

RUTH 1:6-18
TESTIMONIES!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Ruth chapter 1 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Ruth.

As we began our study of Ruth last week, we saw the timeframe that these events took place. It was during the period of the Judges and probably during the time of Gideon. And if you remember from the book of Judges, it was a dark period of time for the nation of Israel. Of this time we are told, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** Judges 21:25.

Thus, we not only saw spiritual adultery but immorality that filled the land.

And maybe you are a little nervous to dig into the book of Ruth considering the time period that this took place. You are not ready for another dark period.

Let me say this. Yes, this book starts out on the dark side, you might say, but as we move on you will see it is one of the greatest love stories of all time, except for my wife and I! And it is a picture of God’s amazing love for us as He has redeemed us from the bondage of sin and placed us into the family of God through Jesus Christ! That truly is the greatest love story of all time! Without a doubt!

And yes, last week was a little dark as it focused on the family of Elimelech. He and his family lived in Bethlehem of Judah, and because of a famine in the land, they headed to Moab to live.

And what we saw was that they ran from the situation instead of seeking direction from God.

In fact, they were living in Bethlehem, the House of Bread and instead of remaining where they should have been, they move to Moab or a washpot to live!

Now, we don't know how long they were down there before Elimelech dies and he leaves behind his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.

Down in Moab Elimelech's sons marry Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth.

And as we closed last time, we read in Judges 1:5, "**Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.**"

Again, not a very happy story and yet, the story is not over yet.

Now, in our study this morning we are going to be looking at – ***TESTIMONIES!***

In other words, statements of faith you might say. What a person believes, and others can see.

And this morning we are going to look at three different testimonies and they are as follows,

THE TESTIMONY OF NAOMI – RUTH 1:6-15

THE TESTIMONY OF ORPAH – RUTH 1:11-15

THE TESTIMONY OF RUTH – RUTH 1:14-18

And, as you will see, it is important to declare or show people why you believe what you believe, how you got to that point, and your testimony will give evidence to that fact.

Let me show you what I mean about the importance of our testimony and then I will show you these three testimonies and what they are showing us. I guess you can call it – ***THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY!*** And not specifically in that order as you will see.

This is what we are told about our testimonies,

Your testimony is your unique story about how a relationship with God has changed your life. Testimonies are personal; there are no two alike. But they all have one thing in common. Jesus!

If you are like a lot of people, you probably feel hesitant to share the “bad”, the “ugly,” or the “shameful” things that you have done or that were done to you.

But here are a few reasons why it is important to have a testimony ready so that you can share yours with someone who may need to hear it at that very moment. God asks us to share our story to help bring others to a place of repentance, to help them see that there is hope for a new life, and for encouragement during times of adversity. It is not our job to persuade, coerce, or guilt someone into accepting Christ. We are only asked to share our story.

Did you know your testimony is the key that can unlock the door to someone who is in prison? People who are imprisoned by shame and chained down by the effects of sin such as unforgiveness, doubt, pride, lust, anger, bitterness, sadness, and grief need the key only you can provide.

2 Timothy 1:8 reminds us that we should not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. That means that our personal story of how God saved us is very important to God and something we should not be ashamed to share – especially the bad stuff!

Revelation 12:11 says that people overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony! Not only do people need to hear that Jesus died for them to redeem them from sin and from the power of the enemy but they need to hear your testimony so they can become an overcomer!

An overcomer is someone who has conquered and prevailed and that is only possible when God becomes Lord of our lives. If you don't share your testimony, you rob people of the chance to become overcomers!

Don't over-think your testimony, but have a short one ready to share. It can be just a few minutes long. Start with your life before you had a relationship with God and share a few of the hardships or challenges you faced. Then share how your life has changed or how you have learned to seek God in times of trouble. Think about how He has helped you, guided you, or changed your heart toward others.

When you share your testimony, you plant a seed. You may be called to help nurture that seed, or God may call others to do that work. It is up to the person who hears your testimony to accept Christ for themselves.

