



PROVIDENCE

 / LEARN

INTRODUCTION

A great story captivates us. We're easily engrossed in classics from Gilgamesh to Star Wars. We yearn for heroic tales of people overcoming insurmountable adversity, hoping that we will experience luck in a similarly powerful way. Too often we cling to that concept of luck and fail to recognize God's providential hand orchestrating every aspect of our lives, from the large events to the littlest details like a baby's breath to the joy of rain after a hot week in Arizona.

Ironically, many of us are numb to the true stories of God's providence that are embedded in scripture. Instead we put our hope and faith in the fictional tales produced by Hollywood. We've either heard these Biblical stories so many times that they've become familiar refrains, or we've heightened the value of our cultural stories to be more important than Scripture. In fact, many of us would have to admit that we're guilty of viewing Biblical narratives in such a distant light that they've simply become fictional to us. It's easy to forget that these people aren't characters in a story written by a novelist or playwright. They're real historical people in God's grand narrative.

The Book of Ruth is thick with every element that creates a great story: setting, inciting incident, conflict, rising action, dynamic and round characters, climax, and a resolution. At first glance the book may seem simplistic, but Ruth is one of the dominoes that the Master Storyteller put into place to author our story and our salvation.

We hope that this series reminds Redemption Church of God's incredible power to weave all things for the good of his glory. It is also our hope that you fall back in love with the stories of the Bible and connect deeply to our heritage through the real heroes who lived and died in the sovereign providence of our great God.

WEEK ONE: GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN OUR SUFFERING

Read: Ruth 1:1-22

Introduction

Naomi Widowed

1:1 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.

It’s easy for us to pray for God’s provision and protection. Yet, we’re quick to credit our circumstances or luck as the reason behind life’s events rather than God’s hand constantly at work. “That’s life,” we say. However, in reality, it’s God’s providence moving throughout every detail of life. Nothing happens on a daily basis, good or bad, that isn’t ordained by God in his sovereignty. Yes, Ruth is a short book, but it’s thick with details that we skip over and take for granted, details that will make for a big sermon series.

This week, examine the variety of characters, literary styles, plot lines, and settings of Ruth. Examine them as a series of events that God weaved together for his glory as part of his providential plan for redemption.

Discussion

- What character do you think you relate to most in the opening of Ruth? Why?
- Do you think that Elimelech and his sons were in sin? What evidence is there to that fact? Is there evidence against it? Why would this be significant?

Explanation

- Think about the characters in this opening. Where are they from? Why do they move? Why do you think these settings may be significant?

- What is ironic about Naomi wanting to return to Bethlehem?
- Why does Naomi want her daughters-in-law to leave her? Why does this show that she has their best interest in mind?
- Why does this make Ruth’s sacrifice even more significant? What risks is she taking?

Application

- Reflect on Verses 15-18. While these verses are most famous for their application to weddings, what significance can you see in this particular context? What other relationships can we apply this devotion to?
- How often do you try to control God’s plan for your life?
- How often do you reflect on all the various events and different variables that had to occur in order to lead you to where you are today? How can you praise God for his incredible control over your life?

Monday - Setting

1:1 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.

...19 So the two of them [Naomi and Ruth] 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?”

While we’re not sure why there was a famine in the land, we do know that Biblical famines are usually a result of God’s people disobeying his words or his commands. Here we see one family, instead of trying to address their sin, run away from their responsibilities as they find alternate methods for survival. Thankfully, even our poor choices can’t stop God’s plans. This brief detour into a foreign land allowed Ruth to meet Naomi and bring her back to Bethlehem. The setting of Ruth, and indeed our own story, is significant. Daily we must ask, Where has God

called us? When have we rebelled against God because of where he's called us or resisted from going somewhere we know we should be? Today, reflect upon the setting of your own life story and what significance it has in God's plan for you.

Tuesday - Character Profile: Elimelech

1:1 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.

If it's true that the famine in Israel was a result of wrongdoing, then rather than humbling himself before God and attempting to reconcile his (or his people's) sins, Elimelech took the cowardly way out and moved to a land where the Lord wasn't worshiped, praised, or even regarded as powerful. Yet again, the text is unclear as to how and why Elimelech died. Though, it could have very well been his avoidance of God's call of perseverance. While some facts are unclear, we can certainly relate to Elimelech's need for instant gratification and quick solutions. How often do you avoid God's call on your life? How often do you think that a move—whether it be financial, career, relational, or physical—will make all the difference? How often do we exclude God from the decisions that most impact us? Today, pray that the Lord guides your every move and that he's a part of all that you do.

