

Finding Real Hope: A Study of Ruth

Justin Morton

Something To Think About

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Other Books by Justin:

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Finding Real Hope

Week 1: When it Seems All Hope is Gone

Introduction: When someone says, “I’ve lost all hope. My hope is completely gone.” what do they mean? Have you ever said something along these lines? If not, have you ever felt this way?

A Famine (vs. 1-2)

A. Bethlehem (house of bread) was well watered so a famine would have hit the area hard.

1. Famine could have been part of Israel’s spiritual rebellion (*Lev. 26:18-20; Deut. 28:15, 23-24*).
2. Elimelech (God is King) apparently didn’t trust God enough to provide and left the Promised Land to seek a better life among foreigners.

B. Elimelech moves his family to the nation of Moab. Moab was a pagan nation. (gods were Chemosh and Molech) This would have been dangerous for their sons.

1. Moab came from the descendants of Lot and his oldest daughter incestuous relationship (*Gen. 19:37*).
2. Moabites refused Israel passage through their territory when they came from Egypt (*Num. 22-24*).
3. It was Moabite women who seduced the sons of Israel and caused 24,000 to lose their lives (*Num. 25:1-9*).
4. Moab was to be excluded from the assembly of the Lord (*Deut. 23:3-6*).
5. Moab oppressed Israel for 18 years (*Judg. 3:14*).

Three Graves (vs. 3-5)

- A. Elimelech died and his two sons married Moabite women. Mahlon married Ruth (**4:10**) and Chilion married Orpah. God had warned against marrying foreigners (*Exo. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:3-4*).
- B. Naomi's two sons died. We don't know how they died or if their deaths had anything to do with where they were living or who they were married too. These men died without having any children.
- C. Naomi was left with two daughter-in-laws and no husband or sons.

A Hopeless Future (vs. 6-13; 20-21)

- A. Naomi heard that the Lord had visited His people and given them food. It was time for Naomi to go back home where she belonged.
- B. Naomi, realizing she has nothing to offer her daughter-in-laws, urges them to go back home to their own people in Moab.
- C. Naomi is indicating to her daughter-in-laws that there is no hope for them if they return back with her to the land of promise.
 - 1. "Have I sons yet in my womb, that they may be your husbands?" (*Deut. 25:5-6*).
 - 2. "I am too old to have a husband."
 - 3. Apparently Naomi feels that no Israelite man is going to marry foreign women.
- D. Naomi is a bitter woman who thinks the Lord is to blame for her messed up life (vs. **13, 20-21**).

Two Lonely Ladies (vs. 14-22)

- A. Orpah's departure emphasizes the loyalty and selfless devotion of Ruth to her mother-in-law.
- B. Ruth makes a choice that would lead to both: an unfamiliar God and an unpredictable future.
 - 1. Ruth was determined to share every experience with Naomi in the future.

- 2. She was determined to be buried in the same family tomb as Naomi.
- C. Naomi's return to Bethlehem caused a great stir amongst the people.

Conclusion: When it seems all hope is gone, remember God is always in the background working in ways we don't always realize (*v. 22*).

Practical Lessons

- A. Bad things happen to all people. Life is never completely fair.
- B. How we respond to the famines in our own lives, says a lot about who we are and our faith in the God we claim to serve. 1) Elimelech ran away. 2) Naomi became bitter.
- C. When it seems there is no hope, walking away from God should never be an option. Orpah turned around and walked away from the God she should have been running toward.
- D. Sometimes we have to decide to do what's unfamiliar and unpredictable. Ruth chose to walk away from what she knew and to go into a land and serve a God that was unfamiliar.
- E. We are to walk by faith, not by sight (*2 Cor. 5:7*). God takes care of the righteous (*Psa. 37:25*).

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Week 2: Seeing God In Our Circumstances.

Introduction: Typically we allow our bitterness toward our circumstances to blind us to the hand of God.

A Woman of Faith (2:1-3a)

- A. Ruth undertakes to provide for her and her mother-in-law. They had to do something.
 - 1. It's easy when we feel like we've lost all hope, to want to sit back, do nothing and just give up.
- B. "Let me go to the field and Glean..." (**Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22**). This was God's way of providing for the poor and needy while causing the Israelites to rely on Him.
 - 1. God was also concerned about widows, many of whom were poor (**Ex. 22:22-24; Deut. 10:18**).
 - 2. To live by faith means to take God at His word and then to act upon it. Faith w/o works is dead.
 - 3. Ruth acted in faith relying on someone to show her grace/favor.
- C. Application: When hope is gone, don't give up. Have faith to act. Naomi was bitter/Ruth was fearless.

A Man of Grace (2:3b- 17)

- A. Boaz was a "man of standing" (worthy, wealthy, influential). This is seen through his kind greeting to his workers and their response back to him.
- B. Boaz takes the initiative and speaks with Ruth. Boaz tells Ruth to stay and glean in his field following along with the women who worked for him. He even invited her to drink from the water jars that were filled by the men.
- C. "Why have I found favor in your eyes..." Ruth begins to see the grace that Boaz has extended.

