

Ruth 2026 (Week 2)

Love, Loyalty, Redemption

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Ruth 2

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What would life look like if you never received another compliment or encouragement from anyone? I think it would get pretty depressing. I know some of you might think it wouldn't be a big deal, not a big deal to not receive encouragement, but I promise you, it would eventually wear on you. Encouragement and compliments are often better currency than cash. We respond well to encouragements and compliments.

They motivate us and move in certain directions in our life. They guide us and often help us discern what we are good at and what we're not good at so that it gives us a direction in life. Generally, it's the compliments and encouragements of others that usually help us choose our career path or even our direction of who to marry and what to do. It's those compliments that we receive because words are powerful.

Words can either breathe life into you or they have the ability to steal life from you. I know in my own life I have understood that even as I get older I continue to have these personal recordings in my head, these tapes that we can replay of words that have been shared with us, whether they're good memories and positive encouragement or whether they're bad memories.

And these include the words of others. And these tapes that we play either build us up or tear us down. These words can even carry extra weight when they come from those that we love and care about. For many of us, the very first recordings that we have in our minds are from the mother figure in our lives. She was the one who cared for us, the one who loved us, the one who sacrificed for us.

She spoke words of encouragement and confidence to us, and for many, our mother figure is the one who always had our back, even if no one else did. She is the one that it didn't matter what you did. She would always love you, and this is why we talk about the love of a mother. Now, this mother figure didn't need to be your biological mother. I know we live in a fallen world, and sometimes there's a different person that fills that role.

Maybe it was an older sister. It could have been an aunt, an adoptive mother, a teacher, maybe it was a coach, or sometimes it could even be your mother-in-law that fills that role of your mother as you get married and as you get older. They play an extremely important role in our lives to encourage us, to motivate us, and to point us in the right direction of life.

As we continue our story today that we began last week going through the Book of Ruth, we will find that special bond between Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. As we read the story, we don't read anything about Ruth's mother, her biological mother, but we see this incredible bond between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law. To recap where we left off last week, we were introduced to this Jewish family who lived in Judah, specifically in Bethlehem.

The dad's name was Elimelech, and he was married to Naomi, and they had two sons, Malan and Kilian. We read that there was a famine in the land of Judah, and so Alimelek, as the providing father, had to make the difficult decision to pull up stakes and to move his family somewhere they have never been to the land of Moab, because in the land of Moab, there was plenty of food and water.

And so, of course, while they were there, his two sons end up marrying two Moabite women. The path of life seems to be going well. There was that first initial bump in the road of the famine, but they have kind of made well with that until they begin to experience some more struggles according to the author. As we read the story, Elimelech, the father passes away, leaving Naomi now with her two sons and their wives.

As if that wasn't difficult enough, then we receive more bad news that both of Naomi's sons also pass away, and so we end up very quickly in the story with three widows who are now living in the land of Moab trying to survive. And for Naomi, it's the most bitter because she's not even around other family. She is truly in another nation and has no one to rely on.

So after a little while, we read that Naomi makes the decision that it would be best for her if she were to move back to Bethlehem so that she could be with her people and make the best of the life that she could. She recommends to her daughters-in-law because they are young and they're from the land of Moab that they might as well stay there and try to start life over again. Get married again, have kids, go back to your family.

Orpah, her one daughter-in-law, eventually agrees, but Ruth vows to stay with Naomi wherever she goes. And so Ruth and Naomi end up back in Bethlehem on a wing and a prayer. They have a bond together, but how are they going to make life work? Naomi filled this mother's role in Ruth's life.

And it seems, as we talked about last week, of course, that Naomi has introduced Ruth to her god, Yahweh, and Ruth has submitted to him, which is one of the reasons why she wanted to go back with her. In my opinion, introducing your children to God is the most important thing a mother can do. There are many here today, many that are amongst us, that are here because you had a faithful mother figure in your life who introduced you to Jesus.

They introduced you to Jesus, and they've encouraged you to start life in this direction, and so you are here today because of the love and care of a mother. And so as we continue the story in Ruth chapter 2, we are going to see this bond between them strengthen, but we are also going to see God work amongst them. And we're going to learn some truths about God as well as some truths and encouragement for us. So go ahead and open your Bible to Ruth chapter 2:1.

