

A Life of Legacy
3-Year Bible Reading Plan
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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Ruth. Now Ruth has got many distinctions in your Bibles. It's one of the shorter books of the Bible, only four chapters in length. It's found between the book of Judges and 1 Samuel, but it's also one of two books in your Bible that are named after a prominent woman in the Bible, the other one being Esther, and today as we turn to the book of Ruth, those of you that are guests or visitors, it's because it's a part of our Bible reading plan and we finished up Ruth, we're headed toward 1 Samuel, and today we're gonna be in chapter 4 of the book of Ruth.

Now we'll have somewhat of an overview in a moment, but when we think of the book of Ruth or the character of Ruth, we think of relationships, we think of expressions of love, we think of perseverance, we think of familial relationships whether that be Ruth and Boaz or Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi, or even the other daughter-in-law, Orpah, who went off and stayed in Moab, but today I want us to look at the book of Ruth from a different lens or perspective, and that's through the lens of legacy and I want to talk about how do you and I today, how do we establish a life of legacy? How do we establish our life in this day so as that in future days greater things are accomplished, done and experienced because of the life we live? Now here's what's important about today: if you go back into chapter 1 of the book of Ruth, there is none of us here who ever would have thought that the Lord would have used Ruth to provide an incredible legacy. Here was a woman who was from the other side of the tracks, who was widowed early in her life, and was picking up the leftovers in the field. That's not the person that would be our number one draft pick, would it? But yet the Lord did an amazing work in her life and I want you to see how he can do the same in ours.

In the book of Ruth 4, I'm gonna pick it up in verse 13. This is the end of the story. It says,

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. 15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age:

for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. 16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now it's that last statement in verse 17 that I want us to hang our hat on today, that this child born to Ruth and Boaz was the father of Jesse, the father of David. I think we would all agree this is a pretty extraordinary legacy here. When you begin to look back at the family tree of life and you see that the most prominent king in all of Israel's history comes as a descendant of yours, I think we'd agree this is an extraordinary legacy. But allow me to kind of unpack that extraordinary aspect of it. The legacy that the Lord did between or from Ruth and Boaz was one that was timeless. You say, "What do you mean it was timeless?" Well, these three men, Obed, the child that was born, Jesse and David, are also found in another passage of the Bible together, not in one single verse, it's actually split among two, it's in the book of Matthew 1:5-6 and it says that Obed, again who came from Boaz and Ruth, was the father of Jess, who was the father of David, and it is that first chapter in the book of Matthew that we know as the genealogy of Jesus. In fact, it begins in verse 1, this is, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David." In other words, what we see here, the legacy that the Lord brought from Ruth and Boaz was one that was timeless. It would be one that eventually would provide the Savior of the world who would give his life as the redeemer of our sins and the forgiver of our souls, and so what we see is the Lord didn't just bear a son, he bore one who would bear another, who would bear another, that eventually would provide for you and I what nobody else could do, eternal life, the forgiveness of our sins, residence in heaven versus a residence in much the opposite.

The legacy that came from this child was one that was timeless in nature, but I want to address its tangibility for just a moment. Notice back in verse 17, Obed is the father of Jesse who is the father of David. That same chapter, Matthew 1:17 says that from Abraham to David were 14 generations, from David to the carrying away were 14 generations, from the carrying away unto Christ were 14 generations. Those of you who have spent much time in biblical studies know that it was not 14 absolute chronological generations as you and I so commonly are familiar with. In other words, when the Bible says that So-and-so was the father of So-and-so, it might be a 100 year gap, it might be three generations, it might be 12 generations. When the Bible speaks of one as a descendant thereof, it typically is addressing significant characters in the story whether they be prominent or, shall we say, the opposite.

Here's what I want you to understand about this extraordinary legacy: Obed, the child of Ruth, was born approximately in the year 1310-1312 BC. That's a long time ago. David, the great king of Israel, sat on the throne in 1010 BC. It took 300 years for it to manifest itself. In other words, Obed had a family and his children had children, and his children had children, eventually came Jesse, eventually came David. When we talk about an extraordinary legacy of life, oftentimes we don't see it with our own eyes, sometimes we never see it before we enter the grave. In fact, when it comes to extraordinary legacies,

from the Lord's eyes oftentimes they are hundreds and occasionally thousands of years away. You see, this is an important aspect when we talk later in a moment of how did this actually happen, that we see that Ruth and Boaz and Naomi were not willing to just look at what was before them and see that as the conclusion of the matter, but to see this child as a springboard for what the Lord was going to do in days future.