Wednesday - Character Profile: Orpah

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...

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Orpah may be a static, flat character that we can easily ignore. She isn't mentioned more than a handful of times, and yet we can still see a lot of ourselves in her. For ten years Orpah and Naomi developed a tight familial bond. They worked side-by-side and suffered side-by-side. One would think a bond like that wouldn't be easily broken. Yet, when the time came, Orpah chose to go her own way, leaving the only family she had. How often do we follow our instinctual nature? Even when we

know what we should do, our flesh sometimes overcomes our commitments. Today, evaluate how you are like Orpah and how you may have broken bonds and escaped commitments simply because it was best for you. How can you let the Lord speak more into your decisions so that the flesh doesn't motivate them in the future?

Thursday - Character Profile: Ruth

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.

This famous passage, often read in weddings, exemplifies Ruth's sacrificial nature. Unlike Orpah, who left Naomi at the first opportunity, Ruth vowed to stay with her mother-in-law, knowing full well that she was entering an unknown land and unknown people. Few of us are faced with this dilemma. Rare are the times when we are asked to completely turn our lives around. But how often do we take that extra step outside our comfort zone to advance God's kingdom? How often do we hide from opportunity and responsibility because we fear the unknown? Today, ask God to help you recognize the opportunities that he presents for you to be faithful to him and his mission. Pray that he gives you the courage to carry out his call—even if it leads you into the realm of the unknown.

Friday - Character Profile: Naomi

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?"

Many people wrongfully assume that the Bible is filled with perfect, holy people who exemplify what it means to be a follower of God all the time. While it's true that we certainly look to Scripture for ex-

amples to live by, we must recognize that the people in the Bible were not above sin, temptation, or genuine emotion and frustration. We can recite verses and quote theology all we want, but when we hit a wall of obstacles and spiritual attack we're prone to doubt God's just plan for our lives. Wrongfully assuming we know better than God, we can easily become bitter towards our Creator. Today, consider when you've been like Naomi—when have you been angry with God? Did it help? How do you think your emotions in difficult times can be used to trust in God and glorify him? Pray that the Lord gives you the wisdom to follow him unconditionally.

Saturday – Plot Links

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.

Here we have a summary of the events so far. While none of the characters involved in the story of Ruth would have dreamed up their circumstances—being widowed and desolate—the Lord has still redeemed sin, moved circumstances, controlled weather and vegetation, and worked through them to get Ruth and Naomi back to Bethlehem at the beginning of harvest. Whether we know it or not, God is providentially and personally involved in even the simplest details of our life, leading us to this very moment. Today, reflect on the Great Weaver, the One who guides so many different events for our good and his glory. Praise him for always loving you and protecting you in everything—no matter how big or small.

WEEK TWO: GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN OUR BLESSING

Read: Ruth 2:1-13

Introduction

Ruth Meets Boaz

2:1 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.

When all seems lost, God provides a way. Here, God brings Boaz to help Ruth through poverty and alienation. We could be tempted to equate Boaz’s role as redeemer in this story as an author’s “all too perfect” solution to an impossible problem. The pieces fit together almost too well and the plot moves along almost too seamlessly toward reconciliation and resolution. We know experientially that resolution to problems isn’t always this smooth. But sometimes it is. After all, God is able to move in whatever way pleases him most. The truth of the matter is that God’s solution is always perfect according to his will—not ours. Many consider Boaz a prefiguration of Christ. In other words, he has many characteristics that foreshadow the character and actions of Christ. Yet, Boaz’s actions, while noble and commendable, don’t always impact us as memorable examples of how we should live our life. This week we will examine Boaz as a Christ-like figure, how we can learn from him and the One who sent him, and about how God works through those who submit themselves to be used for his glory.

Discussion

- Describe a time when your circumstances seemed hopeless? How did you try, to the best of your ability, to fix your circumstances? Who did you turn to? What was the outcome?

- Describe a time when the solution to your problem seemed just too perfect? What happened? Did you give God the glory or did you give the glory to luck?