The words will be on the screen behind me. There is a Bible in front of you. Ruth is only four chapters. It's in the beginning of your Bible if you don't know where it is. And we will begin in chapter one, but before we do, let me just open up with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we come before You today. And today is Mother's Day as we celebrate our mothers here, but Father, again, as I have said, I know that this can be a difficult day for many.

And so I pray that everybody would feel the comfort to respond however they need to respond today. It can be with laughter and smiles. It can be with tears and heartache. All are acceptable before you. And Father, we know that You are with us. And so, Lord, I pray that You would teach us more about Yourself as we continue in the story of Ruth, and in so doing, we would learn more about ourselves and how to be faithful, how to recognize the hope that You offer us, and how to be obedient.

And so, Father, would you receive the praise from our service this morning? We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen. Ruth chapter 2, starting in verse 1, we are going to be introduced to a new character in the story. The author tells us now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side from the clan of Alimelek. He was a man of standing whose name was Boaz.

So we're introduced to this man named Boaz, and we don't know a lot of information about him yet, except for he is from the clan of a limelech, so he has some relation to Naomi's husband. And so, there's some good news there and hearing about that. And we also find out that he is a man of standing.

This means that even in the midst of the breakdown of the culture in Israel right now, we're in the time of judges, remember, where we read that everybody did as they saw fit, so there's a lot of immorality and things

that are going on, that even in the midst of that season, we find that there are still people that are faithful, and Boaz ends up being one of them, known as a man of standing.

He is a godly man even in this tumultuous time of Israel's history. Let's find out more in verse two. Ruth the Moabites said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters.

And as it turned out, she found herself working in the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of a Limelek. Now, Ruth is there in the land of Bethlehem, and they're trying to decide, "How are we going to survive? How can I provide for you, Naomi?" And so Ruth comes up with this idea, "Maybe I can go and pick up the leftover sheaves that have been left behind as people are farming their fields, and we can at least survive on that." She asks for her permission because this was a very degrading thing to do.

It was also a very dangerous thing to do. I think today it would be similar to going on a street corner and begging with some kind of sign, asking for people's help. And so, their options were limited as to how they could survive. There was no welfare, there were no homeless shelters for them to go in. One of the laws that was given to the Israelite people was that when you were harvesting your crops, you were intentionally not supposed to go to the edge of your fields and to grab everything that you possibly can.

You were supposed to leave some for those that were less fortunate among you so that they could go behind and at least provide for their needs. I love that the author uses this phrase as it turned out, right? As it turned out, Ruth just happened to be in the field of Boaz. Of course, as we read that, you know that this is not by chance.

The author is not suggesting that it was just random luck that she ended up in the field of Boaz, but instead this was divine providence at work. God was working behind the scenes. He was putting things together. And so I believe that you and I can be encouraged as we learn about God in the story of Ruth, that God is always working even when you can't see it. You may be in a season of life right now that is difficult, it's filled with turmoil, it's filled with just troubles that you are dealing with.

I want to encourage you that God is working behind the scenes even if you can't see it. God does have a plan even when it doesn't always make sense to us in the moment. And I believe every single one of us can look back at times in our lives where it seemed like God was absent when in fact He was there with us the entire time. I think of the popular poem now called Footprints, right? Many of you know that poem.

It seems like God is gone, but in actuality He is the one sustaining and carrying us. Let's go on in verse 4. Just then the author tells us, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and he greeted the harvesters by saying, "The Lord be with you," and they called back, "The Lord bless you." Boaz asked the foreman or the overseer of his harvesters, "Whose young woman is that?" We recognize from Boaz's greeting that he is a godly man.

I mean, just his way that he greets his workers. The Lord be with you. Yahweh be with you. And they respond, "The Lord bless you." And as he goes back, he sees this young lady that is behind even his servant girls working in the field, and he notices her and he says, "Who is this woman? I don't recognize her." So this is the response starting in verse 6. The foreman or the overseer replied, "She is the Moabites who came back from Moab with Naomi.

