FAMILY BONDS

REFLECTIONS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

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Family Bonds: Reflections of the Gospel in the Book of Ruth

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CONTENTS

09 **LESSON ONE** • ROOTED
19 Devotion 1: God at the Center
21 Devotion 2: Who Do You Show You Are?
23 Devotion 3: I Will Take Care of It
25 Devotion 4: Adoption
27 Devotion 5: Be a Light
31 Devotion 6: Sacrifice and Serving

35 **LESSON TWO** • SERVING EVEN WHEN IT IS HARD
43 Devotion 1: A Seat at the Table
47 Devotion 2: Another
49 Devotion 3: Goals Redefined
51 Devotion 4: Serving
53 Devotion 5: Life Giving
55 Devotion 6: More Than a Love Story

59 **LESSON THREE** • REDEMPTION OF THE FAMILY
69 Devotion 1: Selflessness
71 Devotion 2: Bitter Sweet
73 Devotion 3: Thank God for Jesus
77 Devotion 4: Kinsman Redeemer
81 Devotion 5: He Will Not Rest
83 Devotion 6: Selfless Prayers

87 **LESSON FOUR** • WE ARE FAMILY
97 Devotion 1: The Right Thing to Do
99 Devotion 2: Reconciled
103 Devotion 3: It Is Not About Me
105 Devotion 4: No One Else
107 Devotion 5: To Serve
109 Devotion 6: Grandparenting

113 **THE BOOK OF RUTH**
113 Chapter 1
115 Chapter 2
117 Chapter 3
119 Chapter 4

PREFACE

We often see families through snapshots on social media, passing in public, or encountering them at a church gathering and we think to ourselves, “That is a family goal.” We make snap decisions based on the external view we have. In reality, the family that is viewed as the “goal” has gone through similar ups and downs, moments of disappointment, and stressful situations that we encounter in our families.

For four weeks, we will be studying four family goals found in the book of Ruth. We will read and discuss how, despite the hardships Ruth and Naomi faced, God repaired their broken family. We will see a unique family bond that reflects the Gospel to one another and to the world. That is the *real* family goal.

“Family Bonds” consists of four study guides and 24 devotions based on the book of Ruth. “*Family Bonds”* centers on reflections of the Gospel through family relationships. These insights can be applied to your past, present, and future biological and spiritual families.

1 ROOTED

By Pastor Ryan Story

Whenever someone thinks about "family" there is a myriad of emotions that could come up. Even in the worst situations when it comes to family, there can be glimpses of hope. However, even in the healthiest families, there can be tough times. For the next month, we will be going through the book of Ruth. An amazing narrative is recorded in God's Word simultaneously showing us the realities of what a family can go through in a broken world all within the scope of God's bigger purpose.

Ruth 1:1-2 says, ***"In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there."***

1. Is there such a thing as a perfect family? Why or why not?

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There are times we miss out on very crucial details when we read God's Word. The book of Ruth picks up at a not-so-great moment in Israelite history. For starters, the book begins with ***"when the judges ruled."*** This plants us firmly in the timeline of the book of Judges. These were not Instagram-worthy years for Israel. ***"Everyone did what was right in their own eyes"*** is often said in the book of Judges (example: Judges 17:6). To add the realities of sin in the book of Deuteronomy, God tells the nation of Israel that if they love Him and serve Him with all their heart and soul, He will ***"give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil"*** (Deuteronomy 11:13-14).

Specifically, I want to discuss Elimelech. The Bible says that Elimelech was a sojourner in the country of Moab. That means he

was a Hebrew who left the Promise Land. Elimelech's intention to leave was not saturated in sinful gain, but he left to be in a land that had food. Sadly, Elimelech did not trust in God during a tough situation and left his home.

2. Is it a struggle for you and your family to trust God in difficult situations? Why is it so difficult to trust a God who is so loving that He sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins?

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Whenever reading God's Word, it is easy to look at the people and magnify their sins, disobedience, and wanderings from the Lord. We have to temper our self-righteous, self-glorifying hearts and realize that we are just as disobedient. Elimelech was just as sinful and broken as you and I. Elimelech was a husband and a father who would do anything to ensure his family had a meal to eat at the end of each day. Did he sin in not trusting God? Yes! Should he have stayed in the Promised Land that God gave to His people? Yes! Have you ever not trusted God in making a decision for your family? Have you ever wandered away from God's promises? I would venture to say yes as I know I have.

3. Why is the mercy and grace that only comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ a necessity for every family?

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Ruth 1:3-5 continues, ***"But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband."***

The ravages of sin can be devastating. When tragedy befalls a family, we must temper ourselves from playing the blame game. Are there consequences to sin? Yes. We cannot paint a picture of God that is void of wrath and justice. However, God is the giver of mercy, love, and grace. He even gives it to those who wander. We cannot know for sure if this is God's judgment against this family. It is difficult to figure out the "why" of tragic events.

4. In what ways can the church love people when they go through tragedies?

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These verses get forgotten in the grand scheme of God's plan for Ruth and Naomi. At some point further in the story, come back to Ruth chapter 1. Is there a great tragedy at this point in the story? Yes! Three families are shaken to their core over a ten-year span. In tragedy, sin can make it hard to see God. Ephesians 2:4 reads, ***"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us."*** We have a God that did not just come to die for personal sins of moral depravity. We worship a God who sent His Son to die on the cross because sin and rebellion entered the world causing death, rebellion, and chaos to man and creation alike. Unfortunately, we live in a world where suffering is an ever-present aspect of life. Even in a broken world, we still can see God's plan for rescue and reconciliation.

5. When you are going through a difficult time in your family, what truth do you need to hold on to?

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6. How does knowing the fact that struggles exist in every family sit with you?

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I want to challenge you to read Ruth chapter 1. I want you to focus on God's words, not mine. I want to summarize the rest of the story and get us to an amazing truth. Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah are broken widows. Sadly, the life of a widow is saturated with difficulty. There are many verses in the Bible that specifically tell God's people to take care of them. Imagine not only the emotional pain but the practical difficulties that these three women are now facing.

Naomi, in verse 6, hears that the ***"Lord had visited his people and given them food."*** Naomi decides to return to her homeland. She attempts to free Ruth and Orpah from the tragedy of Elimelech's lineage by blessing her daughters-in-law, wishing for them to stay in Moab, a place where they have more ties to the community and potentially avoid further difficulties in life. Orpah obeys this request, but in a defining moment in Ruth the Moabite's life, she responds, ***"But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.' And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more"*** (Ruth 1:16-18).

7. What is the ultimate defining moment for a family?

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A family rooted in God is stronger than a family rooted in genealogy. Ruth was willing to forsake all she knew, all she grew up knowing, and embrace the God of Israel. This gentile, a pagan god-worshiping

woman, somehow was looking to make the one true God, the God of the Bible, as her God. I believe that Ruth saw Naomi's relationship with God at this moment. Now, go back to Elimelech, we saw compromise and distrust. At this moment, Naomi is returning to the Lord. Naomi is broken, hurt, and not sure where to go. The moment Naomi heard God was merciful to Israel, she wanted to return to Him. In this broken moment of repentance, Ruth declares ***"your God [is] my God"*** and ***"your people shall be my people."***

8. Does your family see the amazing truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your life or do they see compromises and distrust in God?

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Family is an amazing creation from God. Sadly, we live in a fallen world. Families can be far off from what God desired them to be. We struggle, make compromises, fight, and face unforeseeable circumstances. Yet, God remains true, steadfast, and ever-loving. A strong family is not determined by success or the lack of failure and tragedy. Families that are rooted in the Gospel are the mark of strength. For whatever member of the family you might be, show that you are rooted in knowing Jesus as your Lord. Even in struggles, show that Jesus is Lord. God used the pain of Naomi's situation of losing her husband and her sons to reveal what genuine faith and obedience looked like and Ruth committed to following God.

9. What do our families often become rooted in outside of God? Why does this happen?

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10. In what practical ways can your family become more rooted in God?

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In 3 John 1:4, we read, ***"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."*** While Paul's sentiments are more focused on spiritual children rather than biological ones, I feel every parent can take this truth to heart. For the next four weeks, we will be jumping into a topic that, for some, will cause discomfort for their family and in their walk with Jesus. Join me in praying that Jesus does an amazing work strengthening families at The River Church; not only in their love for each other, but for their love for the Lord.

Notes

God At The Center

DEVOTION #1 - JAMES MANN

In the world we live in today, a devoted family is not as ordinary as it once was. Sadly, there are so many different things outside of our family that pull us in different directions from one another. We are all selfish by nature and we want to pursue our jobs, hobbies, friends, and other things that pique our interest. While not one of these things is terrible, when it pulls you away from the family that God has called you to, it is a sin.

The second half of Ruth 1:16 appropriately says, ***"For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."***

I want you to take a moment and think about families that you know. We can all think of one that is constantly struggling internally. Maybe you feel like you are that family. Typically, what you will find is that the reason there is this struggle is that God is not at the foundation of the family; therefore, you do not see Him throughout the entirety of the structure. I do not know if Ruth fully knew what she was saying when she said, ***"And your God my God."*** This proclamation caused the beginnings of a relationship centered around God and she did not even fully understand that.

I would love to sit here and write about how I have a perfect relationship with everyone in my family. Not one person does. Within my immediate family, you can see that God has a strong position. My parents have raised me in the way they feel God has called them to, and I attempt to honor them daily. Once you start taking steps out to my extended family, you will begin to see fractures in certain

places. There are no roots in God that will keep it strong. The further you move out the more you see families deserting one another. It is heartbreaking to see.

