

**Joke:** A reporter heard of a couple who had been married for 75 years so he went to them and asked, "what's your secret for 75 years of happy and successful marriage?"

The old man replied "I'm going to tell you a story, 70 years ago we were on a trip, we were horseback riding just the two of us, out of nowhere her horse went crazy and threw her off on the ground, she calmly got up, cleared herself of the dust and facing the horse said "that's one." She then got back on the horse and we continued our riding, after a while her horse again threw her off, and once again she got up calmly cleared the dust off herself and facing the horse said "that's two." Again she got back on the horse and we continued our ride, and I must say after seeing how calm and peaceful my wife was I fell more in love with her. Again after a while her horse for the 3rd time threw her off, my wife calmly got up cleared the dust off of her dress, grabbed the shotgun and shot the horse. And truthfully I was shocked by what I saw. I started yelling at her calling her crazy and insane, my wife however kept looking at me calmly and still with such peace, and once I finished my triad she looks over at me and says, "that's one."

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I'm so glad I'm no longer dating. Now don't get me wrong my wife and I still go on dates but dating relationships in today's culture seems to me to be, well, . . .complicated.

I mean how as a follower of Jesus in today's culture do you meet someone, date them and get married in a way that honors God.

How do you even start. Do you need some Christian pick up lines to get that first date?

Do you walk up to them and say, "now I know why Solomon had 700 wife's. . .because he never met you."

Didn't work? How about this one? "Last night I was reading in the book of Numbers. . .and I realized I don't have yours."

How do you do it? What do you say to them, oh you thought I was done sorry I'm just getting started, here's one more. Do you walk up to someone and say, "Is your name Grace because your amazing."

I'm just joking around of course but it seems to me that in our culture today marriage is no longer valued.

Statistics have shown that marriage is being delayed or avoided altogether with this younger generation.

And the truth is, if you want something different than you may need to take a different approach.

And that's what we're going to look at today in the book of Ruth.

We're going to look at someone who found the love they wanted.

Now let me pause here because for many of you, you are either already married, or for others of you, you have no intention of getting married, and for those groups I promise there is still something in here for you.

But it's important that I talk about this portion of Ruth because if I were to pass over this part of the book then we would miss some points as we walk through the rest.

So, bear with me as I deal with the relationship aspect of Ruth and then I promise I will get to some other things that will be beneficial for each of us as well in this message.

And let me just say this as well, I still have some things in Ruth I want to share over the next couple weeks for sure, but I will be jumping around a bit in the book. If I were to deal with all of Ruth it would sound like it was for those dating or planning on getting married. And I know that in the book of Ruth is there is wisdom you can learn from if that is you. However, because much of that would not be for most of you. I will just highlight a few things in that area over the next few weeks rather than having a full blown message on the proper way to date and marry.

Is that alright?

It's not that it's not important, but there are other things in the book that is more applicable for our church community.

But as I mentioned I need to deal with the whole finding love today so that we don't miss some points that I will make over the next couple weeks.

Let me recap where we started last week.

We have an ordinary family who lived in Bethlehem who because of a famine decides it's best to pack up and move to Moab. A 50 or so mile journey that proved to a big mistake.

A big mistake, first because God said, don't go to Moab. And how many know God's ways are always good? And if you remember it was because Lot's daughters had gotten him drunk and slept with him.

Now let me remind you of one thing so your mind doesn't run off in all different directions.

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

Nonetheless Moab was founded through incest. Not only did God say not to go there but also not to marry the people of Moab.

The Moabites worshiped a god called Chemosh and not the God of Israel, and they would actually offer child sacrifices to this god.

But this dad because of the famine was worried about his family. And he thinks he can be a better provider in Moab but as it turns out both he and his two sons die while living there.

So, chapter one starts with heartbreak and loss.

And so Naomi decides to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem. Now let me also remind you it didn't happen the next day but she does finally return.

But while they were in Moab her two sons marry Moabite women. One of the daughters-in-law stays in Moab. And as Naomi is urging the other to do the same Scripture tells us this. . .

Ruth 1:16-17 (NLT) - But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"

She makes this declaration of loyalty to Naomi and her God. And she turns away from the god of Moab and turns to the God of Bethlehem.

And so, Naomi, the mother-in-law and Ruth, the new believer, this new follower of God returned to Bethlehem, but they're still homeless, hopeless and hurting.

