

# RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum



June 7, 2009  
No Retiring from God  
Luke 2:21-40

## MINISTERING HELPS

### Group Prayer

Talk a little today about group prayers. Talk about how the following verse applies to group praying...

*<sup>19</sup> When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action.*

*Matthew 18:19 (MSG)*

### Go After Absentees

How will those who are absent know that they are cared for? What will your class do this week to keep someone from falling deeper into inactivity and spiritual vulnerability? Talk about it as a group...

## REACHING HELPS

Harvest Saturday is June 20. On that day, we will meet in the Fellowship Hall to pray over the 100+ unchurched families that we will discover through VBS and then make an effort to contact them and invite them to church the next day.

We need every adult class to have at least ONE person who will be willing to be here representing their class.

Who will be the one to represent your class?

## TEACHING HELPS

We continue our sermon series called LIVING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE.

Chad will be preaching on Caleb and how as a Senior Adult he was passionate about staying in the game and being used by God.

The fastest growing segment of our population in the coming years will be senior adults. These years can be incredible years for someone to experience God's great work in their life. Today's Bible study takes a look at two more seniors; Anna and Simeon.

# No Retiring from God!

## Luke 2:21-40

An author once observed that the first pages of Luke's gospel are filled with people who were waiting: Zacharias and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna were all waiting for the fulfillment of a promise from God. But instead of passively waiting, they actively looked to the Lord each day, something the author called "present to the moment." Throughout life, many find themselves waiting on God for an answer to a prayer or the fulfillment of a promise. In those times, God often desires us to move closer to Him through spiritual disciplines so we can see Him move toward us, or "present to the moment." Simeon and Anna reflect how to move toward God while waiting on God. They inspire us to live, serve, and bless in the twilight of life.

### Mary and Joseph's Obedience Set the Stage: Luke 2:21-24

*<sup>21</sup>On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. <sup>22</sup>When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."*

Mary and Joseph obediently followed God's law after Jesus was born.

Jesus was circumcised eight days after His birth as prescribed by the law, (<sup>1</sup> *The LORD said to Moses,* <sup>2</sup> *"Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period.'* <sup>3</sup> *On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised.'* Lev. 12:1-3)

Mary and Joseph named their son Jesus as commanded by the angel. (*An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>[c]</sup> because he will save his people from their sins."* Matthew 1:20-21)

Forty days after Jesus' birth, He was presented at the Temple in Jerusalem as prescribed by the law. To see the requirements God had established for this go to Leviticus 12. Mary and Joseph offered two birds as a ceremonial offering for cleansing, which lets us know they were a poor

### Teaching Plan

#### Introduction...

You can get your BFG class talking with the following questions:

Who is one of your most interesting elderly friends?

What wisdom have you gained from your grandparents or elderly relatives?

Today people are living longer than ever in recent history. Many people hit their retirement age with 20+ years to spend living life. What is the "stereotypical" view of retirement?

The golden years can and should be an awesome time of investing in the things of God. Today we will get a picture of what that looks like in the lives of Anna and Simeon.

#### 1. Setting the stage... Luke 2:21-24

- Using the commentary, discuss why Mary and Joseph were at the Temple on this particular day. Take them to Leviticus 12 to see the actual command from the Lord in all this...
  - What does this say about Mary and Joseph's commitment to God?
  - What does this say about Mary and Joseph's financial situation?

couple in relationship to worldly wealth.

Neither Mary nor Jesus would have been considered to be in the Lord's Covenant until these ceremonies had been performed. Had Mary not gone through the days of purification according to the law, she could not have appeared in the public worship, and would have been considered disloyal from the faith of the Israel of God. If Jesus was not circumcised and publicly presented in the temple, He could not have been permitted to enter either synagogue or temple, and no Jew would have heard Him preach, or had any connection with Him. Most importantly, Jesus came to fulfill the law. Even as an infant (under the direction of Godly parents), He fulfilled the law to perfection.