Naomi made it clear to Ruth that she no longer had anything to offer this young lady. She has no children and no husband. Naomi begs Ruth to return home. Ruth shows her loyalty and faithfulness to Naomi by staying and you begin to see so many blessings flow. I want you to take a moment today and evaluate why you are committed to your family the way that you are. Is it because they have something to offer you or is it because God is found in the center of it? If your answer is not the latter, I want to challenge you to take those steps to root your family in Him.

Who Do You Show You Are?

DEVOTION #2 - PASTOR FERDINAND SANDERS

Excuse me while I nerd out for a moment, but I believe that *"The Dark Knight"* trilogy is one of the best movie trilogies of all time. Not only is it Batman, but you have the iconic villains as well. It is all elevated by the work of Christopher Nolan and Hans Zimmer. The Joker, who is arguably one of the most iconic villains out there, is a pure agent of chaos. To put it simply, one of the Joker's main tactics is to push people past the limits of their comfort zone. Within *"The Dark Knight,"* he gives one of his iconic quotes, "You see, in their last moments people show you who they really are." This may seem like a bit of a roundabout way to start this devotional, but oddly enough I think it leads quite well into Ruth chapter 1.

The book of Ruth opens up in the midst of famine, a less-than-ideal situation. Within the opening verses, we learn that Naomi had not only recently lost her husband, but had also just lost both her sons. With all of this death and tragedy, Naomi was convinced that she was being punished by God for her disobedience. Has life's circumstances ever had you wondering if you were being punished by God?

At a time when it seemed that her world was falling apart at her hands, Naomi identified her faults and leaned into seeking God's forgiveness. She was not running from it. Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth (who also just lost her husband), commits to staying with Naomi and heading back to Bethlehem by saying, ***"For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God"*** (Ruth 1:16). This is significant because Ruth was leaving her "people" the Moabites, their gods,

and their way of life to stick by family and follow Naomi back to the God of Israel.

So, who are you really in the face of trials or adversity? What do those around you or closest to you see when you are faced with trials or adversity? That can be an extremely convicting question, but it is a good reminder that, as Christians, everything we say or do represents Christ. Naomi's commitment to the Lord and Ruth's commitment to Naomi during these hard times are a great encouragement and reminder for us today. In your moments of pain, loss, confusion, and chaos, would others be drawn to Christ through it?

I Will Take Care of It

DEVOTION #3 - PATRICK BICKNELL

A little bit ago, my friend was telling me about a rough situation their family was having. His parents had found themselves in a tough financial situation when something unexpected came up. In the midst of this struggle, while tensions were high, his brother spoke up and said, “I will take care of it.” My friend said it was so amazing to see his brother not even hesitate and do what he needed to do to serve his parents and help them out.

This is the theme we are looking at as we study Ruth chapter 2. It is the idea that in a Christ-centered family, service to one another should be something we all strive for with nothing in return expected. At the beginning of Ruth chapter 2, we see that Ruth, on her own initiative, goes out into the fields and begins to glean and harvest the leftover crops that the farmers had left. In Leviticus 19:9-10, God commands the farmers to leave the crops that they did not collect for the poor people in their town so that they could gather what is left and feed themselves. What Ruth was doing was not just a job she decided to pick up, but she was doing what needed to be done to serve her family so that they could eat.

Her response to Boaz recognizing this is so incredible. Boaz tells her to stay in his field, get the crops she needs, and that he was going to provide for her. Ruth 2:10 gives her response, ***“Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’”*** Ruth was not expecting any reward in return for her service. She simply was loving her mother-in-law and wanting to help provide in any way that she could.

This type of service and action displayed by Ruth to her family is one that we should all strive for. The basis of this type of self-sacrifice for family comes from what Christ did for us. He was our sacrifice. He emptied Himself and took our place. We now need to go and do likewise. We need to display that love to the world and one of the most important ways to show that is within our families. Are you serving your family the way Ruth did?

Adoption

DEVOTION #4 - PASTOR KYLE WENDEL

In the Bible, the book of Ruth is incredible. I could say that about any book in the Bible. However, it is incredible to look specifically at the story of Ruth and some of the examples of loyalty to God and the blessings of God that we see.

A cool fact about Ruth is that she was the great-grandmother of King David. Another interesting fact is that she was not born a Jew but married into a Jewish family. Ruth's mother-in-law was Naomi. During this time a famine came across the land and Naomi's husband and two sons died. This left Naomi, Ruth, and her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, to be widows.

Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to return to their homelands since their family had fallen apart. It would be better and easier for them to go back to what they know and possibly find a new husband. We see Orpah listens and returns; however, Ruth refused to leave Naomi. Ruth 1:16 (NIV) records, ***"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.'"***

Naomi wanted the best for her daughters-in-law. That is why she tried to tell them both to return. This was an example of the love of God from Naomi. Naomi wanted to selflessly send the women away knowing it would leave her alone and helpless.

Ruth just happened to love Naomi selflessly back. Ruth knew the Lord because she married into a Jewish family. She knew that the

Lord had put her there. She knew that she needed to be there for Naomi. Ruth goes on to say that she will continue to stay in the family and she is part of it continuing forward. She also says that the God of the Jews is her God. This is a very important statement and part of the story.

What is incredible to see is that Ruth was not born a Jew. She was not born as one of God's chosen people. Ruth adopts Naomi's God as her own. It was ultimately a calling from God that kept Ruth with Naomi. This is so incredible to see the power of adoption. Regardless of what race or nation you are born into, you have the opportunity to worship the one true God. We all have the opportunity to accept the gift of adoption that the Lord extends through the power of the Gospel. Through the work of Jesus alone on the cross, we can all be adopted as children of God.

God is the redeemer in this story and ours. They put their trust in God alone and God provided for them. This is what the family should look like. It is to be a unit that is centered on worshiping Him in all ways. Our lives and families should show the love of God in every action and choice.

Some questions for you to ponder:

- What is something that God is calling you and your family to?
- How can you be obedient to that call?
- Is your family rooted in Christ?
- How can you make sure to stay rooted in Christ throughout your life?

Be A Light

DEVOTION #5 - CAMERON ALDRICH

Families are a wonderful blessing from God in so many different ways. Unfortunately, there can also be so much drama, differences, and pain found within them.

I am highly confident that all families are broken, at least in some manner. After all, we are all imperfect people. More often than not, I have learned of members within families who are not walking on the path of Christ, while their loved ones hope for them to one day be saved and be grounded in Christ as they are. Simply, these are the people who really need Jesus. They are not walking with Him and neither are they seeking Him. I will admit, these stray members that I have mentioned are found even within my own extended family. I would imagine that many of us can be reminded of our family members who are living this lifestyle as well.

Here is an important question I want to pose, “Should we sit idle without acting as they continue down their own worldly path with all their faults and imperfections?” I can guarantee that Jesus would want us to answer “no” to that question. However, that does not mean that we should try and force them into changing their ways.

Just as God remains faithful to us within all circumstances, we also ought to be faithful to our families and to our loved ones, no matter how “too far gone” we might perceive them as being. We have the incredible privilege and responsibility to shine the light of Christ to all, but especially to those who either do not yet know Christ or who have turned away from Him.

In the book of Ruth, we are provided with a great example of a woman who remained faithful to her family. It is Ruth herself. Despite how broken her family was and how much pain her family had endured, Ruth was bold and chose not to give up on her family. In fact, she did quite the opposite.

After the passing of her husband and two sons, Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, told Ruth to return to her own family as she saw no point for Ruth to stay with her. In Naomi's mind, the future was dim and she believed she was too far gone from receiving favor from God based on her losses and pain. Thankfully, Ruth would not give in.

Ruth 1:16 says, ***"But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'"***

Despite the hopelessness of her family's situation after their losses, God was at work providing for them as we hear throughout the rest of the story. Ruth later marries Boaz and in giving birth to her son, Obed, she provides Naomi with the family that she longed to have.

Families must remain strong in faith and rooted in Christ, and we must remain faithful to each other. Considering our loved ones who have gone astray, we cannot give up on them no matter how hopeless it may seem to continuously shine the light of Christ toward them. The God in whom we put all of our faith and hope has not ever and will not ever give up on us.

Our Father desires our hearts, and our hearts ought to be His home. No matter how far we have strayed, He relentlessly pursues us despite our likelihood to reject Him. In the same way, we can pursue our loved ones who need Jesus and remain faithful to our family, just as He has remained faithful to us time and time again.

Listen to the faithfulness of God that Jesus shares in Luke 15:1-7, ***"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to***

hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.'"

This is the important task that is set before us. Remain faithful to family and do not stop being a light.

Sacrifice And Serving

DEVOTION #6 - DEBBIE GABBARA

"Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:24

Most Sunday evenings you will find our family having dinner together. After dinner, it is the grandkids' responsibility to clear the table and take care of the dishes. I love listening to them work together and helping them when they need it. Their reward is definitely worth their work! As soon as they get everything cleaned up from dinner, they get to help serve dessert. Homemade apple pie and ice cream are among our family favorites. Helping in my grandma's kitchen with my cousins are some of my favorite childhood memories. Hopefully, one day my grandkids will look back and have fond memories of being in my kitchen laughing and serving our family together.

It is very possible that Ruth was not much older than my teenage grandchildren when she married Naomi's son. Sadly, both women lost their husbands to death within the next few years. Life for a widow was very difficult. After hearing that the Lord had blessed His people with good crops, Naomi decided to return to her home in Bethlehem. Naomi told her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and go back to their families, but Ruth had come to love Naomi and the God she served and she was determined not to leave Naomi. Wherever Naomi was going, Ruth was going too.

