

## Small Group Guide: Unsolicited Wisdom

Based on Luke 2:21-38



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### Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

Begin your group time by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open your hearts to truth, even when it's difficult to hear.

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### Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

**Question:** Share about a time when someone gave you unsolicited advice that you didn't want to hear at the time, but later realized was exactly what you needed. How did that advice impact your life?

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### Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Faith leads to action** - Mary and Joseph believed, received Christ, then lived out their duties faithfully
2. **Good news isn't always easy** - Simeon shared both the joy and the coming sorrow with Mary
3. **Proximity to God brings clarity** - Simeon had Holy Spirit insight that many religious leaders lacked
4. **Encountering Jesus changes priorities** - Anna shifted from temple rituals to telling others about the Messiah

5. **Discipleship means speaking truth, not just comfort** - We should care more about what people need to hear than what they want to hear
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## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text (15-20 minutes)

1. **Read Luke 2:21-38 together.** What stands out to you most about Simeon's response to seeing baby Jesus?
2. Why do you think Simeon could see so clearly who Jesus was when the religious leaders of his day couldn't? What does this teach us about spiritual insight?
3. Simeon tells Mary that "a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (v. 35). Why was it important for Mary to hear this difficult truth in the midst of celebrating Jesus' birth?
4. How did Anna's priorities change after encountering Jesus? What does this reveal about authentic faith?

### Personal Reflection (15-20 minutes)

5. The sermon distinguished between **justification** (being saved by faith) and **sanctification** (growing closer to God through faithful living). Where do you see yourself in this journey? Are you resting only in justification, or are you actively pursuing sanctification?
6. Simeon had the Holy Spirit *before* Pentecost, when the Spirit wasn't available to everyone. We live *after* Pentecost with full access to the Holy Spirit. Yet the sermon asks: "Do we see as clearly as Simeon?"
  - How would you honestly answer this question?
  - What might be hindering your spiritual clarity?
7. Think about your own life: Are you more focused on religious rituals and traditions, or on fulfilling Christ's command to make disciples? What would need to change for you to be more like Anna?
8. The sermon states: "We never warn people about the hard parts."
  - When have you avoided telling someone a difficult truth because you wanted to keep things positive?

- How can we balance celebrating good news with preparing people for challenges?

### **Going Deeper (10-15 minutes)**

9. The sermon mentions that Mary and Joseph brought the "poor person's sacrifice" to the temple. Jesus, the King of Kings, was born into poverty. What does this teach us about God's values versus the world's values?
  10. Simeon said Jesus would be "a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles" (v. 32). This was a radical statement in first-century Israel. What "radical truths" about Jesus might we be missing or avoiding in our own cultural context?
  11. The teacher Mr. Stoker told the pastor: "At some point, you're going to run into something that can slam you down." How does preparing for spiritual hardship actually strengthen our faith rather than weaken it?
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### **Practical Application (15-20 minutes)**

#### **Individual Commitments**

**Choose 1-2 of the following to focus on this week:**

#### **1. Develop Spiritual Clarity**

- Commit to daily time seeking God's presence (prayer, Scripture, silence)
- Ask God specifically: "What am I missing? What truth do I need to see more clearly?"
- Journal about what God reveals to you

#### **2. Speak Truth in Love**

- Identify one person in your life who needs to hear a difficult truth
- Pray for wisdom and courage to share it appropriately
- Follow Simeon's model: balance hard truth with good news

#### **3. Shift from Ritual to Mission**

- Evaluate your spiritual activities: Are they drawing you closer to God or just making you feel religious?
- Like Anna, identify one way you can move from "temple time" to "telling time"

- Share Jesus with at least one person this week

#### 4. Prepare for Hardship

- Reflect on areas where you've been "skating by" on natural ability or circumstances
- Identify one spiritual discipline you can develop to build perseverance
- Find an accountability partner to help you stay committed

#### Group Challenge

**Simeon's Example:** As a group, commit to being people who speak truth—not just comfort—to one another. Establish a covenant that you will:

- Give each other permission to ask hard questions
- Receive correction with humility
- Balance encouragement with honest challenge
- Pursue clarity from the Holy Spirit together

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#### Prayer Focus (10-15 minutes)

Break into pairs or smaller groups and pray for:

1. **Spiritual clarity** - That God would give us Simeon-like insight into who Jesus is and what He's calling us to do
2. **Courage to speak truth** - For wisdom to know when and how to share difficult truths with others
3. **Priority alignment** - That we would value making disciples above maintaining comfortable traditions
4. **Preparation for hardship** - For strength to persevere when following Jesus becomes difficult
5. **Specific needs** - Share and pray for personal struggles or challenges group members are facing

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#### Closing Thought

*"Simeon was the one person in the midst of all of the joy and all of the ritual and all of the tradition to step outside of it and say, 'I know this is good, but it's not going to be easy. It's going to be dark. There are going to be moments that are going to tear your heart apart.' But he kept the good news and the hard news all in the same breath."*

**This Week's Challenge:** Be a Simeon to someone—share both the goodness of following Jesus AND the reality that it won't always be easy.

