

## Ride or Die

**Ruth 1:16-17 (NIV) 16** Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. **17** Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.

How would you respond to someone saying something so beautiful and strong to you? When was the last time you felt like someone was that dedicated to you? Or have you ever felt that? We live in a world where it feels like commitment and faithfulness are scarce commodities. Faithfulness like this seems almost like a fictional fantasy, but it's not. It's something real. It's a model of the love of God in human form. It's the type of commitment that can change the course of someone's life.

Welcome to **Week 1 of "That's What She Said,"** a 5 week study of some of the most poignant stories and statements of women in scripture. Today we are looking at Ruth and her story of faithfulness, which is also a fitting way to start this series since it is Mother's Day because no one can display this type of faithfulness like a mother to her children. So let's take a look at how Ruth's story begins.

**Ruth 1:1-5 (NIV)** "In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. **2** The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

**3** Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband."

Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah had all suffered the loss of a loved one. However, Naomi experienced the greater loss. She was not only a widow now like her daughters-in-law but she also had to face a parent's worst nightmare, the loss of a child.! For Naomi she didn't just lose one child but she lost both of her sons. All three women had experienced losses that shook the foundation of their whole lives. Now they were alone and in great need.

**Ruth 1:6-7 (NIV) 6** When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. **7** With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Naomi didn't see a future where she was, so she was going to do what many of us do, we go back home. We return to our default to start over again, and while Naomi knows this is a functional plan, she really doesn't want it for her daughters in law.

**Ruth 1:8-9 (NIV) 8** Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. **9** May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband. Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud.

As we unpack the rest of this story I want us to look at two important observations when it comes to experiencing loss in life. And here is the first observation:

### **The Pain of Loss has the tendency to Push Us toward ISOLATION**

It’s so easy when we are hurting and wounded to push people away. In fact, for some of us this is a default mode. Maybe it’s out of fear of losing more. Maybe it’s out of insecurity in our standing. Maybe it’s showing a selfless concern for the well-being of others that we don’t want them to experience the pain of our loss. Maybe it’s defensive in nature because you don’t want to have to deal with it. When we are hurting we push others away and try to just curl up within ourselves, which only causes us to feel more alone and to be in more pain. Naomi pushed the girls away out of what I genuinely believe was good intentions, but a lot of these negative feelings were right behind the surface as well. She felt broken. She felt damaged. She felt like a burden. She felt like she had nothing to offer these young women and she wanted them to move on with their lives. So she did what she thought she had to do. She pushed them away. **Have you ever done this? When was the last time you responded this way?** Notice the differing responses of Orpah and Ruth and what transpired next.

**Ruth 1:10-14 (NIV) 10** and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” **11** But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? **12** Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— **13** would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD’s hand has turned against me!” **14** At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

The girls said initially they would stay, but once Naomi pushed back again, Orpah took the opportunity and left. Sometimes people stay out of obligation or appearance. Sometimes people stay because they overcommit themselves and would eventually turn back or fade away. Naomi gave them both a wide open exit and Orpah took it. That doesn’t make Orpah a bad guy. That doesn’t mean she didn’t love Naomi. She took Naomi at her word, and she took a new opportunity for herself. This needs to be a reminder.

### **If We Continually Push People Away, We Can’t Be Surprised When They Leave**

Notice the last part of verse 14, “**But Ruth clung to her.**” Ruth didn’t just hear the open door, Ruth also heard the broken heart. Ruth heard that Naomi felt abandoned by God. Ruth saw that

she had an option, but chose to cling to the one that expressed love for Naomi. Not her mother by blood, but her family by love. Ruth saw Naomi trying to isolate herself, and wasn't having it. But Naomi was still stubbornly resisting Ruth's dedication and love.

**Ruth 1:15 (NIV)** "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

This brings us back to the quote we began with. This was Ruth's response to being told multiple times to abandon her former mother in law. Being encouraged to pursue her own interests instead of pursuing someone who was hurting and in need of comfort. Being told to follow the example of someone who walked away more easily. Ruth was told all the things to send her on her way, but this was her response, and why we are focused on her today.

**Ruth 1:16-17 (NIV)** **16** But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. **Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay.** Your people will be my people and your God my God. **17** Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

Ruth let's Naomi know that she can pump the brakes on telling her to go anywhere. She makes the declaration that she will be by her side no matter what. That she is planning to follow wherever Naomi goes. Do you know how important it is to have people that are willing to say "I will walk with you no matter what?" It's impact is echoed throughout scripture.

**Amos 3:3 (NIV)** Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)** **9** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: **10** If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. **11** Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? **12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

This is what the love of God produces! This is what Jesus gives us and this is what we are to give each other. We were not made for isolation but we are made for community. Love binds and it motivates us to be there for each other. To provide help and assist in time of need. Ruth is pledging to walk with her. Ruth is pledging to make sure that she doesn't fall and that she doesn't do so alone. Ruth is pledging to never leave her in the cold. Ruth is pledging to defend her. All of our lives would be better with friends and family that would have that type of support and dedication. This is what the church should be. This is what the family of God should look like on the daily.

