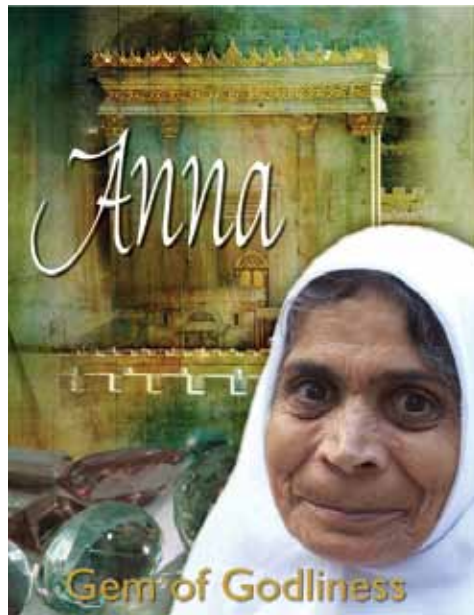


Womanhood
HIDDEN JEWELS
CHARACTER STUDIES OF SOME LESSER KNOWN WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
DECEMBER 2010



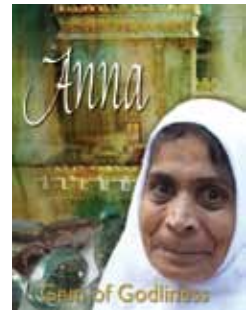
ANNA: GEM OF GODLINESS

Study by
Christina Hopper
Northport, Alabama

Guide by
Carolyn Michael
Madison, Alabama

Gem of Godliness

ANNA



FOCUS: Like Anna, we should celebrate the birth of Christ and anticipate His coming.

FOOTPRINT: Luke 2:36-38

FACETS: This character study includes four key verses (one for each section of the study.) **VERSE ONE:** “But without faith is it 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).

VERSE TWO: “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands” (PSALM 138:8).

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

VERSE FOUR: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse na-tion, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (PHILIPPIANS 2:15).

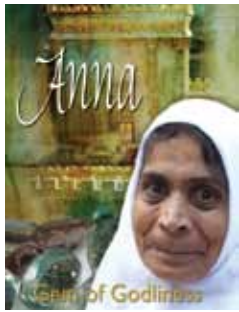
FORTUNE: “True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it”—William Penn.

Have you ever been to a yard sale, estate auction or some type of rummage sale and found a piece of jewelry or another item that turned out to be the “real thing”? Recently, an article in our local paper told of a brother and sister in London who found a decorative Chinese vase in a dusty attic that ended up selling at auction for \$69.5 million dollars (even higher with the taxes and fees). This seems ridiculous to the normal person, but probably not to the buyer from mainland China. I’m sure he was thrilled to acquire the vase which bore an imperial seal and was dated from the period of the emperor Qianlong, who reigned from 1735 to 1796. On the popular television program, “Antiques Roadshow,” experts go to different cities and appraise objects brought in for their inspection. They have discovered rare treasures hidden among the ordinary items. Everyone wants to find something worth a fortune. Few actually hold possession of the big buck treasures. It’s interesting to me, though, that often, when the customers are told how much their ring, vase, painting, chair or whatever is worth, they hardly bat an eye and say, “Well, we plan to keep it.” So, does it really matter that they know how much it’s worth? It’s been hidden or has just lain around for a long time, and its value is still the same whether or not the owners know the dollar amount. The worth, however, is in knowing it is truly a treasure.

Anna is one of those rare treasures or gems, so obscure and hidden, that we hardly notice her in the Bible. Yet, her life is truly unique in ways that cause us to take a closer look. No one had taken notice of her life for a very long time. However, when God was ready for her debut, He presented her with such style and dignity that her life and her message would instantly take on a celebratory status for proclaiming the Messiah’s arrival.

What a revelation that must have been to all who heard her. The fortune of all times had come to her. She had been seeking it, and now she had it. How blessed she was.

The Bible study this month is a chance for personal reflection and introspection. It offers questions for thought provoking awareness of the value in our own lives. There are nuggets of wisdom and jewels of encouragement for the taking. You may need to put on your excavating gear and grab a flashlight as you dig deep into the word of God this month. The rewards will be worth all your efforts.



