

Anna
Luke 2:36-38

For many of us, how we celebrate Christmas is fixed into our calendar—family traditions, group celebrations of all sorts and special church services. But there is another level to how we celebrate Christmas, and it has as much to do with our spirit as it does with our activities—although to a certain extent the one influences the other. Tucked into three short verses of Luke 2, we catch a glimpse of someone who isn't thought of much in the Christmas story—Anna. We don't often think about Anna as part of the Christmas story. She's not included in the typical children's Christmas play. But she played a significant role in recognizing the deity of Christ and telling others of His arrival. Notice these five qualities of her life from Luke 2:36–38:

1. _____—Anna “*departed not from the temple.*” Her worship of and service to God wasn't connected to a yo-yo of emotions. It was embedded into her lifestyle.
2. _____—She “*served God.*” Service really is a choice we make consciously or unconsciously. Often, serving God is best expressed by serving the people in front of us. When we are in the midst of a busy season (such as Christmas) it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the very opportunities we have to serve. Don't make that mistake.
3. _____—Anna's service included “*fastings and prayers night and day.*” She had a sincere love for God that was expressed and nurtured through spiritual disciplines. Don't let the busyness of this season rob you of prayer time or of the means God gives to worship Him. Worship isn't just about a touching song at church—it is cultivated through time in God's Word and prayer.
4. _____—The default response of her spirit to the goodness of God was gratitude. The moment she saw Jesus, she “*in that instant gave thanks.*” I love that Thanksgiving precedes Christmas on our calendars. But sometimes it's easy to check Thanksgiving off our list and then move on to Christmas. The best way to celebrate Christmas is with a thankful heart.
5. _____—She “*spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” One of the things I love best about Christmas is that many people are more tender to listen to the gospel at this time of year. If we're not careful, however, it's easy to miss our best opportunities to “speak of Him” because we're so busy rushing to the next event.

Christmas is a busy season—there's no doubt about it. And some of the sheer madness of the calendar may be outside of your control. (Anna certainly had difficult life events—widowhood and related needs—outside of her control.)

But how you celebrate Christmas depends more on who you are—the condition of your spirit—than what you do. Want to celebrate Christmas well? Be faithful, serving, spiritual, thankful, and a witness for Christ.

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For many of us, how we celebrate Christmas is fixed into our calendar—family traditions, group celebrations of all sorts and special church services. But there is another level to how we celebrate Christmas, and it has as much to do with our spirit as it does with our activities—although to a certain extent the one influences the other. Tucked into three short verses of Luke 2, we catch a glimpse of someone who isn't thought of much in the Christmas story—Anna. We don't often think about Anna as part of the Christmas story. She's not included in the typical children's Christmas play. But she played a significant role in recognizing the deity of Christ and telling others of His arrival. Notice these five qualities of her life from Luke 2:36–38:

1. **Faithful**—Anna “*departed not from the temple.*” Her worship of and service to God wasn't connected to a yo-yo of emotions. It was embedded into her lifestyle.
2. **A Servant**—She “*served God.*” Service really is a choice we make consciously or unconsciously. Often, serving God is best expressed by serving the people in front of us. When we are in the midst of a busy season (such as Christmas) it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the very opportunities we have to serve. Don't make that mistake.
3. **Spiritual**—Anna's service included “*fastings and prayers night and day.*” She had a sincere love for God that was expressed and nurtured through spiritual disciplines. Don't let the busyness of this season rob you of prayer time or of the means God gives to worship Him. Worship isn't just about a touching song at church—it is cultivated through time in God's Word and prayer.
4. **Thankful**—The default response of her spirit to the goodness of God was gratitude. The moment she saw Jesus, she “*in that instant gave thanks.*” I love that Thanksgiving precedes Christmas on our calendars. But sometimes it's easy to check Thanksgiving off our list and then move on to Christmas. The best way to celebrate Christmas is with a thankful heart.
5. **A Witness**—She “*spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” One of the things I love best about Christmas is that many people are more tender to listen to the gospel at this time of year. If we're not careful, however, it's easy to miss our best opportunities to “speak of Him” because we're so busy rushing to the next event.

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