## Simeon – v. 25-33

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup>Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup>"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the sight of all people, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Simeon is distinguished because of his righteousness and devotion. There can be no doubt that there were many men in Jerusalem named Simeon besides this man, but there was none who merited the attention of God so much as he in the text. Several scholars are of the opinion that he was son to the famous Hillel, one of the most celebrated doctors and philosophers which had ever appeared in the Jewish nation since the time of Moses. Simeon could have been the AB or President of the Great Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was an assembly of twenty-three judges appointed in every city in the [Land of Israel](#). The Great Sanhedrin was the [Supreme Court](#) of [ancient Israel](#). In total there were 71 members. The Great Sanhedrin was made up of a Chief/Prince/Leader called [Nasi](#) at some times this position may have been held by the High Priest, a Vice Chief Justice, and sixty-nine general members. In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the [Hall of Hewn Stones](#) in the Temple in [Jerusalem](#).

## 2. Simeon... Luke 2:25-33

- When you read the description of Simeon in v.25, what words are used to describe him? What impresses you most about him?
- Obviously, the Holy Spirit was a huge player in the life of Simeon? What does the following verse tell us about the Holy Spirit?

<sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 15:13 (NIV)**

What could we learn from Simeon about the Holy Spirit?

- The Spirit inspired Simeon to say some things about Jesus. What were they?
- Simeon waited a while between knowing he would see the Christ and actually seeing Him. What do you think his feelings were as it finally came to pass?
- What was the response of Mary and Joseph? Why do you think Simeon blessed them as well?
- The last thing Simeon said to Mary was that a sword would pierce her soul? Did that come to pass?
- What was Simeon looking for in his senior years? How is this a lesson to us about how to plan for and think about retirement?

Simeon was righteous. He steadily regulated all his conduct by the law of God and he fully consecrated himself to God. His conduct was right. The original word for righteous, signifies a person of good report, who is well received among the people, or one cautious and discreet in matters of religion. The construction of the Greek reveal that this type of person was one who considered anything presented to him carefully. Simeon was a true steward. In his deeds, thoughts and duties, Simeon performed them to the Lord. He professed and practiced the religion of his fathers and gave no cause for a friend to mourn on his account or an enemy to triumph. Simeon was above reproach.

Simeon was devout. Not only did he follow the prescribed rule of God's law, but he also had an attitude of reverence within his obedience. Righteous were Simeon's actions; devout was his attitude.

Simeon was promised by the Spirit to see the consolation of Israel, or the Messiah, before he died. Being aged, Simeon actively looked for the one who would bring salvation to His people. Finally, one day, Simeon was led by the Spirit to the Temple. This statement is of great significance. The notation, that the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, reminds one of the Old Testament prophets on whom the Holy Spirit came. Since Anna was "a prophetess" (v. 36), Simeon was probably also in the godly prophetic tradition of Israel. The special revelation from the Holy Spirit about seeing the Messiah was apparently unique and perhaps came because of Simeon's intense desire for the Promised One motivated by his righteous actions and attitudes.

Simeon praised God for His sent Messiah. On seeing the Child and picking Him up, Simeon praised God. His was the response of godly people toward the Messiah throughout the Gospel of Luke. He then uttered a psalm of praise thanking God for fulfilling His covenant, personal promises and bringing salvation to the Gentile and Jew. The Messiah is the source of salvation, as His name Jesus indicates. Simeon noted that the Messiah was to be for the Gentiles, as well as for Israel. The idea of salvation for the Gentiles is set forth many times in the Gospel of Luke.

Mary and Joseph marveled at Simeon's words. Mary and Joseph knew who their child was, but it had not occurred to them that others might know. So, when Simeon publicly (in the temple) praises God for Jesus, they marveled. Mary and Joseph may not have understood the scope of Jesus' future ministry to the world. Simeon revealed Jesus would save both men and women and Jew and Gentile. This may have been the first time they understood. Regardless, Mary and Joseph were amazed. The word Luke uses is the same word he used to describe the shepherds in v.18 after the miraculous events of the His birth.

Simeon warned Mary that she would be impacted by Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus would be a blessing to many but He would also be a stumbling block. He would be rejected, slandered and spoken against. Ultimately, Simeon foretold, Jesus would be the cause of great heartache in Mary's life.

