



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 6

On New Year's Eve, Angela continued in our study of Luke by sharing the story of the presentation of Jesus at the temple and the encounter with Simeon and Anna. As you read about their faithfulness, consider how you will make yourself available to God this year. Maybe you will be used to share Jesus with others.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 2.21-24 (NIV)

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived. When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),²⁴ 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."

- Genesis 17.12 describes the law under which Jesus was circumcised. Notice how Joseph and Mary were not first concerned with obedience to Rome, but rather obedience to God and God's Law. On the 8th day, he was circumcised as a sign of belonging to God's covenant people.

The next act of obedience took place 33 days later when Jesus was carried to Jerusalem to be presented to God at the temple. According to the Law, the first born male was to be presented (*consecrated* or *set aside*) to God. At the same time, Mary participated in the purification rites which would declare her *clean* after childbirth. They made an offering to God in the form of two birds—an offering that indicated that they were too poor to afford a lamb. Since we know Jesus as the Lamb of God, it might be fitting that only one lamb was offered up that day.

All of these acts reveal that Mary and Joseph took their covenantal relationship with God very seriously. **Although we are no longer commanded to offer animal sacrifices, is there evidence that you are offering yourself as a living sacrifice (Romans 12.1) in response to the faithfulness of God?**

- *God I see the obedience of Mary and Joseph under difficult circumstances. I want to respond to the challenges in the world around me with obedience to you. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 2.25-32

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 on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

- Simeon had been promised by God that he would see the Messiah before he died. He had held tightly to that promise for some time, and this was the moment that he had been waiting for. His decision to go to the temple that day was not coincidence. The Spirit of God told him to go. Can you imagine the ramped-up anticipation he felt that day? This was it! His whole life had been leading up to this moment, and he was content to be dismissed. **Is there something you are so eagerly looking forward to that, were it to happen, you think your life would be complete?**
- *God, I have seen the fulfillment of your promises in Jesus. And yet I find myself still looking for your salvation, light, and glory in my time. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 2.33-35

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ 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, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

- Mary and Joseph marveled at what was said about Jesus. The same word used to describe their response (marvel) was used to describe the response of those who heard the shepherd's words at the manger (Luke 2.18). Everytime someone declared or confirmed the identity of Jesus, people marveled. **What opportunities do you have to share what you believe about Jesus? Have you ever seen someone marvel at Jesus?**
- *Jesus, would you remind me of who you are? Sometimes I lose focus. I want to have a heart that marvels at you. Amen.*

THURSDAY: LUKE 2.36-38

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

- What had this 84 year-old widow seen in all of her years? She had lived through hope and loss in her own life. And she had seen the coming and going of so many people through the temple courts as she worshiped, fasted and prayed day-in and day-out for what must have been nearly 60 years. Seeing Jesus, she knew that he was the messiah. She shared with anyone who had also been looking for the redemption of God's story and God's people. **How did she recognize Jesus? How did she recognize those who, like her, were longing for a savior? Can you imagine? 60 years of dedication in order to become a significant footnote in the story of God's rescue of His people! Oh how we long for that level of longing.**
- *God, we are living in challenging and uncertain times. As much as I long for the outcomes I think are best, I long for You even more. May I grow in dedication to worship, fasting, and prayer so that I will be able to recognize you when you enter in and bring true restoration of this broken world. Amen.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 2.39-40

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

- Mary and Joseph had continued to be faithful to the Law. They did what they did in response to the prompting of a messenger from God. And then they got the pleasure of watching the baby grow and become strong. They witnessed how he was filled with wisdom and grace from God. Every child we hold and raise is a child filled with promise, and each child in our care is a responsibility. How much more did Mary and Joseph feel all of that in the years in between Jesus' birth and ministry? Most people say a child grows slowly yet in the blink of an eye is grown. **What experience do you have of watching and waiting for someone to live into their promise and potential?**
- *God, thank you for providing Jesus with a place to grow and become strong. May I also be filled with your wisdom and grace so that I might point to your Son Jesus. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ISAIAH 8.14-15

*He will be a holy place;
for both Israel and Judah he will be
a stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.
And for the people of Jerusalem he will be
a trap and a snare.*

¹⁵*Many of them will stumble;
they will fall and be broken,
they will be snared and captured."*

- In Wednesday's reading, we read Simeon's words to Mary, "*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against.*" These words sound harsh in the context of recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. But as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, the holy Messiah of God will become a stumbling block for those who turn away from God. The light shines in the darkness and many will stumble. Simeon didn't mince words with Mary. This gift is for the whole world, but not all will embrace it. **Our work as followers of Jesus is to keep one another from stumbling and to light the paths of others with the light of Christ. Who keeps you from stumbling? How can you shine the light of Jesus on the paths of others?**
- *God, more than anything, I want to reflect the light of Jesus into this world you have created. Please keep me from stumbling and cover me with your grace. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Incorporate this great resource from 24/7 Prayer and Lectio365 to set your heart towards the things of God in the new year. You may choose to discuss with your group.

[Pray through your dreams for the year ahead.](#)