

# 25 Days of Advent

## Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

### ADVENT DAY 16: Dec. 16 – Anna, the Faithful Widow

#### Devotional

Soon after Simeon appears in the Temple to meet Jesus, we are told of an enigmatic prophetess named Anna (Greek form of Hannah) who also happened to be there to witness these events.

Anna is described as a “prophetess,” which tells us she was gifted and unafraid to declare the word of the Lord. Unlike prophets who predicted what was to come, Anna’s role was to show up at the temple and remind God’s people of God’s words of promise and hope.

Anna had planted herself in God’s presence for decades, turning the grief of a young widow into a lifelong prayer. Waiting on the Lord became her daily practice. Anna had her eyes fixed on God and was in attendance for the presentation of the Son of God because of it. God visits those who wait on Him day and night.

Anna responded to Jesus much the same way as Simeon. His sheer existence was the only evidence she needed to recognize God’s redemptive hand. Christ – a baby who couldn’t even walk – became the focal point of her praise.

Anna made a point of talking about Jesus to all who were waiting for redemption (v. 38). She didn’t view Jesus as a secret revelation exclusively for her. Anna didn’t wait to see how Christ’s life unfolded before spreading the word. She didn’t need to see how things turned out first. And the sharing itself expanded her own joy. Because of her response, many consider her the first “evangelist.” God’s comfort is intended to reach outward.

Anna is 84 years old, according to Luke, and she does not want to die; she wants to proselytize. Like the disciples who will follow her, she is driven to bear witness to what she has seen. Mary was the first to have the good news announced to her, but Anna is the first woman to understand fully and proclaim the good news.

Anna is the New Testament’s only named female prophetess. Luke gives her father’s name, Phanuel, but not her husband’s. He mentions her tribe, Asher. As such, she numbers among the few New Testament characters with tribal listings. Others include Jesus, of the house and lineage of David and the tribe of Judah (Luke 2:4; Matthew 1:1-16), Saul of Benjamin, (Philippians 3:5) and Barnabas, a Levite (Acts 4:36). That’s a pretty strong listing to be a part of, especially for a woman.

Anna was a widow for most of her life, clinging to distant promises, declaring good news to people worn out and weary – and she did this every day for decades. If she was married young as was the custom and was married for 7 years before her husband died, she would have been around 21 when she became a widow. In this story, she is 84. Luke tells us she was a constant presence at the temple. She fasted day and night longing for the Messiah.

In Anna’s story and so many others throughout Scripture, we see that the church mostly advances along through the winding paths of the ordinary and the outcasts, the misfits and otherwise mundane.

## Look Up – Connect with God

**Read:** Luke 2:36-38

**Key Verse:** “Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Luke 2:38)

**Pray:** Lord it is hard to imagine longing for something for so long and then finally seeing it happen. When we read of Anna and her commitment to you, may it give us the encouragement we need to faithfully wait for your promises. May we, like Anna, always look to you and tell others the wonderful things you’ve done in our lives.

## Look In – Family Memories

**Discuss:** Have you ever felt like a misfit? Do you doubt God could ever work through you? Talk about your insecurities and fears and look to Anna for encouragement that God surely will use anyone willing and devoted to Him.

### **Activity:**

- Advent Tree: make or select a bible and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #16, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e., mail Christmas cards). [Family Activities](#)

## Look Out – Connect with Others

Fill a shoe box with gifts through Operation Christmas Child, Angel Tree, Adopt-A-Family, or some other ministry in your community.