Ruth 1:22-2:2 says, ***"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley***

harvest. Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'"

As we see in Scripture, Ruth offered to go and glean the fields when they arrived in Bethlehem. Collecting leftover crops from farmer's fields was put into place by God as a way for foreigners or the poor to work and provide for themselves. Ruth did not wait for her mother-in-law to figure out how the two widows would survive; she offered to go and work so they would have food.

Ruth humbled herself and did what was needed to take care of them. Her sacrifice to serve and to find a way to provide for herself and her mother-in-law would lead to a life only God knew was planned. Through marriage to Boaz, the owner of the fields, God would work out His perfect plan for Ruth, a humble Moabite woman, to one day become the great-grandmother of King David.

Whatever God calls us to do, it will always involve sacrifice and serving. In sacrifice and serving, we find our place in God's plan.

SERVING
EVEN WHEN IT IS HARD

By Pastor Josh Yates

In a family, there can be so much busyness. We are constantly going off to one of about 100 different places, doing so many different things. We are pulled in so many directions.

1. What are some of the many directions you and your family are pulled in right now?

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As we go about all of our things, it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that God has given us each other in our families. It is easy to get self-focused and only think about things that affect us.

2. What is it like to be around someone that is only focused on themself?

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Yet, in the middle of your busy life, you are called to serve. We are all called to serve. Jesus served us when He was in His darkest moments leading up to and through the cross. Had He not, we would have no hope.

This brings us to our study of the book of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth had been through so much in chapter 1. Naomi had lost a son, Ruth a husband. Their sorrow was deep. Yet, in the middle of their sorrow, God shines through the least obvious person.

Ruth was a Moabite. Moabites and Hebrews did not see eye to eye on just about anything, the biggest one being who was actually worthy of being worshiped as God. Moabites had been placed under a ban of eternal exclusion for cursing the one true God and seducing God's people to worship their gods in Numbers chapter 22.

Yet, Ruth decides to stay with Naomi even though she had told Ruth that she could leave. Not only that, but Ruth declares that Naomi's people would be her people and Naomi's God would be her God (Ruth 1:16).

3. Where have you seen God work in or through the most unexpected people or circumstances?

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Ruth goes with Naomi to Bethlehem. Is it not just continually amazing how God works? This entire account is a story of redemption. Something else happens in Bethlehem centuries later. Coincidence? I do not think so! Neither Ruth nor Naomi was in the best mental state. They were still grieving and Naomi was struggling so much that she was not really able to function. They would need to figure out what they were going to do for food and even shelter now that they were in a new land. This is a foreign land for Ruth.

4. Read and record what they were going through in Ruth chapter 2.

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Ruth goes and serves Naomi once they are in the land. They need food and so she went to the field of Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi. She worked hard and she went at much personal cost and danger. Ruth was gathering the harvest that was left over after the reapers, the workers of that field, had finished.

God had told His people to leave some of their fields on the edges for those that are poor. This was where God had led Ruth.

5. When have you experienced the provision of God in your life? How expected was it?

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6. Write down those experiences so that you can remember them next time that you are in the midst of struggle and trial. Please share with your group.

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Ruth continually shows her character throughout this book, but specifically in this instance. She went to a foreign land that worshipped a God she did not yet know, but she would come to know. She sacrificed whatever life she used to have in order to serve her mother-in-law. Not only that, she served even though she would put herself in danger. She was a younger woman that would catch the eye of the other workers. This could mean that she could find another person to marry, but it could also mean she could be assaulted with what we know about the national and moral chaos in Israel during the Judges period.

7. When have you been served by someone that sacrificed in order to serve you? How was that?

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God provided for Ruth and she was protected by Boaz. In fact, she would receive the blessing of God as it was no coincidence that he was the family's kinsman redeemer. She would eventually marry Boaz.

Boaz was drawn to her because of her character. Ruth 2:11 says, ***"All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death***

of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before."

Ruth is a woman who has suffered and has shown resolution, loyalty, and courage. Above all, she has shown kindness to her bereaved mother-in-law and has been willing to sacrifice her own prospects to do so. This is what Boaz finds so impressive about Ruth and what moves him to show kindness to her in return.

Consider how Ruth served her family. She did so unselfishly and unreservedly. She served at great sacrifice to herself.

8. How do you serve your family? Do you serve out of love, putting others first? Or do you serve reluctantly, if at all?

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9. Does your family serve each other? What does that look like?

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10. Why is it hardest, at times, to serve those we are closest to?

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11. How can you lead your family to serve each other more? What would it take to set that example?

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Take some time to pray about what it means to serve each other in your family. Ask God for eyes to see how you can actively serve each other. Find ways that you can serve others as a family. Ruth served Naomi. Jesus came from Ruth's lineage and gave the ultimate sacrifice. The example is given to us. How will you serve your family?

Notes

A Seat At The Table

DEVOTION #1 - PASTOR JOHN CARTER

I really enjoy the story of Ruth. It is a true love story that precedes the greatest love story ever told. The greatest love story ever spoken of is obviously the story of Jesus. We will see a lot of similarities and correlations between the story of Ruth and the story of Jesus.

As you read passages in the book of Ruth, there is a lot of detail that seems somewhat irrelevant in the connections between Ruth and Jesus. For example, Ruth 1:22 says, ***"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest."***

You might just assume this is just useless filler in the story of Ruth. It may seem like a line that is used for the sole purpose of setting a narrative, or just basic information. It is from this very verse that we can make some very significant connections to the story of Jesus. This city, Bethlehem, is the very city where Jesus would later be born. That alone might not seem very significant but the connection goes much deeper. The information on the timing of the harvest of the barley fields is particularly fascinating to me. This would have started sometime in March and would have continued till the fields were completely harvested. Once the harvest was completed, the farmers or owners of the fields, someone like Boaz, allowed shepherds to bring in the herds of sheep to the field. This was to allow the sheep to clean the fields and help fertilize them for the next growing season. It is during this time after the harvest that in the story of Jesus' birth, angels appeared to the shepherds, possibly these very fields that Ruth gleaned barley from to care for

her mother-in-law. The angels shared with the shepherds a very particular message. It was a message that has very similar parallels to the story of Ruth.

Luke 2:10–11 says, ***"And the angel said to them [Shepherds], 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"***

You can read the whole encounter in Luke chapter 2. In just a few short verses of the story of Luke, a whole multitude of the host of heaven proclaim this amazing message. Luke 2:14 adds, ***"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"***

This message that the angels shared with the shepherds is very similar to the hope that Ruth is desiring. Ruth and her mother-in-law only have the option to go to these fields and beg for grain. This is the only way they can obtain sustenance for life. I am sure as a young woman, Ruth had much to be anxious about and certainly, she faced many of her fears. As a woman in a foreign land begging for food, who would ever show any kindness to her and provide her with an option of salvation?

We see a reflection of Christ in the person Boaz, and the desperation of Ruth is very relatable to our own condition as sinners against God. When it comes to our salvation, we have very limited options in ourselves and they fail us. We may be overwhelmed with fears. When we view our true condition of sin we find ourselves in need of begging God for help.

Just as in the story of Jesus in Luke chapter 22, Ruth experiences a wonderful encounter. It is when a person (Boaz) shows incredible kindness and in a sense repays the faithfulness of Ruth to her mother-in-law. He does this by showing her great mercy and grace. You can read this in Ruth 2:8-13.

Ruth 2:11-12 says, ***"But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!'"***

As you read the entire passage, you see this amazing kindness that Boaz shows Ruth. His kindness goes way above and beyond anything Ruth would have expected as a foreign woman. What Boaz does for her is a true picture of mercy and grace. This is the very thing in the story of Jesus that we, as sinful people, can also relate to. God does not just offer us the bare minimum option of grace and mercy. He goes way above and beyond to include us as His very own family. I love that Boaz invites her to his table for food.

Ruth 2:14 says, ***"And at mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over."***

This is the same thing Jesus offers us, a seat at His table. It is a place where we can be satisfied, comforted, and experience peace. As you read the story of Ruth, I think you will find many similarities to the story of Jesus. As we apply these things to our own family, we can start to see how in many ways we can also show kindness, mercy, and grace to one another in our own immediate family. We can follow the example of Jesus and Boaz in showing the greatest love that has ever been recorded for us. The story of Ruth and Boaz is a great picture of the story of you (me) and Jesus.

Another
DEVOTION #2 - KARSEN THEEDE

Redemption is a prevalent theme within the Bible and in pop culture. I have always loved redemption stories. The idea of going from zero to hero has always intrigued me. In this family series, we are going through the book of Ruth, which holds one of my favorite redemption stories. It is the story of Ruth and Naomi. As I was reading the story of Ruth, another redemption story popped into my head. This story is not found in the Bible but it is found in one of my favorite movie series of all time, *"Star Wars."* It is the redemption story of Darth Vader.

For those of you who do not know who Darth Vader is, he is one of the main villains of the original three *"Star Wars"* movies. He is shown as an extremely strong and hostile figure, but if we look at the last of the original movies (*"Star Wars: Return of the Jedi"*), we will see where this redemption story takes place. At this point in the series, Darth Vader's son (Luke Skywalker) has become powerful enough to face Darth Vader and his master. Throughout this confrontation, you see that Luke slowly helps his father return to the good side or the "light" side. Eventually, Darth Vader helps Luke to defeat his old master. This is only possible because Luke was able to help his father become redeemed. Vader was not able to do it on his own, he had tried before and failed, and he needed someone to step in and help. For Darth Vader it was Luke, but if we look into the story of Ruth, we see a similar story between Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.