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Again, remember where we left off last time, Judges 1:5, "**Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.**" Judges 1:5.

The focus of our story is upon Naomi and her two daughters-in-law. And the question may be, "*What does the future hold? Can Naomi ever recover from this horrible situation?*"

We will see how that all plays out as we go through the book of Ruth, but in our study this morning we will see where Naomi is at, and it is not a good place, at least not yet! And not only Naomi, but we will see where Orpah and Ruth are at as well.

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Ruth chapter 1 beginning in verse 6, and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study through His Word and look at this topic of – ***TESTIMONIES!***

RUTH 1**VERSES 6-15**

Keep in mind that Naomi lost her husband and her two sons, all three have died. And she is in a desperate situation.

And she hears that “**. . . the LORD had visited [or aided] His people in giving them bread.**” Ruth 1:6.

And when Naomi hears what God has done, that the famine in Bethlehem is over and there is food once again, she begins to return to Bethlehem.

Now we read that and we might think that is great, she is heading home. Or maybe we don't think much about it at all.

But there is something that I believe is very significant in what Naomi is doing or I should say, why she is doing it!

The first point here in the – ***TESTIMONY OF NAOMI*** is that Naomi is going back for the food, for the physical satisfaction and it says nothing about her going back to the Lord!

Now many don't see this as a problem, she needed food, there was food back in Bethlehem and that is where her family was at, so why not go back?

First of all, this family should have never gone down to Moab in the first place, they should have sought direction from God.

And yes, she needed to return to the land of Israel, to the House of Bread, Bethlehem, but the reason she needed to return is for the Lord and not for any physical needs. That is what got this family in trouble in the first place.

Also, the people in Bethlehem were experiencing the blessings of God and for Naomi, she only heard of these blessings. And that is what happens when we are outside the will of God. We see what God is doing in other people's lives and instead of coming to the Bread of Life, we are seeking the blessings instead of the One who is doing the blessing!

Let me explain it like this,

Do you ever view God like Santa Claus? Have you ever acted as if God exists just to give you what you want as long as you're good enough to deserve it? And Santa grades on a pretty easy curve when it comes to naughty and nice, right? So as long as we're not awful compared to other people, we should get what we want. . . .

Basically, this is using God, not loving Him.

A better way to view God than Santa Claus is Father. This is a common description of God in the Bible and the term Jesus used often.

Whether you have a positive, negative, or mixed reaction to the word Father, based on your personal experiences, you can be sure God is the perfect Father. He's what a father should be. Any positive experiences you have with earthly fathers point you toward an even greater Heavenly Father. Good fathers give us a small picture of what a relationship with God can be. But no earthly father is perfect.

Any negative experience you may have had with a father-even the absence of a father-is painful because you know what a father is supposed to be. You know that relationship is supposed to be safe, supportive, and characterized by unconditional love.

One part of our relationship with God that we distort and make unhealthy is a misplaced affection for the things He gives us. James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

It’s human nature to become obsessed with the gifts God gives us. We turn good things into our gods and worship them, giving them our affection and allowing them to consume our lives.

Earlier James warned people that temptation and sin don’t come from God but from within our own hearts when we desire things instead of God. It’s true that gifts are from God . . . But the Giver is much greater than the gifts He gives us.

You can identify what you idolize by recognizing what tempts you. If something is enticing, part of you believes it’s more satisfying and pleasing than what God can give you. Whatever lures your heart away from loving your Heavenly Father is an idol. Anything that has your devotion and influences your life more than Jesus is an idol, a distortion of the good and perfect gifts the Father gives.

Paul wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3).

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in a city called Ephesus, a center of idolatry. Ephesus was the home of the temple of Artemis, one of the most popular Greek goddesses, the daughter of Zeus and the twin sister of Apollo. She was a seriously big deal in ancient religion. Her temple was not only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world but was also deemed as the most magnificent.