Explanation

- The ESV Study Bible explains gleaning as “appear[ing] in this scene 12 times (vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 15 [twice], 16, 17 [twice], 18, 19, 23). Provisions for the poor, sojourners, widows, and orphans allowed them to gather standing grain in corners or borders of fields, as well as dropped stalks and left-behind sheaves (Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19).” How do you think Ruth felt gleaning in fields? How would you feel?
- Verse 3 notes that “she happened” to glean on the part of the field belonging to Boaz? What do you think is the intention behind this phrasing?
- Why do you think that Boaz decided to be so generous? What motivated him to exceed what he was required to give?
- How do you think Ruth and Naomi respond to this? How would you respond?

Application

- Where do you turn for generosity when you are in need? Are you humble enough to ask for help, or does your pride get in the way?
- How generous are you with what God has given you?
- Reflect on those whom God has placed in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to see who most needs to be blessed this week and pray that you are able to fill some of their needs.

Monday: Leadership Lessons

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.”

Some employees are blessed with incredible supervisors who treat them well and serve the Lord. Boaz, a man of wealth, could have easily

trampled on his workers. Instead, he chose to bless and engage with them as fellow children of God. How often do we care for those whom we are called to lead? How often do we put our relationship with the Lord above profit, grades, or other result-oriented data? Today, reflect on how you interact with those over whom you have influence. Is your leadership reflective of Christ-like qualities, or do you deal with others no differently than a non-believer? Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of any shortcomings and to guide you to help inspire those around you.

Tuesday: Generosity

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."

Most people actually love the concept of a tithe. Perhaps they still struggle with giving up some of their finances, but dividing by ten seems clear and consistent enough. However, God never calls us to give just enough. Gleaning fields was a privilege given to those in need, and most people—much like us—followed the law because it was just that, the law. Yet, Boaz goes above and beyond the requirement of the law by providing Ruth with more than she could have asked for in the form protection, food, and drink. We must be cautious of giving “just enough” in our tithes and our relationships. After all, God didn’t give “just enough” to save us. He gave everything. Today, evaluate your generosity and how you can use it to better advance God’s kingdom and bless those around you.

Wednesday: Looking Past Our Sins

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."

To say Ruth was out of place in her new home is an understatement. She is unfamiliar with the cultural norms of her new residence, hav-

ing grown up her whole life as a bitter enemy to those who now host her. We can assume that a lot of people cast a glaring, judgmental eye upon her or whispered as she passed. Boaz, however, looked passed her cultural displacement. He recognized that our identity isn’t defined by our past but rather God defines it. Too often we let our background, upbringing, and previous sins cloud our perspective of ourselves and others. Today, think of the past background or sin that is weighing down your view of someone (including yourself) and ask the Lord to help you see through his eyes all those whom he’s called as a child of God, forgiven by the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice, which eliminated all sin and eradicated all former upbringing.

Thursday: Redemption

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.

Old Testament laws dictated that if a man died, a close relative could take that woman as his wife and “redeem” her. Women in that time were totally dependent on either their father’s or their husband’s provision. Widows like Naomi and Ruth would be in a terribly difficult, if not impossible, financial situation. The ESV Study Bible comments that, “Boaz is neither the closest relative to Naomi nor the only one. This situation combines two institutions: the redemption of family land and levirate marriage.” Thus, if Boaz married Ruth, the family would be financially and emotionally restored. Again, Boaz, as a prefigure to Christ, demonstrates the unbelievable sacrifice and generosity it took to bring us back to where we belong. Today, reflect on the concept, the cost, and the love exemplified by redemption.

Friday: Determination and Trust

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.

As we learned yesterday, widows during the time of Ruth were devastated emotionally and financially. It would be easy and even understandable to respond like Naomi did by becoming embittered to the world and to God. However, Ruth is determined to help her mother-in-law survive this challenging time. Such tenacity “happened” to lead her to a path of redemption. How often do we persevere despite the grim outlook? How often do we throw our hands up in despair rather than trusting that all of God’s plans are good? Today, reflect on your response to tragedy and difficult times and outline how you can respond more like Ruth in times of great need.

Saturday: God Provides

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.”