Boaz steps into Ruth's life at a very important time. At this point, Ruth had been married to Naomi's son, Mahlon, and then widowed alongside Naomi. Ruth then decides to stay with Naomi as Naomi

travels back to Bethlehem. During this time, women almost needed men to survive. Women had very limited privileges, so two widowed women would have a tough time surviving on their own. For Ruth and Naomi to survive, or in other words, be redeemed, Ruth would need to remarry. At this time, it was very uncommon and difficult for a woman to get remarried. As we talked about before with Darth Vader and Luke, Darth Vader needed someone to step in, just like Ruth needed someone. For Ruth, that person to step in was Boaz. He stepped in and married Ruth, and he redeemed her. Ruth could not redeem herself. In this situation, Ruth needed someone to come alongside her and help her.

It is actually beautiful if you look at how the story of Ruth and Boaz parallels the story of us in Christ. We cannot escape our sin on our own; we need another to come alongside us. Jesus is that person. He intervenes and redeems us; He saves us from our slavery to sin. Just as Vader needed Luke, and Ruth needed Boaz, we need Christ. We cannot redeem ourselves, we will fail if we try to do it on our own. So be like Ruth, be willing to accept the help, and allow yourself to be redeemed.

Galatians 4:5 tells us that Jesus came ***"to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."***

Goals Redefined

DEVOTION #3 - STEPHEN BILLINGS

"At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.'" Ruth 3:8-9

My wife and I got married on June 1, 2019. During our engagement, and even in our years of dating, we spent much time chatting about the type of life we hoped to live and the dreams that we shared. As we stepped into marriage, we began to set benchmarks for savings so that we could fulfill our goal of buying our own home and begin welcoming little ones into our lives.

No matter what stage of life I find myself in, I have found that setting goals can provide focus and motivation so that the next phases of life can begin. When I approach the book of Ruth, I think about all the family milestones which Naomi had experienced alongside her husband, Elimelech. I think about how both of Naomi's sons, Mahlon and Chilion, were raised. The way she approached and influenced her sons' next milestone would help achieve many mothers' goals of being a grandmother someday.

However, as the book of Ruth begins, we quickly discover that Naomi does not have the chance to have grandchildren from her two sons. Instead, Naomi's next stage of life is greeted with pain, grief, and sorrow as she quickly witnesses the passing of her husband and two sons. I can only imagine the sense of loneliness and confusion which Naomi must have been feeling as she watched her family pass away.

Not only did the hope of having grandchildren fade away for Naomi, but also her ability to function in society, which was deeply dependent on the father figure to provide for all of their family's needs. Even though all hope seemed to be lost for Naomi, God had the plan to redeem her circumstances. Ruth 2:1 (CSB) shares that there was a ***"prominent man"*** in the line of Elimelech, who we later learn could redeem Naomi's daughter Ruth, which would return hope to Naomi's family.

As we read in Ruth 3:8-9, Ruth boldly approached Boaz for help by laying at Boaz's feet in the middle night in order to request his help. With a heart of compassion and love, Boaz looked at Ruth just as God looks at us in our times of need. It was with love.

God wants us to boldly, yet respectfully, approach His throne with our prayers and requests as we set goals and celebrate all of life's milestones.

Seek the Lord for His salvation, love, and compassion. He loves you so very much!

Serving

DEVOTION #4 - CATHY STORY

Do you consider yourself a willing server? Maybe you serve or volunteer at your child's school, the local charity locations, or even within the church. At some point I read, and doing a quick search online would confirm, that people have found that if they volunteer for about one hour a week, this leads to more happiness in their lives. Now, what that happiness actually means or looks like varies among people, but something we can gather is that people should feel drawn to serving! Many people who are not believers are willing to volunteer their time, belongings, and efforts in service to others in different situations. At times, serving or volunteering may feel easy as we can show up somewhere, complete a task, go home, and move on with our days. We may even spend some time thinking about the benefits someone may have received from our help or the look on someone's face when we were able to offer them assistance.

Here in Ruth chapter 2, we see a special perspective on serving. It is one that I believe can be more difficult to do. Ruth 2:2 starts, ***"And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field.'"*** What stands out to me here is Ruth's words, ***"Let me go."*** It is the offering of her service to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth jumps into a need to serve here, but not just any need, one within her own family. Family service can be one of the trickiest to maintain! Have you ever noticed that for some reason it can be easier to show more kindness, help, or assistance to others outside of our own homes? Growing up with many siblings, I can certainly say I was not jumping at the chance to offer my assistance to my brothers in completing their chores. At the same age, I can recall being at a friend's house and their parents telling them to finish cleaning something and being more than willing

to help my friend. Sometimes within our families, we can come up with a lot of reasons why they are capable of completing their own tasks. We may not view serving or offering our help to those within our family as beneficial to ourselves as helping someone we do not know. For Ruth, it was not even a second thought. She willingly offered herself and her service.

I would challenge you this week to look for an opportunity to serve or give your time to someone within your family. What may feel like a small bit of assistance to you, may be a big help to someone else!

Life Giving
DEVOTION #5 - ZACH HONNEN

Family can be such an uncomfortable subject for many. Family can be, by far, the most comforting, caring, and life-giving structure in our lives. Simultaneously, a family can hurt, annoy, and leave scars. As we continue to look at family through the book of Ruth, we will focus on service in the family. Ruth is one of the best examples we have of this.

We first see the kindness and love of Ruth for Naomi in chapter one. Despite her own pain, loss, and fears Ruth chose to serve Naomi. She was not seeking to get anything from her, for Naomi had nothing to offer. Ruth wanted to be faithful to her mother-in-law no matter the outcome. Instead of returning to her own mother and father, Ruth stayed with Naomi.

1. Would you be willing to sacrifice what most people would consider being the best choice for your own life in order to serve another member of your family?

Continuing into chapter two we see that Ruth was eager and ready to serve her mother-in-law. Ruth 2:2 says, ***"And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'"***

Ruth was immediately ready to serve. She was not self-seeking but was self-denying. She did not seek a husband of the richest or most attractive man in town, but only sought provision for herself and her mother-in-law. Keep in mind that Ruth is not only serving her

mother-in-law, but she is also serving a woman who changed her name to Mara which literally means bitter. Ruth continued to serve Naomi even though she was bitter.

2. When you are dealing with loss, are you able to serve your family?

3. When your family is angry, bitter, or upset, are you still able to love and serve them as Ruth does?

Now, if Ruth was the only one serving in this family, it would be a very one-way relationship that would not be good for anyone. However, Naomi was serving Ruth as well. Naomi told Ruth what field to glean in and we can assume that Naomi taught Ruth the customs and the culture of the Jewish people.

A good, God-centered family seeks the betterment of the other members. If each member seeks to serve others, a family can truly be the most comforting, caring, and life-giving structure. The key is self-sacrifice. Ruth was a wonderful example of this and she is someone we should strive to emulate.

4. What is one way you can put this principle into practice in your own family?

5. How do you think it would impact your family dynamic if you chose to serve your family in this way?

More Than A Love Story

DEVOTION #6 - KENDALL HINE

One of my dad's favorite t-shirts reads, "Rules for dating my daughter: you can't." To his disappointment, he had to revise that list of rules to be a bit more realistic if I were to ever find a man to marry. Now that I have been in a relationship for a few years with a loving and godly man, dad had to revise the list yet again to "rules for marrying my daughter." At the top of that list, he must have graduated from college and have a full-time job. To the parents reading this, you probably agree, but to the one still waiting for that engagement ring - graduation feels a million years away!

I can feel for Ruth at the beginning of chapter four. Instead of a college degree standing between Ruth and Boaz, there stood the rule of the kinsman redeemer. Unfortunately for the couple in love, this meant that there was the potential for Ruth to be married off to the man that came before Boaz in familial order. Not only would this other man have the opportunity to buy back the land that rightfully belonged to their family, but also he would take Ruth as his wife.

At the end of this beautiful love story, the guy gets the girl. The man passes his right to marry Ruth onto Boaz. Then Boaz declared before the gathering of people, ***"You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day"*** (Ruth 4:9-10). What a beautiful love story!

Not only do we see how God wove together the love of Ruth and Boaz, but also see how God used them for a greater purpose. We see at the end of chapter 4 that ***"...Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David"*** (Ruth 4:21-22). The gospel of Matthew tells us that our Savior Jesus is in this same family!

If we take another look at the picture of Boaz and his role as kinsman redeemer, we see how ultimately Christ redeemed us. The kinsman redeemer had to be family, and Jesus came down to this Earth in human form in order for us to become part of His family. Boaz was not motivated by selfish ambition but by selfless love for Ruth, just like Jesus gladly took the penalty of our sin upon Himself. There is no greater love story than God loving us so much He was willing to send His son to redeem us.

Redemption of the Family

By Pastor Roy Townsend

Have you ever heard that we should be careful about what we wish for, care about, or what we look for in life? There are all sorts of stories out there. I have heard stories about people looking for their families when they were given up for adoption. I have heard stories about people doing their family tree and they find out that they have a convicted criminal in their family tree. I have heard stories of people looking into their DNA through a modern-day service and they are introduced to new family members that they did not know existed. Some things we find in the family or family tree are much appreciated, while others we may find to be hurtful.

1. Do you have a godly heritage or do you have a messy family tree? Please explain or give examples.

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2. Even if you have a godly heritage, is there anything messy about your family tree?

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3. Do you know anything about Jesus' family tree?