At one point the craftsmen and merchants who made a lot of money selling shrines of Artemis stirred up a riot after Paul preached the gospel of Jesus (see Acts 19:24-41). People in the city had been transformed by the love and grace of Jesus, and they were worshiping Jesus instead of Artemis and “the sacred stone that fell from the sky” (verse 35).

In contrast to idol worship, Paul said everything you need is found in your relationship with Jesus. He’s infinitely greater than anything in this world. He wants to bless you. He wants you to experience life to its fullest. He’s not a cosmic killjoy who wants to ruin all your fun. He has the very best intentions for you. And the things you think you want apart from Him aren’t good. Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

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I think Naomi, because of all that happened to her, was just looking for satisfaction, for her needs to be met and she was not looking for God, not yet. In fact, as we will see, she is going to have a distorted view of God and what He is doing in her life.

So the first point here with Naomi’s testimony is that ***SHE IS GOING BACK TO BETHLEHEM FOR FOOD AND NOT FOR THE LORD!*** She forgot that the Lord is the giver and sustainer of life and thus, she has her priorities messed up!

Another sad point here is that Naomi is trying to ***DISCOURAGE HER DAUGHTERS–IN–LAW FROM COMING WITH HER TO THE HOUSE OF BREAD – BETHLEHEM!***

Instead, she wanted them to remain in Moab, in this pagan nation instead of coming to the true and living God!

And when you think about it, they had no family, no friends in Bethlehem, so from a purely human viewpoint, that would be the right thing to do. That would just make sense!

But spiritually speaking, it was a horrible thing to do!

But Naomi's walk with the Lord was not right and because of that, she has no hope and why bring these young women to Bethlehem, there is nothing there for them! Well, except the Lord!

And think about this. Both Orpah and Ruth were going to go back with her.

They said, "... 'Surely we will return with you to your people.'" Ruth 1:10. That is awesome, they were willing to leave that old life behind and come with Naomi to Bethlehem!

But listen to Naomi's response, her discouragement for these young women to come with her to Bethlehem.

We are told, "But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go - for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!'"

Ruth 1:11-13.

That is discouragement. Naomi is telling them that if they go with her that they will not be able to find a husband from her loins.

Think about it. Are they really going to wait for Naomi to not only get pregnant, then to have a child, hopefully a boy and she needs two, one for each of these women, and then these boys would have to grow up before they could marry them. We are talking a long time and there is no way they were going to wait.

Now what about what God had said about the Levirate marriage?

In other words, in following what God said in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 regarding a widow, that if a woman's husband dies without having children, that his brother or nearest relative was duty bound to marry her and their first-born would be under the dead brothers name.

But she was not even thinking along those lines. Maybe thinking she has been gone so long that her family has probably disowned her. It has been some ten years since she left Bethlehem, and they probably forgot all about her!

But again, Naomi is not focused on that and thus, Naomi says that by the time she married and had children, by the time these children were old enough to marry them, they would not want to wait that long.

In fact, this was just a foolish thought considering Naomi's age.

Thus, she encourages them to remain in Moab to marry one of their own.

I find it interesting that Naomi is not praying about this but just going by her own feelings, what she sees and not what God wants!

And to have these young women willing to go with her, to come to the God of Israel, how awesome is that but Naomi is struggling with her faith and does not even think about that. She is walking by sight and not by faith!

So we see here that Naomi is discouraging these women from coming with her to Bethlehem, to the House of Bread!

One other reason why she may be discouraging them from coming back with her is that it would show how disobedient to God she was in allowing her sons to marry pagan women, Moabites! And thus, she was trying to cover her sin!

And as you look at the last part of Ruth 1:13 you will see the reason she is not in favor of coming back to God and for bringing anyone to God, and that is our third point here in this testimony of Naomi, ***EVERYTHING IS AGAINST ME!***

She says, “**. . . for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!**”

Do you see what Naomi is doing? She is blaming God for what is happening in her life!

Some try to paint Naomi as not accusing God of bringing this upon her life but was expressing her belief that God was in total control of the situation.

I don't see it that way.

You see, she is telling her daughters-in-law not to go with her, God's hand is heavy upon her and it was God that has done this to all of them so it was better to be away from her!