And hear this church some of you might be hurting today.

But the good news is today we're turning a page. We're starting a new chapter? Today, chapter one comes to an end and we're in chapter two.

And I don't know who this is for, but if your hurting today, take heart because I believe God is about to turn the page in your story.

You've been stuck for a long time in chapter one, and right now God is going to do something in your life, reveal something to you, move in some way for you, make a way where there seemed to be no way, and He's going to turn a page in your life.

When you turn away from Moab, you'll find God's blessings in Bethlehem.

So, let's begin. . .

Ruth 2:1 (NIV) - Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

Notice what it says, Boaz was a man of what? Standing.

What that means is and some other translations say it like this but in Hebrew it means he was a man of wealth. He had money and property. And we will also see he loved God and had character.

How many of you ladies know its good to find a man of character. A man of standing. You want someone like a Boaz. Now just like most of us Boaz had some other relatives as well maybe you've even dated a few of them. . .look who they are.

**Show Boaz slide**

Broke-az, Po-az, Lyin-az, Cheatin-az, Dumb-az, Drunk-az, Cheap-az, Lockedup-az, Goodfornothing-az, Lazy-az, and his third cousin, Beatin' yo-az. Wait for your Boaz and make sure he respects Yoaz

You don't want them you want a Boaz.

Let's pick up our story. . .verse 2

Ruth 2:2 (NIV) - And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."

Verse 3. . .

Ruth 2:3 (NIV) - So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

What does it mean to glean?

We find out in Leviticus 19. . .

Leviticus 19:9-10 ( NIV) - When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.

So, if you were harvesting something and you dropped some of the wheat or grain on the ground, you were not to pick it up. You were to leave there so those less fortunate, the widows, the outcasts, or those who were poor could come behind you and they would pick it up.

It was one of God's way of providing for them.

And so this was what Ruth was doing as a widow.

And I love this look again at verse three. . .

Ruth 2:3 (NIV) - So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

Notice what it says. . .As it turned out

Some other translations say, "it just so happened."

As it turned out, it just so happened.

I love that, it's as if God is winking at us. Like He's telling us I got ya. It just so happened.

And this is where you can see one of the major themes found in the book of Ruth.

When you look at the book of Ruth, you're going to notice that there are no supernatural miracles from God.

There's no burning bush, no parting of the Red Sea, no one is raised from the dead, and there are no voices from heaven.

But what you do see over and over again throughout the book is the supernatural providence of God.

And basically that's a fancy way of saying, it's whenever God uses natural circumstances to bring about His supernatural plans.

It's that. . .it just so happened moment.

I went to a place and it just so happened that I met someone.

It's the providential power of a good God. I think Roman's says it best. . .

Romans 8:28 (NIV) - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

It just so happened that God placed you there and He worked out for good. And the answer came suddenly. It just so happened.

And in chapter one things aren't going to well but then along comes chapter two and we will see the blessings of God in it because He works all things to bring about His good and perfect will in our lives.

And so, she just so happens to be working in the field of a man named Boaz.

This is where Ruth is at her lowest. She's gleaning, picking up the leftovers. Then enters the handsome hero.

Maybe he wasn't handsome, we don't know for sure, but he was a man of standing. A business owner which was certainly a good thing.

So she just happens to come across a man named Boaz.

Why do you think she just so happened to come across Boaz?

There was a little clue in chapter one. . .I jumped over it last week but let me fill you in now. . .this is what Naomi did. . .

Ruth 1:8-9 (NIV) - Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."



In essence she prayed for them, she prayed "May the Lord show you kindness and may he bring you a husband."

She prayed that in chapter one. And when she prayed, God listened.

And maybe some of you need reminding, every time you pray to God, He listens. God always listens. God cares about what you care about. After all he said he would give us the desires of our heart, why? Because the truth is as a new creation your heart wants what He wants. And when you cry out to God, it just so happens that He shows up.

That's why praying for, if you have the desire in your heart to one day get married, praying for your future spouse is a really wise thing to do. If you're a parent and you want your kids to marry well, it's a wise thing as a parent to pray for your children's future spouse.

So, she's just out working the fields and she just so happens to meet Boaz.

And verse 4 tells us this. . .

Ruth 2:4 (NLT) -While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. "The Lord be with you!" he said. "The Lord bless you!" the harvesters replied.

Notice what he said to the harvesters. . . "The Lord be with you!"