We have a short-term memory. God consistently brings miracles, both big and small, into our lives. He answers prayers, opens paths, protects us from evil, and blesses us even when we least deserve it. Yet, we continue to doubt his incredible provision for us. Under no circumstances should Ruth or Naomi have hoped for what they received from Boaz. God not only provided what they needed, he also brought an incredible abundance to their situation. Recall a time when God either provided just what you needed or more than enough. Meditate on that blessing and allow it to be the first thing that comes to your mind the next time you seemingly face an insurmountable need.

WEEK THREE: GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN OUR DECISIONS

Read: Ruth 3:1-18

Introduction

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

3:1 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."

Most good stories include a passionate romance. The thrill of the chase and the anxiety of courtship keep us engaged to the plot line. The story



of Ruth is no different as she seeks to have Boaz extend his previous generosity to redeem her and her family in what is admittedly one of the most difficult and unique portions of Scripture.

Many cultural norms and practices may prevent us from understanding exactly what is going on in this text. Many commentators question the motivations of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz regarding this scene. While there are various details that we can certainly learn from, it's important to focus on the greater picture here: Ruth humbly approached Boaz for further relationship, and Boaz honorably pursued her. From these two points we can gain a bigger understanding of what it means to be a Biblical man and woman, especially pre-marriage. This week, we will look at this and other scripture to identify the qualities that God intends us to have in Biblical relationships and marriages.

Discussion

- How do you think each of the characters acted or responded to this scene? Was Naomi too bold in her instructions? Were Ruth's actions a bit odd? How did Boaz react to a woman sleeping at his feet?
- What do you think marks the qualities of a strong Biblical relationship and marriage?

Explanation

- What do you think it means that Naomi should "seek rest" for Ruth? Why do you think she wants to do this?
- What advice does Naomi give Ruth before she visits Boaz? Is it good advice? Why or why not?
- Re-read 2:12 in the context of 3:9? What do you think it means to "spread wings" over someone? Why do you think Ruth uses this language?
- What is Boaz's first response to this odd situation? Why do you think he started this way? What did it help or prevent?
- Why do you think Boaz wants to keep her there for the night? What is he trying to do?

- How does Boaz continue to show his generosity at the end of the section? Why do you think this is significant?

Application

- Who do you know that can either counsel you or whom you can counsel in relationship and marital matters? How often do you speak to them?
- How often do you reflect on Biblical manhood/womanhood? Spend some devotional time in Psalms and Proverbs this week to remind yourself of God's intentions for you in relationships.

Monday: *Proverbs 31:10-12*

*10 An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.*

Here we see excellent advice for both men and women. An excellent wife continues to work hard for her family, supports her husband and children, and stands as a person whom her home and church can trust. Of course, as sinners, we are always going to fall short at some point. However, when a man finds a woman who strives to do the Lord's bidding, he should treasure her more than precious jewels. Women, are you shaping yourself to be this type of an example? Men, are you looking for and treasuring the right type of woman? Today, reflect on how you can respond to this passage's call to Biblical womanhood.

Tuesday: *Proverbs 31:13-19*

*13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
14 She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
15 She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
17 She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.*

*18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.*

Many have erroneous beliefs on Biblical womanhood and what roles women should play in both society and the home. Some wrongfully assume that women should only be at home. Today's passage demonstrates that a strong Biblical woman can work hard both at home as well as the marketplace. Outlining what it means to be a hard worker, this passage reminds us that it takes great effort to manage a household beside a husband. As a woman, how are you striving to work hard for your family? As a man, how are you acknowledging your wife's hard work? Today, ask that the Lord gives you the opportunity to serve your partner in a way that is glorifying to God.

Wednesday: *Proverbs 31:20-24*

*20 She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
22 She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.*

The generosity and hard work of Biblical men and women doesn't start and stop in the home. Today's passage exemplifies both a man and a woman extending their skills, time, and resources to those around them who may not have enough. Furthermore, they understand that as Christians we're called to build up the body of Christ. How are you known at the "gates" of the town? How generous are you with your time and resources? Today, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to serve your community and your church in the best way possible.

