

## INTRODUCTION

- What I love about the Bible is that it is the book that keeps on giving.
- So, this isn't a comprehensive message on the book of Ruth

## THE IN-LAWS

But before we learn about her and her noble character, the author of the book of Ruth tell us about her in-laws

- Elimelech.
- Naomi.
- And their two sons – Mahlon and Chilion.

Of the tribe of Judah.

And who during the times of the judges left Bethlehem because there was a famine in the land and moved to Moab for a period of time.

### *DURING THE TIME OF THE JUDGES...*

This is a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Elimelech and Naomi included. They thought it better to live comfortably with their non-God-fearing enemies than to suffer with their God-fearing brothers and sisters. So, they left. And not just them, but they also abandoned worship of God. Why? Because they did not want to die.

As we all know, this is unfortunate because Elimelech dies. And not only that, but his two sons die. And all that is left is Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth. These are bitter circumstances.

## THE BITTER CIRCUMSTANCES

- Three Widows.
- This is worse than losing all your money, your home, and having no family in the world because not only had they lost all of that, but they also had no place in society.
- This is why Naomi pleads with them to abandon her and go back home.

### *READ 1:8-10*

*Naomi said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home.  
May the LORD show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me.  
May the LORD grant each of you rest in the house of a new husband."  
She kissed them, and they wept loudly. They said to her,*

*“We insist on returning with you to your people.”*

Then, Naomi gives them “the real” to make sure they are not just making an emotional decision but have truly counting up the cost of what it would mean for them to stay with her. She says,

### **READ 1:11-15**

*But Naomi replied, “Return home, my daughters. **Why do you want to go with me?** Am I able to have any more sons who could become your husbands? **Return home, my daughters. Go on,** for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, would you be willing to restrain yourselves from remarrying? **NO, MY DAUGHTERS, MY LIFE IS MUCH TOO BITTER FOR YOU TO SHARE,** because the LORD’s hand has turned against me.”*

*Again, they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, **but Ruth clung to her.** Naomi said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Follow your sister-in-law.”*

**T:** But Ruth clung to Naomi. She chooses to suffer with Naomi. She fully enters into Naomi’s bitter life.

## **RUTH CHOOSES TO LIVE SACRIFICIALLY INSTEAD OF LIVING COMFORTABLY**

This is so different than the choice that Elimelech and Naomi made when the famine hit. They got out of dash in an attempt to preserve their lives. Instead, we see Ruth enter into suffering with Naomi. Where they reject suffering with God’s people, she willfully chooses it.

**T:** Why would Ruth do this? Why would she want to go with Naomi? Two reasons. Ruth does this because she fears the Lord and because she trusts in Him.

## **RUTH FEARS THE LORD**

### **READ 1:16-17**

*But Ruth replied: Don’t plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me, and do so severely, if anything **BUT** death separate you and me.*

Ruth speaks as one who is acquainted with the benevolent character of God.

- She speaks as one who knows how much he cares for the widow and the orphan.
- She speaks as one who knows that if she were to abandon Naomi on that road that led back to Bethlehem that God would be greatly displeased with her.
- She knows God and cares more about His will being fulfilled than her comfort.
- She is convinced that YHWH's thoughts and YHWH's ways are better than hers and chooses to enter into suffering with Naomi instead of doing what is right in her own eyes.

**Q:** When's the last time you've chosen to suffer with someone?

I imagine that some of you are in the thick of it right now.

This is what ministry is...

Sometimes it's not just coming alongside someone...

Sometimes ministry is a matter of entering into someone's suffering in a way that costs you...in a way that inconveniences you...in a way that exhausts you...in a way that causes you to live sacrificially...

### ***KIM'S WISE WORDS...***

I had a mentor once tell me during a time when ministry was hard...

"You know Yana, we have a tendency to romanticize ministry. Kind of in the same ways folks romanticize marriage. We only consider how good things will go. We never consider how bad things may go or how hard things will be, but if you look at the men and women in Scripture that we often admire, doing what God called them to do was often hard. It was difficult."

**Q:** So what keeps us going?

It can't just be because we easily love or like a person because this can run out as a person becomes difficult to love and enjoy...

It can't just be because we want to use our spiritual gifts or need some sense of purpose because what happens when you fail or things don't come together...

We need a motivation outside of ourselves.

We need a conviction that will last.

Ruth was convinced that God's ways and His will was better.

We need to be convinced of this as well

So that when you see a sister in need like Ruth, you jump at the opportunity to meet it because you understand that God has called us to bear one another's burdens.

When you see a sister living in isolation, you do what you can to bring her in because you are convinced that God has called His people to live together as family.

When you have a sister who has a tendency to always say the wrong thing at the wrong time, instead of running from them we run towards them with gentleness and patience because we are committed to God's vision for us all to grow into Christ-likeness together. (Ephesians 4:13)

This is what it means to fear the Lord.

And, it is this fear that lead Ruth to honor the Lord and choose to live sacrificially for others.

T: Ruth also choose to live sacrificially because she trusted the Lord to provide.