How sad when we misrepresent God, like Naomi did.

We blame God for the things that have happened to us, and share those feelings, as wrong as they may be, with the unsaved.

And as the unsaved listen, they get a warped picture of who God is. Instead of blaming God, we should take a look at our own heart, and either repent of our sin or learn the lessons that God is trying to teach us.

Jacob had a problem with that kind of thinking. In Genesis 42:36 we are told, “**And Jacob their father said to them, ‘You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.’**”

Because Jacob took his eyes off of God, he felt that “**All these things are against me.**”

Is that true?

Absolutely not!

In fact, all these things were working for good, to preserve a people, to raise up a nation, to restore them and not to destroy them.

Isn't it easy to get into that mode of thinking when things are not going well?

You bet it is! It is kind of the “Eeyore mentality!” Eeyore is the melancholy stuffed donkey in Winnie the Pooh who thinks that everything and everyone is against him. Nothing goes right, and he just goes moping around. That is Jacob and the solution for Jacob and for us is to get refocused on the Lord and trust that He knows what He is doing!

Listen to what David did in those times of fear, of uncertainty to get refocused.

In Psalm 42, starting in verse 1 we are told, “**As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, ‘Where is your God?’ When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me; Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, And from the heights of Hermon, From the Hill Mizar. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me. The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, And in the night His song shall be with me - A prayer to the God of my life. I**

will say to God my Rock, ‘Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’ As with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me, While they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.” Psalm 42:1-11.

You see, David meditated upon the Lord, He looked to the Lord for help, for strength, he hungered for God, he went into the house of God with praise unto God and as he did he had a correct perspective on things, **“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”**

That is what we need to do, hope in God for He will bring about good even in the darkest of times! Jacob’s heart sang out, *“No one loves me, this I know. My misfortunes tell me so!”*

Do you know that song?

Instead, for Jacob and for us, we should be singing, *“Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so!”*

In fact, all things are not against us but all things are for us as Paul tells us in Romans 8:28, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”** May we not forget that!

Now let me give you this example of what a bad testimony looks like as we misrepresent things. We are told,

As a result of poor planning, Dennis, from Katy, Texas, needed some same-day dry cleaning before he left on a trip.

He remembered one store with a huge sign, “One-Hour Dry Cleaners,” on the other side of town, so he drove out of his way to drop off a suit.

After filling out the tag, he told the clerk, “I need this in an hour.”

She said, “I can’t get this back to you until Thursday.”

“I thought you did dry cleaning in an hour.”

“No,” she replied, “That’s just the name of the store.”

Those of us who carry the name Christian but fail to act like the one whose name we bear, create confusion and disillusionment for those who have yet to believe.

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That was truly Naomi’s testimony, and you might call it – **BAD!**

Warren Wiersbe tells us,

Whenever we have disobeyed the Lord and departed from His will, we must confess our sin and return to the place of blessing. Abraham had to leave Egypt and go back to the altar he had abandoned (Gen 13:1-4), and Jacob had to go back to Bethel (35:1).

The repeated plea of the prophets to God’s people was that they turn from their sins and return to the Lord. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7). Naomi’s decision was right, but her motive was wrong. She was still interested primarily in food, not in fellowship with God. You don’t hear her confessing her sins to God and asking Him to forgive her. She was returning to her land but not to her Lord.

But something else was wrong in the way Naomi handled this decision: She did not want her two daughters-in-law to go with her. If it was right for Naomi to go to Bethlehem, where the true and living God was worshiped, then it was right for Orpah and Ruth to accompany her.

Naomi should have said to them what Moses said to his father-in-law, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel” (Num 10:29, KJV). Instead, Naomi tried to influence the two women to go back to their families and their false gods.

Why would a believing Jewess, a daughter of Abraham, encourage two pagan women to worship false gods? I may be wrong, but I get the impression that Naomi didn’t want to take Orpah and Ruth to Bethlehem because they were living proof that she and her husband had permitted their two sons to marry women from outside the covenant nation.