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This may come as a surprise, but I have heard it said, "Jesus' family tree makes me uncomfortable." There is the history of Judah and Tamar (Jesus' great-grandparents) and this story is filled with sexual deception, trickery, and desertion. In Genesis 38:24-26, we read, ***"About three months later Judah was told, 'Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality.' And Judah said, 'Bring her out, and let her be burned.' As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, 'By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant.'***

And she said, 'Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.' Then Judah identified them and said, 'She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.' And he did not know her again."

Also, King David (Jesus' great-grandfather) led by his sexual desire took another man's wife and got her pregnant. In 2 Samuel 11:2-5, it says, ***"It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.'"*** When he could not cover it up, he had the husband killed starting in verse 14 of the same chapter, ***"In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die.' And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died."***

There are ancestors in Jesus' family tree that will cause you to pause. For instance, Rahab is a great-grandmother of Jesus, and she was a prostitute from Jericho. Many may remember the story of Rahab, the prostitute that helped to save the Hebrew spies in Jericho. She helped them escape, and then when Jericho was conquered, she was spared. She married a Hebrew man named Salmon, and they had a son named Boaz. Moreover, Boaz takes a wife, but she is a refugee from another country, she is not even a Hebrew, and they both are great-grandparents of Jesus in this difficult family tree. However, Jesus has a plan for redeeming His people, including His

family. He has provided a way for us to be redeemed through the bitterness that can fall upon us through our family circumstances.

4. Does it make your family's situation feel better or worse knowing that Jesus' family had such a troubled history?

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We have probably picked up the overall love story of Ruth and Obed by now, but because of life's circumstances, Naomi (Ruth's mother-in-law) was bitter. She was bitter because her husband and two sons had been taken from her in death. She had left her home because of a famine. She is alone except for her one daughter-in-law, Ruth, and now they are destitute and need to gather the leftover grain from the fields.

5. Have you seen situations that lead to bitterness in the family? Please share.

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6. Was the bitterness caused by outside forces (loss of job, house, poverty)? Or, was the bitterness caused by the family choices (addiction, adultery, divorce)? Do you see a difference?

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In Ruth 1:19-22, it reads, ***"So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, 'Is this Naomi?' She said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why***

call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?' So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest." Naomi was bitter towards God, but God's plan brought redemption to Naomi and Ruth. Picking up in Ruth 2:17-20, we read, ***"So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. And her mother-in-law said to her, 'Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.' So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, 'The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz.' And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!' Naomi also said to her, 'The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.'"***

7. Have you ever heard of a kinsman redeemer? If so, what is it?

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8. Has a friend or relative ever played a redeeming role in your life? Please share.

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As I studied this concept of a kinsman redeemer, this is a role in the Old Testament of a prominent male in your family whose role is to guard the family's honor. They may have to avenge the wrongful death of a murdered relative. They may have to buy back the property of a family member that was sold during a hardship. They could redeem

a family member who was sold into slavery. MacArthur wrote, "The Old Testament places a great deal of emphasis on the role of the goel (Hebrew for kinsman redeemer). There was a significant redemptive aspect to this person's function." In Ruth 3:9-13, it reads, ***"He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.' And he said, 'May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.'"***

We know that Boaz decides to become Ruth's kinsman redeemer to lift her from a life of poverty, a life without a husband, and a life without a child. Also, we know that this turns Naomi's feeling of bitterness toward her family life and turns it into a great blessing with grandchildren. In Ruth 4:13-17, we see how both Ruth and Naomi's situation has been redeemed, ***"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."***

The kinsman redeemer is a great picture of what Jesus Christ can do in our lives. John MacArthur writes, "Every kinsman-redeemer

was, in effect, a living illustration of the position and work of Christ with respect to His people: he is our true Kinsman-Redeemer, who becomes our human Brother, buys us back from our bondage to evil, redeems our lives from death, and ultimately returns to us everything we lost because of our sin."

9. Do you see how Christ is our "true Kinsman Redeemer"? Please explain to the group.

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10. There is no family trouble that is too great for our Kinsman Redeemer (Jesus). Please list and pray for those aspects of your family situations that need to be redeemed.

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Notes

Selflessness

DEVOTION #1 - JOSH THAYER

In Ruth chapter 3, we pop in on Naomi and Ruth. Both are widows and Ruth is the daughter-in-law to Naomi. Here is where we see the selfless act of Naomi. From what we know about her, this is typical of her character. While you read through Ruth chapter 3, you will also see the term "kinsman redeemer." This was a man who would take responsibility for the extended family when the husband of a relative would die. Typically when a woman's husband died, the law provided that she could marry the brother of her dead husband. In this specific case, Naomi had no more sons for Ruth to marry, but the nearest relative to the deceased husband could become the kinsman redeemer and marry the widow. This was a very important role because typically the life of a widow was one of poverty and difficult times. So, when Boaz came into the picture, things changed.

Ruth 2:19-20 says, ***"And her mother-in-law said to her, 'Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.' So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, 'The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz.' And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!' Naomi also said to her, 'The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.'"***

Boaz had the opportunity to save both Ruth and Naomi from a life of poverty. Naomi's selfless act was seen in chapter 3 when she told Ruth to go meet with Boaz instead of her. Naomi, the older widowed woman, could have been first in line to receive the kinsman redeemer of the family, Boaz, since he was a relative of her husband. However,

she laid down her own needs and gave the opportunity to Ruth. This was a truly selfless act, knowing that Ruth could easily remarry and Naomi could have lived out a life of poverty alone.

Both Naomi and Boaz have very different parts in this story, but both of their actions only point toward Jesus! Naomi's selflessness and Boaz stepping in to save Ruth and Naomi are characteristics of Jesus. In a way, Jesus acted like the kinsman redeemer to all of us. He came down to Earth to save us all, knowing the end goal would be to selflessly lay down His own holy life on our behalf. Jesus redeemed us from all our sins and hopelessness by providing a way to eternal life with God the Father in Heaven through the cross. He came and died for you and me so that one day when we die, we can spend all of eternity in Heaven with God. That is what we have to look forward to. That is what we should be living for!

Bitter Sweet

DEVOTION #2 - GARY WRIGHT

Have you ever had a tragedy in your family? It is hard to see God's hand at work in those hard times. Years ago, my sister and her husband went to North Carolina to visit our parents. While they were there, they were involved in a terrible car accident. My sister's pelvis was broken and she had to spend months in the hospital. Her injuries would eventually cause arthritis, so the doctors suggested they move from Michigan to somewhere with a warmer climate. Even though they really did not want to, they decided to move to North Carolina.

The book of Ruth also starts with a tragedy. Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth become widowed. Naomi does not understand why God would allow this to happen and she does not see any hope for the family. She becomes very bitter and even changes her name to Mara, which means bitter.

The two widows had no way to provide for themselves, so Ruth goes out and picks up barley behind those harvesting, which is called gleaning. Ruth ends up in the field of a man named Boaz, who is Naomi's deceased husband, Elimelech's, close relative. Ruth 2:3 says, ***"So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech."***

When Ruth returns home she tells Naomi about Boaz. Naomi lets Ruth know that Boaz is a kinsman redeemer for the family. A kinsman redeemer is a male relative who, according to God's law, has the responsibility for taking care of family members in trouble,

danger, or in need. A kinsman redeemer can also buy back the land of a family member. In this case, if Boaz were to purchase the land of Elimelech, he would have to marry Ruth, and their son would take the name of Ruth's dead husband and inherit the land to keep it in the family.

Because Naomi loves Ruth, she comes up with a crazy plan to get Boaz and Ruth alone together hoping for marriage. The plan works and Ruth asks Boaz to marry her. Ruth 3:9 records, ***"He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.'"*** Boaz agrees to marry Ruth and becomes the kinsman redeemer for the family.

Jesus is our true kinsman redeemer! He bought us out of sin and was the only one worthy to do so. At the beginning of the story, Naomi did not think redemption was possible, but God uses a series of circumstances to redeem the family.

God used the circumstances in my sister's life in the same way. Because she was in North Carolina, she was able to take care of several family members including our aging parents, who would have been in trouble without her help.

We may not always be able to see the hand of God working in our lives, especially when we are going through hard times, but we can trust that Jesus is there and working.

Thank God For Jesus

DEVOTION #3 - DAVID HUDGENS

Some years back, while studying the book of Ruth, I was challenged by my Pastor to identify the character from among the text to whom I most related. After some careful and honest reflection, I finally pointed to Naomi. My Pastor, a bit surprised at my choice, asked me to further explain. I would share that I, like Naomi, am quick to despair in times of trouble and I readily exchange the years of God's proven faithfulness to me in favor of my own woeful, sinful, and hopeless perception of a given situation. This unfortunate personal revelation would lead me to ponder this question, "How is it that God could love me?"

Have you ever asked yourself that question? If you have, like myself, you most likely arrived at this same conclusion. There is no good explanation, nor any rational evidence, that one can provide for reasons that God should love any of us with such loyalty and steadfastness. Yet, the Lord Himself declares that He is a ***"God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"*** (Exodus 34:6-7).

What a perfect declaration from the Lord that should afford all hope and comfort to any that read or hear it. Still, there is a quiet resistance in my own heart at times to accept this powerful truth. You see, similar to Naomi, but with differences, my family and I have recently experienced a terrific amount of change and upheaval in our lives. Over the last 365 days, we have replanted ourselves into a new church community here at The River, physically relocated to a new city and into a new home, and all the while my wife recovers from major surgery.

At key moments in the past year, candidly, I have questioned the goodness, nearness, and faithfulness of the Lord. I have grieved in my heart over the surprises that have come from being a homeowner. I have questioned whether or not the Lord will sustain us and provide for our needs. I have cried in anguish over the direction of our lives with Him, wondering whether or not we are walking in step with the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:4-7 says, ***"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."***

While I considered Him silent to my needs, the Lord was working in the waiting. During the time of my doubting, the Lord was providing. He provided friends, neighbors, miracles of finances, and other goods. He provided a field to harvest Kingdom growth. Perhaps greatest of all, the Lord quieted me with His love (Zephaniah 3:17).