### **READ RUTH 1:18-2:2**

Where Naomi only sees bitterness, Ruth remains hopeful and trusts the LORD.

Explain the law of gleaning.

*When you reap the harvest in your field, and you forget a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It is to be left for the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the works of you hard.*

Deut. 24:19

Here it is that God has set up his society in such a way that no one goes hungry.

Ruth is aware of this provision the Lord has made for the widow and asks Naomi if it is okay to go. Now the thing that baffles me about this is that Ruth suggests this and not Naomi. Ruth is not Jewish! Naomi is!

But before we go all bad on Naomi, let's remember what she has lost. Her husband who she was to spend the rest of her life with. Grow old with. She also lost both of her sons in whom was not only wrapped all of her hopes and dreams for them, but also her security. They were supposed to take care of her. Now, they are gone and though she has inherited this daughter-in-law that has committed to stay with her, I imagine that it feels more like a burden than a blessing. Naomi is clearly in pain and not only that, but she senses that she somehow is deserving of the pain that has entered into her life. Maybe, maybe not.

However, what I love about this story is how as Ruth exhibits a trust in the Lord and sees Him provides this sparks a change in Naomi.

***RECAP 2:2-2:18***

Naomi is so amazed by the Lord's provision that she asks...

***READ 2:19-20***

Naomi then exhibits trusts in the Lord...

***READ 3:1-4***

Now, Naomi is trusting in the societal laws that God has set up to protect and care for the women.

**T:** Ruth stood in the gap for Naomi and exhibited faith when she had none. This is the gift that we get to be to one another, which leads me to the next thing I noticed. Ruth actions – her choice to live sacrificially serve Naomi out of her fear and trust in the Lord – lead to two outcomes.

**RUTH'S FAITHFULNESS ENCOURAGES OTHERS**

Naomi. Boaz. The men and women in the field. The elders of Israel. The whole community of Israel.

As we a life marked by a fear of the Lord and a trust in Him, others are impacted...

When others see you live sacrificially, it inspires them to do the same...

When others see you take relational risks with people, they are encouraged to do the same...

A lot of disciple-making – growing in Christ likeness and displaying His love to other – is caught more than taught...

The command is to teach others to obey and sometimes the best way to do this is for us to obey...

- I learned about the importance of integrity from Danielle on a summer mission as she wrestled about whether to use one of her ministry stamps for personal use...
- I learned about financial stewardship from Sandy on an impromptu trip to the mall as she stood at the counter considering whether or not she really need to buy something...

- I learned about joy in suffering as I watched my Josh grief the loss of his dad and from his wife when 3-4 months later her mom was diagnosed with the very same kind of cancer that took Josh's dad life...

All these people pulled the curtain back and gave me a front row seat to their life...

**T:** Now, I don't think these people were putting on a show for me or trying to even model these things to me in those moments. I truly believe that they were living before the face of the Lord and out of a desire to honor Him. And as we already know that was also true for Ruth. When she clung to Naomi on that road she had no idea what chapters 2-4 of the book would bring or what would become of her great grandson or that she would be a part of the lineage of the Messiah. NO CLUE! Yet, as she is just putting one foot in front of the other fearing and trusting God, she ends up playing a role in God's redemptive story.

## **RUTH PLAYS A PART IN GOD'S REDEMPTIVE STORY**

Now, I don't this is a matter of reward...

This is a matter of consequence...

As Ruth is just doing what she's supposed to be doing, she finds herself playing a part in God's redemptive plan...

This is why this story is in the Bible...

To tells us of how God fulfills His promise to all of creation to bring about one who will crush the head of Satan and to restore and redeem all that was lost at the fall...

God's story is still moving forward...

And you and I have been invited to be a part of it...

In life and in ministry there is a verse that serves as an anchor for me...

In life, it clarifies God's plan for my life. When good things like making a good friend or bad things like someone hitting my car, my roommates car, and my friends car in the middle of night happen, this verse provides me with perspective.

In ministry, it clarifies what should be my goal in disciple-making.

### ***READ ROMANS 8:28-30***

God's goal in for His people is for them to be conformed into the image of Christ...

Make sense right...the imago Dei

I heard a man say once - In ministry, we are to be for the completion of another...the completion of the other in Christ...

## **LAND THE PLANE**

Beloved, it will cost you something to commit yourself to the work of helping others growing in Christlikeness.

Think about it...

- We were born into sin...
- We got a long way to go...
- And so do the people we serve...

Praise God that we have a Savior who has not only made us right with God but who is also committed to transforming His people into the image of His Son and who in the end will make us like Him!

However, in the meantime, He has invited us to join Him in this work and as I said before as we join Him in this it can't be about us earning a gold star or finding some sense of purpose in our lives.

We need an anchor outside of ourselves to compel us to live sacrificially for others in the task of disciple making.

Grow in your convictions and fear of the Lord...  
Grow in your trust of the Lord...

## **HOW DO WE DO THIS?**

It's committing to the basics

- Read your Bible – Grow in our convictions
- Pray often – Grow in our trust
- Be present in your life – Living life as God intended (Obedience)

This is what will sustain you...

Let's pray...