## **Anna – Luke 2:36-38**

*<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup>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.*

Anna continued to the work Simeon started. Anna was a prophetess. It does not appear that Anna was a prophetess in the strict sense of the word, i.e. one who could foretell future events. She was rather a holy woman. From her extensive knowledge and deep experience in Divine things, she was capable of instructing others, according to the use of the word prophet in 1 Corinthians 14:3; "He that prophesies, speaks to men to edification, and to exhortation and to comfort." Anna, a holy widow, proclaimed Jesus to all who looked for

redemption in Jerusalem. Jews were in constant expectation of the promised Messiah. They were expecting redemption, such redemption was to be brought about by an atonement, or expiatory victim or ransom price. This redemption would free them from the world's oppression and cleanse them. Therefore, Anna had one thing to do, TELL OTHERS. It is probable that Anna went about from house to house, testifying the grace of God. Anna was one of the first publishers of the Gospel of Christ; and it is likely that she traveled with it from house to house through the city of Jerusalem, where she knew there were those who were expecting the salvation of God.

Like Simeon, Anna was living for God in the twilight of her life. She was a widow who lived in the Temple as a servant to the priests and the people. Luke denotes that she was favored with her husband but was only married seven years and then widowed. Since then she served in the Temple and was now eighty-four years of age. At such an age, it might be supposed she was reasonably exempted from performing the duties of religion; but her spirit of piety continued still to burn with a steady and undiminished fame. She actively worshiped God in the temple at all hours of the night and day. She was known to fast and pray often. She was devout, and living for God in every possible way she could waiting for Him to fulfill His promise to redeem Israel. When that moment came, she praised God for it.

Anna and Simeon actively searched for God in their personal life and in their public life. Was it coincidence that Simeon was called by the Spirit? Was it coincidence that Anna recognized the Messiah? Anna and Simeon were active seekers of God. In other words, they purposely extended their relationship with God. It was not by accident that God revealed the Messiah to them. It was purposed by God and them. Therefore, as they sought God personally through prayer, fasting, study and worship, He revealed Himself publicly in the temple. God made Himself clear to them as they sought Him.

### Mary and Joseph's Obedience Continued – Luke 2:39-40

*<sup>39</sup>When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.*

Mary and Joseph continued in obedience. As soon as the presentation and ceremonies in the temple had been accomplished the family returned to Galilee, as Luke states. They lived there until Herod's purpose was revealed to them by the Lord; which probably took some time to bring it to its murderous crisis, after the departure of the magi. After which, they fled into Egypt, where they continued till the death of Herod. Along this journey, Jesus grew physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Physically, emotionally and mentally we can understand how a baby grows and matures. But how does God grow spiritually? Simply this, grace means favor. As he grew as a

### 3. Anna... Luke 2:36-38

- How old was Anna and what was her story? Some folks get bitter about their difficult life experiences. What might have been some bitter experiences in Anna's life?
- Instead of becoming bitter, Anna seemed to spiritually thrive. What are the evidences that Anna had not allowed life to make her bitter?
- Anna interpreted for others around her what Jesus was all about. How are we to be like Anna?
- For both Simeon and Anna, their senior years were not so much about living life for themselves, but being connected to God and being used by Him. How should this be an inspiration to us as we grow older?

### 4. Mary and Joseph continue to obey... Luke 2:39-40

- How did Mary and Joseph follow up on the events of the day?
- What impact do you think these seniors had on this young couple? How can seniors be an encouragement to young couples? What would seniors have to do to become encouragers to younger adults? What would young adults have to do to be encouraged by seniors?

human grows He also grew in God's favor. He never stopped His relationship with the Father by coming to earth and just as Simeon and Anna sought God, so did Jesus.

### **Points for Application**

1. The senior years can be great years for passionately pursuing God. Discuss ways we need to prepare for retirement spiritually just as we would financially.
2. The Holy Spirit is our power for living abundantly at any age. How much do you know about His role in our lives? How dependent are you on Him?
3. The relationship between seniors and the younger generations can be mutually beneficial. Talk about the benefits and ways that your group could build relationships between the younger and older generations.