- D. Boaz goes above and beyond what the LAW required of him. He sees to it that Ruth and Naomi are well taken care of.
- E. Application: When we are going through a difficult time, remember God can use His good people to bless us. When others are going through a difficult time, let's be compassionate and go above and beyond what is required or expected on our part.

A God of Love (2:18-23)

- A. Kinsman Redeemer – responsible for protecting the interest of needy members of extended family.
 - 1. Provide an heir for a brother who had died (**Deut. 25:25**).
 - 2. Redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (**Lev. 25:25-28**).
 - 3. Redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (**Lev. 25:47-49**).
- B. “As it turned out...” (v. 3) – This is almost like sarcasm. This has nothing to do with luck (**Prov. 16:33**). Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz, was the hand of God at work.
- C. Boaz played a part in God's providence. There was no guarantee that farmers during the days of the judges would be faithful to this provision in the Law; they did what was right in their own eyes.
- D. In times of difficulty, let's fix our eyes on Jesus (**Heb. 12:2**).

Conclusion: The same God whom Naomi thought was out to get her was in fact working for her good.

Practical Applications:

- A. Sometimes during our times of feeling hopeless, God is doing His greatest work.
- B. God still knows what He is doing today and because of His providence that should give us HOPE!

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Week 3: Taking A Risk/Do Something

Introduction: Have you ever taken a risk? What did the risk involve? Did the risk pay off?

Naomi's Concern (3:1-5)

- A. Naomi wants to find "rest" for Ruth. The idea of "rest" is a home with husband to provide for Ruth (1:9). She knows Ruth needs more than just food during barley season. She needs to be provided for permanently. She is a young Moabite widow in need of a husband.
- B. QUESTION: What concerns you so much that it keeps you up at night?
- C. In spite of her own troubles, Naomi was more concerned with Ruth. Thus, she instructs Ruth to clean up.
- D. Naomi and Ruth take the initiative during what would have been a time of hopelessness.

Ruth's Request (3:6-9)

- A. Ruth assumes some risk by going to Boaz on the threshing floor. Prostitutes were known to try to seduce the men during this time of celebration and fun.
- B. QUESTION: Why do people take risk in the first place?
- C. Ruth is asking Boaz to protect her. Ruth's actions were a request for marriage.
- D. Boaz is vividly reminded that he must serve as the Lord's protective wings over Ruth (2:12).

Boaz's Response (3:10-15)

- A. Boaz once again shows he is a man of integrity. He doesn't kick her out or misinterpret her intentions.

- B. Boaz would see to it that Ruth and Naomi were provided for one way or another.
- C. Boaz sent more barley home with Ruth for her and Naomi.
- D. QUESTION: What are you willing to do for the people in your life who are going through what they may feel is a hopeless situation?

Practical Applications:

- A. Redemption and hope are and will be needed. QUESTION: What type of circumstances can bring our need for redemption?
- B. Taking a risk is sometimes part of finding hope (Prov. 3:5-6). QUESTION: What kind of risks must we take? (EX: if an alcoholic just mourns that he is an alcoholic, will he ever conquer his addiction?)
- C. There is always someone who cares for you in the midst of your hopelessness (ILLS: When we lost our baby).

Finding Real Hope
Week 4: Happily Ever After

Introduction: We love movies that have happy ending, right? (Lion King or Toy Story 3 ending)

Boaz the Man of Integrity (3:16-18)

- A. Naomi believes that Boaz is a man of his word (3:12-14).
- B. QUESTION: Do you like dealing with people who aren't people of integrity?

Boaz the Man of Action (4:1)

- A. Boaz doesn't waste any time. Notice how quickly he goes to settle this matter.
- B. QUESTION: Have you ever had to wait on someone who made a promise to you?

Boaz Refused to Take Short cuts (4:2-4)

- A. Boaz wants to marry Ruth but he wants to do it God's way.
- B. Boaz did all this in front of a full court. He took the proper legal action.
- C. When need more people in the church who are like Boaz; people who are not willing to take short cuts when it comes to living out the Word of God.

Boaz Gets What He Wants (4:5-12)

Practical Applications:

- A. God is walking with us through our hardships and pain.
 - 1. Before Ruth met Boaz, Naomi was bitter and felt that God was out to get her.
 - 2. How often do we go through difficulties feeling like we are going at it alone?

3. Matthew 28:20 and Hebrews 13:5-6
- B. God is Working for our Good.
1. There will always be peaks and valleys. Don't spend too much time focusing on your current circumstances because they will soon change.
 2. God worked for the good of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz (He provided food and family).
 3. God worked for the good of mankind (Ruth 4:13-22; Matt. 1:5-6, 16; Jn. 3:16).
- C. God is Working for His Glory (Psa. 23:3).
1. Behind the story of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz, God was working for His ultimate glory.
 2. God will find a way to shine His glory bright even in the midst of utter darkness.

Conclusion: The real hope that Ruth and Naomi found wasn't finding food and family, but it was finding out they served a God that could be trusted even in