She said to me, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' So she went into the field and has worked steadily from mourning until now, except for one short rest or break in the shelter. So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and try to glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls and watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along after the girls.

I have told the men not to touch you, and whenever you are thirsty, you know what, why don't you go ahead and get a drink from the water jars that the men have filled? At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground, and she exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner, I need to make you aware, as awful as it is, that in this time and in this culture, being a woman already kind of relegated you to the lower class of society, and then if you were a foreigner, you were on the very bottom of society." So a foreign woman was just, and again, as awful as this is, I wish it were not the case, you were almost viewed as a piece of property.

And so the fact that Boaz is recognizing her, this is why she is so grateful for this, because she is a foreigner from the land of Moab. And as I shared last week, the relationship between the Moabites and the Israelites was not good. They were always fighting with each other. So not only was she a foreigner, she was a foreigner, really, from what many viewed as an enemy land. The author, almost every time he refers to Ruth, refers to her as the Moabites from Moab.

And I think the reason why God is sharing that with us in this story, the reason why the author is talking about that is because you and I need to be reminded that God is not just a God of the Jews, but He is a God of everyone. Even in the Old Testament, it's easy to say, well, the Old Testament is the story of how God chose the Israelites to be a special people. All of that is true. But all throughout the Old Testament, you see that if somebody submitted to Yahweh, if somebody submitted to God, then they were included in this beautiful family that was a big mess.

And just to, I don't want to ruin this for you, if you've never read the book of Ruth before, but we are going to see that Ruth actually plays a huge role in the family line of David and eventually of Jesus. She is in the lineage of our Savior, Jesus. Ruth is rewarded for her faithfulness and for her devotion. As Boaz sees her and as the overseer saw her in the fields, she is viewed as a hard worker. And so Boaz says, "I want to offer her protection.

I want to take care of you. Don't work in anybody else's fields. I want you to stay here and I've told the men not to touch you." This shows how dangerous doing that actually would have been in that culture for any woman. She could have been taken advantage of, but instead Boaz says we are going to respect her. And so this reminds me of a phrase that I often mention because it is what I try to live my life by. Work like it depends on you, pray like it depends on God, right? We put in all the work we can.

We are not commanded to sit around and be lazy. We are commanded to work with our hands. God has created work for us. I've shared with you before. Work was not a result of the fall. Work existed in the garden when the world was considered perfect. We are created as people to work. So work with your hands, do what you can, recognizing and praying, realizing it all depends on God.

And again, we are not promised blessing, even if we work with our hands, and even if we do everything we can, we are not promised that everything will go great, but we are given these commands to say this is the wise thing to do in the world in which you live, which is a fallen world. And so Ruth goes and works in the fields of Boaz.

Verse 11, Boaz replied, "I have been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law, Naomi, since the death of your husband, how you left your father and your mother, and your homeland, and you came to live with a people that you did not know before. And so because of that, may the Lord repay you for what you have done," Boaz said, "May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my Lord," she said, "You have given me comfort, and you have spoken kindly to your servant, though I do not have the standing of even one of your servant girls." She recognizes her place in this society, as awful as it is, and she recognizes how Boaz has gone above and beyond even what they were commanded to do in order to care for the less fortunate and for the widow among them.

And so she is working hard in order to provide for her mother-in-law and for herself. And so I am reminded of this truth once again that Scripture teaches us, and it remains true today, that who you are and what you do will eventually be exposed. And this can be for the good or for the bad. For Ruth, it was a good thing. She was being exposed for being a woman of character, a person of integrity.

Remembering that integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is watching. I'm not sure how many of you recognize this, most of you probably do, but living in a small town like Angola here in Steuben County, word travels pretty fast, doesn't it? If you're new to the area, let me warn you that you won't have many secrets for long, all right? It's just the community in which we live. And one of the struggles of that is also the truth that sometimes people will say things about you that aren't true.

Especially if you own a business or if you try to actually help the community. Now, if you just hide and stay in your house and don't do anything, maybe you'll be safe, but then they'll just say you're lazy, right? But if you go out and do anything in our community, I promise you there will be times that somehow, some way, something will come out about you that is not true, it is not an accurate reflection of you. And here is what I want to share with you today, based on the story of Ruth.