ANNA ANTICIPATED HIS COMING

- ✧ Read this week's key verse together. *"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).
- ✧ Read the paragraph on p. 30 and go over the questions and answers for Fittings: Week One, pp. 30-31 together.
- ✧ Go back to question one. Why do you think Anna stayed at the temple all the time? *(She was dedicated to taking care of the Lord's business and the temple was her home, also.)*
- ✧ Do you know any older widows who are still active in the Lord's work?
- ✧ Describe their attitudes and willingness to serve God.
- ✧ Anna is described as a prophetess. Look up these prophetesses: Miriam—Exodus 15:20; Deborah—Judges 4:4; Huldah—2 Kings 22:14; Daughters of Phillip—Acts 21:8-9.
- ✧ What did a prophetess do? (Spoke by divine inspiration or as an interpreter through whom the will of God is expressed.)
- ✧ Who else in Luke 2 was waiting for the Messiah to come? *(Simeon—Luke 2:25)*
- ✧ What had been promised Simeon? *(That he would not die before he had seen the Lord—Luke 2:26.)*
- ✧ Did he immediately know that the child was the Christ Child? *(Since Simeon was in tune with the Holy Spirit, he knew that it was the day he would see the Messiah—Luke 2:27-28.)*
- ✧ Did Simeon believe Jesus would bring salvation for only Jews? *(No, he recognized that salvation had come for all people—Jews and Gentiles.)*
- ✧ This concept was first introduced by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:2; 42:6; 49:6 and 60:1-3.
- ✧ Who proclaimed the message first after the birth of Jesus? *(The angels to the shepherds—Luke 2:10)*
- ✧ Did Anna, like Simeon, recognize that the Messiah had truly come? *(Yes, she proclaimed the coming "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."—Luke 2:38)*
- ✧ What does Jesus' coming offer? *(Hope, light and salvation to all people—Luke 2:29-32)*
- ✧ Do you anticipate the coming of our Lord?
- ✧ Do we know when Jesus will return?
- ✧ Because we don't know the exact date, should that keep us from being prepared?
- ✧ Make an entry in your journal of women in your life who have influenced you or ones you have influenced.
- ✧ Close in prayer and ask God for a desire to live a righteous and holy life.

ANNA ACCEPTED HIS BLESSINGS

- ✧ Read the key verse together. *"The Lord will perfect that which concerned me: thy mercy, O Lord endureth forever: forsake not the works of thine own hands"* (Psalm 138:8).
- ✧ Go over the answers for Fittings: Week Two questions 1 and 2 (p. 32) together.
- ✧ Has God blessed you? *(I'd be really surprised if anyone says no. God blesses everyone—Matthew 5:45; Psalm 68:19; Psalm 115:13.)*
- ✧ Leader, read Psalm 107 having the group read aloud verses 8, 15, 21 and 31 responsively.
- ✧ What does verse 43 of Psalm 107 say we will understand? *(Lovingkindness of the Lord)*
- ✧ Anna received the greatest blessing of her life when she saw Jesus. Share how you think she reacted after giving thanks.
- ✧ Read Romans 12:11-12. We understand that Anna didn't just *know* God was first in her life, but she *showed* it by her actions.
- ✧ What does your life reveal?

❖ What did Anna's life reveal about her relationship to God?

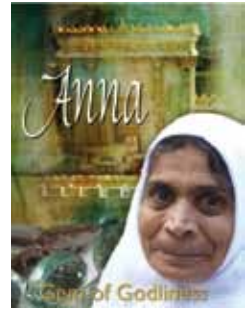
- (1) She had a life that put God first;
- (2) She had a devoted life;
- (3) She had a life that honored Him above all else;
- (4) She had a heart completely surrendered to God.

❖ From where did Anna come? (*The tribe of Aser (Asher), which probably made her a Galilean—Luke 2:36. When she married, she moved to Jerusalem and did not return to her family after the death of her husband.*)

❖ Since she was alone for so many years, who or what kept her from being lonely? (*Other women in the temple, visitors, but mostly her work for the Lord.*)

❖ Make a list in your journal of some of your greatest blessings—besides salvation. (My first word is husband, then children, grandchild, parents and on and on.) This may take a while.

❖ Close in prayer and thank God for His blessings in your life.



ANNA ANNOUNCED HIS ARRIVAL

❖ Go over the questions and answers for Fittings: Week Three, pp. 32-33.

❖ Question 2 concerns the key verse, James 1:17a: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father..." Do you really believe God gives only perfect gifts?