Thursday: *Proverbs 31:25-26*

*25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*

Character and personality are critical to our mission. No one wants to hear about Jesus from someone who doesn't act and live like him. Today's scripture reminds us that we are to carry ourselves with strength, dignity, and kindness, never afraid to speak into other's lives but doing so in a way that reflects the character of Christ. Today, evaluate how your demeanor attracts others to our Savior? Are you pleasant to be around? Do you attract others to your company? Or do you generally push people away by what you say and do? Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of any wrongdoing and pray that you may be a light unto those around you to point to the One who saved you from so much.

Friday: *Proverbs 31:27-28*

*27 She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:*

"The bread of idleness" is tempting. Our culture, economy, and general stresses of our social life can leave us worn and torn, often pining after a lazy day of rest. Now, there is certainly nothing wrong with taking a Sabbath; in fact, God commands it. But we are not made for extended idleness. We're made to work hard for our families, our bosses, and above all God and his mission. Today, evaluate whether or not you've been too idle in your mission and ask God to provide the time, energy, and resources to truly work hard for him and those he's put in your life.

Saturday: *Proverbs 31:29-31*

*29 "Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all."
30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.*

Above all the qualities to be admired, the best is that a Biblical woman fears and loves the Lord. All other qualities are an outpouring from this fundamental core. Not only does she work hard for her husband, her children, and her church family, but she also does it out of a reverence and extreme love for God and his commands. Women, evaluate today how you can work to be the type of woman the scriptures call you to be. Continually remind yourself that any positive quality or behavioral modification will fail if it's not grounded in the Gospel. Ask the Lord to remind you of this daily.

WEEK FOUR: GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN OUR WISDOM

Read: Ruth 4:1-12

Introduction

Boaz Redeems Ruth

4:1 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."

So far this story has provided thrilling settings, intriguing characters, captivating romance, and unique plot twists. Of course, what would a great story be without a great villain? While this unnamed "redeemer" (he is unnamed for a reason) may fall a tad short of our Lex Luthors or Green Goblins, he certainly is an antithesis to what Boaz does and represents.



Contrary to popular belief, Boaz did not have to redeem Ruth or her family; this requirement fell immediately on this unnamed character. His selfish first instinct is to redeem the situation, wrongfully assuming that if he does so he will gain financially. Yet, when Boaz clarifies that he might actually lose money, he quickly rescinds his offer and tosses Ruth and Naomi aside for the preservation of his own financial gain.

Naturally, we are not rooting for him to be the one Ruth marries. Yet, we learn that finances should never be the barrier to doing what God has asked us to do. This week we will explore Biblical manhood, how this unnamed redeemer falls far short of God's expectations, and how Boaz demonstrates the attributes of what God calls men to do.

Discussion

- What do you think it means to be a “Biblical Man”?
What does culture say a man should be and how he should act?
How are the Bible's views similar to our current culture's?
Where do they differ?
- When have you allowed finances to stop you from doing God's work? Why is it so difficult for us to sacrifice our time, money, and talents to God's mission?

Explanation

- Why do you think that Boaz's presentation to the redeemer may have been intimidating? Who was there?
- Do you think it was intentional that Boaz gave his proposal in front of so many people? What do you think the reason is?
- What piece of information changed the redeemer's mind?
- What is the elders's response to the deal? Why do you think they bring up Rachel and Leah? What does that allusion add to our story?
- Why do you think the redeemer is never named?

Application

- What intimidating situations have you faced?
What motivated and strengthened you to face the situation?

- What does responsibility mean to you? What are you responsible for? Where do you fall short of your responsibilities? Which ones do you pass off as less important, despite the fact that scripture and God calls you to them?

Monday: Psalm 112:1

*112:1 Praise the Lord!
Blessed is the man who fears the Lord,
who greatly delights in his commandments!*

This is a tremendous Psalm to meditate on. Here we see a firm outline of what it means to be a Biblical man—keeping the fear and love of the Lord at the core of all motivations. This one verse is packed with several questions to consider. What does it mean to be blessed? What does it mean to fear the Lord? What does it mean to delight in God's commands? What are God's commands? No one really likes rules. As sinners we'd much prefer to be in control and give ourselves exceptions wherever and whenever we see fit. Yet, this Psalm begins with a reminder that our ultimate happiness begins with a reverence for God and the boundaries that he, as a loving Father, has established for us. Today, meditate on the rules and commands that God gives and ask that he helps you delight in them.