I am a firm believer in not trying to defend myself when others begin to attack my character, because I believe the truth will eventually come out. The truth eventually comes out. People will eventually find out, oh, that story that so-and-so shared with me, that's just not true, or that's definitely not the person that I know. We don't need to defend ourselves. I believe that if you are a person of integrity and honesty, eventually the truth will be found out.

I think that God protects us in that way, and so here we have Ruth. Her integrity, her character is being witnessed by Boaz. The fact that she loves her mother-in-law, the fact that she's providing for her, let's go on into verse 14, "At mealtime, Boaz said to her, 'Come over here, have some bread, and dip it in the wine vinegar. When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain, and she ate all that she wanted and had some leftover.

As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men. Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. Rather, I want you to pull out some stalks for her from the bundle and intentionally leave them for her to pick up and don't rebuke her when she does. So this is Boaz going above and beyond the call of what he was asked to do. Hey, to take care of the poor, the orphan and the widow, make sure that you don't go all the way to the edge of your fields. Leave some so that they can work and do it.

But Boaz goes a step further and says, "No, you know what? To make it even easier for her, I want you to intentionally pull some out and just leave them so that she can grab it. And don't rebuke her when she does this. He invites her to the meal so that she can have bread and be taken care of. That was not necessary. That was not something that he had to do. And so here we see Ruth being rewarded for her humility, for her faithfulness, and for loving others.

And we see that Boaz recognizes this in her, which is a truth in your life as well, that when someone of character recognizes someone else of character, there is a desire to bless and reward them. Haven't you ever had this happen where you have a young person in the church, or you have a young couple that just got married, and they're making good decisions in life, and they're kind of moving in the right direction, and you say to yourself, you know what, I want to continue to encourage them to do that. I want to bless them.

And so you bless them in some way, because you say, I want them to know that somebody noticed they're making right decisions in a difficult world. And so you bless them, and we've had this happen to us. You've had it happen to you as well. And so Boaz is impressed with Ruth, and so he wants to reward her, so he goes above and beyond. And it causes me to ask the question, where did Ruth learn to be this kind of person? She was from Moab. Did she learn it from her parents?

We aren't told in Scripture where she learns to be this type of person, but I am here to share with you based on what I read in the story that it is very possible, if not even probable, that Ruth was encouraged over the last 10 years by Naomi, her mother-in-law, as Naomi walked with her through the loss of her father-in-law and her husband. Maybe Naomi continued to encourage her and compliment her with those words, those tapes that she could play over in her mind over and over again.

And we definitely know that Naomi introduced Ruth to God and to Yahweh. We go on in verse 17. So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley that she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah, which doesn't mean anything to you right now, but we'll get back to that, all right? She carried it back to town to her mother-in-law, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her mother-in-law what she had left over, which she was not able to eat during that meal.

And so, Ruth gets home to Naomi that evening, and it's obvious that it was not a normal day of trying to glean crops that are just being picked up from leftovers. It was a good day, because a good day in that time for a widow that would go and try to gather at the end was maybe to provide one or two meals of barley. That was a good day if you could provide just one meal. And if you could provide two, that was almost a great day.

And yet the author tells us that Ruth came home with an ephah. Now, what is an ephah? An ephah would have fed Ruth and Naomi for more than a week. In just one day, she was able to do that. Now what is even more interesting as you think about the timeframes, if a good day was one to two days and she fed two people for a full week, that was seven times what a normal day was. Now think about the number seven in Scripture, it often means fulfillment or totality that God was providing for them in a full kind of way.

And if that wasn't enough, then Ruth pulls out of her pocket the leftovers from lunch and says, "Look, you can even have this, Mom. This is not just barley, it was bread and other things that she was able to eat." This must have been an exciting story for her to share. For the first time in probably a long time, there is good news for Naomi. Do you remember that even when she came back to town, she told all the people that knew her, "Don't call me Naomi anymore because life has become bitter for me." And now she has some good news, some exciting things to share.

