

Life lessons from the Old Testament | RUTH

There's a movie that I love, called sliding doors - stars Gwyneth Paltrow, 1998! She plays this character who is fired from her job, and makes her way to the train station to catch the train home - the film splits here into two parts - one explores what would happen if she caught the train, and the other explores the idea of what would happen if she misses the train.

The film alternates between these two parallel stories, showing how Helen's life unfolds differently in each scenario. It explores how the small, seemingly inconsequential event of missing or catching a train can have a profound impact on her relationships, career, and personal life and growth.

Clearly this is dramatized in the movie - but it's a great question! And one worth asking!

What decisions, small or big brought you to this place? Right here, right now? What small decision or seemingly small decision did you make, that transformed the path of your life?

We're going to use the story of Ruth, to examine the providence of God in our own lives, this idea that God plans and purposes are fulfilled through our obedience and faithfulness to him, but also in spite of ourselves at times.

The hand of God represents the divine intervention, guidance, protection, or influence that

The Story of Ruth

Once upon a time in a little town called Bethlehem, there was a family facing some tough times. A man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons moved to the land of Moab because of a famine in Bethlehem. While in Moab, Elimelech passed away, and Naomi's sons, Mahlon and Kilion, married local Moabite women named Orpah and Ruth.

Sadly, Mahlon and Kilion also died, leaving Naomi a widow and her two daughters-in-law without husbands. Naomi decided to go back to

Bethlehem, and she told her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and find new husbands among their own people. Orpah tearfully agreed and stayed behind, but Ruth, with a heart full of love and loyalty, insisted on going with Naomi. She uttered those famous words, "Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God."

So, they returned to Bethlehem, where they were basically starting from scratch. Ruth went to work gleaning barley in a field to support herself and Naomi. As luck (or divine guidance) would have it, she ended up in the field of a wealthy and kind man named Boaz, who happened to be a relative of Naomi.

Boaz noticed Ruth's dedication and kindness and made sure she had plenty to glean, even telling his workers to leave extra grain for her. He also discovered Ruth's background and how she had been looking after Naomi. Impressed by her character, he offered her protection and support.

Naomi realized that Boaz was a potential "kinsman-redeemer" – someone who could help Ruth and her by marrying her and providing for them. In a bit of a daring move, Naomi advised Ruth to approach Boaz one night and propose to him. Ruth did just that, and Boaz, who had already taken a liking to her, agreed to fulfil this role as a kinsman-redeemer.

With that settled, they married, and Ruth gave birth to a son named Obed. Now, here comes the beautiful part: Obed later became the grandfather of King David, one of the most important figures in the Bible, and in Christian tradition, he's part of the lineage leading to Jesus Christ.

1. Set backs

The Book of Ruth teaches us that God's hand is often most evident in times of difficulty.

The book of Ruth is filled with tragedy - so much tragedy it's almost incomprehensible, hard to fathom right? It starts with famine, the middle bit



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS

everyone dies - then they're forced to start again back where they came from in Bethlehem. This is a world where there is no security of unemployment benefits, or WINZ payments - make no mistake, the loss of their husbands creates a perfect storm here, one which throws them into the possibility of poverty - Naomi is being graceful here when she tries to send her two daughter in-laws way, there is a possibility they can still find a husband, and rescues themselves

Ruth demonstrates incredible loyalty in the face of an enormous set back when she says: *'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. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely if even death separates you and me.'*

Ruth embodies this whole hearted commitment - faithfulness to Naomi, she is willing to throw her whole future in with hers. Tie herself and her life to Naomi's.

So often we see the challenges of our lives as Gods indifference - maybe even questioning the path we've chosen - but it's so important to recognize, that despite what it looks like, despite what is happening around us - God is still in charge, God is still sovereign

2. Rescue

Ruth 2:3 : *"So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek."*

The story of Ruth is a powerful illustration of redemption. As we mentioned before the in an age where there are no social services to lean back onto, one of the ways that Jewish people would care for the poor was to not glean to the edges of their fields - and leave that for people who needed food. So this situation is not usual - at harvest time, there likely would have been quite a few people who needed food, following after the harvesters.

Somehow she picks the right field to glean in - and finds a member of her family, one that can help them.

Boaz, as the kinsman-redeemer, played a crucial role in securing Ruth and Naomi's future. A kinsman-redeemer is a male relative, usually a brother or close family member, who has a special role and responsibilities within the family, especially in cases of adversity, financial difficulties, or personal need. Their primary duties typically include: Redemption of Property, Levirate Marriage, Protection and Support.

I think it's important to point out here that their rescue, there help is not instantaneous - it takes a long time to work itself out, it's a long journey guided by God. So often when we're in the midst of we want to see in happen right now!

3. Trust

Ruth 4: 16-17 - *'Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.'*

I think it's really important here to point out that Ruth is not an Israelite - she is a Moabite, she has married into the faith. She wasn't schooled in the faith, she didn't grow up hearing the stories of Abraham and Isaac, she is very new to this - but she puts us all to shame.

Ruth demonstrates a profound trust in Gods faithfulness in spite of the circumstances - a willingness to trust!

How this works is itself out is profound - Ruth finds herself included in the lineage of Jesus

The Book of Ruth ultimately leads to the lineage of King David and Jesus Christ, demonstrating that God's providence has a far-reaching and eternal purpose. As we reflect on Ruth's story, we are reminded to embrace God's plan for our lives. That our lives are part of a greater story that God is writing. By trusting in the hand of God, we can find hope, purpose, and assurance in His plan for our lives.



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS

How has your trust in God been rewarded?

Conclusion:

God's faithfulness is unwavering, even in the face of life's toughest challenges. Just like Ruth and Naomi faced setbacks, God is with us in our difficulties.

When we look at the story of Ruth, we see a Moabite woman who embraced the God of Israel and found herself gleaning in the fields of Boaz. It's a powerful reminder that even when life feels uncertain and we can't see the bigger picture, God's unseen hand is at work, guiding us along a path we may not fully comprehend.

God's faithfulness isn't confined to the pages of scripture. It's a living reality, a constant presence in your life. Whatever you're facing, whether it's loss, uncertainty, or adversity, trust in God's faithfulness. Know that He's working behind the scenes, guiding your steps, and crafting a beautiful story out of even the most challenging chapters of your life.

Just as Ruth's story led to the lineage of King David and, ultimately, to the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, your story is part of a grand narrative too. God is using your experiences and your faithfulness to weave a beautiful tapestry, so don't lose heart.

May you leave here today with the assurance that God is with you, His faithfulness is unchanging, and His unseen hand is always at work. Walk in faith, knowing that, like Ruth, you are part of a divine plan that leads to blessings beyond your imagination.

Download or listen to this message at:
www.icbc.org.nz

REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

What setbacks have you faced in your life? How have you reacted to them?

Where have you seen God take time to work, to rescue you? Where you've wanted it to be instantaneous - but its taken weeks, months or years?

How has your trust in God been rewarded? Where have you personally seen Gods hand at work in your life?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS