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Anna: Living a Life of Praise



Part 41 (071223AM)

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Luke 2:36-40

As we open to [Luke 2:36](#), and are introduced to the life of Anna, I'd ask you to underline two words in your mind. First, in v. 36 "she was of great age"—underline in your mind **OLD**. Second, in v. 37 "a widow of about 84 years"—underline in your mind **ALONE**.

There you go, in two words you could describe the woman we are going to meet this morning. Anna was OLD and ALONE. Yet from this account God gives to us, this old and alone woman was also vibrant, filled with joy, overflowing with God's Word and in love with the Lord. She is just what any woman who knows the Lord would want to become...

An Old Testament Woman of Grace

Think about her resources to live this life we see, she had God's Word and the Spirit of God. But, just like most of the saints of Old Testament and the early church Anna had no personal copy of God's Word. They had to rely upon the Word they heard as it was read to them, or what they could copy down for themselves. So with limited access to the Word, she flourished because of the unlimited access she had to God.

In the context of our recent study of godly women, I would like to call Anna a powerful example of a grace-energized woman—from the Old Testament! And how does God describe godly, grace-energized women? Is she perfect? No, she is not perfect, but she has a life dominated by choices to obey and follow the Lord.

Anna, like any other grace-energized woman may fail here and there, sin now and then, give up from time to time—but her life is characterized and dominated by choices to seek to follow God's Word. That describes Anna, that describes a grace-energized woman, that is what God always wants, and that can describe YOU!

As we turn to [Luke 2:36-40](#) and read this incredible account, open your heart to God's Word as He speaks to us today:

	Christmas-- Immanuel: God with Us
Part: 29	Joseph & Mary: The King's servants
Part: 28	Lessons from the Wise Men Giving our Worship to Jesus
Part: 27	Simeon & Anna-- Single Hearted Devotion
Part: 26	The Humble Shepherds
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Part: 19	The King's Seekers Magi and Shepherds
Part: 18	The Wonder of Christ's Love
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Part: 12	Joseph & Mary Walking with the Lord
Part: 11	Zacharias and Elisabeth -- The 1st Spirit Filled Family
Part: 9	The Priests & Scribes: So close and yet so far
Part: 8	The Two Kings: Herod and Jesus
Part: 7	Joseph and the Magi
Part: 6	The Origin of Christmas Traditions
Part: 5	Are you looking for Christ this Christmas?
Part: 4	The Fourth Glory of Christmas: His Name
Part: 3	God With Us
Part: 3	Lessons in Worshiping Christ
Part: 2	Anna: Living a Life of Praise
Part: 2	God In A Manger
Part: 1	The Fullness of Time: The Day Jesus Was Born

*Luke 22: 36-40 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. **She was of a great age**, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was **a widow of about eighty-four years**, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant **she gave thanks to the Lord**, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. 39 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. 40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. NKJV*

There is no more timely, vital, or relevant message I could share with you from God's Word this morning than this one. The whole world is growing more and more aware of the bleak future facing most women. In fact, the U.S. Census Department issued an analysis of the population demographics of the USA and their conclusion was...

Being Old and Alone is The future for 80% of all women

The most recent US census paints a very bleak picture facing women in America. You could summarize the numbers by saying: just under half of women 65 years old and over are widows, and of those widowed women the vast majority lived alone.

If you are a woman here this morning you will very likely spend the final days of your life being OLD and ALONE. Now think about what it means to compound old age with all of its limitations and troubles with loneliness.

Loneliness can be described as one of the most desolate words of the human language, capable of hurling the heaviest weights the heart can endure. As Chuck Swindoll says,

"...it plays no favorites, ignores all rules of courtesy, knows neither border nor barrier...; it will not be left behind.

Crowds only make it worse, activity simply drives it deeper.

Silent and destructive as a flooding river in the night, it leaves its slimy banks, seeps into our dwelling, and rises to a crest of despair.

There is simply no other anguish like the consuming **anguish of loneliness**.

Ask the inmate in prison this evening...

or the uniformed man thousands of miles at sea or in some bar tonight...

or the divorcee in that apartment...

or the one who just buried his or her life's companion...

or the couple whose arms ache for the child recently taken...

or even the single, career-minded person who prepares a meal for one and goes to bed early, *alone*, [and] surrounded by the mute memory of yesterday's song and today's disappointment". **[1]**

Though loneliness has many forms—it has but one purpose. Loneliness is when God takes something treasured out of my life—so He can be closest to me. This means that loneliness is a tool in God's hand, an opportunity for a right response by us His children.