Every day that goes by, I wonder more deeply how and why it is that the Lord entertains my rhythms of nonsense. Like the apostle Paul, I am discovering what a ***"wretched man"*** I am (Romans 7:24), and furthermore cling more tightly to Christ Jesus who alone can rescue me from my condition (Romans 7:25).

How incredible it is to learn and know personally that God's disposition towards humanity is to be loving and forgiving despite, by contrast, our human struggle to faithfully love Him in return. I will end now with these words to meditate upon from the hymn writer, Robert Robinson, and with my own personal declaration: *Thank God for Jesus!*

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood;
How His kindness yet pursues me
Mortal tongue can never tell,
Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me
I cannot proclaim it well.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.

"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

Kinsman Redeemer

DEVOTION #4 - SIERRA COMBS

I am always amazed when I hear of people who choose to skip over the Old Testament in favor of the New Testament because they think that is the only place Jesus is. While, of course, He does not enter the earthly scene until the book of Matthew, the fact is that Jesus Christ is written on every page of the Bible. All throughout the ancient texts, we can clearly see God weaving the beautiful tapestry of His plan together, all making way for the Messiah. We see shadows and glimpses of Jesus through the imperfect people in the stories we know so well. In Abel, we see one who would suffer for righteousness sake and in Job, we see a righteous sufferer. In Abraham, we see a stranger in a foreign land, and in Joshua, we see one who would lead his people to the Promised Land. Joseph would be exalted and save his brothers, and Moses would lead his people out of captivity. David was a shepherd King, and his son Solomon was a King of peace. None of these things were coincidental. They all point to Christ, who He is, and what He would one day perfectly do. Today, in the book of Ruth, we see another beautiful foreshadowing of Christ as the Kinsman Redeemer.

We first see the concept of a kinsmen redeemer introduced in the book of Leviticus. Basically, their job was to redeem, or buy out that which was lost by their relative, whether that be their freedom, property, or name. In the book of Ruth, we find two women, both recently widowed, left with nothing, and in great need of redemption. After losing her husband and two sons, Naomi decides to return back to her hometown of Bethlehem. One of her daughters-in-law decides to stay put, and the other, Ruth, decides to go with Naomi. They arrive in Bethlehem with no income and no support, having lost

all possessions and property. Being completely destitute, Ruth went out to the fields to collect leftover food for them to eat, where she "happened" to come upon the field of a man named Boaz, who also happened to be a relative of Naomi. He noticed her immediately and showed her extreme favor and generosity. Ruth 2:10-13 records, ***"Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?' But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!' Then she said, 'I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.'"***

After being fed until full and given more food to take home, Ruth went back to Naomi and told her everything that had happened. Naomi was hopeful as she knew that Boaz was one of her family redeemers. Now, the process of redemption was not an easy one, and the role of the redeemer was costly. Many requirements had to be met. The redeemer must not only be family (kin or of "the same kind"), they had to be willing. They also needed to be financially able to follow through with the transaction, and the price needed to be paid in full. This would have been a hefty price and lofty consideration, and yet Boaz went out of his way to lawfully redeem Naomi's property and name. Ruth 4:9-10 tells us, ***"Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech [her husband] and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon [her sons]. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.'"***

The story of Ruth is not just a fairytale love story. It is an actual historical event that would go on to change history. After Boaz and Ruth were married, the Lord opened her womb to conceive a son. This son, Obed, would be the grandfather to King David, and through David's family line would eventually come the Messiah!

The story is also another incredible foreshadowing of Christ as our Kinsman Redeemer. He met all of the requirements. Jesus willingly left Heaven's throne and became flesh, to become "our kind," and now calls us family. Not only was He able to redeem us by living a perfect sinless life, He willingly paid the price in full through His death on the cross. We were lost, destitute, and without hope when He lavished us with love and generosity, bought us with His blood, and redeemed us once and for all. Praise the Lord, our Savior and Redeemer!

He Will Not Rest

DEVOTION #5 - JOHN STONE

"For the man will not rest until he has settled it today." Ruth 3:18 (NASB)

As I read the story of Ruth I cannot help but be amazed by the profound depth of God's mercy and kindness as He redeems sinners. The book of Ruth is not just a story of redemption, but it is an incredible foreshadowing of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Many of the details that paint the desperate picture of this family, both physical and spiritual, can be overlooked as we optimistically gravitate to the love story. We can miss the powerful hand of God moving through these broken situations as He sees His eternal purposes realized.

The story begins with a severe famine in Israel. This is not an uncommon occurrence in the rebellious history of God's people. The Lord uses it repeatedly throughout the Old Testament narrative to remind the Israelites of their sinfulness and to turn their hearts back to Himself (1 Kings 8:35-40). In this instance, the leader of the family, Elimelech, does not turn toward God but instead leads his wife and sons away to Moab, an avowed enemy and oppressor of Israel whose people are steeped in idol worship including the sacrifice of their children to a false god. Against the commandment of the Lord, Elimelech assimilates his family into this evil culture and his two sons marry women of Moab, one of them Ruth. After ten years, the three men have died, leaving the widows to fend for themselves, but also, providentially, freeing them to escape to Israel.

God had been preparing Ruth's heart through the teaching of Naomi and, when the moment came to make a decision to stay in Moab

or pursue an unknown life in Israel, she was already convinced. We know the rest of the story. Ruth stays faithful and finds favor with Boaz who redeems and marries her thereby preserving the family bloodline through which King David and eventually, the King of kings, Jesus Christ, would come.

The story of Ruth is the story of us all. The Bible says we were enemies of God, desperately lost in our sin (Romans 5:8); foreigners in a land that sacrifices its children on the altar of self. However, God did not rest. He made a way for you and me to be saved through the blood of Jesus Christ and welcomed us into His family (Colossians 1:13-23). That is an incredible story of redemption! Today, stop and consider your former life before God rescued you. Thank Him for His mercy and love and then go out and share that love with others.

Selfless Prayers

DEVOTION #6 - PASTOR KEATON WASHBURN

What role would you say prayer plays in your life? For some people, prayer is a rescue line that they throw out when they are in need. For others, prayer is somewhat of a habit. For others, prayer is a daily habit, something they cannot go without. According to Pew Research Center in 2021, 45% of Americans said they prayed daily. One of the key themes in the book of Ruth is answered prayer. More specifically, it is a story of selfless prayers that the characters in Ruth pray for others and God answers.

Throughout the book, we see the example of Naomi praying for her daughters-in-law in (Ruth 1:8-9), Boaz praying for Ruth (3:10), Naomi praying for Boaz (2:19-20), the witnesses at the Bethlehem gate praying for Ruth and Boaz (4:11-12), and multiple other instances. If you take the time to read each of these verses, you will see that the theme of each of these prayers is their selflessness. These were not self-focused prayers, but others-focused. In each of these instances, those that are praying are asking God's blessing for those that they are praying. In chapter 4, we see all of these prayers answered!

A couple of years ago, I had a conversation with a good friend about prayer. At the time, living on a guy's dorm floor, there were certain people in my life that I really did not like. I did not want to be around them, spend time with them, or honestly, even rub shoulders with them. The reality was that I had to be around them. God made me aware of my feelings towards them and, through prayer, I sensed God calling me to love these certain guys. I did not want to! The last thing I wanted to do was love them! I brought this up to a friend who

challenged me to begin praying for these guys by name. So, I began to pray for each of them by name every day. These were not grand prayers, but they were honest. As I continued to pray for them, God began to change my feelings toward them. Slowly, that disdain I felt for them, began to diminish. As more time went on, I even began to love them. My love for them was not over the top, but like my prayers, it was genuine. I do not believe that was an accident. As I prayed, God changed my feelings. As we look at the example of those in Ruth, God answered the selfless, genuine prayers that were prayed.

Who is God calling you to love that you have been resisting? One of my favorite prayers in all of Scripture is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. I challenge you to pray this over someone today!

Ephesians 3:14–21 says, ***"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."***

4 WE ARE FAMILY

By Pastor Philip Piasecki

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court." Psalm 127:3-5 (NIV)

When my daughter Molly was born, my wife and I instantly thought of this verse. I always loved the picture of children being like arrows in the hands of a mighty warrior. This is an amazing reminder of the value that they bring, of the impact that they can have, and the true blessing that they are. So, we had the idea that we would go get a tattoo of an arrow, my first ever tattoo, to honor Molly. We drew up designs of an arrow along with her birthday and got the tattoo done. Our thought was for each kid we could add an arrow. It turns out that having kids is expensive, and extra tattoo money is not always easy to come by. At the time of writing this, we have yet to get our second arrow tattoo for our son who currently is four. I mean, in theory, it was a great idea, and I am still hopeful at some point we will get our second arrow tattoo for him.

1. What is a funny story of a time you failed to follow through with a family plan?

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2. What do you think the Bible means when it says, ***"offspring a reward from him"***?

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3. Do you view family as a reward?

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We have been studying the book of Ruth and we have seen how the story of Ruth and Naomi gives us so many incredible insights into how meaningful the family really is. The historical account of Ruth seemingly goes through more ups and downs than a Hallmark movie. Every time you think there is finally going to be that happy ending, more disaster hits. However, finally, in Ruth chapter 4, we get to see the happy ending and the reward that both Ruth and Naomi receive from the Lord.

