Week 6: Simeon and Anna

This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
Simeon and Anna are frequently overlooked in the Christmas story, but we can learn so much about their passion to see the Messiah come to earth. They waited and they anticipated the coming Christ. They dedicated themselves to the pursuit of the Messiah. In this lesson, we’ll discover what we can learn from them and their passion for the Messiah—and how they responded once they saw God’s promise fulfilled.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: Simeon and Anna aren’t central characters in the Christmas story, but their lives are amazing examples of patience, faithfulness, and worship.
2. WHY: Simeon and Anna’s dedication to waiting for the promised Messiah teaches us how to search and wait for Jesus in our own lives.
3. HOW: This lesson will encourage students to be diligent in their pursuit of Jesus and to never give up.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Luke 2:25-38

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE
Titus 2:12-14

TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Simeon was righteous and devout—a man waiting for the consolation of Israel. He was given a promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the promised Messiah. His heart was in tune with the Holy Spirit, and when he saw Mary and Joseph with Jesus in the temple, he knew that the promise was being fulfilled. Simeon then prophesied over Jesus.

Anna is called a prophetess, meaning one who proclaims God’s news. She didn’t depart from the temple, and she spent her days fasting, praying, and worshipping. When she saw Jesus she gave thanks for the redemption that Jesus would bring.

Two different people in one moment who eagerly waited for Jesus. In our day and age, we struggle waiting for anything. We want instant answers and results. Simeon and Anna are powerful examples of people who were willing to wait for their greatest hope, no matter how long it took.

Simeon and Anna committed themselves to following God and waited patiently, never losing hope. We must follow in their footsteps, devoting ourselves to following hard after Jesus while we eagerly wait for his return.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [optional]

Text Message Questions
We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What role did Simeon and Anna play in the Christmas story? Nope, they weren’t shepherds or wise men. Find out more tonight!

- How long would you wait for something really good? Days? Years? Find out tonight how long others were willing to wait.
GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]
Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then ASK:

- What emotions do you experience in the final days before Christmas, and why?
- Why do people use advent calendars or paper chains during the Christmas season? [NOTE: Consider bringing an advent calendar or paper chain to illustrate and discuss how they help people count down to Christmas Day.]
- Could you imagine waiting years to celebrate Christmas? If you knew that it was coming but didn’t know exactly when, how would you feel about waiting?
- Does our ability to wait for things, people, or promises say something about our hearts? Why or why not?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Waiting for Christmas is relatively easy for us because we know exactly when it is and how long until the day arrives. Imagine that you have been waiting years for the birth of the promised Messiah. You don’t any details—only the promise that you will not die before your eyes have seen him. Today, we’ll talk about two people who did just that: anticipated and waited for the birth of Jesus. They received a promise, and they saw that promise fulfilled.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS
The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Sometimes we wait, (2) Sometimes we listen, and (3) We always can worship.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Luke 2:22-38 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Let’s spend a few minutes discussing the story of Simeon and Anna and seeing what we can learn from them.

1. Sometimes we wait

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Anna and Simeon waited years to see the Messiah; they never lost hope and they never stopped devoting themselves to God. We find them both at the temple waiting and eager; when they saw Jesus they knew he was the one that they were waiting for all those years.
ASK:
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you enjoy waiting? Why did you choose your particular answer?
- Why do you think Simeon and Anna were willing to wait so long for the promised Messiah? How do you think they handled the moments when they got discouraged?
- Do you feel like you are waiting for something from God? Explain.
- Does waiting have to be bad? What can we learn in our waiting?
- What is the significance of what Anna and Simeon did while they waited?

2. Sometimes we listen

ASK:
- When do you find it most difficult to listen well? What noises, sounds, challenges, or distractions keep you from listening well?
- Based on this passage, how did Simeon and Anna listen?
- How do we listen to God? What are some of the ways God may choose to speak to us? In what ways can we choose to listen?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Simeon and Anna waited a long time. They likely faced discouragement and frustration, but they continued to listen for God’s leading and God’s comfort and God’s direction. On that amazing day, the Holy Spirit revealed that this little boy was the promised Messiah. When we listen for God’s voice and God’s leading, we discover amazing truths and witness God doing incredible things.

3. We always can worship

ASK:
- Even when Simeon and Anna didn’t know the time of the Messiah’s arrival, they stayed devoted in their worship to God. Do you find it hard to worship when you don’t see God working in your life? Explain.
- Both Simeon and Anna immediately responded in worship to Jesus. How can we choose to be as ready to worship as they appeared to be?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Simeon and Anna seem to play a small role in the Christmas story, yet the closer we look the more we learn about their important role in confirming the birth of Jesus. They are excellent examples of lives lived out in complete worship of God—people who never lost sight of God’s promises.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]

ASK:
- Read Titus 2:12-14. How do Paul’s words in this passage echo the actions and emotions we find in the story of Simeon and Anna?
- What is the hope that Paul talks about in this passage?
- Is it difficult to place all your hope in Jesus when you don’t sense or feel him? Why or why not?
APPLICATION

ASK:
- Why is faithfulness in our devotion to God so important in our faith journey?
- What role does hope play in helping our devotion?
- When we lose hope, what can happen to our devotion? How can we regain hope—or help other people regain their hope?

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:
- Are there areas in your life where you have been asking God for guidance but God seems silent? How is this experience impacting your life?
- How would you rate your level of devotion to God right now?
- Do you find yourself losing hope because of the "stuff" in your life? How can we encourage each other to not lose hope and to continue in devotion?

SUMMARY

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed (Titus 2:12-13).