

# ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS

## FAITHFULNESS WHEN LIFE FALLS APART

### RUTH 1:1-5

#### ***Faithfulness Is Tested When God's Provision Seems Absent***

***Ruth 1:1-5*** 1 In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there. 3 Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. 4 The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband.

- The book of Ruth opens with “In the days when the judges ruled in Israel...”, this phrase is the *historical marker* for the text
- It refers to times of the text ***Judges 21:25*** ***In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.***
- There was a famine in the land of Bethlehem, Bethlehem means *house of bread*
- Elimelech (God is King) was the husband of Naomi (pleasant) and father Mahlon and Kilion (also spelled Chilion, but is pronounced KEE-lee-un)
- Elimelech decides to move his family to Moab for food and survival
- Elimelech is making a responsible choice for the to care for his family
- He is doing what he needs to do to take care of his family
- Faithfulness is spectacular or heroic, it's consistent care and provision
- They were committed to making a place they had not planned to be work for their family
- Mahlon and Kilion marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah
- They are forming new families while staying connected to family
- Though they are living Moab, the family maintains their faith in God and identity as Israelites
- They maintain their integrity, their values, their faith in their daily living, even though they are surrounded by cultural pressures
- Ordinary faithfulness for us is being in the world and not of the world
- It's staying committed to honesty and integrity at work where dishonesty and unethical behavior is common, it's often celebrated and promoted
- Over time Elimelech, Mahlon and Kilion all die, leaving Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth are all widows
- This was not only a time of grief, but also uncertainty
- But they continued to live responsibly, care for each other and make good choices even when it look like all is lost
- Faithfulness is perseverance in the small things
- The decision they made are understandable and practical.
- Our faithfulness is not tested in seasons of prosperity and abundance, it's during seasons of lack and uncertainty

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#### Faithfulness Requires Courageous Decisions

**6 Then Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.**

- Naomi heard that God had *visited* His people by giving the good crops again
- Visited means God steps in to act in a situation, often to restore, judge, or rescue
- God's action often precede our movement
- Even during a season of famine and personal loss, God is working behind the scenes
- God is often at work before we realize it ***Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***
- We must remember that God may *already* be changing conditions we thought were permanent
- Naomi hears the good news, but it doesn't change the status of her life
- Naomi is moving toward Bethlehem on hope
- Naomi's faith was *responsive obedience* to what God was doing
- Naomi's move is both practical and theological
- Naomi's going home is an act of trust in God's provision
- Ruth and Orpah go with Naomi, they are walking with Naomi
- Ordinary faithfulness starts with walking together
- Sometimes it's simply not leaving someone alone in their grief
- For us ordinary faithfulness is staying with people going through a transition is life transition ***Romans 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.***
- When life falls apart, faithfulness may look like taking one painful step back toward God, returning to worship, prayer, and community.

#### Faithfulness Loves Others Even When the Future Looks Empty

**8 But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes. And may the Lord reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. 9 May the Lord bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept. 10 "No," they said. "We want to go with you to your people." 11 But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? 12 No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? 13 Would you wait for them to**

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***grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord himself has raised his fist against me.***

- Naomi urges Ruth and Orpah to return to Moab, to their mothers' homes, and to the possibility of remarriage.
- Naomi knows she cannot secure their future and refuses to bind them to her bitterness.
- Naomi's faithfulness expresses itself as sacrificial release, not possessive attachment.
- Naomi blesses Ruth and Orpah while she feels empty herself
- She still believes God can bless others
- Faithfulness does not require emotional fullness,, only spiritual honesty
- Naomi blesses Ruth and Orpah while carrying unresolved grief.
- Emptiness does not disqualify you from being a vessel of grace.
- Naomi honestly tells Ruth and Orpah that she has no husband, no sons, and no security with being manipulative
- Naomi didn't try to "guilt trip" them into following her back to Bethlehem
- True faithfulness allows people to choose God freely, even if that choice costs you companionship.
- Faith doesn't deny pain; it brings pain into God's presence.
- Naomi was honest with God; ***"...The hand of the LORD has gone out against me"***
- Naomi was bitter, afflicted, and honest about her pain
- Naomi is *lamenting*, not "complaining"
- Lamenting is honest grief and sorrow voiced *to* God, rooted in relationship and trust, even when answers are absent
- Lamenting is being able to tell God "This hurts" and being able to say "God, I still belong to You"
- You don't lament unless you believe God is listening.
- Complaint is dissatisfaction or frustration expressed about God, often rooted in accusation, entitlement, or distrust.
- Faithfulness loves honestly, blesses generously, and releases sacrificially—even when the future looks empty.

#### **Faithfulness Requires Trust in God's Silence**

- This passage lets us know that God can be faithful even when He's silent
- What can learn from the silence of God?
- ***God is active, even when God is not speaking***
  - Yet the narrator hints at God's presence, *"The LORD had visited His people by giving them bread"* (v.6)
  - God's silence is not "absence"; it is *hidden providence*
- **God's silence tests what we truly trust**

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- When our prayers go unanswered our faith is refined and our motives are revealed
- Faithfulness clings to God's character when God's voice is quiet.
- **Naomi had to interpret life without new revelation from God**
  - Without a *new* Word from God, Naomi makes decisions to leave Moab, to return to Bethlehem, to release her daughters-in-law
  - Faithfulness sometimes means acting on what God has *already* revealed, not waiting for something new
- **Silence calls us to live by remembered truth**
  - In the silent seasons:
    - We lean on Scripture already given
    - We rehearse God's past works
    - We trust His covenant promises
  - When God is silent, our faith listens to what God has already said.
- **Silence creates space for lament, not unbelief**
  - Lament is faith responding to silence, not faith abandoning God.
- **God's silence does not pause God's plan**
  - God is already weaving Naomi's redemption story
  - God's silence often hides His greatest work.
- **God's silence allows human faithfulness to shine**
  - Divine silence reveals whether faithfulness is rooted in outcomes or in trust. ***Habakkuk 3:17 - 19 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.***
  - **Faithfulness in silence prepares us for revelation**
- Faithfulness in the quiet seasons positions us for God's redemptive breakthroughs