

Joke: Two men are sitting in the cinema waiting for the movie to start, they get bored we'll waiting. One of them notices a bald guy in the middle of the front row. He looks over at his friend and says, "5 bucks if i go smack the top of his head."

The other guy curious about the outcome agrees. The man stands up goes down the stairs smacks the bald guy on the head and says to him, "Hey Mike, long time no see man."

The bald guy clearly surprised responds "I believe you made a mistake sir, my name isn't Mike." The guy replies " I'm so so sorry for the mistake sir " and walks away.

The two friends laugh and the man gives the 5 bucks to his rather bold friend. After 5 minutes the guy tells his friend again "10 bucks if I do it again?" The friend agrees and so the man goes and smacks the bald guy's head again and says "Hey mike how have you been? "

The bald guy now clearly irritated tells him "Hey man listen, I've already told you I'm not Mike" and the guy responds." A thousand apologies sir, won't happen again" and goes back to his friend who is now dying of laughter while the bald guy in the front row switches seats and sits now in the corner.

He receives the 10 bucks and after another 5 minutes looks over at his friend and says, "50 bucks if i do it one last time?" His friend who is dying of curiosity of how this will go this time once again agrees. Once again the man goes down to the same bald guy who is now sitting in the corner and smacks his head again while shouting "Mike , you've been sitting here all along and i've been smacking that pour guy's head for 15 minutes! How have you been?"

Today, I'm starting a new series but before I fill you in on what we will be looking into let me ask you a question. . .

If you were to pick a genre of movies which would you choose?

How many of you like Action flicks? Action has to be the best. Things blowing up. Car chases. Shoot ups. Explosions. That's a movie.

Maybe you're more of the comedy type. Life is hard and we all know laughter is good medicine so maybe your more of the comedy type.

Some of you might be them Super hero's kind of people. Need some Spider-Man, Superman, Wonder-woman, and who doesn't like those Avengers.

If you had to choose what would it be?

Well the book we are going to be looking at over the next few weeks isn't an action flick. There's no Sylvester Stallone, Jason Statham, no Arnold, or Chuck.

The book we are going to be looking into is the book of Ruth. If I was going to put a genre on this book it would have to be a chick flick.

85 verses total in the 4 chapters and of the 85 verses 55 of them are dialogue. A couple women and a whole lot of talking. That has to be a chick flick.

However, as we look at the Story of Ruth and it is an amazing story, there is so much we will learn as we dive into the book.

We are going to see two women who lost everything. There is tragedy in Ruth. But, even with the tragedies we still see God is present in the moment just maybe not the way you'd expect Him to be.

So often we expected to show up with some miraculous manifestation but this is one of the two or three in Scripture where you don't see God perform any physical miracles. There's no parting of the Red Sea. No one being healed. No one being raised from the dead. Nothing.

Yet in most every verse you will witness the presence, power and providence of God.

And if you are hurting or discouraged it will speak to you. If you are struggling to find hope and you believe God has something more or better for you yet you feel stuck in a place you shouldn't be then this book will speak to you as well.

Let's start in Ruth chapter 1 we will begin at the very first verse it says this. . .

Ruth 1:1 (NIV) - In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

Notice how it starts. . .In the days when the judges ruled.

In other words, in the days when there were no kings.

Now what's interesting to me about that is the book right before Ruth is the book of. . .any idea? It's Judges.

And watch this the last verse of Judges chapter 21 says this. . .

Judges 21:25 (NIV) - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

When there were no kings everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Sounds a little like today's culture. Everybody is just doing what seems fit in their own eyes.

Back to Ruth it says, In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land.

And so because of the famine we're going to see a family pack their bags because they're afraid there will be no food or provision so they're going to move to someplace new.

The verse continues. . . So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

Verse 2 tells us the names of those who made the plan to move.

Ruth 1:2 (NIV) - The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

They were from Bethlehem and they went to Moab and they lived there.

Look at the characters in the script, we have Elimelek. He is the husband and father. Any idea what his name means? Elimelek means my God is king.

Next up we have the wife and mother named Naomi. Her name means pleasant or gentle.

Then we see the two children and what's important to understand here is that during this time people would name their children based on two things. One way is they would name them prophetically based on what they wanted to see.

The other is they would name them based on what they did see.

They might call their child big hands. Or some other characteristic they saw when they were born. Like you might call me good looking.

Oh thanks for the agreement church.

And with these two boys it's very likely that they named them based on what they saw when they were born.

They had Mahlon which means sick or sickly. And Kilion which means wasting or tired. Probably because they were struggling early on after their birth.

Can you imagine having to introduce your boys, here's my boys sick and tired.

And so we have someone named, my God is king, another sweet and pleasant, followed up with sick and tired.

