

1. Celebration of Matt Muehlhausen.

2. Elimelek and Naomi move from Bethlehem to Moab because of a famine

- a. Two sons
- b. In Moab, Elimelek dies
 - i. Two sons marry local Moabite women (Orpah and Ruth)
 - ii. Two sons die 10 years later
 - iii. Just Naomi, Orpah and Ruth left
- c. Naomi hears from folks back in Bethlehem that God has now provided food
 - i. Naomi is going to go back
 - 1. she must feel “about time” or “too late”**
 - ii. As the 3 are on their way back Naomi tells the women to stay
 - 1. because they deserve kindness as they have been kind (**selfless**)
 - 2. they will be provided for (**their benefit/gracious**)
 - a. both women WANT to stay with Naomi (attractive)**
 - i. Tell bad mother-in-law joke**
 - 3. Naomi can't provide for them
 - a. Naomi feels “bitter” (her world had turned on her in Moab)
 - b. Orpah stays in Moab, but “Ruth clung to her.” (1:14)
 - i. Ruth was DETERMINED (READ 1:16-18)**
 - ii. If I am hot, I keep shooting, if I am not hot, I shoot until I am hot
 - c. The town is pumped to see Naomi
 - i. They know her as “pleasant”
 - ii. Naomi not the same woman, now “bitter” (Mara)

3. Ruth is a worker . . . hits the fields “to glean behind the harvesters.”

- a. She ends up in the fields of Boaz
 - i. Boaz greets the harvesters in faith, “the Lord be with you.”
 - ii. Boaz notices Ruth, a foreigner, but doesn't seem to care . . . and protects her
 - 1. Boaz heard about Ruth's heart (READ 2:11-12) (like reputation of Naomi)**
 - 2. Boaz takes care of Ruth (nothing romantic, just genuine care)
 - iii. Ruth continues to work the fields of Boaz

4. Naomi puts together a plan to secure Ruth's future

- a. Wash, perfume and best clothes and went to threshing floor
 - i. Ruth puts on the moves, total trust in Naomi
 - 1. Threshing floor:** sheaves of grain on the floor, oxen separated grain from stalks by walking on it, grain thrown into the air, breeze carried chaff away and grain fell to the floor, then sifted
 - ii. Ruth basically proposed to Boaz
 - 1. Boaz is excited because Ruth did not go for a younger man
 - a. Ruth is a “woman of noble character”**

- b. Boaz is indeed a family guardian, but NOT the closest related
 - i. Naomi's plan was based upon land the family still owned in Bethlehem (Ruth 4:3)
 - ii. **Leviticus 25:25, "If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold."**
 - iii. **Deuteronomy 25:5-6, "If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."**
 - 1. Eastern servants frequently slept in the same tent as their masters
 - a. **"spread the corner of your garment over me" (3:9)**
 - i. **Ezekiel 16:8, "Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine."**
 - ii. **Arab custom of a man throwing a garment over the woman he decides to marry**
- c. Ruth is assertive, but she is not aggressive
 - i. She lays down by his feet, uncovers them, but then waits . . .
 - 1. **I just waited for Dana outside her classes and outside her apartment, etc.**
- d. Boaz shows his deep honor, by not only not immediately taking Ruth as his wife, but by going and finding the other guy that is a closer relative
 - i. The other guy was willing to take the land, but did not want Ruth
 - ii. Boaz did and bought both and married Ruth
- e. Chapter 4 then ends with the significance of what has happened.
 - i. **READ 4:14-17.**
 - ii. **God used these common people . . . to give birth to David, the righteous King of Israel**

5. There are several themes that I believe are essential for us to understand from this story

- a. **God can and does work through ordinary people in ordinary ways**
 - i. At no point in this passage does the angel of the LORD show up and say, "Naomi go here" or "Ruth do this."
 - ii. There are no prophets that spring forth to proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord."
 - 1. Just ordinary people doing ordinary things
 - a. **"For Ruth no guidance comes through dreams, visions, angelic messengers, or voices from heaven. God is everywhere, but totally hidden in purely human coincidences and schemes . . . God's firm, loving providence lurks behind Ruth's 'lucky' meetings with Boaz and Naomi's plan."**
 - 2. But they are faithful in those ordinary things and God uses them
 - a. Naomi has a reputation
 - i. The people in Bethlehem remember her
 - ii. Her daughters-in-law do not want to leave her side and Ruth never does

- b. Ruth makes a difficult choice to follow Naomi away from home
 - i. She cares for Naomi and refuses to leave her
 - ii. She is assertive, but she is also a servant
 - c. Boaz treats Ruth with respect
 - i. Boaz does not care that she is a Moabite
 - ii. He protects and cares for her
 - iii. He does not take advantage of her and offers her first to the closer relative
 - b. Non-Israelites are welcomed into God's covenant relationship with God's people**
 - i. Ruth is a Moabite, yet she become a part of the bloodline of David and eventually Jesus
 - ii. In Matthew, Ruth is one of only 4 women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus
 - c. Naomi's felt failure became God's pivotal place to work**
 - i. READ 1:20-21.**
 - ii. Naomi is dejected . . . her family is gone and so is her security
 - iii. She is empty
 - iv. Failure is scary
 - 1. in fact we often don't want to mention it
 - 2. But in the midst of Naomi's seeming failure . . . she sees the heart of God in Ruth's treatment of her
 - a. Ruth is returning the favor in a sense . . . Ruth believe Naomi is worth more than she believes
 - b. Ruth shows Naomi God's deep love and loyalty
 - d. Naomi lived a faith that Ruth wanted to follow**
 - i. READ 1:16-18 again.**
 - ii. This is a testament to Ruth's determination, but it is also a testimony to the strength of Naomi's life
 - 1. Later she does question God's work, like we all do at times, but she must have lived a very attractive faith for Ruth to care so deeply for her
 - 2. What do others see in our lives?
 - 3. Do others want to follow our God because of what they see in us?

Sources Consulted:

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