God's Prescription for Old Age is Psalm 92

For all of her life Anna, when she went to the synagogue each Friday evening—had heard the same Psalm (as the 92nd Psalm is titled, it was the Sabbath Psalm) sung over and over, week after week. Think about those little details in God's Word. How old was Anna? Either she was 84 or 104 from v. 37. That means that she had heard Psalm 92 either about 4,472 times (if she was 84) or about 5,408 times if she was 104. That is an awful lot of times to hear these words and not be deeply impacted by them:

Psalm 92: 12-15 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, 15 To declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. NKJV

I believe Anna is a model of what a godly, grace-energized woman ought to be. She heard, read, and believed God's Word enough to want live it by God's grace! That is all that God is looking for today. Women who believe Him enough to want to do His will as declared in the Bible. I hope that you are such a woman today!

Senior citizens, both men and women, have some challenges. Elderly people (anyone over 65) need to learn to live the grace-energized Psalm 92 life.

A Psalm 92, grace-energized saint like Anna sees:

...how useless self pity is; and
...how dangerous selfishness becomes; and
...how worthless greedy people end up; and
...how hopeless those who fight for independence can be; and
...how restless those characterized by discontentment will be; and finally,
...how empty human pleasures become so quickly.

However, by God's grace, an older woman knows:

...how priceless real friends truly become; and
...gets to experience how endless Christ's joys can be; and
...how numerous ministry opportunities are all around us; and
...how utterly satisfying Christ's presence becomes the more we are alone;
...and finally, how comforting prayer grows to be in our lives.

Without a Psalm 92, grace-energized life, older women do not have very much to look forward to. Listen to the rest of the U.S. Census Department's analysis for older women. It is astoundingly dismal...

America's Guide to Aging Women: Exercise and Get Financially Independent

Demographic Trends and Projections

Today, almost 35 million Americans, or one in eight, are age 65 or older, and three out of five are women. Over the next 40 years, the population aged 65 and over will

more than double, while the number of persons age 85 and over will more than triple.

Today, the average life expectancy at birth is 79.4 years for women and 73.9 years for men. Seven out of 10 "baby boom" women—those born between 1946 and 1964—are expected to outlive their husbands. Thus, many can expect to be widows for 15 to 20 years.

Why Older Women's Issues Are Important

Women in the U.S. currently have a life expectancy approaching 80 years. However, the gift of longevity is frequently accompanied by a number of challenges. Older women spend more years and a larger percentage of their lifetime disabled. They are nearly twice as likely to reside in a nursing home. Nearly 80% of all older persons living alone are women. Widowhood and the geographic mobility of children both contribute to the growing phenomenon of older **women living alone**.

Economic Security

More than 70% of all elderly persons with incomes below the poverty level are women.

Health Care

Older women are more likely to be unemployed. They are more likely to work part time and in industries that do not offer health insurance benefits. At the same time, older women are at much higher risk of chronic diseases and disabling conditions as they age.

Women of the Future

Changes in physical activity status, more positive self-images, and greater economic and social independence should enable many women to take charge of their health and improve their activity status. If women choose to actively engage in life course **planning**, this may well lead to more years of **healthful independence**.

[2]

Well, the best the US government has to offer is exercise and save your money—you are going to be old and alone—don't also be poor! Now contrast that with...

God's Guide to Aging Women: Live Energized by Grace

As with all crucial questions in life, God's Word has the answer, and not just an answer but **a living example of all these things**—how to grow old, how to finish well, how to do so as a single, and how to do so as one who has lost their life partner.

This morning Anna was a woman with a life energized by grace, and **dominated by the consequences of wonderful choices** that she made.

Anna's name means "grace". She was a grace-energized widow, who was alone, and who had no place to go. That is what it says. She was limited to the 40 acres of the Temple courts. But what kind of life did she lead? We are blessed because God leads Dr. Luke to record these details in a Gospel that gives great emphasis to women of all ages and walks of life [3]. Here are the lessons in triumphant living this godly

old saint, energized by grace can give to us.

