



Take5 for the Week of May 1-5, 2017

A Hard Life and a Little Hope

Ruth 1:1-13

By Pastor Curtis Johnson

MONDAY

In the Days When the Judges Ruled

Ruth 1:1

I have come to understand time and again that context matters. The book of Ruth begins by establishing the setting for a beautiful story that will begin to take shape in the verses that follow. But, before the story is told, we are informed that it was a very tough time in the land. The author sets the stage in the opening line by writing, "In the days when the judges ruled..."

We know from history (Judges 1 through 1 Samuel 7) that the Israelites had no king, and no succession of prophets; neither did they have any fixed capital, sanctuary or government. Everything was occasional, irregular, uncertain and fluid. What stood out in this period was the sinfulness of the people and the persistent mercifulness of the Lord.

FOR TODAY: How would you describe the context or setting of your life today? Do you see God's mercy being played out?

TUESDAY

We Need to Leave

Ruth 1:1

In my spare time, I like to do a bit of hobby farming. I call it "hobby farming" because my avocado yield has never provided more than the cost to produce it. Many conditions factor into the size of the yield but none bigger than the cost or availability of water. Through the years many trees have succumbed to the five-year Southern California drought. Across the ages, drought has forced people to abandon their dreams or livelihood and seek relief elsewhere.

Because of famine in the land, Naomi and her husband and sons needed to leave their home and their people to travel 50 miles to the other side of the Dead Sea in the land of Moab. It was there, among the Moabite people that their sons grew and married Ruth and Orpah, both Moabite women. While being away from her extended family and support structure, Naomi continued to worship the God of Abraham.

FOR TODAY: What have you abandoned due to factors outside of your control?

WEDNESDAY

What was Hard Just Became Harder

Ruth 1:3-5

Just ten years after moving to escape the famine in Bethlehem, the three men in Naomi's life die; her husband then her two sons. Naomi is now a widow in a land not her own. Being a widow during these times was extremely challenging and difficult. Widows were typically taken advantage of and ignored; many lived in poverty. With no relatives to care for her in Moab and no recent news about any living relatives back in Bethlehem, Naomi had a big decision to make; where could she go and what could she do?

Has graduation, divorce, retirement, or death of a loved one left you wondering what to do next or questioning who can help you now? No matter how devastating our present situation may be, we can experience God's grace.

FOR TODAY: The story of Ruth is the story of God's grace in the midst of trying circumstances. What are you going through; do you need God's grace?

THURSDAY

A Tough Decision

Ruth 1:6-13

Hearing that the Lord was blessing the people of Judah with crops again, Naomi begins her journey home. Naomi realized that the land of Israel offered little hope for her daughters-in-law, so she encourages them to return to the home of their mother. Her daughters-in-law must decide whether to stay in Moab with their people, customs, and finding a husband among their people or travel with Naomi and take up residence among the Israelites. They must make a very personal decision by weighing the hope for a future against their loyalty to Naomi, and their faith in Naomi's God.

No matter how discouraging situations may be, there are always people who will follow God. He will use anyone who is open to Him to achieve His purposes.

FOR TODAY: Have you ever faced a really tough decision? In hindsight, did your faith enter into the decision-making?

FRIDAY

Love, Loyalty & Faith

Ruth 1:14-16

Daughter-in-law Orpah decides to stay in Moab while daughter-in-law Ruth surprises Naomi with her love, loyalty, and faith and accompanies Naomi to Israel. Ruth's selfless step of faith will be used by God to bless Naomi in the months and years to come, as well as bless all humanity for generations to come.

We tend to think of blessings in terms of prosperity rather than the high-quality relationships God makes possible for us. No matter what situation we face, we can love and respect the people God has brought into our lives. Love is the greatest blessing!

FOR TODAY: Who is the person or persons God has placed in your life to walk with you and bless you?