Read this Psalm a few times. What qualities in this Psalm do you feel you best possess? What qualities do you fall short in? How can you better follow the path of righteousness? Ask the Lord to help these words seep into your heart and guide your decision making this week.

Tuesday: Psalm 112:2-5

*2 His offspring will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
3 Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.
4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;
he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.
5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;
who conducts his affairs with justice.*

Today's verses lead us to even more complicated questions. Does following God's commands automatically equate to wealth and riches? What do wealth and riches include? How can one's righteousness endure forever, and are we even motivated by that reward? It's

important to focus on what scripture tells us about God's plan for us. "Light dawns" for us, if we keep our Lord at the core of everything we do, despite hardships and devastations. Boaz certainly may have felt his stomach drop when the redeemer said he would take action, but that didn't leave Boaz in despair. Instead he persevered, trusting in God's plan. Always dealing honestly and justly, we must continue to keep his law and his commands in the forefront of our mind. Today, remind yourself how truly blessed you are regardless of your present circumstances. Ask the Lord for courage, strength, and perseverance to endure and to always see the light in the midst of darkness.

Wednesday: *Psalm 112:6-8*

*6 For the righteous will never be moved;
he will be remembered forever.
7 He is not afraid of bad news;
his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.
8 His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,
until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.*

So many wrongfully assume that becoming a Christian makes your life automatically easier. The truth is that becoming a Christian often makes life more complex and difficult. Yet, the Bible often refers to our Lord as a rock, a firm foundation that can't be moved. So many people despair when bad news comes. Surely, it's appropriate to mourn, to express sorrow, and to feel devastated, but never be afraid that God can't help you overcome, especially in his plan. Today, meditate on verse seven and ask God to compel you to live it out in all circumstances.

Thursday: *Psalm 112:9-10*

*9 He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honor.
10 The wicked man sees it and is angry;
he gnashes his teeth and melts away;
the desire of the wicked will perish!*

Paralleling what we learned last week in Proverbs 31, a righteous, Biblical man is generous with his time and money, recognizing that all resources come first and foremost from God. While living a godly life can sometimes be discouraging (there are many ethical shortcuts that could get us where we want to be much faster), scripture reminds us that if we maintain our devotion and our reliance on God, then we will

stand before him with nothing to fear. Those who don't love God will grow in bitterness, jealousy, and above all—judgment. Today, evaluate your generosity and ask that you are able to use your resources for his righteousness.

Friday: *Psalm 128:1-4*

*128:1 Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,
who walks in his ways!
2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.
3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the Lord.*

Those who fear the Lord will be blessed. And this passage articulates that we will be blessed by what we sow. Here we see the results of a strong Biblical marriage in children. While not all Christian couples will have children, they will (or should) certainly have those around them whom they are supporting, counseling, and shepherding closer to God. Those that obey God's commands are blessed with fruit and with leadership roles. What and whom has God entrusted into your care? Today, pray for those around you to whom you are responsible and ask the Lord to continue to help you lead well.

Saturday: *Psalm 112:5-6*

*5 The Lord bless you from Zion!
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life!
6 May you see your children's children!
Peace be upon Israel!*

We don't often think about how the decisions we make today have far-reaching implications for tomorrow. Ruth and Boaz, while they may seem inconsequential now, continue a lineage that would lead to God's own Son, our savior. Next week we will examine the gift of generations. But today, explore how well you think beyond your lifetime and what you are doing to help promote and build up the kingdom.

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WEEK FIVE: GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN OUR REDEMPTION

Read: **Ruth 4:13-22**

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.

Genealogies are often the most skipped sections of Scripture. We often question why it would be productive to read rosters of people, most of which had no other Biblical mentions and seemed to have no other critical significance. Today, we have to question why the author of such an intricately woven story would chose to end this complex plot with a genealogy. A bit anticlimactic, isn't it?

The story of Ruth is one of choices and actions. Too often we pass off what we do today as inconsequential to our lives or the kingdom. This mentality makes it much easier to justify sin, excuse our mistakes, and listen to ungodly council. The choices that Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz made, however, had significant and lasting impacts on God's Kingdom. In God's providence, Ruth and Boaz became great-grandparents to David, a man after God's own heart and someone to whom God promised his line would never end. This promise would eventually be fulfilled in Jesus.