And Elimelek, my God is king is worried. because of the famine that is taking place. So, he decides to move his family from Bethlehem to Moab.

Now in order for him to get there he would have to go around the Dead Sea and travel about 50 miles to get there. So, it's around a two day trip.

He and his family leaves Bethlehem and heads towards Moab, which turns out to be a big mistake. For several reasons.

First off God had forbidden His people from living in Moab. Why what's wrong with Moab? Great question glad you asked.

The Moabites were the descendants of Moab. That's not a big deal right? Wrong. If you don't know who Moab is we find him in Genesis 19.

I'm not going to read it all but I will share with you the story. Lot's daughters got him drunk. Not once but twice the first time the older daughter after he had fell asleep since there were no men around to give them children decides to sleep with dad. The second night the same thing happens with the younger daughter.

Now so you don't get the wrong idea let me read this. . .

Genesis 19:33 (NIV) - . . .He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

So, Moab was conceived out of incest. And that was just the beginning of the issues. Another problem is that they also worshiped a false god, Chemosh, they even went so far as to sacrifice children to this false God.

And just to put in into more context here is what God thought about Moab.

In Psalm 60 verse 8 He said, Moab is my wash basin. In other words this is where I wash my feet.

And Elimelek took his family from Bethlehem, which means house of bread to a place that God had said they shouldn't go.

Here's what is really interesting Elimelek which if you recall means God is my king yet he wasn't living like God was his king.

Instead he is doing what was what Judges told us remember what it said. . .

Judges 21:25 (NIV) - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

Elimelek was simply doing what was right in his own eyes.

And the truth is it appears to me that we have many in our culture and our churches that are doing the same thing.

Simply doing what was right in his own eyes. Compromising what God has spoken to fit in.

Now let's not be too hard on poor Elimelek, after all there was a famine happening.

So, he's probably thinking if I go to Moab I can get a better job, because it has better economy, and I'll be able to better provide for my family.

Who couldn't understand that?

And here is one lesson we can learn from that thinking. I have seen so many who have given into the temptation to prioritize economic provision over their spiritual wellbeing.

You have a better job opportunity but you will never be able to come back to church because of the hours. You have a job offer somewhere else that pays more so it must be God's will and must be the place to go.

And listen sometimes it is the blessings of God to go and have better provision for your family. So you can be a better blessing and be more generous. But sometimes it's not, it sometimes is the enemy drawing you away from the church community where you were growing close to God and your brothers and sisters in Christ and you go to that other place and make a little more money but less of God.

And because things are a little tough in Bethlehem he leaves and goes to Moab.

So, what do you do when times get tough?

When times get tough, do you continue to trust and obey God in Bethlehem? Or do you leave and go to Moab? What do you do when times get tough?

Because most of us might say, I'm a Christian. Or my God is the King of my life. And so, I want trust and obey His word. Believe that He is my ever present help in time of need.

And maybe you're dating. And His word says, to save yourself sexual until you are joined together in the covenant of marriage.

So, I'm going obey God. But then the temptation comes along what do you do? Do you trust God or move to Moab?

My God is the King of my life. I'm a Christian. And so, I'm going to stop getting drunk. And then I have a really bad day and I'm really stressed out. Do you continue to trust and obey God or do you move to Moab?

Because I'll shoot straight with you and it's true for me as well, when times get tough, Moab looks tempting.

Listen, I can relate to this guy's dilemma. He's worried about his family. And so, he does what feels right in his own eyes.

And let's be honest for a moment, most of us have gone to Moab under far less pressure.

My God is King of my life. But sometimes we do what's right in our own eyes.

So, what happened? They left Bethlehem, they went to Moab, and everything worked out just fine.

They did what they wanted. They did what they felt. They trusted their heart. And they lived their own truth. And everything worked out just as they had hoped. And they lived happily ever after.

No that's not the case. . .Scripture says this starting with verse 3

Ruth 1:3-5 (NIV) - Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

So, Naomi who left Bethlehem so they could live a better life was left without her husband and two sons.

What a heartbreak. First Elimelek died we don't know how we just know he died maybe he got trampled on by a caravan of camels we just don't know.

But what we do know is this left her in a really bad place.

Now what's interesting is do you remember how far the journey was from Bethlehem to Moab? It was about 50 miles. A couple days, yet she stayed there for 10 years.

And because she was away from God's people, her sons married women that were not God's people. They married Moabite women.

Now, I want to give the boys a benefit of the doubt, because these girls were probably really cute and had a really good personality and they probably thought, I can convert them.

And truth is I have seen so many followers of Jesus do the same thing today.

And yet in God's love for us, He actually gives us very loving boundaries. He actually wants what's best for us so he tells us. .

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV) - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

And maybe you read that and ask why is God so restrictive? And the truth is He isn't, He's just loving and wants what's best for you.

