predicting about the work of Jesus? The fate of Nations? The pain of the parents?
- I: How does this version of the Christmas story (the long-term mission and divisiveness of baby Jesus) fit into the typical portrayal of Jesus and the celebration of His birthday over Christmas?
- Follow-Up: How should a more "informed" Christmas celebration for us look like in light of this part of the Christmas story?

v.36-40 - Anna

- O: Of whom does Anna remind you? How does she complement Simeon's prophecy?
- I: What impact would these STARTLING predictions by Simeon and Anna have on "all" who were listening that day? On the parents of Jesus as they returned home (v.33,39)? On Jesus as He grew up (v.40)?
- A: How does the worship and devotion/commitment of the characters in these stories teach us/model for us our pursuit of God? Mary and Joseph? Simeon? Anna?
- A: When has God brought along someone to confirm something in your life (like Simeon and Anna did for the parents of Jesus)? How did this make you feel? How is God stirring you/us to worship God and "talk about the child to everyone?"