In other words, Naomi was trying to cover up her disobedience. If she returned to Bethlehem alone, nobody would know that the family had broken the Law of Moses. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov 28:13, NKJV).

When we try to cover our sins, it’s proof that we really haven’t faced them honestly and judged them according to God’s Word. True repentance involves honest confession and a brokenness within. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps 51:17). Instead of brokenness, Naomi had bitterness.

The tragedy is that Naomi did not present the God of Israel in a positive way. . . Had Naomi been walking with the Lord, she could have won Orpah to the faith and brought two trophies of grace home to Bethlehem.

For Naomi, at least she was returning to Bethlehem, but there is much she will need to learn in her growth in the Lord, in her trust in the Lord!

But again, the *TESTIMONY* she had given was – ***BAD!***

VERSES 11-15

Here we see – ***THE TESTIMONY OF ORPAH!***

And, in regard to the ***GOOD***, the ***BAD***, and the ***UGLY***, this testimony of Orpah is ***UGLY!***

Let me show you what I mean.

First of all, we see that Naomi tried to discourage both Orpah and Ruth from coming with her to Bethlehem three times. We saw that in Ruth 1:8 and Ruth 1:11-12.

And Naomi even prayed for them, that God would deal kindly with them, bless them and that they would find a husband, not in Bethlehem, but back in Moab!

And yet, both started to head with Naomi to Bethlehem, they both began this journey with Naomi.

But we see that Orpah “**kissed her mother-in-law**” and departed from her, went back to Moab.

Interestingly enough, the name “**Orpah**” means “*Youthful*” or “*immature.*”

So there was this emotion with Orpah towards Naomi, but there was no real devotion to her and thus, she departed, she went her own way.

For Orpah, this just made sense. Why go to a land that she never knew before, to a people she did not know, she didn’t know anyone in Bethlehem, and to a God who seems to be vindictive according to the witness or testimony of Naomi!

And I guess the issue for Orpah is this. The God of Israel was never real to her and thus, her life and her testimony reflected that!

Now let me also say this. Our testimony as Christians can also be – *UGLY!*

You see, we can be immature in our Christian walk and when we don't get what we want, we are ready to move on, to leave, to go back to the world and see what it has to offer. And I will tell you this. The world does not have anything for you, it never did, and it never will. It is passing away and if your life is in Christ, it will be everlasting!

Make no mistake about it, the Christian life is not easy, and God allows us to go through some very difficult times to help us to grow, to help us to mature in the faith. And many times, we place ourselves in difficult situations because we are not obeying the Lord!

For Orpah, and for us many times, difficulty, hardships, suffering will cause us to run in the opposite direction from where God wants us. We don't want to continue forward so we retreat, you might say.

Let's face it, there is a lot of uncertainty in the Christian life. And when I say that I mean we just don't know all the things that we are going to go through. We don't know how things are going to work out. And that is difficult.

But can we trust in God?

Can we trust in His promises to us?

You see, we need to be able to trust in Him and rest in His promises.

If you can't, then there is no way you are going to be able to walk by faith. All your movement will be in response to what you see and seeing can be deceptive.

We need to be able to look at things through the eyes of faith.

We are going to see that Ruth is going to walk by faith, but Orpah was not able to. The pull back to Moab, back to the world was too strong for her and she went for that which she knew rather than what she didn't know because she was not willing to walk by faith!

And I wonder what would have happened if Orpah did go with Naomi to Bethlehem, to the House of Bread.

You see, as Orpah returned to Moab that is the last time we hear of her as she disappears from history, never to be mentioned again.

She appeared to have faith. She seemed like she wanted to go with Naomi but in the end, she didn't and how many people have heard of Christ, heard of His love for them and then, in the end, turned and walked away?

I pray that if there is anyone here who has not repented of their sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives, that they would turn to Him! Don't pass this up like Orpah did!

God has a wonderful plan for your life, but you must first come to Him!