And that verse gives us a clue of the kind of man Boaz was.

We see he's a leader, he's kind to his people, and the first thing he's talking about is the Lord. The Lord be with you.

Hear this church people tend to talk about first what they value most.

And what I love about Boaz is notice he's not a priest, he's not a prophet, he's not a pastor, he simply talks about what is important to him, which to him is the Lord.

He didn't ask did you meet the quota. How much time has been wasted he said, the Lord be with you.

And even though he's not a minister he still has a ministry.

He's working his mission field. His fields of harvest is also his fields of ministry.

And that's a reminder to everyone of us, no matter what you do in life you have a mission field.

You don't have to go to overseas to preach the gospel, you just need to let the way you live preach the gospel.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (TPT) - We are ambassadors of the Anointed One who carry the message of Christ to the world, as though God were tenderly pleading with them directly through our lips. So we tenderly plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Turn back to God and be reconciled to him."

So this is just an ordinary business owner who's letting the light and love of God shine. And while he's serving God, he just so happens to notice Ruth.

And what did he notice? Well, to be honest, if she had an online dating profile, it wouldn't have been ideal. Think about it. If you looked her up and if she was honest because let's face it, not everybody's honest on their online profile.

But if she had an online profile, it wouldn't have been something to be really drawn to. What do we know about her? Well, she was a Moabite. Meaning she was from the wrong people group, and she used to worship the wrong god. And she was widowed, she was homeless, destitute, and she came with her old mother-in-law. We could say she had a complicated past.

But even with her complicated past, she did not let her past define her. I'm going to tell you right now, don't let your past talk you out of God's plan for your future.

Some of you right now, maybe you're thinking "Well, I can never because I whatever, you fill in the blank."

Listen I had a complicated past before I was a Christian I lived in a way that was not pleasing to God. But listen if God can redeem me He can do the same for you.

Don't let your past talk you out of what God wants to do in your life right now or in your future. It just so happens. . .

So let's look at what happened when they finally meet.

Ruth 2:5 (NLT) - Then Boaz asked his foreman, "Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?"

That's the Old Testament version of stalking the person's profile.

Boaz wanted some more details. He wanted some more info on that young woman.

Verse 6. . .

Ruth 2:6-7 (NLT) - And the foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter."

All of a sudden, Boaz, a man of standing, is looking on at this unlikely woman, and he notices some things that stand out in her.

Listen you may have been told your not from the right side of town for God to use you. That your past is just too tainted, but I'm here to tell you God has you here for a purpose. Can uses the unlikely. Look at ones Jesus chose, fishermen, tax collector, people that most of us might have thought wasn't the best and the brightest.

1 Corinthians 1:26-28 (NLT) - Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.

And then we read in the Gospel of John. . .

John 15:16 (NLT) - You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.

Back to our story. . . We see three things that he noticed in her.

First of all, she's faithful to God. The second thing we see is she's loyal to her family. The third thing we see is she's a hard worker.

First of all, she's faithful to God. She turned away from her people and the false god to serve the God of Israel. She's loyal to her family. The other daughter-in-law Orpah, she stayed back in Moab. But Ruth made the decision to stay with Naomi and go to Bethlehem. She's a hard worker.

The Scripture told us. . . She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter. She's not waiting around for someone to meet her needs, she's not crying out I'm a victim. She's up early gleaning in the field.

And the text goes on to tell us this.

Ruth 2:8-9 (NLT) - Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well."

Notice what it says, I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly.

In other words, I'm going to protect you from them being inappropriate. They'll be no cat calls on my watch. No wrong behavior on their parts as long as you're here.

And then watch as he said, "And when you're thirsty, help yourself to the water that they have drawn from the well."

He's protecting her, he's caring for her needs. And then what does he do next? The next thing he does is he prays for her. He prays for her in verse 12 and this is what he prays.

Ruth 2:12 (NLT) - May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done."

And now it just so happens that we see some qualities that stand out in Boaz as well.

Number one, he honors her.

Let me back up a couple verses and watch what Ruth said. . .

Ruth 2:10-11 (NLT) - Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner." "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers.

Number two, he protects her. Number three, he provides for her. And we are going to see next week that he is incredibly generous. And number four, he prays for her. He honors her.

To you men in the room we need some Boaz's.

Look what happens the Scripture tells us. . .