Good news often breathes life into difficult situations, but the news is even better than Naomi could have imagined. Listen to this in verse 19. Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. And so she said, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz." The name of Boaz changed everything for them.

It offered hope. It offered healing. It offered life. If you remember back to last week, and I told you about these weird laws that the Israelites had that if your husband died, you had to marry within the family so that you can continue the family line. And here we're getting just this little glimpse. There is hope that Boaz can fulfill that requirement so that the family can continue on so that Naomi doesn't have to be bitter. She doesn't have to just waste away in life.

The name of Boaz changed everything for them. And so Naomi needs to fill in the details to Ruth. This is even better than what you thought it was. So I thought about our lives today and about how we live in our community. And I asked the question to you as well as myself today, do you want your name to bring life like Boaz's did? Do you want your name to bring hope that when people hear about you, they would say, "Yeah, that's a good guy."

That's a good gal. We want to encourage them. We're blessed by them. Or would you rather live your life in such a way that when somebody in the community hears your name, they go, "Oh, yeah, I know them," you know? And you can always tell when you share a name with somebody and they're kind of like, "Oh, yeah, even

when they're trying to be nice," right? We want our names to be like Boaz, to be remembered for doing what is good. Let's finish Ruth chapter 2. "The Lord bless him," Naomi said to her daughter-in-law.

"He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative. He is one of our kinsman redeemers," and we'll talk more about that next week. Then Ruth, the Moabites, said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.' Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, 'It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field, you might be harmed.' So, Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and the wheat harvest were finished, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Here we can see God's hands all over in the story of Ruth and Naomi, and they're beginning to catch a glimpse of what God is doing behind the scenes. Ruth could have ended up in anybody's field, but God led her to the field of Boaz. The outcome could have looked so very different. She could have been harmed, again, taken advantage of, potentially even killed, but instead God leads her to the right location. And during the barley and the wheat harvest, so for two months, Ruth has a steady place to glean and to provide and even store up a mass of extra food so that they will live.

Their immediate needs have been met, and then some. We all probably have stories in our lives where we have thought I'm not sure how I'm going to make it another day, and then God shows up. I'm not sure I'm going to make it another step, and then God shows up. Here in the story, Ruth has this amazing gift that she gives to Naomi, and I believe it's the gift of hope. It's the gift of hope.

And so today, as we celebrate Mother's Day, I want to make sure that we thank our mothers for their words of encouragement, for leading us in the right directions, for pointing us where we're going to go. And it's my prayer that in return, we can do the same that Ruth did for Naomi, and we can offer our mother's hope. And what is it that offers our mother's hope? Our successes, our joy brings hope to our mothers. They long to see us succeed. But you know what?

Even more than that, every Christian mom I know says the same thing. Yes, I want my kids to be successful. Yes, I want them to have a good life. I want them to be blessed. But more important than that, I want them to know Jesus. And so if you are here today, your mom probably knows at this point whether you have a relationship with Jesus or not, but here's my encouragement to you. If you have a relationship with Jesus and you know that that would bring your mom hope, would you just remind her of that today if you can?

Make a phone call, have a conversation, just say thanks, Mom, for leading me toward Jesus. I just want you to know that because of your efforts, because of what you have done, I am grateful that I get to know and have a personal relationship with Jesus. I would tell you of the moms that I have talked to that will be better than flowers or chocolate. Now they like those too, don't get me wrong, all right? But if they know that you are walking with Jesus, that will give them hope beyond hope. I'm reminded that we don't all have perfect families and mothers.

I know that there might be some messiness in our families, but can I just encourage you today to be a blessing as the best as we can, where God has placed us. If they are still around, if your mothers are still around, give them a call today. Let them know you care. Let them know that you are grateful for what they have done. As always, we have people up here to pray with you. If you want to pray, if today's a difficult day, love to have people that would pray with you, but let's close.

Heavenly Father, thank you for today, just for an opportunity to offer our gratitude to our mothers for who they are and for what they've done, for the sacrifices that they made. I pray that you would provide comfort in those places where only you can provide comfort. I thank you that you love us. I thank You that You are always working in us and through us and amongst us. And we do pray that You would receive the glory in all of our situations.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.