Ruth 4:13-17 records, ***"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."***

Boaz finally takes Ruth as his wife and they have a child named Obed. Naomi and Ruth stayed faithful to the Lord throughout all of their struggles and setbacks, and now the reward of Obed is finally here. In regular rom-com standards, halfway through verse 17, ***"they named him Obed"*** would be a great place to wrap the story. We have Ruth happily married with a child, Boaz as a faithful husband and now father, Naomi as a happy grandma, and all is right in the world. However, there is something of much more eternal significance happening here. We read, ***"He [Obed] was the father of Jesse, the father of David"*** and Christians know that the line of David eventually extends all the way to Jesus Christ. After everything was said and done, Naomi and Ruth trusted the Lord through the circumstances and the reward was a child from whom one day would come. He is the Son of God.

4. How does knowing Obed's lineage change your perspective of the story of Ruth?

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Family can be such a sensitive topic. So many of us come from broken families where it is difficult to even envision the idea of family being a reward. We can often think of our family as a burden instead of a blessing. It is easy to fall into this sinful attitude. It would have been easy for Naomi to fall into this attitude as well. We should look back to chapter one of the book of Ruth.

Ruth 1:3-5 says, ***"But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband."***

5. How would you have reacted in this situation if you were Naomi? How do you tend to react when things get hard?

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Naomi goes to a strange land, her husband dies, her sons marry foreign women, and then both of her sons die. Eventually, the one daughter-in-law returns to her land but Ruth stays with Naomi. Naomi could have looked at Ruth and seen her as a burden, but instead, think of the blessing that Naomi received from having Ruth now a part of her family. We already know how eventually Ruth gives birth to Obed as the greatest blessing of them all, but I can even imagine Naomi just being thankful to have someone to share her life with when it was just the two of them. Despite the tragic circumstances that brought them together, Ruth was a blessing to Naomi. We need to love our family and celebrate our family like the reward that they

truly are. No matter what your family looks like, God has blessed you with them, and not only should we thank God for them, we need to let them know that they are valuable to us. A reward is something of great value. It should be treated as such. I truly believe our home lives can change dramatically if we treat the members of our family as the reward that they are.

6. Do you celebrate your family?

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7. Do you struggle with viewing your family as a burden?

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The word reward means "a thing given in recognition of one's service, effort, or achievement." I want to focus on the word "effort." The reward would not mean as much if it was easy. Having a family and keeping it together takes effort. I think of people I know who have family they have completely lost touch with. They have lost touch because it is easier to drift apart than it is to fight to keep it together. The whole book of Ruth is a story of Naomi and Ruth leaning on the strength of the Lord and pushing forward to save their family. It would have been much easier for both of them to have just given up to their circumstances. Parents, you have to be willing to fight for your kids. Siblings, you have to be willing to work hard to have God-honoring relationships with your brothers and sisters. Parents with adult kids, you have to commit to honoring God in building your relationship with your soon-to-be daughter or son-in-law. I could go on and on with examples, but for the reward to be given, there must be God-honoring and Holy Spirit-filled effort in those relationships.

8. Do you believe you put in the proper effort needed for your family? What changes could you make to do better in this area?

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Ephesians 2:13-19 says, ***"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."***

When we talk about effort and sacrifice, Jesus Himself made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross for us. It was so we could be a part of His family. This section of Ephesians shows us that through the blood of Christ, we have been brought near, and we are no longer strangers, but we can now belong to the household of God. It is so important for us to always remember that no matter the circumstances of our earthly family, as Christians we belong to the body of Christ. It may be a family that at times can be the most dysfunctional of them all, yet still a family from which come so many blessings. When we share the same Heavenly Father, we are able to care for each other as true brothers and sisters. If you find yourself without an earthly family, please be encouraged to know that you have brothers and sisters in Christ all around you. God made the ultimate sacrifice of His Son so that we could all be united as a family with Him. What an incredible reward it is to each and every one of us to be included in the family of God.

9. Do you view the church as a family?

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10. How does it encourage you to know that you are a part of that family as a believer?

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We see so clearly through the story of Ruth the true reward that family can be. Through Naomi and Ruth's reward of Obed, we all were given the opportunity to receive the reward of being a part of God's family through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I am so thankful for the faithfulness of Ruth and Naomi as we are reaping the rewards of their obedience to this day.

Notes

The Right Thing To Do

DEVOTION #1 - JOE WILSON

As I studied the book of Ruth, the overwhelming concept of loyalty just kept returning to me. Memories of a young boy who had absolute faith in his father, grandfather, and uncle to provide the right answers and the problems that seemed to be overwhelming and unsurmountable replayed in my mind. I never questioned the loyalty they had for what was in my best interest. I do however remember questioning, "Why does this have to be so hard?" The reply was normally, "Because it is the right thing to do." It was a tough lesson to learn as a young boy and as an adult, it has not gotten much easier.

I can only imagine the thoughts going through Boaz's mind when he could see his future so close he could reach out and touch it (literally). Ruth 4:1-4 records, ***"Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, 'Turn aside, friend; sit down here.' And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, 'Sit down here.' So they sat down. Then he said to the redeemer, 'Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.' And he said, 'I will redeem it.'"***

The overwhelming anxiety Boaz must have felt as his fellow kinsmen made the statement, "I will redeem it." At this point, he must have felt

the future he wanted so badly being taken away from him. He may have thought, “Why does this have to be so hard.”

Ruth 4:5-6 continues, ***“Then Boaz said, ‘The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.’ Then the redeemer said, ‘I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.’”***

The relief Boaz must have felt as the future he wanted so badly was about to become a reality. He was committed to being loyal to Ruth and Naomi. He had their best interest at heart.

We have a Heavenly Father that we can have absolute faith in. He will always have our best interest at heart. He will always have the right answers to life’s problems even though they may seem overwhelming and insurmountable. He is the epitome of loyalty. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can without a doubt have that childlike, absolute faith.

Just remember when He answers you and you have that thought or feeling in the pit of your stomach, “Why does this have to be so hard?” It is because it is the right thing to do.

RECONCILED

DEVOTION #2 - JEANNIE YATES

I love a good romance story, and I mean, the cheesier the better, Hallmark-approved kind. Yes, the plots are all very similar, and you can usually take a nap in the middle and still not miss any important details. What you are actually waiting for is the glorious ending when all the wrongs have been made right, the couple finally finds true love, and their future is on the path to happily ever after. We might be tempted to reduce the book of Ruth to just that, but instead, we see that God uses this unordinary family and a baby named Obed, to tell an extraordinary story not just of romance, but His story of redemption. Reverend Kyle Norman writes, "At first glance, the book of Ruth may appear to be nothing more than a quaint romance. When we dig a bit deeper, however, we find an exciting story of God working for the salvation of his people. In creative and exciting ways, God brings about God's purposes through unlikely circumstances and people."

Ruth 4:14-17 records, ***"Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."***

Here we see the glorious ending, and it is a true ***"but God"*** moment. Naomi was lost in her bitterness, ***"but God"*** had a plan. Through

the love story of Ruth and Boaz, she is given a son. Naomi is now no longer bitter but rather blessed. Her strained relationship with God is reconciled; it has been made right. Obed is called Naomi's ***"restorer of life and a nourisher of old age."*** Naomi had lost it all, her husband, her sons, her life as she knew it, but God brings Obed into her life and redeems her treasured desire for family.

The Bible has several stories that have the theme of reconciliation. You can read about Joseph reconciling with his brothers in Genesis 50:20, ***"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."*** When confronted with his sin, King David repents and reconciles with God in 2 Samuel chapter 12. One of the more well-known stories is that of a father and son in Luke chapter 15. A rebellious son leaves his father's house, squanders his inheritance, and becomes a disgrace. Returning home to his father, he receives an unexpected welcome. Luke 15:21-24 says, ***"And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."***

Yet, the greatest reconciliation story of all time is that of a Holy God and a sinful world. In Romans, we read, ***"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly…For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation"*** (Romans 5:6, 10-11). We were weak, dead, and enemies of God, but He made a way for us to become a new creation with abundant life; no longer enemies, but now adopted as sons (2 Corinthians 5:17; John 10:10; Galatians 4:5).

Naomi had to choose to step out of her bitterness and accept the gift of Ruth's son, Obed. Through her daughter-in-law's family, she received reconciliation. Naomi's family name was redeemed as it was woven into the Gospel story as part of the genealogy of Jesus. We, too, have to choose to let go of whatever doubt, fear, sin, or disgrace that we are holding on to and accept the gift of God's only son, Jesus. Our acceptance of Jesus as Lord not only places us in right standing with the Almighty God, but we become part of His family. So, just as Paul pleaded with the people in Corinth, I pray that today, you would ***"be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"*** (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

It Is Not About Me

DEVOTION #3 - CHRIS MONTVILLE

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David." Ruth 4:13-17

We live in a very selfish culture. We have learned to think about ourselves, take care of ourselves, and focus on ourselves in everything we do. We do not see this attitude in Ruth. Everything she does is for Naomi. She follows Naomi back to a land she does not know, listens to her instructions regarding Boaz, and lives it all out faithfully. Ruth never says, "But what about me?" Ruth never seeks her own glory. She lays her life down and faithfully follows. If we would take a step back from ourselves, we could do the same.

How often do we see sacrifices made for someone turn into something greater? It could be a deepening of the relationship or that sacrifice leading to another blessing for that person down the road. How often does that sacrifice actually bless us in return?