Ruth 2:14 (NIV) - At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

Here's the thing notice what it says, She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

And here's that lesson in that. . .we serve a God of abundance.

Ephesians 3:20 (NLT) - Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

We serve a God that provides more than enough, exceeds our expectations, and blesses us with every scriptural blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

Let me pause for a minute and try to make this a bit more applicable to all of us and summarize what we've seen thus far in our story.

Truth is in many ways, all of us have some Ruth in us. Here's what we know about her.

She was a Moabite and she had sinned against God. She served a god that wasn't the Lord God.

And we too have done the same. We have sinned against the God of the universe and fallen short of His standards. Served things, put things and others before God.

She came empty handed with nothing to offer except herself.

We too often may feel like we have nothing to offer. But church I promise you if you will just offer what you do have, offer yourselves to God He will use what you have to bring glory to Himself and blessings to others.

Remember the young boy in the gospel that had just a few fish and little bread. He offered it to the Lord it wasn't much but it fed multitudes. Because little is much when God is in it.

Remember Moses he only had a staff. A walking stick but when he offered that to the Lord it became a rod of power.

Back to Ruth. , ,

Everything good she had would be given to her.

Remember what she asked?

Ruth 2:10 (NLT) - Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner."

And in much the same way you and I have gleaned from the goodness of God. We didn't do anything to earn His grace, he just allows us to receive it.

And Boaz blessed Ruth with more than she ever expected.

And our God will bless us with more than we deserve. He gives us grace that is sufficient, Gives us His power that makes us new, His peace that goes beyond our human ability to even understand.

And I want you to notice, Boaz invited Ruth to his table in the much same way Jesus invites us to His.

And listen church Jesus allows us to sit at His table no matter what your past is like. When you come to Him and ask for His forgiveness, He says, I remember your sins no more. He died once-for-all so we could be forgiven and new.

And church if you're stuck in chapter one, it's time to make the change. It's time to turn away from Moab and turn to the God of Bethlehem.

Because when you turn away from Moab, you find God's blessings in Bethlehem.

If you're hurting or you're stuck, God wants to help you turn your page.

If you're caught in an addiction, cry out to God, and allow His Spirit that dwells in you to help you turn the page.

For those of you that are losing hope, God wants to help you turn the page, it's time for a new chapter.



You're battling depression or anxiety, fear and worry, whatever it might be maybe today you need to turn the page of your story into a chapter two. Your story isn't finished yet. It just so happened that God.

Because whatever you're going through, God hears the cries of your hearts, He hears your prayers. And when you pray, God just happens to show up.

And through His providential power, He takes natural circumstances and uses them for your good to bring about His divine purposes in your life.

That's how good He is.

Today, chapter one is finished. Chapter two has begun.

You may be struggling in your marriage and it just so happens God may speak to your spouse today. This is the kind of wife that you can be. This is the kind of man of God that you can become.

It just so happens that if your faith is low, God may build your faith because I know faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

It just so happens God brought you here to hear this word, to build your faith.

Chapter one is closing, chapter two begins.

God is here, He is with you, and He is for you.

I wonder how many of you, you're stuck somewhere in chapter one right now and you're ready for chapter two. You're praying I'm ready for something new.

What I've been doing hasn't been working.

I'm ready for God to do what only He can do. I need a miracle.

Father, I pray today that for those that are stuck in chapter one that your Holy Spirit would do a work. God, we thank you that you make all things new. That even if we're stuck in a chapter that we don't like, you can still work in that chapter to bring about good and we believe that it will all work out for your glory and our good by faith. And You are working even when I don't see it, or feel it.

Move in us God, transform us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Work together for good in our lives. God you are a way maker. And even in our seasons where we would rather not be You can bring about something good in the midst of it all.

Some of you, let me prophesy to you today you're about to get the new chapter that you've praying for. You might feel stuck in Moab. But God is about to bring you out.

Maybe you feel because of your past that you don't measure up and you feel stuck.

Well the amazing thing is, in His love and mercy, your past doesn't need to define you.

We're going to find as we go through this story, that out of the brokenness of a Moabite woman comes the lineage of our savior, Jesus Christ.

The son of God who never sinned, who is perfect in every single way. And that same Jesus, invites us to His table.

We don't deserve to be there, but He gives us the bread and the wine. His body that was broken for us. His blood that was shed for us on a cross.

He died and rose again so that we could be forgiven. He gave His life so that we could truly live.

Pray