Ruth also pledged that Naomi's people would be her people, and her God would be her's. Ruth claimed firmly that she was Naomi's family even though there was nothing legally binding to her. You see LOVE transcends blood ties or legal bindings. She didn't know what awaited them when they arrived at their destination, but it didn't matter to Ruth. She was confident in her unity

with Naomi. Not only did she pledge to be her people (her family), but Ruth was committing to Naomi's faith, even when Naomi was struggling in it herself. In this passage Ruth was declaring the type of unity and community that would be foundational at the beginning of the church, and what the church would be striving for over the next 2,000 years. The unity and community we see the apostle Paul describe across 3 different books in the NT.

**Romans 12:5 (NIV)** so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

**Galatians 3:28 (NIV)** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female (btw, this doesn't mean that there are not two distinct genders. It just means that we are not to divide people nor decide their value based on certain distinctions), for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)** **1** Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Do you feel we as the church have that kind of commitment? Is there anyone in the body of Christ you feel that confident in? Are you that type of person for someone else? Ruth went as far as to literally label herself as a Ride or Die companion to Naomi, she said that God could punish her if anything, even death, separated them. Ruth was RIDE OR DIE. Not just someone faithful. Not just someone in unity or community, but someone who literally pledges to stay by her side even through death. That's a hard pledge to make, and most of us don't have many people in our lives that we truly feel are ride or die with exception of maybe our MOTHERS. Or if we ever did think someone was ride or die, they've probably ridden on by now. This type of loyalty in Ruth seems rare, but it's what we are called to. This is a love and loyalty that only comes from the HOLY SPIRIT. Ruth was God's grace gift to Naomi in a time when she needed the encouragement

**Proverbs 17:17 (NIV)** A friend loves at all times,  
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

**1 Samuel 18:1 (ESV)** As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

**John 15:13 (NIV)** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Not only did Ruth make this pledge for Naomi, she stuck by it. Her actions were more than empty talk. Before she even had the chance to prove it with action, Ruth's words had convinced Naomi.

**Ruth 1:18 (NIV)** When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

**Sometimes we are just one moment of encouragement and commitment away from someone truly believing that they are no longer alone.** From someone truly believing that they have someone they can count on. Ruth's faithful declaration that day changed the outcome of not only their lives, but of history. Can we make that declaration and even more importantly, can we live it out? **Observation #1 - The Pain of Loss has the tendency to Push Us toward ISOLATION.** And here is **Observation #2:**

**The Faithfulness of Another Can Restore Our Faith when we ourselves are struggling.**

Not only did Ruth accompany Naomi, but she helped restore and even strengthen Naomi's faith in God. When we allow God's love and faithfulness to flow through our lives it becomes tangible evidence of God at work in and around others. As the story progressed and Naomi saw how God was working through Ruth's life to bless Naomi, when we get to Chapter 2 we see Naomi's attitude towards God begin to shift from DOUBT to ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS when Naomi comes to understand that the field Ruth finds to collect grain in for Naomi is Boaz's field who also happens to be close kin to Naomi's husband. As Jewish custom and law called for whenever there was a widow who had no sons or husband to take care of her (Like Naomi and Ruth) it was the closest male relative's privilege or responsibility to act on the widow's behalf by claiming her as his own and providing for her in her greatest moment of need. Listen to Naomi's response to this revelation.

**Ruth 2:20 (NIV)** The LORD bless him!" (Meaning Boaz) Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man (Boaz) is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.

We see it even more so as the story concludes in Ruth Chapter 4 as Boaz takes Ruth as his wife and provides Naomi with a family, a grandson, and a future legacy for her family and ultimately for our salvation.

**Ruth 4:14-17 (NIV)** **14** The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! **15** He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." **16** Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. **17** The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi not only put her in direct position to restore and care for Naomi, but she would also continue the lineage that would lead to the birth of Christ as our Messiah fulfilling God's faithful promise to His people. Obed, who would be born to Ruth, would go on to be the father of Jesse. Jesse would become the father of David and from David would be the line that

would deliver to Israel the Messiah Jesus. One woman's declaration and faithfulness changed the lives of history and eternity, not just for Naomi's family, but for a nation. Not just for a nation, but also for the entire world. Imagine what could happen if you, and I, and all of God's people followed through with the same faithfulness, commitment, unity, and community. We can learn from Ruth's example and strive to live out the gospel truth she modeled. It is through FAITHFULNESS that we leave a spiritual legacy! What legacy do you want to leave? What legacy will you decide to leave?

### **Worship Comes Back Up**

#### **Invitation:**

Are you isolated right now? Would you draw near to Jesus!

Who is God calling you to commit to? That you may restore their faith in God!

Who are you pushing away? Will you let God comfort you in this moment!

What legacy will you leave? Remember, our God is FAITHFUL!!!

Will you RIDE or DIE for Jesus