

Young Women Active for Christ



Christmastime

Remember Why You Celebrate

I recently read a wonderful book by David Thomas called *Remember Why You Play* (available at www.christianbook.com). Mr. Thomas is a sports reporter for a newspaper in Texas, and for one year, he followed and wrote about the football team at Faith Christian School in Grapevine, Texas.

In the style of *Facing the Giants*, the Faith Christian School Lions resolve that they will remember why they play the game. They dedicate the season to God and to each other, determining to give their best in all areas of their lives. They don't play for the glory or the trophies or the scholarships...they play because they love it and they can use the game to bring glory to God.

Through hardships, injuries, bad grades, and even a temper tantrum that causes a player to spend an important game in the locker room, the team learns that God has a plan. Their coaches teach them how to be men of honor and tell them at each practice how much God loves them. The boys in the book learn so much more than how to play the game of football. They learn how to live life for God, in good and bad times.

This Christmas, I hope you and I can learn the same lesson. And I hope you will remember why you celebrate.

WEEK ONE

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Just a few days ago, I saw a Hallmark™ commercial about a Christmas tree ornament that digitally counts down the days, hours, minutes and seconds until Christmas. The little girl on the commercial checks the ornament, then runs to tell her mom, dad, brother, sister, friends and anyone else that will listen exactly how much time is left before Christmas morning. You can see the excitement in her eyes and hear it in her voice as she joyfully spreads the news about how much closer she is to getting to open the gifts under the tree.

This time of year, most of us feel the same childlike wonder and excitement of the little girl in the commercial. We all anticipate Christmas morning and the good things that come with it.

Most of us know the Christmas story by heart: An angel comes to Mary and tells her that she will have a baby that is God's Son. Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem and can't find a place to stay, so they have to sleep in a barn. Jesus is born that night, wrapped in pieces of cloth and laid in a manger.

When my family and I read the story on Christmas morning, we usually stop at Luke 2:14 where the angels say “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” But, if you read the rest of the Luke 2, you will find a few verses (36-38) about a very special woman who displayed amazing faith. Her name is Anna.

Just as we look forward to Christmas, Anna was eagerly waiting for her Savior to come. She didn't know how many days or hours it would take for Him to arrive, but she patiently anticipated the day she would get to meet Him.

While she was waiting, Anna spent her time praising and worshiping God. She lived at the temple and did God's work, teaching the young women about the Scriptures. The way Anna chose to live her life showed others that she had faith in God's promise to send a Savior. I like to think that Anna told people about a coming Savior with the same level of excitement and joy as the little girl in the Hallmark™ commercial, counting down the days to Christmas.

YWAC in Action: How do you count down the days until Christmas? This year, make an Advent chain out of construction paper slips. On each link of the chain, write down an activity (like memorizing a Bible verse, helping an older person decorate his or her home for Christmas, volunteering to babysit for a couple at church, etc.) that you can do to remember the real reason for the Christmas season—Jesus! Once you make your chain, tear off one link a day until Christmas and do the activity written on that link.

WEEK TWO

“For I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

What kind of things do you dream about? I hope you have big dreams for your future. God wants us to plan and dream and have goals. I'm sure that Anna had big dreams for herself when she was your age.

Anna probably wasn't much older than you when she got married. I'm sure she dreamed about having a happy marriage and a big family. But after only seven years of marriage, Anna's husband died and Anna was left all alone. Her dreams went up in smoke.

Have you ever had something that you wanted to happen not come true? Maybe you wanted to make the basketball team and didn't. Or maybe you really wanted to be friends with one of the girls in your class, but she didn't want to be friends with you. We all know what it's like for something to go all wrong and leave us feeling disappointed.

I'm sure that Anna felt that way when her husband died. But instead of becoming bitter, Anna gave her life to God. She trusted in His plan, even though it might not have made sense to her.

In her book, *God Called a Girl*, Shannon Kubiak says that we all face unfulfilled expectations—“not because God [is] not faithful, but because [we were] looking for God to do something different.” When your plans don't work out, it's not because God doesn't love you and it's not because God is punishing you. Sometimes, our plans and dreams just don't come true because God has something better for us.

YWAC in Action: Use some pretty scrapbooking paper to make bookmarks for your friends with Jeremiah 29:11 and Psalm 37:4-5 written on one side and your friends' names on the other. Use the bookmarks as tags on your friends' Christmas presents. Then, they can use them in their Bibles to remember that God has great plans for them. (Make one for yourself, too, and try to memorize those verses by the end of the month.)

WEEK THREE

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh from the Father...” (James 1:17a).

What are you asking for this Christmas?

If you got the things on your Christmas wish list, how long would it take you to call all your friends and tell them about what you got?

When Anna saw Jesus' face on that first Christmas, she was so excited. She started shouting out to everyone that her Savior had come. People probably thought she was crazy, but she didn't care. She had good news, and she had to share it. Anna got the best gift that anyone could ever get that first Christmas, and it's a gift that is still available for anyone that wants it. Who can you share the gift of Jesus with this Christmas?

YWAC in Action: If you have time at your YWAC group meeting, have each girl write down one thing she wants this year on a slip of paper. Place all the slips into a bowl. Then, just for fun, pull them out one at a time and try to guess who asked for each thing.

After the game, take some time to pray for the missionaries who are working every day to fulfill the Great Commission and to share the gift of Jesus with others. Pick a few missionary families and send them some Christmas cards from your group.

WEEK FOUR

“We are his mirrors, you know. Reduce the human job description down to one phrase, and this is it: Reflect God's glory.”

—Max Lucado in *It's Not About Me: Live Like You Mean It (Teen Edition)*

Anna had a very short spotlight in the Bible—only three verses. Her testimony is short and sweet. She's overlooked and left out a lot. But I don't think Anna would mind one bit.

It's hard for us to understand that life is not all about us. If you're like I am, then you enjoy being the center of attention and love it when all eyes are on you. But my job on this earth is not to bring glory to myself. My job is to bring glory to God and point others to Him.

Think about the lights on a Christmas tree. You don't look at them and think about how beautiful each individual light is. Instead, you see all the lights together and notice the beauty of the tree.

Anna's faith allowed God's beauty to shine through her. Do you let Him shine through you?

YWAC in Action: Discuss this question. Since God is able to do anything He wants, why do you think He chooses to work through us?



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