



Scriptures: Luke 2:36-38; Matthew 6:5-8, 16-18

Have you ever noticed that when someone has a crush on a person, they talk about them constantly? It's like everything that they say or any story that they tell has a way of wandering back towards the object of their affection.

Or maybe someone is obsessed with something: a sport, a new band, this great new online shop that popped up with the best clothes. And they cannot tell you enough about their new discovery.

I wish I felt the same pull to talk to you about my faith in God that I feel about telling you where I think the best tacos in town are found.

When we adore something, we feel the almost compulsive need to share about it.

When we talk about worship, what are some words that come into your mind? [\[Wait for responses.\]](#) Most of the time, people associate worship with music. In reality, worship is expressing adoration and love for God. We love God way more than a band or the best tacos in town. Worship is a way of communicating that adoration to Him and for Him.

Adoration/worship can happen in countless ways besides singing with our voices. Sometimes, the word 'worship' is hijacked by its connection to song. You can worship through a song, but there are seriously countless other ways that you can worship God.

There is one part of the Christmas story that will sneak right by you unless you are paying attention. It's the story of Anna. Let's look at Luke chapter 2:

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary

and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

— Luke 2:36-38 (NLT)

So, Anna had been married for seven years before her husband died. Back in this time, ladies would get married really young. Sometimes they would be married at thirteen or fourteen years old. We do not know how old Anna was when she was married, but if she had been 14 that would mean that her husband had died when she was 21 years old and she had been single ever since then. Regardless of her age when she was married, she was now 84 and we can assume she had been alone for a very long time.

Being single in that time was not ideal. We do not know why Anna never remarried but we can assume that she had a challenging life alone. Women did not have much of an opportunity for personal independence in that day. But what we may view as a challenge, it appears that Anna viewed as an opportunity.

We read:

She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer.

— Luke 2:37b (NLT)

She spent her days in the temple fasting and praying. That was how she worshipped God. We have those same spiritual disciplines available to us today as well. Let's dig a little deeper and see how fasting and prayer are ways that we can worship God.

1. Fasting

[Leader Note: Share a story about giving something up. You can share my story below if you'd like.]

The 40 days of the before Easter is referred to as Lent. During Lent, many people give up something as a reminder of all that Jesus sacrificed for us. That's in essence what fasting is — it's giving up something for a time to help you focus on God.

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