



RUTH

RUTH

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The book of Ruth beautifully reveals that entrance into the coming Kingdom of God is not determined by birth, bloodline, or background, but by a life shaped by faith-filled obedience to the will of God. Ruth tells a story of redemption—of emptiness giving way to fullness, bitterness transformed into joy. It is a powerful witness to the beauty of selfless, covenant love. In meeting us in our deepest longings, the story of Ruth ultimately points us beyond itself to the Redeemer who alone can restore what has been lost and make us whole again.



WEEK ONE

RUTH 1

¹ In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

² The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. ³ Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶ When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. ⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. ⁹ May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." ¹¹ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹² Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my

daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!" ¹⁴ At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

¹⁹ So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" ²⁰ "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹ I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." ²² So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

How do you feel about commitment? What comes to mind when you hear the word?

Maybe you think about high school athletes committing to a college to play sports. These days, those commitments seem fleeting at best. They can transfer to another school at almost any time. Maybe the word “commitment” has lost its meaning a little bit.

Maybe you think of a relational commitment, like marriage. While commitment has been growing in first marriages, the percentage of marriages that end in divorce is still between 40 and 50 percent.

What about commitment to calling? If you think about that, does your mind go to Mother Teresa? She felt called to life as a missionary, specifically in the area of Bengal. She spent almost her entire adult life living and ministering in Calcutta. She dedicated more than 50 years of service to the poor and forgotten in the slums of this huge city.

She got “famous” but stayed committed to what she believed God had called her to do. What was she called to? In her own words, Mother Theresa was called to “care for the the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone.”

What God was asking her to do, was unique to her. It isn't everyone's calling. What she was about isn't for everyone. We can't compare our calling to anyone else's, but we can wonder if we are as committed.

Can you name all the commitments you currently have? What things are you committed to? Have you ever gone through a process of prioritizing your commitments?

You are committed to Netflix, but that commitment is nothing like your commitment to your spouse. There are levels to this.

This story in Ruth is one of commitment. Ruth was from Moab. Moab was historically an enemy of Israel. Moabites were hated for how they treated the people of God while they were lost in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.

Moab wouldn't let Israel go through their territory on the way to the Promised Land, and because of that, they weren't well thought of. Naomi's husband, Elimelek, chose to go to Moab to get relief from a famine in Israel. During the time of the Judges when Naomi and Elimelek lived, the Israelites were punished when they strayed from God, which was often.

No one in Israel was a big fan of Moab, but God used them to show the depth of His grace and mercy. Ruth is viewed favorably in this book. The Old Testament is a Jewish book, and it contains this small book named after a Moabite woman. There is seemingly no place for Ruth in the Old Testament, but God is celebrating her commitment to Naomi and, by extension, her commitment to Him.

Ruth was a "foreigner," but that didn't stop her from worshiping the one true God, nor did it stop God from accepting her worship. It's remarkable that God, even this long before Jesus, was already expanding His people beyond the Israelites.



QUESTIONS

Think about something you were committed to in the past. Why were you so committed? What made that commitment attractive?

Is there an area where God may be inviting you into deeper commitment—to Him or to others?



WEEK TWO

RUTH 2

¹ Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." ³ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. ⁴ Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" "The Lord bless you!" they answered. ⁵ Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?" ⁶ The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi." ⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

⁸ So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. ⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." ¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" ¹¹ Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹² May the Lord repay you for what you have done.

May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”¹³ “May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.”

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.” When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.¹⁵ As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her.”¹⁶ Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”¹⁷ So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.¹⁸ She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.¹⁹ Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!” Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said.²⁰ “The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.”²¹ Then Ruth the Moabite said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’”²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”²³ So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

What is the kindest act you have ever been associated with?

This time of year, a church might give money to their members to spend on paying for someone else's groceries. The idea is to walk through the grocery store, look for a large family or someone with a cart full of groceries, and follow them to the cash register to pay for it all.

Another option could be to go to the laundromat and pay for people's laundry. Go talk with the schools and see if there are any lunch accounts that are severely delinquent. Talk with the principals to see if there are any kids coming to school without coats, boots, gloves and hats and buy some of those things to donate to the school.

Not all acts of kindness have to do with money. Maybe you have a neighbor you can mow or move snow for. Maybe you could share a meal with you a neighbor, take them some of your leftovers, or make some freezer meals ahead for them.

Maybe you have friends who could use a few hour break without kids at the house or friends who would allow you to help them clean their house. Maybe you have a neighbor who needs a ride to a doctor's appointment.

In the movie *Pay It Forward*, the concept is to do a favor for someone and ask them to pay it forward instead of paying you back. Do three kind things for people that they can't do for themselves. In turn, each of them will do three kind things and so on and so forth. The idea is that acts of kindness can, in reality, change the world.

Kindness was built into the Law in ancient Israel.

⁹ 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.' (Leviticus 19:9-10)

This law tells us a lot about God. He is for all people, and He doesn't forsake anyone. He created a rule that would help the displaced and those who were less fortunate. He wanted to take care of those who struggled to take care of themselves.

God's kindness shows up in the very beginning of the Bible. God shows care for Adam and Eve even after they had sinned.

Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with God. They walked with God in the garden just as He intended. After they sinned, God was disappointed for certain, but when they admitted what they had done, God showed kindness by fashioning clothes out of animal skins for Adam and Eve.