And if you have turned to Christ and yet, you are being drawn back to the world, back to Moab or to a washpot, I pray that you repent and return to the giver and sustainer of life. That you would return to the House of Bread!

THE TESTIMONY OF ORPAH was not good, it was ugly because she just walked away.

But we are not done. We are going to look at – ***THE TESTIMONY OF RUTH*** next.

VERSES 14-18

Look again at Judges 1:14 and I want you to see the difference to how Orpah responded to what Naomi said and how Ruth responded. It may not seem like a big difference, but it is a huge difference as we see how what they did was then seen in their life!

Orpah gives Naomi a kiss of emotion but not devotion.

Was Orpah going to miss Naomi? Absolutely and I think that is why she responded like she did, with a kiss.

I don't believe this kiss was not sincere, but it was all emotion, and it did not result in the proper action on her part. You see, Orpah returned to her own people in Moab, not going with Naomi.

Then there is Ruth, and we are not told that Ruth kissed Naomi, but that she clung to Naomi! There was no way that Ruth was going to let go of Naomi, she was not going to get away from her.

And this is more than just emotion here on the part of Ruth. What we see here is devotion, and as we will see, this devotion is not just to Naomi, but I believe it is a devotion to the God that Naomi served. In other words, Ruth wanted the Lord and thus, she is going to go with Naomi to the House of Bread!

Now maybe you are thinking I am reading too much into that. Maybe you think that the response of both was good. Now I am not saying that Orpah's response was evil, it was just that it wasn't the best response, and, in the end, she will have nothing!

How do I know that Ruth's response was better?

Listen again to what we are told in Ruth 1:16-17, **“But Ruth said: ‘Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.’”**

And keep in mind that these words from Ruth are after Naomi tried to discourage her from coming. She told Ruth that her sister-in-law is heading back to Moab, why not return with her, why come and follow me?

And yes, it would be much easier for her to remain in Moab than to go to the House of Bread, to Bethlehem.

But Ruth was determined to go, she was not going to let anything stop her!

And Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and to the Lord was strong, it was deep. She was willing to follow Naomi wherever she went. She wanted to be a member of the family of God and thus, she was willing to become like Naomi was, a Jew!

You see, this was more than a change of address.

Ruth was willing to forsake the Moabite gods she grew up with and embrace the God of Israel.

Ruth was willing to leave family and friends behind and follow Naomi and the God she served.

For Ruth, she was deciding to follow the **LORD**. Thus, Ruth’s testimony was – **GOOD!**

Look at this for a minute. This Gentile woman, once far from God, had drawn near to Him.

How did she find out about the Lord?

I think it was through the witness of Naomi and maybe Naomi's son, Ruth's husband.

And maybe it was not a great witness, but it was still a witness and she wanted what they had, and that was the Lord!

I truly believe that Naomi's relationship with God had a huge impact on Ruth.

And I think about our own lives and sometimes we just don't live up to what we think we should be doing. And we wonder what people are seeing in us. God is gracious and He is merciful and like He was working in Naomi's life, He was also working in the life of Ruth through Naomi!

And God, in our weakness, is working not only in us but in others who are watching our lives. And our witness may not be as great as we want it, but God is still working, never forget that!

And think about this for a minute. When people look at your life, how you live, what you say, the things that you do, do they say as Ruth said, ***"I want your God to be my God?"***

You see, our trust in God, and turning towards Him in tough times, will often be the thing that draws others to the ***LORD***.

It is as Spurgeon put it, ***"Ah! You will never win any soul to the right by a compromise with the wrong. It is decision for Christ and his truth that has the greatest power in the family, and the greatest power in the world, too."***

How true that is!

Now maybe you think that these are just empty words by Ruth. As I read this, I don't see it that way. I think she was very sincere in what she was saying to Naomi!

Again, look at verse 17 of Ruth chapter 1 and you will see the sincerity of what she was saying, what she was willing to do, what she was willing to sacrifice. We are told, “**Where you die, I will die, And there I will be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.**”

How about us? Are we that sincere about our faith and what God desires of us that no matter what, we will follow Him all the days of our life? We need to.