First look at v. 36:

Luke 2:36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; NKJV

Anna was either 84 or 104 years old, either way you do the math of Luke's account you come up with someone whose resources of time, health, strength, and future plans should be all used up. But not Anna, the secret of her strength was in how she viewed God.

Anna had unlimited access to the Lord, He was neither distant to her nor detached.

If she had allowed the pains and troubles of life to distance her from seeking God she would have become dull and lifeless. But to this grace-energized woman, God was near to her and at work in her life.

The presence of God brings life and hope to even those who by every other measure should be hopeless. Anna lived and walked in hope and saw God's Hand all about her life. She was willing to be what God wanted her to be—even if it's not much by others' estimation! She was a "nobody" to everyone except to God.

Lesson number one:

**Grace-energized women like Anna
Can be old but not hopeless.**

Now look at v. 37a:

"and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple..." NKJV

Losing her support and fellowship in a husband was painful, but she did not become embittered. Sorrow can either soften our lives, and make us compassionate and kind—or we can allow pain and sorrow to harden us into harsh and bitter people. Which way are you allowing your pains and troubles to shape your life?

She resisted the crippling attitudes of despair, disillusionment and bitterness (Luke 2:37a). Anna had known pain, but kept on trusting the Lord as a "widow".

Lesson number two:

**Grace-energized women like Anna
Can know pain but not bitterness.**

Now look at v. 37b:

"... but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. NKJV

She stayed faithful and fruitful to the end of her life. Anna had grown old but kept on serving the Lord, as she "worshiped Him by prayer and fasting".

Anna couldn't get out anymore, she couldn't travel, shop, visit and get away—she was limited physically but unlimited spiritually. Notice that she never left the Temple. That means that she had a world that was only a portion of 40 acres big.

But her life was all about what she could do, not what she

couldn't do. She could excel in worship, she could offer her adoration to Him at any time and that is about all we ever get to know about her from God's Word.

Fasting is about me learning ways of denying my flesh; praying is me learning more ways of seeking God. So "fastings and prayers night and day" meant that Anna was on a course of less and less of her and more and more of God.

That is exactly what grace energizes us to do. As Paul said in Titus 2, grace leads us to deny ungodliness and look for Christ. Anna's life was all about God, and she gave Him what she had—time to pray and fast.

Lesson number three:

**Grace-energized women like Anna
Can know limits but not uselessness.**

Now look at v. 38:

Luke 2: 38-40 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. NKJV

Do you see what her prayers had done? She was alone from every perspective but God's. He was in touch with her constantly. And as she talked to the Lord, He guided her **around to be involved in what mattered to Him.**

One of the most obvious characteristics of this woman's life is the speed at which she could praise God. She seems to have practiced this often. It was almost a reflex; and praise just flowed out of her. Anna was praising the Lord immediately **when she saw an answer to her prayers.**

Another wonderful aspect we see is that Anna was willing to share with others, **what God was doing in her life. She** overflowed into the life of this younger woman and her family. Mary was touched as was Joseph, by this older woman. Her love for God, her passion to share His faithfulness, all of this must have made a deep impression on not only Joseph and Mary, but also everyone who came across this amazing, grace-energized woman named Anna.

Lesson number four:

**Grace-energized women like Anna
Can know loneliness but not emptiness.**

How about it ladies, are you seeing the pattern? Do you want to have a so dominated by little choices made to seek God, respond to His Word, and to allow His grace to flow through your life? That is what Anna had.

1. Grace-energized women like Anna can be old but not hopeless.
2. Grace-energized women like Anna can know pain but not bitterness.
3. Grace-energized women like Anna can know limits but not uselessness.
4. Grace-energized women like Anna can know loneliness but not emptiness.

God's grace can overflow the life of any woman willing to be dominated by a choice to respond to God's Word just like Anna. Why not make choices today to...

Learn to live a Life of

Praise to God like Anna

The Bible speaks often of people praising God and encourages continual praise. What does it mean to praise God? Why should we do it? How should we do it? The Bible gives us answers to those questions.