So it is timeless because of the connection to Jesus Christ, the tangibility is 300 years. You do realize that's longer than our great country has officially been a nation. And here today as we celebrate veterans and the many wars, we talk about that how few are left from this specific wartime and that one. You understand it took longer than our country has been officially recognized before Obed's descendant sat on that throne that we now call the throne of David.

But I want to deal with the temporal for just a moment. Go back up to verse 13. It says, "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son." Now that's just an observation of life, is it not? She bore a son. In other words, what the Bible is saying is all that the Lord was going to do in this very timeless, extended, tangible fashion was manifested in a process, in an entity that we see each and every day of our lives. They had a child. In fact, in today's world of over seven billion people, this happens on quite a regular occasion, does it not? And what I want you to see is the extraordinary legacy that the Lord did through their life came through the very ordinary. It was temporary. In other words, the child was born and it grew and it weaned and it began to matriculate.

You know, one of the things that has often come from the mouth of my wife Tracy and I in recent days is we're getting to that stage in life where we start interacting with people who have children much younger than we do, and we're turning old. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" Because we look at these parents and say, "Enjoy it while you've got it." Because we remember when you could confine them in a space and just leave them there for a moment. You can't do that when they're teenagers. We remember there was a day where the biggest problem that we had was some type of liquid that had sugar in it would be spilled on the carpet. Now they're out driving and you're wondering where and how and what and why. And we say, "Enjoy it while you've got it." It's so temporary, those times of life.

Raising the child, weaning the child, teaching and educating the child is very temporary but what's important to understand, this extraordinary legacy is because the temporary was not voided. It continued throughout the course of time and the Lord used ordinary people to bring about extraordinary legacies. And I want us to think about that this morning, that the Lord can use you and he can use me and he can use all of us to do extraordinary things because our lives aren't much different than their's, because when we look at Ruth, when we look at Boaz and we say, "Oh, of course." Just like the Apostle Paul and these guys, these were incredible stalwarts of faith. These were normal everyday people that the Lord did extraordinary things with.

I want to demonstrate that to you. Go back to chapter 1 for just a moment. I want you to see where these people came from and who they were. Chapter 1, verse 1 of the book of Ruth is not gonna seem like very exciting reading material but I promise you it's very apropos. It said,

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

And that's how the story begins. They go into Moab. The two sons marry who we know as Ruth and Orpah, and then all the men die. This great man, Naomi's husband, dies. Her two sons die. And you've got three widows who are in Moab who are gonna make their way back to Bethlehem because they have a need of food and provision.

I want you to notice the identities that are involved here. Bethlehem. Now we think of, "O little town of Bethlehem," we sing Christmas songs about it because the prophet Micah sang about it, but you do understand that even in Jesus' day, they struggled with the King of kings and the Lord of lords being born on the other side of the tracks. That's what happened. Bethlehem was that little small area that, remember, Joseph who we know as the earthly father of Jesus not by conception but by raising of him, he was criticized because he was from that part of the world. He had to go down there for the census. You were not somebody because you were from Bethlehem.

But that's not the key factor. They went into Moab. They go into Moab and there their sons marry Moabites which means that's gonna be their history and their lineage. Now to you this may just be a place and a word but this is so relevant to our lives. How many times has someone come to you and said, "Well, that person is the distinctive sheep of our family." You know what I'm referring to, right? I don't know about you, some people talk about that distinctive sheep, I've got a whole flock in my crew. I don't know about you. I have people come to me all the time and they'll say, "Pastor, I need to talk to you about something that's going on in my family. I'm sure you wouldn't understand." I'm like, "Well, you want to talk about my family or yours because I can go all day long if we need to." I don't care what your family heritage is, I don't care what your backstory is, it can't compare to these ladies.

You say, "What do you mean it can't compare to them?" Let me tell you how the Moabites came to be. There was a man by the name of Lot. We're not starting off good, are we? He was the bratty nephew of Abraham who decided he wanted to chase wealth and fame so he settled in this cute little town called Sodom and Gomorrah. You remember the story. The Lord descends with his judgment. Lot, his wife and his two daughters escape. His wife turns around and looks. She turns to a pillar of salt. They go up into the mountain and here's what Lot's daughters do, they decide that they're the last people on earth and if they do not reproduce, humanity will die out, so they get their dad inebriated and they bear him children. It's the Jerry Springer show, Old Testament edition, right there. Why is that important? Because so many times we look back on our family tree, so many times we look back on our past and we say there is no way that God

could do anything in the future through me. I've got news for you, I don't care what your background is, it can't be that bad. I mean, can you imagine explaining that on a job interview?

