

# February 2000: A Lesson from Ruth\*

by Aaron Greenway

Being single is sometimes very difficult and in light of Valentine's Day. We wonder where that person is (or that ought to be) in our lives. Hugs and kisses from Mom and Dad are good. Friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord are awesome, but we are grown up now, and we wish to share our lives with someone, with a soulmate. For those in ministry, we don't want to venture out into the Lord's work alone. And we cannot imagine our lives without children.

What a beautiful thing what God created, the union of a man and a woman, a union that is spiritual, emotional, physical and sexual, a union that transcends the surface right to the core of the person. Those of you who are married know exactly what I am talking about. So, it is a problem trusting the Lord with this part of our lives, those of us who are not married yet.

In one of my Bible Exposition courses, we have gone through the Book of Ruth, a beautiful story in the Bible about two young (pagan) women, Ruth and Orpah, who are married to a couple's (Elimelech and Naomi) two sons (Mahlon and Chilion) who are Hebrew. Well, Elimelech dies, and his two boys die. This means there are three widows, three women who have lost their husbands. Can you imagine losing your husband or wife to a disease like cancer? My grandmother lost her husband just a year and a half ago. My mother almost lost my father three months after that to a massive stroke. It is very hard on the family to go through things like this. So, one can empathize with these two women.

Well, Naomi, then returns to her own people. But only one daughter-n-law follows her, Ruth. Ruth not only gives up her chance to be married again (by going back to her people, the Moabites), she is faithful to this woman. And even better, her faith is put in the living God, YHWH.

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[of this book]  
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\* AUTHOR'S NOTE: I had not planned to give this devotional for February, but felt really pressed upon to give attention to a particular area that is very sensitive to many as well as with me. I certainly didn't want to be misread.

What a blessing to an older woman to have a faithful companion who is not there under any obligation except that she desires to follow the Lord. In spite of her devotion, this must have been hard on Ruth. Someone who is lonely could have just as easily returned and gotten remarried.

God, then, rewards Ruth. When Ruth and Naomi return to the Hebrew people, Boaz, a close relative, takes notice of Ruth. With a little more inquiring, he finds out that she has stayed with Naomi and has been faithful to her and to God. And he protects her from the other men as well as acting in total purity with her. But, according to the Mosaic Law, instead of buying the inheritance and marrying the widow, Elimelech's inheritance would have to be bought and while there is some discussion as to whether marriage was a part of this process, she would have to be given over a "closer" relative to carry on the family name. So, here we have Boaz who wishes to be joined with this woman, but he first desires to honor God and His law by being obedient.

To Ruth and Boaz's delight, the closer relative declines the offer, and as a result, this godly man and this godly woman are joined. What would have happened had Ruth went back with the other daughter-n-law? What would have happened if Ruth was unfaithful to her mother-n-law? What would have happened if she had ignored God and returned to her idols?

What a lesson for the singles who are beginning to wonder if God has remembered them and if purity and faithfulness are really worth it. What can we learn from this passage? The lesson is that God will not forget the faithful. The lesson becomes that our eyes and our attention has to be on our God. This is very hard to do when we feel so alone, but we **MUST** learn to be satisfied with Jesus, and let Him take care of the rest. Remember what Paul told the Galatians, "Let us not become weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9 NIV).

Just as caution, if we are **TOO** desperate to marry, we may end up marrying the wrong person. If we jump ahead of God's timing, we may cheat ourselves of God's best for us. The key is to be attentive and to be content (Phil 4:11). Let us learn to be faithful in a world of faithlessness. Let us be pure in a society of perversion. And let us learn to be desperate for Jesus and the

things of God rather than expecting another person to meet our needs. God, in due season, at the proper time, will give us the desires of our heart (which will be, by that time, the desires of His heart). Waiting is hard, but it is easier if we keep our eyes on the Lord (Isaiah 40:31).

Will we wait on Jesus? Will we follow Him even if it appears we are being led away from our dreams? Can we trust Him enough to know that, somehow, in His time and in His way, He will take care of our heartfelt needs? Easier said than done, right? Of course it is. It is a daily process, learning to trust the Lord with those areas of our lives, letting Him have more control. The key is surrender. The key is learning how to lay down our own desires before the Lord and ask to be filled with Him and His ways and trust Him with the rest.

Besides God's glory, God's ultimate purpose in our lives as believers is to bring us to the point where we want Jesus so badly, we will give up anything just to have Him (Phil 3:7; Heb 12:1-2).

Who wants to be desperate for Jesus?