



Week Two: Encountering Jesus in our WAITING

Luke 2: 22-40

Opening Time and Question: If you have any new people at Bible study this week, make sure you take time for introductions and making them feel welcome. Then ask the group: What is something that you really wanted that you remember waiting a long time for?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Last week, we learned a bit about the author of the book of Luke. What do you remember about him? Why are the stories and faith encounters of others so important in our own life with Christ?

Today's Passage: Today we encounter Jesus as a tiny little one, most likely just a little over one month old. We find his family at the temple- the center of Jewish faith- engaging in two rites that are deeply connected to Jewish law. The first is *purification*. Jewish law said that for 40 days after a male child is born, the mother was considered “unclean” and therefore unable to enter the temple until she went through the rites of purification. The other rite is *consecration*. Jewish law required every family to bring their first-born son to the temple to be redeemed-or “bought back”- from God through the giving of sacrifices. This was meant to keep reminding the Jewish people of the way God had freed them from slavery in Egypt for relationship with Him, as he declared, “I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel...They are to be mine” (Num 3: 13). But as Mary and Joseph bring their little one to the temple to BE redeemed, they encounter two important people who have been **waiting** almost their whole lives to announce this child as THE redeemer. Today we learn about what it means to meet Jesus in our waiting, and are reminded that we never, ever, wait alone.

CONTENT

Read Luke 2: 22-40 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things. Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. What words does Scripture use to describe Simeon? What words would you use to describe him or his interactions here based on what you read?
2. Look at all the times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in vs 25-27. What do you learn from these verses about what the Spirit does?

3. What very specific details does Luke give us about Anna? What words would you use to describe her or her interactions based on what you read?
4. What has Anna been doing during all her years of waiting?
5. Simeon and Anna both have a similar immediate response to being in the presence of Jesus? What is it?
6. What do you learn about Jesus from these two wise prophets? Who is he? What is his purpose? Who is he here for?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- Share about a time where waiting for God's movement or voice or answers to your longings or questions has been hard (maybe that season is now). How has your faith been sustained in those seasons? And/or how has your faith been challenged in those seasons of waiting?
- Anna and Simeon seem to place themselves right in the center of the community as they wait for God to reveal Jesus to them. Why do you think being in relationship and proximity to a faith community in our times of waiting might be important?
- This passage makes clear that Anna and Simeon were accompanied by the Holy Spirit- God's very presence- in their waiting. The text clearly describes this for Simeon and assumes it by calling Anna a "prophetess"- one who speaks through the power of the Spirit. During one of his last times with his disciples, Jesus assured his beloved ones that when he left them, the Spirit would fill, empower, comfort, guide, and connect them to the person of Jesus in such a way that Jesus would "be with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28: 20). How might this truth- of Jesus' presence WITH YOU in your waiting- change how you feel about these hard seasons? What does it mean to be both *with* God and *waiting* for God to act at the same time?
- In this passage, we hear the praise and testimony of two elderly believers who seem to have formed their lives around God's promises and the practices of faith. Are there any elders in your life who have been especially important in sharing their stories of faith with you or who have demonstrated what it looks like to stay faithful in waiting?
- In this story, God meets Anna and Simeon's waiting with the answers they were hoping for. But that doesn't always happen. What does it mean to have a God who keeps promises but doesn't always answer our waiting in the way we expect or want?

PRAYER: Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your "wonderings" from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

God of fulfilled promises- We thank you for Anna and Simeon- for two faithful witnesses who found the strength to wait for your promises because of the presence of the Spirit in their lives. God, what a mystery it is that while we wait for you- wait for you to heal us, wait for you to lead us, wait for you to free us, wait for you to answer us- we do that waiting wrapped in your very presence. We are with you as we wait for you. May that truth sustain us, hold us, and cause us to proclaim deep praise whenever we see you break into our seasons of waiting.

We pray this in the name of Christ- our light, our glory, our salvation, our redemption-Amen.