

A Quiet Christmas Story

Ready:

There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and was a widow for 84 years. She did not leave the temple complex, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers. At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. - Luke 2:36-38

Set

Sometimes the most quietly faithful people are the ones who see real purpose fulfilled. One person I know who serves as this kind of example to me is my college basketball teammate Rachele. From high school to college Rachele tore her ACL a total of four times. She waited through years of physical therapy and frustration before she really had a chance to be on the court in a game situation. Yet, in the last year of her career she was able to be part of an upswing in the program when our team started to win more games. During that season, she inspired us all with her perseverance, and she was able to end her basketball career displaying the gift of faithfulness and applying meaning to her wounds.

When reading the Christmas story in the beginning of the book of Luke, it's easy to breeze through verses 36 through 38 of chapter 2. The passage tells us about Anna, a woman who spent 84 years as a widow. After her husband died, she had spent her days in the temple, fasting and praying for the redemption of Jerusalem. Based on the Old Testament she knew that the redemption would be carried by a Messiah—the anointed one.

Anna had serious wounds of loss. In my opinion, I believe God used that pain to give her the strength to live a life of meaning. Anna's wounds led her to look to and rely on God's promise of redemption, and she spent the rest of her years serving Him until that redemption was fulfilled. As we read in verse 38, when Mary and Joseph walked in the temple with Jesus, Anna thanked God and spoke about Him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

It's the Christmas season again, and what better example than that of Anna to provide us with a helpful lesson. Let's reflect on the wounds of our lives and how they can be a part of what gives us courage to wait for the ultimate redemption of Jesus Christ. We live in the "not yet" of history. Jesus, God in human flesh, has lived, died and been resurrected, but we are still waiting for Him to return and make all things new. As we wait as Anna did, let's let our wounds mark our lives with faithfulness and meaning. We each have gifts—just as this quiet widow did—to truly be lights of redemption to our hurting world.

Go

1. What wounds or struggles in your life could God use to let you help bring meaning to the

- lives of your teammates, coaches and others?
2. Who can you share your struggles with in a way that helps them see Jesus?
 3. How does the promise of Christ's ultimate redemption (God's Kingdom come) affect the way you practice, compete and live your life?

Workout

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-11
- 2 Peter 1:3-11

Bible Reference:

Luke 2:36-38
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