Verse

Psalm 9:1-2 (To the Chief Musician. To the tune of "Death of the Son." A Psalm of David.) 1 I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. 2 I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. NKJV

Psalm 146:1-2 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! 2 While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. NKJV

Psalm 103:2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: NKJV

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,⁹ not

Explanation

PRAISE IS WHEN I GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR WHO HE IS. Praise is saying thank you to the Lord for each facet of his divine nature we see through His Word; and seeing with the eyes of faith all the marvelous works that God has done. The longer we practice this our inward attitude will become an outward expression of praise. When we praise God for who He is, we are experience Him through that worship.

PRAISE IS WHEN I FOCUS MY HEART ON GOD. The last five Psalms in our Bibles (146–150) are filled with praise. Each has the same beginning and ending using the words: "Praise the Lord!" What will praise do to my life? (1) Praise will take your mind off your struggles and failures and gets you focused back on God; (2) Praise will open my heart to magnify God's character; and (3) Praise will lift my perspective from centering merely on life on Earth, to walking in step with the majestic scene around God's Throne in Heaven.

PRAISE IS WHEN I THANK GOD FOR HIS MANY GRACIOUS GIFTS. We are wired to complain about life, but praise redirects our thoughts towards the goodness of God—He forgives our sins, heals our diseases, redeems us from death, crowns our lives with love and compassion, satisfies our deepest desires, and gives us His joy. As believers we receive all this undeservingly. No matter how hard life's journey, we can each count our blessings—past, present, and future.

PRAISE IS WHEN I THANK GOD FOR MY SALVATION. When someone gives us a gift, do we say, "That's nice-but how much do I owe you?" No, the

of works, lest anyone should boast. NKJV

appropriate response to a gift is, "Thank you." Yet, often believers, even after receiving the gift of salvation, feel obligated to try to work their way to God. Because salvation and even faith are gifts, believers should respond with gratitude, praise, and joy.

Hebrews 13:15

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. NKJV

PRAISE IS MY SPIRITUAL OFFERING TO GOD. Jewish Christians, because of their witness to the Messiah, no longer offered animal sacrifices with other Jews. So praise and acts of service became their sacrifices-ones they could offer anywhere, anytime. The prophet Hosea wrote, "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips" ([Hosea 14:2](#)). A "sacrifice of praise" today would include thanking Christ for his sacrifice on the cross and telling others about it. Acts of kindness and sharing are particularly pleasing to God, even when they go unnoticed. ^[4]

Anna modeled how to finish life fruitfully for Jesus because they lived a life that counted. A fruitful life that pleases God is a chosen path. What pathway are you choosing to live?

All for Jesus

*All for Jesus, all for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed pow'rs:
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours.*

*Let my hands perform His bidding,
Let my feet run in His ways;
Let my eyes see Jesus only,
Let my lips speak forth His praise.*

*Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside,
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Looking at the Crucified.*

*What wonder! how amazing!
Jesus, glorious King of kings,
Deigns to call me His beloved,
Lets me rest beneath His wings.*

[1] Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), p. 140.

[2] <http://www.aoa.gov/naic/may2000/factsheets/olderwomen.html> Last updated 9/2004.

[3] "There are forty-three references to women in Luke's Gospel, and of the twelve widows mentioned in the Bible, Luke has three ([Luke 2:36-40](#); [7:11-15](#); [21:1-4](#); and [note 18:1-8](#)). Widows didn't have an easy time in that day; often they were neglected and exploited in spite of the commandment of the Law ([Ex. 22:21-22](#); [Deut. 10:17-18](#); [14:29](#); [Isa. 1:17](#)). Anna devoted herself to "serving God by worship" through fastings and prayers. She moved from the tribe of Asher and remained in the temple, waiting for the appearing of God's promised Messiah (see [1 Tim. 5:3-16](#)). God's timing is always perfect. Anna came up just as Simeon

was praising the Lord for the Child Jesus, so she joined in the song! I would like to have heard these elderly people singing in the temple! Their praise was inspired by the Spirit of God, and God accepted it. But Anna did much more than sing; she also spread the Good News among the other faithful members of "the remnant" who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. The excitement began to spread as more and more people heard the Good News". (Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. [Lk 2:21](#))

[4]

This chart adapted from Barton, Bruce B. ; Veerman, David ; Taylor, Linda Chaffee ; Osborne, Grant R.: *Luke*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997 (Life Application Bible Commentary), S. 54

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