This book ends with a genealogy to emphasize the fact that our daily choices affect tomorrow's generations. As Christians, we are to build up our treasures in heaven, not on earth. That may mean sacrificing much so that those in our near and far future can hear the Gospel proclaimed and can come to know Christ and his love.

Discussion

- Do you know your family history? What choices did individuals in your genealogy make that are currently impacting you now (positive or negative)?
- How often do you think about the next generation of Christians? What do you think you can do to ensure that God's Kingdom continues to grow here on Earth?

Explanation

- The Lord blessed Boaz and Ruth immediately with a son. Why was this significant, given Ruth's situation at the start of the book?
- Why do others focus on Naomi's blessing rather than Ruth's? Why do they say that a son has been born to Naomi?
- Given our discussion about genealogies, why do you think the author chose to list Boaz's family line?

Application

- How do you plan for the next generation? If you have kids, how do you plan for your kids
- How do you plan for the next generation of churchgoers? Within the church family, do you help cultivate those outside your age range?
- How do you think you can make a lasting footprint on God's kingdom? How are you allowing the Lord to use you in this way?

Monday: *Mathew 1: 1-16*

1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and

Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, 8 and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, 15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

Not many choose to include genealogies in their devotionals for good reason—lists of names don't often times inspire us or train us. However, take your time today and read through each name. Who do you recognize? What were their lives and choices like? Why do you think they were chosen to be part of Christ's family line? Spend your time in devotional prayer by studying how God so intricately wove together pieces of a puzzle to fulfill his promises.

Tuesday: *Luke 3:23-38*

23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son

of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

While two consecutive days of Jesus's genealogy may seem redundant, it is important to note that this one is a bit different from yesterday. Again, look through these various names and identify those who are in the lineage of Christ to discover inspiration and comfort. God doesn't choose us because we're so great. God chooses us because he is great. Every name on this list had significant flaws and sins that tainted their past. Yet, they persevered in faith and put their entire trust in God. Today, praise God that he has covered all of your sins and equipped you for his word and his mission.

Wednesday: *Genesis 12:1-9*

12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. 9 And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

God's chosen people began with one man's leap of faith. Coming from a culture that was completely contrary to God's original intent for us, he called Abram to be the first of many generations that would be a major part of God's redemptive plan to lead us back to him. What leaps of faith has God called you to? What major decisions is he putting in your path? What decisions are before you that may seem outlandish, terrifying, and perhaps even foolish, but could very well advance God's plan

for you and His Kingdom. Today, pray that the Lord gives you wisdom in your decisions and ask that God guides your steps carefully to his glory.

Thursday: *Esther 9:29-32*

29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. 30 Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth, 31 that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. 32 The command of Queen Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

Often paired and compared with the Book of Ruth, the Book of Esther is also about a brave young woman who took many risks for her faith. Not only did she overcome many racial and cultural barriers and prejudices, she then put her life on the line for the sake of the Jewish people. Her bravery saved many lineages of God's people from persecution and possible extinction. What bold choices are you making for your faith? Certainly we must pursue meaningful relationships with other Christians to spread the Gospel, but how are we going outside of our comfort zone to ensure that all hear the good news of our Lord? Today, evaluate the extent to which you're willing to risk for your faith. Ask the Lord to help you in his mission.

Friday: *Mathew 1:18-25*

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Joseph, Jesus's earthly father, is a character of whom we don't know much. He was an incredibly honorable man fit to help raise Jesus as a father. He could have very well accused Mary of adultery, a charge that came with death. Instead he chose to save her life and quietly separate from her. When God spoke to him to stay, he followed God's commands despite personal risk to himself. Like Boaz, he redeemed a situation that could easily have played out differently. How can you let God lead you like he led Joseph? Are you open to hear the words of the spirit? Today, pray that the Lord guides your decisions to make a lasting impact on present and future generations.

Saturday: *2 Timothy 4:1-7*

4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Here we see Paul, nearing the end of his life, giving some final instructions to his young protégé Timothy. Doing all he could to ensure the Gospel message thrived after his passing, Paul took great effort to pour into the next generation of Christian leaders. How can we support our present leaders? How often do we pray for our pastors, our worship leaders, and those who lead our Redemption Communities? Today, pray for those who serve you well and ask the Lord to help you help them build up the next generation of Christians.



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