But that was the heritage of Ruth. She was a Moabite. Those were her descendants. And so when you look at the identities of where they were from and who they were, their ordinariness did not affect God's extraordinary plan. The second thing that made them ordinary were the issues they dealt with. You say, "Well, what are the issues?" Well, if you've read the book of Ruth, you have the issues of marriage and death. You have the issue of relationships with in-laws. You have the relationship or the aspect of traveling across the state line, so to speak, and going to a place that you weren't reared and having to depend on people you didn't grow up around, these issues of life that you and I deal with every single day of our life. Marriage. Death. Raising of children. Moving. Traveling. Whatever it may be, are just everyday issues of everyday people. They didn't sit on thrones. It doesn't say that they had plush apparel. They just walked through life much like you're walking through life.

So I want to talk about the interval. You say, "What do you mean the interval?" When you look at life from the outside, there's really two kinds of experiences you can have, you can have the mountain peak experience and you can have the valley, correct? You're either on the mountain peak enjoying everything or you're coming off the mountain peak or you're headed in the valley or up the next one. When you look at it quantitatively, life is made up more of valleys than it is mountain peaks, is it not? And when you look at Ruth's life, there's the mountain peak of getting married but then there was the great valley of her husband dying an untimely young death, and other than that the mountain peak is Boaz and this child. It's a lot of valleys in her life. Why is that significant? Not only did the Lord use extraordinary people or do an extraordinary legacy through ordinary people, but he did so as most of us live our life, it was in the valley of their life that the Lord did the greatest work.

Would you want to be Ruth picking up the leftovers from the farm hand of a wealthy man by the name of Boaz? Is that what every young woman dreams her life can be? Does every young man dream those stories for them. Of course not, and what you see in Ruth and what you see in this story is that God did something extraordinary in their lives in spite of where they came from, in spite of who they were because of their willingness to be faithful through it all. They realized something that our culture tells us is absolutely counterproductive to our lives. What does our world say today? Get it all, get it now, and get it all for you.

That's not what we see in the life of Ruth. In fact, I want to address how did an ordinary person have such an extraordinary legacy? You can make that personal if you want, how can you as an ordinary human being have an extraordinary legacy from God? Well, there's four things that we see from all the four chapters of the book of Ruth and this is where the summary comes in.

I want to begin in chapter 1. Ruth was willing to allow the priority of her life to be faith. Look in verse 16, a very famous verse as her and her mother-in-law are gonna make their way back to Bethlehem. It says,

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God

One of the blessings that I get to experience each and every week here multiple times is what we call our guest reception, and at the end of all of our service hours, we have people who are either coming to the next service or just left the previous service who oftentimes are new to our community. Can I share with you one of the biggest blessings in my life? It's when I ask somebody, "Are you new to the community?" And they say, "Well, we're gonna move here in 3-6 months. We're looking for a church first." How often in our lives do we exhaust our carnal efforts and then say, "Okay, God, you've gotta bail me out of this one." How many times do we seek out whether it be employment or climbing up the ladder, whatever it may be and we yet to factor in our faith? If we go there, how and where will we worship and what will be a part of things? One things I love about the spring around here are there are perspective college students who come in the spring looking at churches for when they move here in the fall.

Well, that's exactly what Ruth did and if you want an extraordinary legacy, then your faith in Jesus Christ has got to be the priority. She would have been wealthier had she stayed in Moab if you look at it financially. She would have had a better network of friends staying where she grew up rather than going where she knew nobody. This was an incredible risk in her life. She was willing to give up financial stability, relational stability, but what does she say? "Your God, the God of Israel, will not be my God." She was willing to take that step of faith and say, "I need to make sure that my faith, that the Lord has the primary place and is the priority in my life."

2. Chapter 2, we see that Ruth was persistent. If you turn over to chapter 2 of the book of Ruth, we discover that this expression of faith or her life of faith wasn't just a one time, one day event. In verse 7 we have this description of Ruth while she's in the field.

7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

The observation that these men made, the observation that Boaz, who technically is her employer at this time but will one day become her husband, is much like what we love to say about athletes. You know, every now and then we'll have these great athletes that rise to the forefront. Do you know what the coaches often say about them? They're the first one to practice and the last one to leave. They're willing to put in the sweat equity that it takes to get to the next level. What was Ruth willing to do? She was willing to get to the field before the reapers even got there on the equipment and she was staying long after

dark, and according to what we just read, she didn't take a very long lunch break, did she? She was willing to be persistent.

