

Read Ruth 1

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back 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. Ruth 1:16 I learned early on, that just because someone calls themselves a Christian, doesn't mean that they are. When my parents began to allow me to date, going out with a Christian was non-negotiable for them. Quite honestly, I didn't have a desire to date a non-Christian, because I knew in the long run we could never be compatible. But, until I met my wife Nikki, I had never seen a young woman who was so driven and authentic in her relationship with Jesus. Some girls you had to ask about their faith. With Nikki, her faith was her identity. You could no more separate her faith in Christ from her, than you could to remove her femininity from her. That's who she very honestly is, and that's why I love her.

In this passage of Ruth (which is one of my wife's favorite books), Ruth has experienced heartache in the loss of her husband. We see her sister-in-law not only leave Naomi, but to return to her land and to her gods (v.15). Ruth says not only will she not leave, but she doesn't want those gods of her past. She will stay with Naomi, and serve her God. I'm sure she knew much of Him, as a result of being the wife of a Jew, but she reveals that she truly sees the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as her God. **Are you fickle in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Could a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness snatch you away and bring you into their fold? Could a Muslim or a Hindu give you compelling arguments from their beautifully written religious texts? It happens to "church members" often enough, but is not the destiny of a Christian. A Christian not only claims Christ forever, but He claims us in the same way. Do you belong to Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, or have you held back parts of your life and your will, in the event you decide to go back to a former way of life (drugs, adultery, former disobedience)?**

Read Ruth 2

When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Ruth 2:15 When we were in seminary, money was pretty tight during the period of time that I couldn't find a job. A month came up that we didn't have the money to pay the rent, and the landlord called to say that someone had paid our rent anonymously. She gave us a card so we could write them a thank you note, but in the process I saw the address it was going to...my mother's! So I called my mom and thanked her, and she was disappointed that the secret had not been kept. She truly just wanted to help us, without us knowing it was her and feeling like we owed her some debt. The interesting tidbit, is that she had no idea we were actually short that month.

As you look at Boaz, he tried to bless Ruth in different ways. He allowed her to wander into the fields, instead of just taking the unharvested edges that the Law required be left for the poor to harvest. He also instructed his servants to drop extra grain, which by Law was also to be left on the ground for the poor to harvest. She apparently doesn't realize

what he had done, and she gets to enjoy a blessing. Too often people try to do something nice for someone else, and they get caught up in horn-tooting. They miss a blessing from God because they sought a blessing from men. **Do you truly bless other people? Sometimes we can't do it anonymously, but when you can, do you try? When people know who did something for them, they feel a need to thank them, and it's important that people realize that God is the one who blesses. If you ask for provision in some area, and a person provides it, guess who led that person to make that choice? Be a secret servant, knowing that people who are never rewarded will be rewarded by their Father in Heaven who sees all.**

Read Ruth 3

"Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning." Ruth 3:13 Some people get the wrong idea in what is really a beautiful story. Ruth goes and uncovers the feet of the man Boaz and lays there at his feet. There is nothing provocative about this act, as it was a Jewish custom to show servanthood. He had shown nothing but kindness, and she had been drawn to him. She requested that Boaz become her kinsman redeemer, another from her family to marry her because of the death of her husband. He takes upon himself the work to complete the redemption while she is simply to wait for him to take care of it. Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz will not rest until it is settled.

While this account is completely true, God included it in His Word because it's a picture of Christ. We see the kindness and love He showed us on the cross. Jesus didn't rest as He sought to redeem us, finally doing so on the cross and saying "It is finished." **Just like Ruth to Boaz, we come to Jesus with nothing. She didn't have anything to offer to Boaz except her life. In the same way, we offer our lives to Jesus, recognizing that we need to be redeemed. Do you remember what it took for Jesus to redeem you? It cost Him pain, suffering and death on the cross. Even though He rose again, do you think it made that death any less painful or difficult? No, and yet he did it for you. I love the quote "He came to pay a debt He did not owe, for people who owed a debt that they could not pay." Our sin costs too much for us to pay for it on our own. Remember as you sit in church or read your Bible, God doesn't owe you anything. He redeemed us. We owe Him everything. Thank Jesus today for redeeming you despite your sin and selfishness, and thank Him that He continues to redeem and hold you for all eternity, even though we are imperfect and fail Him at times.**

Read Ruth 4

"May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Ruth 4:15 I don't know why in-law relationships are the great punch line of comedians today? Sometimes people forget that when they marry someone, they marry the whole family. My wife's parents were divorced when we got married, but I had a great relationship with Nikki's mother before she passed away (from my wife's accounts,

her mom was scoring points for me before we ever went out). And while I think my father-in-law views me as a bumbling city slicker sometimes, I'll never forget walking in the church parking lot with him before our wedding and hearing him say that he was proud I was marrying his daughter. Ultimately, in-law relationships are the same as any other...they require patience, understanding and love.

Ruth had this kind of relationship with Naomi. Naomi was feeling a bit sorry for herself, even saying for people to no longer call her Naomi, but "bitter". The love Ruth had for her mother-in-law was so clear, that other people saw it. **How are your relationships among family and friends? Is there a lot of strain? Do you find it difficult to talk to certain people? Then it's probable that you have not truly been loving them as you should. Sometimes people can be a strain, and their expectations and selfish desires can push us away. But, that doesn't eliminate our need to love. If you have in-laws, find the good about them and build the relationship for the sake of your spouse and kids if you have them. If you are seen as a person of genuine love, you will be better able to share the gospel with your lost family and friends.**