Let me explain it like this. We are told,

Adventurer Robert Young Pelton was confronted with the price of commitment while in Afghanistan.

“When I was being shelled on a front line north of Kabul, I asked a 23-year-old Taliban fighter, ‘Why don’t we dig trenches to escape the bombardment?’

“He looked at me and asked, ‘If you didn’t come here to die, why are you here?’”

- More Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

Now, in saying that, what about your life? Are you willing to give your life completely to the Lord no matter what? We need to!

Also, when people watch what you do, when they read your life, are they seeing Jesus? Is your life a witness of Jesus? It should be.

It is as Jesus said, “**If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**” Matthew 16:24.

Let me share how these men were willing to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Jesus. This is from Wes Bentley from Far Reaching Ministries and we are told,

I was in Russia with our team celebrating the Eastern Orthodox Christmas on the 7th of January. We were celebrating with one of the churches when I received a call from Michael, our senior chaplain. He called to inform me of the deaths of two of our men, Gabriel Manyoun and John Deng.

Gabriel had graduated in 2015, from the chaplaincy training program, and John was being field trained by Gabriel and would have been part of class eleven.

Michael shared this news that had come in from the front where one of the forward military units had been overrun by the enemy.

From what we understand, there were wounded and dying men everywhere. Gabriel and John ran up trying to save other men's lives when they were ambushed and killed, or so we thought. However, when the military was able to retake the overrun position, they found that John was still alive though he was critically wounded. He was transported to a hospital for treatment, but the medical care at the front is ill equipped to care for critically wounded patients and far from what you would find in the western world.

I know from my experience that John's chances of survival were not good, but we prayed and hoped God would intervene. As a war zone, South Sudan is a very dangerous and hard place. Around the 21st of January, word came informing us that John had succumbed to his wounds and went home to be with the Lord. This was a difficult way to start the new year, but this was only the beginning.

On the 23rd of January, Michael called to inform me that Chaplain Peter Longar had been captured by the enemy and he was burned alive. He was on his way home to see his wife and two daughters, when he fell into the hands of the enemy. What happened next, we can only speculate. When his remains were found, he had been bound and had firewood around his body. He was doused with fuel and lit ablaze.

Peter had graduated in June of 2015. He had been in the field a little over a year before he was killed.

In the last 16 years, we have lost a total of 32 staff who have given their lives in the service of Christ. It is a hard fact to realize that we are no closer to this war ending.

Sadly, this is going to go on. Yet, despite all the hardship we are seeing many souls won for Christ.

The day I found out about Peter's death, I just had to go home. The loss of too many men in too short of a time was overwhelming. I needed to be alone with the Lord and with my thoughts.

Peter's death was very difficult to handle because of the brutality of the nature in which he was killed.

I shared this news with a few friends and Ken Graves sent me a message and I felt it was appropriate. He said that may you and I also go out in the same blaze of glory. It made me realize for a moment of pain, he will wear the robes of a martyr and a crown of glory for eternity.

[This is the testimony of Peter Longar]

I came to the chaplains training program because Chaplain Peer Akech preached the Gospel of God to me and disciple me. He taught me Matthew 11:28 and he demonstrated daily how to love Jesus with all my strength. I wanted this same commitment in my heart. I joined the church and followed the examples I was given. As I came to learn the Word of God and began to go and proclaim to other soldiers, I realized God had a plan for my life.

When I arrived at the chaplain base, I was still shallow and selfish. I was not a good person. I told everyone that I was only going to stay for two weeks. God had one of the teachers share from Matthew 11:28, and my heart broke before God.

Suddenly, God's peace was upon me and my heart became transformed. Christ changed me. I thank God for increasing His Word in my heart through the chaplaincy program. I am so glad He kept me in the program.

I have two brothers and two sisters. My parents are still alive. My mother and father are born-again, and so are my two sisters and one of my brothers.

