

A Message of Hope to Carry You Through Hopeless Seasons

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you without a redeemer. May he become famous in Israel! He will be a comfort for your soul and support you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Then Naomi took the child, laid him on her lap, and became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David (Ruth 4:13-22).

The storyline of Ruth goes from a funeral to a wedding both practically and emotionally.

Ruth, one of the best-written short stories of all time, concludes with scenes of God's hand of providential blessing resting upon Boaz, his lovely bride, Ruth, and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Subsequently, the story completes its cycle from barrenness to birth, widowhood to marriage, poverty to riches, bitter to sweet, idolatry to worship and devastation to redemption. The big idea in this section of Scripture is that piety and providence are inextricably connected. Simply, those who continue to live in holiness, trusting God to bless them, aren't disappointed because in His time and by His grace, God

in His goodness smiles upon them.

Indeed, Ruth and Naomi were first wrecked and then redeemed financially, relationally, spiritually and generationally. They accepted the reality of their lives, accepted that their lives had forever changed with the death of their husbands, had a funeral to grieve their losses, conducted a life-autopsy to learn what had brought their painful circumstances, healed up, moved toward God's people and presence and enjoyed a fresh start.

Their little story, which echoes the big story of Jesus, reveals that life comes after death. If you're reading this amidst a painful season of life, Ruth and Naomi's example provides hope to keep going until you're on the other side of the dark valley you're currently in.

Ruth and Boaz had a love that rivals any love story in human history. And God gave them a son named Obed, who became the grandfather of the great King David, through whom Samuel (2 Sam. 7:1-7) promised would come Jesus Christ. Ruth is mentioned in only one place in the entire New Testament. In Matthew 1, the foreigner Ruth is included with the unwed Mary, the prostitute Tamar, and the adulteress Bathsheba as the only four women included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the inclusion of each woman reinforces the truth that Jesus Christ saves us by pure grace and blesses even the least likely people from the least deserving backgrounds.

While God is the hero of the story, Naomi, Ruth and Boaz are wonderful mentors for us to learn from. Although Naomi was bitter about her life, she wisely chose to take her pain and problems to God and His people for healing and help. Although Ruth was a new convert with no guarantee of safety or welcome, she ran to God and His people in faith that somehow He would providentially take care of her if she simply woke up every day to do what was right in His sight. And Boaz stands above most other men in Scripture as an example for every

man—particularly young men who aspire to be godly husbands, fathers and business leaders. In fact, there are numerous lessons to be learned from the life and love story of Ruth and Boaz, including:

- God loves, saves, transforms and blesses people from even the worst backgrounds and family histories.
- Older, divorced and widowed people can find love and godly spouses.
- Character is what counts, especially when you think no one is watching.
- Jesus' family had some horrible people in it, which means there's room for us horrible people, too!
- Those without godly parents and/or the input of a godly family can have a God-honoring, romantic relationship with their spouse.
- Work ethic, character, income and holiness are what show that a man is ready for marriage.
- Sometimes the family of God's people is a stronger bond than even blood family.

In a day when most adults are single, the timeless story of Ruth is perhaps more timely than ever. The story begins amidst seemingly hopeless circumstances for nearly hopeless people.

Are you the first link, strong link, weak link or broken link in your chain of faith? If you don't come from a strong chain, how can you be encouraged by the life of Ruth? Boaz was a strong link in the chain. What can you learn from him? {eoa}

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