And so let me just ask you a question in all sincerity, if God is the King of your life why would you want to spend the rest of your life and raise your kids with someone who doesn't see Him as their King.

And here's what's interesting. Why did they leave Bethlehem? They left so they wouldn't die. And what happened when they did what was right in their own eyes, three of them died.

And this is how this chick flick begins. You now have three widows with no homes, no money, no hope, and finally, Naomi, the mother, decides to return to Bethlehem.

You can read about this in the text. Along the way, they have this conversation and Naomi tells her daughters-in-law, "Go back to your home, marry your own people, have babies."

And Orpah does that. And then, she starts this TV show that's huge and everyone just takes her advice. Opps, sorry wrong Oprah.

And so, Orpah goes back, but Ruth decides to stay.

And she speaks for the first time in the story in verse 16. And here's what she says. She says. . .

Ruth 1:16 (NIV) - But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.

She declares not just a loyalty to her mother-in-law but also of a dependence on her God.

In other words, I'll no longer worship Chemosh. Now, I will worship the God of Israel.

And she makes this dedication that this is her salvation. What did she do? What happened? Ruth and Naomi, essentially they did this. They left Moab and they returned to Bethlehem.

This is a picture of what the Bible calls in the New Testament, repentance. Re means to turn, in this case, to return from the lower place of Moab to the higher calling of Bethlehem.

It's to turn away from where you were and to go back to...

Now, what's interesting, in order to turn to Bethlehem, you have to turn your back to Moab.

Hear this church, to go to where God wants you to be, you have to leave where you are. To get to the right place, you have to leave the wrong one.

To get to where God wants you to be, you have to walk away from a place that is not His will.

And what's amazing is she made one decision to turn her back on Moab and to go back to the God of Bethlehem. And this one decision, this one act of repentance, this one choice changed her life and it changed her legacy.

Truth is it even changed the course of the entire world. How you ask?

What does Bethlehem mean? It means the house of bread. Jesus, who was the bread of life, was born where? In Bethlehem.

And I don't want to give too much away, but I just can't wait to tell you so I will. Jesus was a descendant of a sinful Moabite woman who left Moab and went to Bethlehem. She listed in the lineage of Jesus.

This is how amazing God is.

Through a woman who worshiped a false God. We're going to see in the upcoming chapters, and I don't want to give it all away, but we're going to see that through one decision, the living water, the bread of life, the Prince of peace, the good shepherd, the Lord of all Lords and King of all Kings, the alpha and the omega, is born.

One moment of repentance, one single decision.

So, what does this mean for you?

I'm going to ask you, and I want you to be open to what the Holy Spirit might show you. I wonder if there is some part of your life that is still in Moab.

Is there some area of your life where you're saying, my God is King, and yet you're doing what's right in your own eyes?

Listen, Elimelek wasn't the only one to ever do what was right in his own eyes. Abram and Sarai were willing to settle for an Ismael when they were promised an Issac.

So I ask you, is there some area of your life where you're claiming, yes, I am a follower of Jesus, and yet you're following your own truth and not His truth?

Papa speak to us? Show us. Convict us. Lead us?

What one decision could you make? What one action can you take that would change the trajectory of your life and legacy?

What one decision could you make? What one action could you take to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem?

Some of you might need to cut up your credit cards because they have caused you to buy things that you wanted but couldn't afford.

Maybe you need to block that person from your phone and your social media account because every time you talk to them or they post something on your wall all it does is anger you or drag you down.

Some of you, you could surrender something to God. Others of you could surrender someone to God.

Maybe there are others of you who need to repent and surrender yourself to Jesus, the King of Kings and the Lord of lords.

To get to the right place, you have to leave the wrong place.

Over 1,100 times in the Bible, the word shuv is used. Shuv means to re return. Over 1,100, it's all about the re.

If I had to write a one paragraph message on re it might go something like this. . .

You might need to re-turn to God. Re-buke the enemy, re-pent of your sins, and re-cieve Christ. And in doing so you will be re-born, and have a re-newed mind. You will reconciled by Christs re-deeming work. And all of that will cause you to re-joice causing re-vival to come into your life as your life is re-built, because of the re-lationship you find in Him. God wants to re-ignite, and re-align and I want you to know church that He is within reach. And God wants to re-awaken and have you re-call so that you can re-claim, and re-count, all the promises that he has re-vealed and reap the re-wards of knowing Him.

And some of you here today or watching online have been doing what seems right in your own eyes and God is saying it's time to re-consider.

Proverbs 14:12 (NIV) - There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12 (TPT) - You can rationalize it all you want and justify the path of error you have chosen, but you'll find out in the end that you took the road to destruction.

Proverbs 21:2-3 (NIV) - A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart. To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Prayer