❖ If not, would He give bad gifts? (*Read Matthew 7:9-11. God gives good things.*)

❖ How do you think Anna announced the arrival of the Messiah? (*Shouted, sent out announcements, cried, told everyone she came in contact with?*)

❖ How do you announce the arrival of Jesus in your life? (*Change habits, baptism, church attendance, tell others, tithing?*)

❖ Is it important to attend church? (*Yes.*) Why? (*For teaching, for guidance, to hear the Word and as examples to others—Isaiah 2:3*)

❖ Who went to the Temple in these verses? (*John 7:14—Christ; Acts 3:1—Peter and John*)

❖ What was characteristic of the ones who believed in Acts 2:46? (*Unity*)

❖ How does Acts 2:44 serve as a guide? (*Those who believed were together and had all things common.*)

❖ Why were the disciples continually in the Temple? (*They had seen the Lord—Luke 24:51-53.*)

❖ Can you say that the church is much to many?

❖ Make a list in your journal of some of the things the church means both now and in Anna's day. Do this activity together.

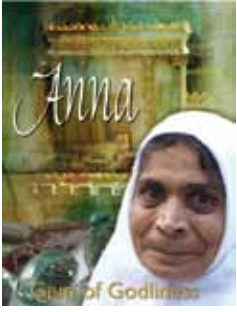
- (1) Comfort in old age—Luke 2:36-37
- (2) Example of Christ—Luke 4:16;18:10
- (3) Blessings given—Malachi 3:10
- (4) Refuge in times of trouble—Isaiah 37:1
- (5) Place of instruction—Micah 4:2.

If you think of others, share these with the group. Include the Scriptures.

❖ Close in prayer. Give thanks and praise to God for your church.

ANNA ALLOWED HIM TO SHINE THROUGH HER

❖ Read the Scripture verse together: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (*Philippians 2:15*).



- ✧ Go over all the questions and answers for Fittings: Week Four on p. 33.
- ✧ Jesus spoke here of a “crooked and perverse nation”. Was He speaking of our country? (*I believe He meant anywhere that sin abounds—any country, any group of people, anyone who wasn’t doing the things of God.*)
- ✧ How does He want us to live? (*Blameless, harmless [not hurting anyone or doing harm to ourselves], above reproach*)
- ✧ What are we to be for the world around us? (*Lights or witnesses in the dark world and to a lost generation—Matthew 5:14; Ephesians 5:8*)
- ✧ What are some verses that help us shine? (*1 John 1:7; Matthew 5:16; Philippians 4:8; Titus 2:12; Proverbs 22:1*)
- ✧ Are you thankful God called you out of the darkness? (*1 Peter 2:9*)
- ✧ Anna was an 84-year-old, godly woman whose life had power and meaning. Did her life end well?
- ✧ Do you want your life to end well? What do you want to have accomplished?
- ✧ There were probably people who thought Anna was wasting her time praying and staying all the time in the Temple. Do you spend very much time in prayer, or do you consider it a waste of time?
- ✧ What does 1 Thessalonians 5:17 exhort us to do? (*Pray without ceasing.*)
- ✧ How did Anna’s expectations of the Messiah keep her strong and faithful? (*She knew her hope was in the right place—Titus 2:13.*)
- ✧ Do we have these same expectations today? (*Psalms 62:5-8; Philippians 1:20*)
- ✧ Are you looking for that blessed hope?
- ✧ Write in your journal of ways you can “shine” and be an example of hope to those around you.
- ✧ Pray, asking God to let you live a meaningful life of praise and glory to Him.

In Closing

Anna saw Jesus face to face. Do you long to see Jesus face to face? Think about that for just a minute. It’s almost too hard to comprehend with our cluttered, busy minds. Yet, one day if we have accepted Him as Lord and Savior, we will stand before Him. That will be a glorious day when the redeemed are gathered together. Anna reflected His glory. Do you reflect God’s glory, or does the image get cloudy at times? I’m sure we all have our moments when the reflection others see isn’t the clearest picture of Jesus. But we can use the glass cleaner of God’s Word and bring back the shine. This Christmas, try to remember that Simeon and Anna actually saw the Christ Child, got to hold Him, and then spent the remainder of their lives telling others about Him. They were shining their lights around them. Shouldn’t we do the same?