

Don't Just Love, Be Loveable

Ruth 1:6-18

In our first study from Ruth, we saw how this love story is a picture of God's redemption of us, His Bride. Ruth is an unlikely bride-to-be for Boaz because she's a stranger and a foreigner to God and to His ways. In this text, Ruth decides to go with Naomi to Bethlehem where she will meet her future husband Boaz. We have a beautiful picture or allegory of what it takes for a stranger to God to become a friend of God.

I. Mercy and kindness motivate people to begin their journey toward God (vs. 6-7).

Our text begins with the reason for the immediate and decisive step of Naomi to return to Bethlehem. In the Gospel picture of these verses, we see principles for how a person begins to move toward God.

A. **She heard** that Yahweh had visited His people.

B. **She believed** the report of Yahweh's goodness.

"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). Look around you. God is good in ways that should lead you to repentance (a change of mind) about serving Him and His Kingdom.

C. **She arose** and went back to the land of her fathers.

Like the prodigal son who remembered "his father's house," Naomi arose and went to the Lord.

II. Mercy and kindness move people to become transparent toward others (vs. 8-15)

We often hear that it is our calling to be loving, but what about a desire by all of us to be loveable?

"For someone to have friends, he must show himself friendly" (Prov. 18:24). Naomi is loveable, and her mercy and kindness toward two women from Moab brought great benefits to Christ's Kingdom. Naomi exhibited selfless grace (v. 8), offered true freedom (v. 9), and displayed humility (v. 10-13).

A. To be loveable is to be a magnet of people

Both Ruth and Orpah showed their affection to their mother-in-law. Even though Orpah returned to Moab, "She kissed Naomi (v. 14). This kiss of affection is from one choosing a different path.

B. To be loveable is to be a mirror for people.

A mirror reflects who you truly are. A lighted mirror doesn't hide anything. A life full of mercy, kindness, and love – loveable in nature – is like a lighted mirror for people to see themselves.

"I can't be kind to (so-and-so) because he'll abuse his kindness and do whatever he wants!"

It's better for loyalty to be from one compelled within than from one constrained without.

C. To be loveable is to be a minister to people.

I often say "pastor" is a verb of service, not a noun of status. To be a minister is to help people.

True ministry is teaching people what freedom looks like. Orpah went back to her gods (v. 15).

III. Mercy and kindness move people toward true loyalty to the Kingdom (v. 16-18).

The speech that Ruth gives to Naomi in **1:16-17** are some of the most beautiful words in the OT.

"For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus, may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." These are often words used in wedding vows.

A. Resist seeking to control others.

Desire them to be free. Desire them to experience love. Desire them to be compelled within.

B. Realize that God's plans are best.

"The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it wherever He wills" (Prov. 21:1).

C. Rest in the Good purposes of God.

We'll see Ruth eventually makes it back to Bethlehem, marries Boaz, the House of David begins.