## 5-Day Devotional: Faithful Encounters with Christ



### Day 1: Seeing Beyond the Joy

**Reading:** Luke 2:21-35

**Devotional:**

Simeon's encounter with the infant Jesus reveals a profound truth: following Christ brings both immeasurable joy and inevitable suffering. While others celebrated the ceremony, Simeon spoke the difficult truth Mary needed to hear—a sword would pierce her soul. True discipleship requires us to embrace the whole truth, not just the comfortable parts. Like Simeon, we must develop such intimacy with the Holy Spirit that we see clearly even when others miss what God is doing. Today, ask yourself: Am I seeking deeper relationship with God that brings clarity? Am I willing to speak truth in love, even when it's difficult? Faithfulness means preparing others for both the mountaintops and valleys of following Jesus.

## **Day 2: Faith That Works**

**Reading:** James 2:14-26

### **Devotional:**

Mary and Joseph's journey to the temple demonstrates that genuine faith produces faithful action. They believed the angel's message, received Christ, then fulfilled their duties according to God's law. This is the rhythm of authentic Christianity—justification by faith followed by sanctification through obedience. We cannot earn salvation through works, yet true faith inevitably produces works. Like Joseph and Mary bringing their humble offering of two birds, our obedience may seem small or inadequate, but it matters deeply to God. What duties has God called you to fulfill? Are you skating through life on natural gifts, or are you putting in the work that prepares you for greater challenges? Faith without corresponding action remains incomplete.

## **Day 3: The Holy Spirit's Clarity**

**Reading:** John 16:5-15

### **Devotional:**

Simeon possessed something remarkable: Holy Spirit clarity before Pentecost. His faithful relationship with God allowed him to recognize the Messiah when religious experts would later miss Him entirely. Today, we live with full access to the Holy Spirit, yet often see less clearly than Simeon did. Why? Perhaps we've allowed tradition, busyness, or comfort to drown out His voice. The Spirit reveals truth, convicts of sin, and guides into all righteousness—but only to those who cultivate intimacy with God through prayer, Scripture, and obedience. Simeon waited faithfully, seeking daily, and didn't miss his moment. Are you positioned to recognize what God is doing in your life? Clarity comes through consecration.

#### **Day 4: When Priorities Shift**

**Reading:** Matthew 28:16-20

#### **Devotional:**

Anna spent 84 years as a widow, faithfully serving at the temple through prayer and fasting. Yet one encounter with Jesus completely reordered her priorities. She left the temple—her place of comfort and routine—to tell everyone about the Messiah. True encounter with Christ always results in mission. Our traditions, rituals, and religious activities are good, but they must never supersede Jesus' command to make disciples. How much of your spiritual life revolves around personal comfort versus kingdom advancement? Anna teaches us that authentic faith eventually moves from the sanctuary to the streets. The world needs to hear about Jesus more than we need to maintain our comfortable routines. Let Christ redirect your priorities today.

#### **Day 5: Unsolicited Grace**

**Reading:** Proverbs 27:5-6, 17

#### **Devotional:**

Mary and Joseph never asked for Simeon's prophecy or Anna's testimony, yet these unsolicited encounters shaped their understanding of Jesus' mission. Sometimes God's greatest gifts come through unexpected channels—a teacher's challenge, a friend's rebuke, or a stranger's insight. We naturally prefer affirmation over correction, celebration over warning, but spiritual growth requires both. Like Mr. Stoker's arm-wrestling lesson, the most valuable advice often comes when we least want it. Are you open to receiving truth from unexpected sources? Can you distinguish between harmful criticism and Holy Spirit conviction delivered through others? Simeon's willingness to speak difficult truth was an act of love. Seek wisdom from faithful voices, even when their words pierce your comfort.

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*As you conclude this devotional journey, remember that faithful living means embracing the whole truth of following Christ—the joy and the suffering, the celebration and the cross. Like Simeon and Anna, may you see clearly, speak truthfully, and prioritize Christ's mission above all else.*