My wife's name is Bati. God blessed us with my two daughters, and I think God will give us another child. I ask for prayer for my ministry and for my family; especially for my brother who is an unbeliever in Christ.

Peter's favorite Scripture was Matthew 11:28:

“Come to Me, all [you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

- Wes Bentley, Far Reaching Ministries, March 2017

These men sacrificed their lives for the Lord. They counted the cost, and their lives are examples to others of what true sacrifice is all about.

It reminds me of Paul who was encouraging Timothy to continue on in the faith, to finish the race strong. Paul knew his life was coming to an end, he was going to be put to death for his faith by Nero. And he wanted to encourage Timothy, using his life as an example for him, to continue on and to continue on strong!

And what I want you to notice about Chaplain Peter Longar was that he was not only disciplined and followed the examples that were given to him by other Christian men but now his life is a witness to others even though it was short on this earth!

I realize as you look at your life you might not want to be an example but make no mistake about it, by being a Christian you are not only witnessing to the unsaved but you are an example to the saved.

Therefore, we must be willing to follow the Lord, lay down our lives to be used by Him for His glory.

Remember what Jesus said, **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”** Matthew 16:24.

May we follow Christ and be that example to others!

Again, Naomi’s witness may not have been great. In fact, in those ten years down in Moab we don’t see Naomi make Ruth speak forth her faith, her allegiance to the God of Israel.

But, when Naomi said she was leaving Moab and heading to Bethlehem, to the House of Bread, Ruth stood with her. She confessed her faith in the God of Israel, and nothing was going to stop her from following Naomi!

Let me share these words with you from Warren Wiersbe as he wrote,

Naomi was trying to cover up; Orpah had given up, but Ruth was prepared to stand up! She refused to listen to her mother-in-law's pleas or follow her sister-in-law's bad example.

Why? Because she had come to trust in the God of Israel (2:12). She had experienced trials and disappointments, but instead of blaming God, she had trusted Him and was not ashamed to confess her faith. In spite of the bad example of her disobedient in-laws, Ruth had come to know the true and living God; and she wanted to be with His people and dwell in His land.

Ruth's conversion is evidence of the sovereign grace of God, for the only way sinners can be saved is by grace (Eph 2:8-10). Everything within her and around her presented obstacles to her faith, and yet she trusted the God of Israel.

Her background was against her, for she was from Moab where they worshiped the god Chemosh (Num 21:29; 1 Kings 11:7,33), who accepted human sacrifices (2 Kings 3:26-27) and encouraged immorality (Num 25).

Her circumstances were against her and could have made her bitter against the God of Israel.

First, her father-in-law died, and then her husband and her brother-in-law; and she was left a widow without any support.

If this is the way Jehovah God treats His people, why follow Him?

Ruth dearly loved her mother-in-law, but even Naomi was against her; for she urged Ruth to return to her family and her gods in Moab.

Since Elimelech and Mahlon were now dead, Ruth was technically under the guardianship of Naomi; and she should have obeyed her mother-in-law's counsel.

But God intervened and graciously saved Ruth in spite of all these obstacles. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5, NKJV).

God delights in showing mercy (Mic 7:18), and often He shows His mercy to the least likely people in the least likely places. This is the sovereign grace of the God “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4, KJV).

Ruth’s statement in Ruth 1:16-17 is one of the most magnificent confessions found anywhere in Scripture.

First, she confessed her love for Naomi and her desire to stay with her mother-in-law even unto death.

Then she confessed her faith in the true and living God and her decision to worship Him alone.

She was willing to forsake father and mother (2:11) in order to cleave to Naomi and the God of her people.

Ruth was steadfastly “determined” to accompany Naomi (1:18) and live in Bethlehem with God’s covenant people.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 480

Ruth is an amazing woman who was devoted, not only to Naomi, but more importantly, to the true and living God! My prayer as we go through this study here in Ruth is that we would learn to love the Lord more and more. That we would follow Him no matter where He is leading us. That we would follow Him all the days of our life! And may we leave a powerful **TESTIMONY** of our love for the Lord!