They were naked. They had always been naked, but they only realized it after they had sinned. Once they noticed their nakedness, God took care of them. He had every opportunity to shame them, to "how dare you" them but His actual response was to care for them and set them up to win.

He also kicked them out of the garden. This may seem harsh, but, it was actually caring. Although we may not fully understand, God was showing compassion towards Adam and Eve in this action. He put them out of the garden, but He did not abandon them.

In Genesis 11, the people make a tower to celebrate their accomplishments. God, in His kindness, confused their speech and scattered them across the earth to save them from themselves. If they had not been scattered, they would have been caught in idolatry, worshipping everything but God. It is clear that God is kind, and we are made in His image.

Who is the kindest person you can think of? Do you have someone in your life who represents kindness for you?

Ruth showed Naomi amazing kindness by choosing to stay with her when she had lost everything. Ruth was going to stay in it

with Naomi even though it meant leaving behind everything she had known.

God showed kindness to Ruth by leading her to the field of Boaz, a family member of Naomi's husband.

Boaz showed kindness to Ruth by allowing her to glean from his fields and making certain that she is protected by his workers while she is there.



QUESTIONS

Have you ever been on the receiving end of an unexpected act of kindness? How did it impact you?

Can you think of a time that you have shown extraordinary kindness to another person? What led you to do that? How did it make you feel?

What is one specific, practical act of kindness God might be inviting you to step into this week?



WEEK THREE

RUTH 3

¹ One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for.

² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.

³ Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes.

Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do." ⁵ "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered.

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. ⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! ⁹ "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family." ¹⁰ "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.” ¹⁵ He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town. ¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” ¹⁸ Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

The Reformation, the movement started by Martin Luther that provided an option outside the Catholic Church; caused some unintended consequences. All of the systems of charity were managed by the Catholic Church, and when many people abandoned Catholicism, those receiving benefit from the charities were caught in the middle.

Orphaned children were some of the most impacted by this event. Since help had been given through the church in the past, the Reformers’ plan was to set up a system to do the same. Eventually, care for the poor, the widow, and the orphan was carried out by individual parishes.

One of the solutions that was put into action during this time was sending children and vagrants to landowners who were in need of employees to work their farms. This led to a period of indentured servitude until the children “became of age” or the adults could purchase their freedom.

While this was an imperfect solution, to say the least, it did make a way for humans who were stuck trying to make a living from the streets to be cared for.

This practice was one of the things brought over to North

America during the colonial years. The first recorded “foster child” was seven-year-old Benjamin Eaton in 1636.

The practice of sending children to farms who needed labor continued to be unmonitored until the 1850’s when local and state governments started contributing to the process and keeping record of where children were sent. In the early 1900’s, after years of using the orphaned children to help landowners, laws started to be established that protected children who were in vulnerable situations.

God is all about care for the vulnerable. His law is designed to care for the least of these. Jesus shares a parable that displays this clearly in Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing

to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ ⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ ⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ ⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

It’s the responsibility of the righteous to care for, as Jesus puts it, “the least of these”.

There are a number of things we can learn from these passages, but we are going to focus on two things. Will you ask for help when you need it, and will you give help to those who need it regardless of if you believe they deserve the help or not?



QUESTIONS

How do you respond when you see someone begging for money? Do you give them money? Why or why not?

Do you ask for help? Why or why not?

Can you think of a time when asking for help led to growth, healing, or provision in your life?



WEEK FOUR

RUTH 4

¹ Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down. ² Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. ³ Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. ⁴ I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said.

⁵ Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." ⁶ At this, the guardian-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

⁷ (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) ⁸ So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!"

¹¹ Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ This, then, is the family line of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz,

Boaz the father of Obed,

²² Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of David.

Integrity has multiple definitions, but two main ones stand out:

1. Doing the right thing when no one is watching
2. The state of being whole

In today's world there could be a whole discussion about what IS "right". The reality is, the right thing is plain to all of us because we are made in God's image, and the right thing is imprinted in us.

Romans 1:18-20 says:

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

If we know what is right, why don't we always choose that? We get selfish and greedy. It's been true since the beginning of time.

The other definition of integrity is the state of being whole. The reality of this is that God wants us to be our whole selves. When we are whole, we are the people He created us to be. We so often settle for less than what God has intended for us.

Boaz had a life with rhythms and plans. He could have been totally derailed when Ruth showed up, but Boaz did not try to run from what God wanted him to do.

Instead, Boaz did the right thing. He did the right thing when he wasn't sure anyone was watching. He did the right thing before he was aware of his responsibility to do so.

When he realized he was a kinsman redeemer but not the first in line, Boaz did the right thing again by going to the first in line to

make him aware.

Boaz isn't our hero, but he does find himself in the line of our Savior. God does the unbelievable by bringing Ruth, a second Gentile, into the line of Jesus. God, in His plan, was always bringing the whole world to Himself. He started with a people, but that wasn't the whole plan. As time went on, He folded all people into His family.

Naomi never asked for the situation she found herself in. She didn't want to be a widow and childless, but that's where she found herself. God didn't leave her there. That wasn't the entire story.

We can't see everything that God is doing. Only He knows the whole plan and the whole truth. All He asks for us to do is be obedient to His call. Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth were great examples of this kind of obedience for us.



QUESTIONS

Who are you when no one is watching? What would those who know you best say about who you are when no one is watching?

Who is God making you into? What is your next faithful and obedient step towards that identity?

Do you live your life thinking "what's the best that can happen" or "what's the worst that can happen"? Why?

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