Now in chapter 1 we see a woman of faith and what happens is as a person of faith, as a believer in Jesus Christ, getting saved is easy. You realize that, right? Admitting that you're a sinner and that Jesus is the only solution to the problem and you call upon him to save you, that's the easy part. Do you know what the hard part is? Waking up tomorrow. Do you know what the hard part is? Next week. Next month. Day after day walking in faith, that's where it gets tough, and what do we see with her? She was persistent. She was in a situation that she didn't want to be in, going through things she had no desire to be a part of, yet she got there early, she stayed late, she didn't quit, she didn't give in, she didn't give up. She was persistent and what you see about extraordinary legacies is that even in the valleys of life when the want-to is not much there, there is still the going through and addressing the situation at hand.

Third, chapter 3, she was a woman that was proper. Now I know that's a term we love to use in the South, they're a proper woman, but in chapter 3 of the book of Ruth, there is a story that many have tried to hijack into an x-rated dialog which was not there. Her mother-in-law told her that Boaz, who was a kinsman of her deceased father-in-law, this wealthy man who had never married, was available and that she should intreat upon him. She gave her instructions. She said, "I want you to go to the barn and when he and the men come in after their celebrating, I want you to go and sit at his feet and cover his feet." Now there are many who want to allude that somehow something carnal occurred there, but I want to read the story beginning in verse 8. It says,

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid [I would be afraid too], and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. 9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. 10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

Push pause there for just a moment. Boaz was wealthy but he wasn't desirable from a carnal nature. He had passed the marrying stage. He was an older man. He was an elder in the city, so to speak. And here is this young lady and he's saying, "Man, if there was anybody who you'd want to spend the rest of your life with, wouldn't you want somebody you could spend a little more time with? Wouldn't you want somebody that had a little more energy? A little less gray hair?" And what happens in verse 11,

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know [listen to this] that you are a virtuous woman.

Now why would you call somebody virtuous who was up to no good? In other words, we see that this young lady humbly presents herself before him in a very submissive but very

humble way, and he responds by saying, "She is virtuous." Then when we get to chapter 4, as we just read, it said that they knew not each other until they were married.

Why is this important? Because it is in the persistence of life, it is in the daily grind of life that our brains begin to work into overdrive and we begin to think maybe the world knows what they're doing. Listen to me clearly: it never works out in the long way to do it the world's way. She did it the Lord's way and I worked out in the long term. Never sacrifice the long term for the short term. It's never wrong to do it God's way and it's never right to do it the world's way. Even in the valleys of life, she was proper.

But the last thing, we've already read it in chapter 4, was her perspective. Here was this child that was born who will one day be of a heritage with Jesse and David. Can I tell you one of the great Achilles' heel of our culture? Here's what our culture tells us to do, get all you can and get it for yourself. Can I tell you something that just really burns me up? Now I know some of you may actually own what I'm about to talk about and hear me clearly, this isn't personal, it's philosophical. When somebody is driving something or has something and on the back of it the sticker says, "I'm spending my children's inheritance." You say, "Why does that burn you up?" Because what you see in the Scripture is, it's not about you and you've just made it about you. When you say it's all for me, you know I want to be honest with you, and I understand there's a lot of issues behind here but I'm gonna speak to one, you know that's one of the biggest issues behind what you and I know commonly as abortion? "I don't want to be inconvenienced. I don't want things to be difficult. This wasn't the life I wanted." Talk to Ruth. You think Ruth wanted to be in that field picking up sheaves? No, but she was proper, she was persistent, and you know what her perspective was? "It's not about me, it's about what's coming after me." And a life of extraordinary legacy says, that that which comes behind me is of greater importance than what I personally desire.

I want to leave you today with one that has become one of my favorite verses in Scripture. It's found in 1 Corinthians 13. We know it as the great love chapter, right? Faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love. He says, "When I was a child, I did things as a child, but now that I'm an adult, I have put away childish things." Do you know what a child says? "Give it to me." An adult should say, "How can I provide for you?"

So when it comes to a legacy, if we spend our days trying to get all we can, we're never gonna have an extraordinary legacy. Ordinary people have extraordinary legacies when they say, "I'm gonna do everything I can to make sure that others have even greater opportunity than even myself."