

# ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS

## FAITHFULNESS AT THE TURNING POINT

### RUTH 1:14-22

#### ***Faithfulness Makes a Costly Choice***

***Ruth 1:14 (NLT) 14 And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi.***

- Naomi's life up this point has been one of *famine, funerals, and forced good-byes*
- In the midst of all their tears, Orpah kissed her mother in law Naomi goodbye and returned to Moab, but Ruth clung to Naomi
- Yet they made *different* choices
- Orpah chose the path of least resistance, she chose "convenience" over *commitment*
- Naomi's advice is practical and loving; but God's redemptive plan often requires more than just "being practical"
- We can receive good advice and still fall short of God's greater plan ***Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,..."***
- For Orpah, letting go was easier than clinging to Naomi
- Orpah kisses Naomi, an act of "affection", but affection without *allegiance* will not carry us into the destiny God has for us ***Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.***
- God does condemn Orpah's choice, but the story goes on without her
- Practical and reasonable choices can still be *consequential, destiny-impacting* choices ***Matthew 19:22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.***
- But Ruth clung to Naomi
- Clung to speaks of *covenant loyalty* ***Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife..."***
- In the Hebrew culture, physical clinging could signify loyalty, covenant, and commitment
- Ruth is making a visible declaration of allegiance
- Ruth is making a *costly commitment*
- Ruth's commitment is faith in action without guarantees
- Ruth's clinging is obedience *before* outcome
- Ruth's choice to cling to Naomi shows us what *ordinary faithfulness* looks like:
  - It's staying when "leaving" makes sense
  - It's choosing commitment over convenience
  - It's saying Yes to God when logic and "common sense" says "No"
- Ruth clung to Naomi as an act of covenant faithfulness; as believers, we must cling to God and His purposes when the *cost is high, the path uncertain, and the outcome unknown*
  - Faithfulness doesn't "cling", it also *commits*

#### ***Faithfulness Commits Without Guarantees***

***15 "Look," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same." 16 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. 17 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!"***

# ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS

## FAITHFULNESS AT THE TURNING POINT

### RUTH 1:14-22

- Naomi tries to discourage Ruth from going with her and do what Orpah has already done by returning to her family, her culture and her gods
- She knows what life is like in Bethlehem for widows with no sons
- Naomi's advice is an act of love not rejection
- Naomi is realistic about risk and uncertainty
- Naomi's advice is what we would call "playing it safe"; return to family, culture, security and what's familiar, etc.
- Naomi's bitterness was influencing her view of God
- Naomi urged Ruth to return to Moab out of love and being realistic, but as believers we must learn that *true faithfulness* sometimes calls us to *step beyond* others' caution and trust God's *unseen* plan
- Ruth tells Naomi, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back"
- *Wherever you go, I will go - a new direction*
  - This is not about travel; it is about *direction*
  - Direction suggests *submission*; Ruth gives up control of her path **Proverbs 3:6 *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.***
  - Faithfulness for us begins when Jesus Christ, not comfort, culture, or convenience, sets the direction of our lives.
- *Wherever you live, I will live – a new dwelling*
  - Dwelling speaks to belonging and security
  - Not only is Ruth going with Naomi, but she is also identifying with Naomi
  - She embraces vulnerability alongside Naomi
- *Your people will be my people – a new community*
  - This is a radical identity shifting move
  - She accepts "outsider status" in order to belong to God's covenant people.
  - Following Jesus Christ reshapes who we belong to; sometimes that costs us relationships, comfort and cultural approval
  - It's impossible to make a decision for God without *identifying* with God's people
- *Your God will be my God – a new worship*
  - Ruth confesses that Naomi's God will be her God
  - She claims the true and living God as her God, without even seeing His blessings yet Joshua 24:15 — "Choose this day whom you will serve."
- *Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. – a new future*
- This speaks of permanence
- Ruth commits to a future that extends beyond life itself **Romans 14:8 — "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."**
- *May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"*
  - Ruth's commitment and conversion is not, "I'll walk with you for a season", but I'm going all the way with God
  - Ruth's faithfulness at the turning point is a *full change* of identity, where she goes, belongs, worships, and hopes is now defined by God, not by her past.
- Ruth's decision to leave Moab and follow God says a lot about Naomi
- Naomi's life was speaking to Ruth
- Ruth saw a godly husband and father in Elimelech, a family faithful to God in godless surroundings, she continued to trust God when Naomi's life fell apart, and trusted in the sovereignty of God even she was in pain

# ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS

## FAITHFULNESS AT THE TURNING POINT

### RUTH 1:14-22

- Authentic faith attracts
- Live it. Speak it. Trust God with the results.
- The turning points of our lives rarely announce themselves, they show up *disguised* as ordinary decisions
- Ruth didn't know she was stepping into destiny, she just knew she couldn't turn back

#### ***Faithfulness Persists Even When Discouraged***

**18 “When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more. 19 So the two of them continued on their journey. ...”**

- When Naomi saw that Ruth was *determined* to go with her, she said nothing more
- Ruth is no longer negotiating
- Nothing could change Ruth's mind, she was going with Naomi
- Ruth's vow and determination is a turning point
- Naomi had been “urging” Ruth to turn back, but now she says *nothing*
- So, the two of them continued their journey
- After the Ruth's vow is made, faithfulness is revealed not by emotion or affirmation, but by steady steps toward God's promise
- God works in the space between our *decision* and our *destination*
- Faithfulness is not validated by approval
- Obedience is not canceled by discouragement
- God often matures us in *quiet* determination

#### ***Faithfulness Walks Forward Carrying Paing and Hope Together***

**19b “...When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. “Is it really Naomi?” the women asked. 20 “Don't call me Naomi,” she responded. “Instead, call me Mara,[a] for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. 21 I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer[b] and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?” 22 So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem in late spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest.”**

- Naomi and Ruth arrived back in Bethlehem, and the entire town was glad to see them
- But the first her friends and family say to her is, “Is it really Naomi?”
- The people see the Naomi that has experienced the death of her husband, her two sons, widowhood, and poverty
- Naomi (means pleasant) says don't call me Naomi call me Mara, which means *bitter*
- Naomi was not fake, she was honest, life has been bitter for the last 10 years
- Naomi knew it was the Almighty God that made her life bitter
- Naomi left full, but *the Lord* brought me home empty
- We can have a season where we go out *full*, great health, marriage family career, financial stability, and a bright future; etc. and everything seems to fall apart and we return *empty*
- Naomi still says she is “empty” and God has ended the famine, God has given her Ruth to beside her, and God is *also* working in ways she is not yet aware of

# ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS

## FAITHFULNESS AT THE TURNING POINT

### RUTH 1:14-22

- Naomi “feels” empty, but she is *not* abandoned
- Our “feelings of emptiness” may be real, but they are not always final
- Too often in life we put a “period” where God puts a *comma*
- We think our emptiness is *permanent* when God says it’s “temporary” 1 **Peter 5:10**  
***So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.***
- So, Naomi returned from Moab
- This is more than geography, this is covenant language.
- Naomi returns to Bethlehem, the house of bread, the Promised Land, and to the people of God
- Naomi returns to Bethlehem *empty*, but she *still* returns
- This chapter ends with the text saying *it’s the beginning of the barley harvest*
- Even though Naomi feels empty, God is *working* on her harvest
- Despite her feelings of emptiness, God was not finished with Naomi and Ruth
- It also means God is not finished with you
- The harvest God is preparing often begins quietly while we are still walking through loss, uncertainty, and unanswered questions
- We often name our season too early, but God is still working, a harvest is coming, even when all we can feel is loss