

TEACHING OUTLINE | Real Ones: Real Love In Real Relationships

Week 1/4 – Love’s Commitment.

Big Idea: Love is committed, no matter what!

Small Group Objective: We will see that even when we feel empty, we can find fullness in God’s commitment to always be with us.

Scriptures Used: *Ruth 1; Proverbs 29:18; Galatians 6:2; Psalm 51:17; 1 John 1:9.*

Anchor Scripture: *Ruth 1:16-18 NLT*

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!” 18 When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

Theme in Chapter 1: Ruth displays God’s faithfulness (Commitment) to Naomi who is questioning His faithfulness in her present trouble.

Big Question: Is God still with me in my trouble? Yes! As Ruth is Committed to Naomi, so is God committed to you.

Intro: There are only 2 books in the bible dedicated to the faith of 2 women, Esther and Ruth. Both played significant roles in God’s overall plan to rescue humanity back to Himself. For the next 4 weeks we are going to take a deep dive into the life of Ruth and see **how real love is displayed in real relationships**. We want to walk away from the discussion recognizing that God is the OG Real One and how we can be a Real One to each other & the rest of the world through authentic relationships.

Question: Do you ever have moments in your life when you look around and it seems like no matter where you look things are going crazy and are out of control? Perhaps you may have felt this in your own life at school, on the field, in relationships with friends and family, or simply just trying to stay committed to following God?

I think that is how Naomi felt in the opening scene of the book of Ruth.

Like any good movie, the opening scene frames the story and sets us up for the plot. Let's look at chapter 1 in **Four frames**.

FRAME 1: The Mess | V.1 | God is in control even in our mess.

Look at verse 1. It says, "In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land"

If we really want to understand the story of Ruth, we must go back and remember that this story takes place in the bigger picture of the book of Judges.

This whole story begins when God makes a big promise to Abraham back in Genesis 12. God says, "Abraham, I am going to bless you and through your offspring I will bless the whole world."

- You are blessed to be a blessing.

Then Abraham's grandson, Jacob, has twelve sons and their children become the twelve tribes of Israel.

- These twelve tribes were supposed to be the **physical example of God's love and peace on earth**. But things didn't work out that way. Instead, the tribes **chose to follow the idols of the Canaanite people**.
- **They turned away from God and they turned on each other.**

Here's my picture of Judges:

- Each generation got progressively worse as they went off the rails.
- The very last story in Judges tells of a man whose concubine was (*Raped, though true, it's a sensitive word so please you discretion with your group*) forcefully taken against her will, used, and murdered by a neighboring tribe, so he cut up her body into twelve pieces and mailed them to each of the twelve tribes.
- And you thought TV was bad today.
- Then look at the last line of Judges.

"all the people did what was right in their own eyes."

The big frame shows a world that is out of control.

- **Proverbs 29:18** - When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful.

Application: Doing what we want and what feels right leads to a life that spirals out of control. When we choose to live life God's way, He promises that we will experience true joy.

- *Happiness* is a temporary feeling dependent on our circumstances. But *joy* is an emotion that remains no matter the outcome of the situation you may be in. Choose Joy!

T: Then we come to the second frame. Here we bring it down from the big picture and look into the life of one woman and her family, *Naomi*.

Frame 2: The Move | V.6-13 | God has not turned against you, even when we turn on Him.

“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. 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 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 was a Jewish woman married to Elimelech. They lived in Bethlehem with their two sons. The famine (No food) forced them to leave their home and go to a foreign country called Moab.

- They were there for ten years. Her sons married Moabite wives. But then her husband and her two sons died.
- The gravity of this scene escapes us in our culture. In those days, if a woman had no husband and no sons, that meant **she had nothing**.
- **Naomi hears that back in her original home of Bethlehem that there is food and hope for a new start. She is determined to return to her home because of what she heard.**
- The journey back wasn’t a quick return, so it’s safe to say that Naomi and the young women had a lot of time on their hands to think and then Naomi has this thought, (Paraphrase) *“Why should they come along with me? I have nothing to offer.”*
- Naomi was in the thick of her hurt. She is completely empty with nothing to offer for her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. So she blesses them to return back to their homeland.
- But instead of returning they plead to stay with Naomi. Naomi knows the danger that lies ahead of them and wants to spare them the pain. She insists on traveling alone.
- This seclusion is a form of self-infliction.
- Perhaps you have found yourself in the place Naomi was in, Bitter, believing God has turned against you. So it’s best for you to deal with this alone.

- **TRUTH: YOU ARE NOT A BURDEN TO GOD AND HE HAS NOT TURNED AGAINST YOU!**
He helps us, but How? In community through authentic relationships.

Look at **Galatians 6:2** - *Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

Application: There's a famous quote, *"Be who you needed when you were younger"*. You don't have to wait till you're older to be that person. You can take action **RIGHT NOW!**

- Obeying God looks like helping one another when life gets tough. Believers are to serve one another like spotters serving those who are lifting weights. This could take form in praying for one another. Making time for one another. Be a listening ear. The list is limitless. But if you're still having a hard time wondering how you can help someone, consider this thought: **What did you need when you were at your lowest? Now how can you duplicate that to others around you?**

T: God gives us a perfect example of a loyal friend in Naomi's daughter, Ruth.

Frame 3: The Moabite | V. 15-18 | God is committed to the promises He made to us.

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!**" 18 When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

Ruth is the definition of a "Real One".

- **Ruth was committed to following her mother No matter the cost.**
- true faithfulness—the true way of God—is a commitment to the other person that is made when it is truly for the other person and not for yourself.
- That's the kind of commitment God has made to us. When Jesus died on the cross, that was God saying to us, **"I'm all in."**

Frame 4: The Meaning | V. 19-22 | God is hope during hopelessness.

19 So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the woman asked. 20 "Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara, 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 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.

Gospel: The enemy wants us to believe we cannot return to God because we have nothing to offer Him. Though it's true, we have nothing good to offer. The other truth is we can always return back, and God will gladly receive us.

- The psalmist, David, known as man after God's heart, was far from perfect. Yet, He knew that God still loved Him even in his brokenness. Look at his words of prayer when he was at his weakest...

Psalm 51:17 - *The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.*

- **We have nothing to offer God except our brokenness. He loves when we call on Him.**

God is loyal to His promises towards you and I. He promises to forgive those who repent (turn from the sin) and choose to follow Him.

- *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.* 1 John 1:9 NLT

Discussion Questions:

- 1) **High's & Lows. What's been a highlight and an area we can be praying for you this week?**
- 2) **What stood out to you in this passage? Why did this catch your attention?**
- 3) **What was Israel like when Judges ruled?**
- 4) **On what basis did the people generally make their decisions?**
- 5) **Like Naomi, have you ever felt like God has "Turned against you"? How so?**
- 6) **When you face rejection, humility, or shame, where do you run to find comfort?**