I got to witness a story when that happened for a young man in our church. In his Growth Community, a friend expressed concern

that he and his mother, who were trying to find a new place to live, would not be able to afford the security deposit on an apartment they had been hoping for. They needed $1,000. As the friend expressed his worry, the young man felt a push from the Holy Spirit to cover that fee. The young man pulled his friend aside at the end of the night and told him. This, obviously, blessed the friend and the mother. However, the young man would be blessed in return! That Thanksgiving, the young man's family did not gather together, so he planned on being alone for the holiday. However, as a thank you, the friend and his mother invited him over for Thanksgiving dinner. The young man said it was the first home-cooked meal he had eaten in quite a while. It was a fantastic experience and a fun night spent with his friend and his mother. He was filled with gratitude.

Jesus tells us to be a blessing to those around us in John 15:12-13, ***"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."*** However, the blessing often goes both ways. Proverbs 11:25 says, ***"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."***

If we would be less worried about ourselves and actually trust *God* with our lives, we would be surprised at the amazing experiences we can have and the gratitude that can fill our hearts when we take a step of faith and bless those around us. Just as Ruth blessed Naomi by staying by her side and was rewarded with a son, the young man blessed his friend and was rewarded with an unforgettable night that continues to impact his life.

When was the last time you truly made a sacrifice for someone? We may feel like these opportunities do not show themselves, but the truth is we are just too wrapped up in our own lives. If it does not have a big enough impact on us, we are not willing to take that step for them. Odds are that you know someone, right now, who could use a real hand.

Ask yourself, "Are you willing?" If not, "Why not?" We will have to answer for that someday.

No One Else

DEVOTION #4 - MITCHELL HOLMES

I think it is fair to say that most people would agree that the term "family" is one that is used to describe people that are close to you and understand you on a deep, emotional level. However, we see the word family used in many different ways. It may be used to describe biological families such as your siblings, parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, and more. It may be used to describe your closest friend in phrases such as, "I am going to invite my buddy over for the barbeque, he is like family." The word is even used in media such as in a personal favorite series of mine, *"Band of Brothers"* in which a platoon in World War II all refer to one another as a family that bonds over the struggles of war.

I think all people are born with an innate understanding that family is something that is supposed to be close-knit, loving, supportive, and protective of one another. That is why we love to extend the term to those closest to us even when they are not family by blood. These are the people that are meant to be there for us when all else fails. These are the people that truly understand us and know our faults. These are the people that love us.

As we go through this series on the book of Ruth, we have seen how the story places heavy emphasis on the family and what a healthy family looks like. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter is that not everyone has pleasant experiences with their family. Some of you may come from families that have been broken and scattered; Naomi and Ruth battled with such an issue as this. The fortunate thing is, we serve a God of miracles that brings reconciliation.

Ruth 4:14-15 says, ***"Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.'"***

Our God is a God that cares about the broken and the hurting. He brings peace and comfort. He brings restoration and reconciliation to those who feel cast out and alone. He brought a redeemer to Naomi and Ruth. I am so thankful to serve a God whose favor rests upon the lowly and whose grace extends to the brokenhearted.
God uses family to bring reconciliation. Through His Son Jesus, He has made it possible for you to be reconciled to Him and free from sin. John 1:12 tells us, ***"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."***

Regardless of your past, no matter how lonely you feel, even if your own family is broken or painful, Jesus extends His hands to you and offers an invitation into the family of God through belief in Jesus and what He did for you on the cross. If you are reading this and want to be welcomed into the family with Almighty God, find someone who can tell you more about what Jesus did to free you from sin. Maybe you are reading this and you already have a relationship with Christ but you do not like church. I encourage you to come and be a part of a family like no other. Families have the unique ability to frustrate us like no one else, but they also have the ability to love us like no one else.

To Serve

DEVOTION #5 - NATHAN ELLIOTT

As my wife and I prepare for the arrival of our first child, numerous thoughts race through my mind: Am I ready to raise a child? How much do diapers cost? Why is God allowing this to happen now? Similar concerns may have gone through Ruth and Boaz's mind when God blessed them with a child. Ultimately, all of those fears were quickly silenced by the amazing realization that God blessed us with the gift of life. There is no greater blessing that God can give us than the gift of life, but with every life, comes the curse of death. This curse has and will affect every human who has ever been born. Thankfully, through the lineage of Obed came a Redeemer for us all. He is Jesus.

We do not know a lot about Obed, but what we do know is that he was the son of Ruth and Boaz. Obed then grew and had a son named Jesse, and Jesse fathered the great King David.

Why did God choose such a normal family to carry on the seed promise of the Messiah? We do not know. However, Ruth had something very precious, even when she lost everything. She had a servant's heart and this is often all that God requires when He wants to use us to do mighty things for His Kingdom. We can only assume this same character trait was carried down through generations starting with Obed, whose name literally means "to serve." In our day-to-day, whether we are parents, married, unmarried, divorced, or widowed, may we all strive to serve.

Philippians 2:3 says, ***"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than***

yourselves." Verses 5-8 continue, ***"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."***

Grandparenting
DEVOTION #6 - RICH SAWICKI

When Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth are introduced to us at the beginning of Ruth 1:3-5, we see they have all experienced a great loss with the death of their husbands. All three women were widowed and it looked like it would be impossible to carry on the family name.

I wonder, “If children are a blessing from the Lord, what are grandchildren?” Since I am a grandparent, let me tell you. Grandparenting is the very best part of parenting. It is like getting a do-over. I view it like retaking a test years later after you have studied and studied and studied. I mean you have so many more great answers now because you learned all the wrong answers on your own kids.

You get to have all the fun of parenting in loving unconditionally, spending quality time together, laughing, playing, just being silly, and spoiling them because you have a little extra now that maybe you did not have with your own kids. Most importantly, it is not really your responsibility to punish them if they do something wrong. Of course, you can guide them and tell them what is right and wrong, but I leave the punishment up to the parents.

Punishments are just as hard for parents as they are for kids. So, how do you think God felt when we received the punishment for sin? What is the punishment for sin? It is death; spiritual and physical death and eternal separation from God. However, God redeemed us from that punishment by sending His son to die on the cross for our sins. When we confess and believe in the name of Jesus, we are adopted into His family and reconciled back to God. We are

redeemed by the blood of Christ. The sin that separated us from God is not in the way anymore and God no longer sees our sins. He only sees His son. Now that we are His children, we will never have to receive the punishment of death that we truly deserved. That does not mean bad things will not happen.

Naomi did not think she would ever get to be a grandparent, this was devastating in those days. Her circumstances caused her to become so bitter that she changed her name to Mara, which meant bitter. Orpah on the other hand took her circumstances into her own hands and chose to go back to her old ways. She left her new family to return to her own people and her old gods.

Ruth was faithful to Naomi and chose to stay and go to Bethlehem. More importantly, she was faithful to God. She trusted in the Lord even though she had no idea what the future held for her or Naomi. Her faith was rewarded through the family she had chosen. God blessed her with Boaz, a kinsman redeemer, who took her to be his wife. God blessed her as she had a son and Naomi had a grandson, his name was Obed.

We need to remember when bad things happen throughout life, it is not always God punishing us. He knows the full picture and we can trust Him even when things seem impossible. When bad things happen to us, we cannot just go back to our old ways. We need to bring our burdens and lay them down at the feet of Jesus. When we cannot understand why, we need to have faith like Ruth did. She did not complain and she did not go back to her old life. She did not turn from God and she submitted everything to Him. God then made the impossible possible.

Ruth 4:13-17 says, ***"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your***

daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

Out of the lineage of Elimelech came Obed. From Obed came Jesse and from Jesse came David. Out of the house of David came the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is Jesus our Redeemer and our Hope!

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Chapter One

Naomi Widowed

1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years,5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Ruth's Loyalty to Naomi

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my

womb that they may become your husbands? [12] Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, [13] would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." [14] Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

[15] And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." [16] But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.[17] Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." [18] And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Naomi and Ruth Return

[19] So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" [20] She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. [21] I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

[22] So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Chapter Two

Ruth Meets Boaz

1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. 4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. 9 Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn." 10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"11 But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of

your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. [12] The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"[13] Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."

[14] And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. [15] When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. [16] And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

[17] So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. [18] And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. [19] And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." [20] And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers." [21] And Ruth the Moabite said, "Besides, he said to me, 'You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.'" [22] And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted." [23] So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Chapter Three

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? 2 Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." 5 And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. 7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." 10 And he said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. 12 And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. 13 Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."

14 ***So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” 15 And he said, “Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. 16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, 17 saying, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’”18 She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”***

Chapter Four

Boaz Redeems Ruth

1 Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down.2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. 4 So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." 5 Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." 6 Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. 9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. 10 Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have

bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.” [11] *Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem,* [12] *and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.”*

Ruth and Boaz Marry

[13] *So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.* [14] *Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!* [15] *He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”* [16] *Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.* [17] *And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

The Genealogy of David

[18] *Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron,* [19] *Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab,* [20] *Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,* [21] *Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed,* [22] *Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.*

OUR VISION

Matthew 28:19-20: ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

REACH

At The River Church, you will often hear the phrase, "We don't go to church, we are the Church." We believe that as God's people, our primary purpose and goal is to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to reach the world in your local communities.

GATHER

The goal of weekend gatherings at The River Church is to glorify Christ in all we do! Whether it be through singing, giving, serving, or any of the variety of ways He has gifted us and called us together, Jesus is at the center of it all. We celebrate that when followers of Christ gather together in unity, it's not only a refresher, it brings life-change!

GROW

Our Growth Communities are designed to mirror the early church in Acts as having ***"all things in common."*** They are smaller collections of believers who spend time together studying the Word, knowing and caring for one another relationally, and learning to increase their commitment to Christ by holding one another accountable.

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