

Title Slide 1:

What Will You DO With Your SHOE?

A Gospel Story

Introduction: Slide 2 – Once Upon a Time

This morning, I would like to tell you a story. You may remember as a child, so many stories would begin with, “Once upon a time,” and you would hear stories about a blonde-haired girl who wandered into the forest and met with three bears, or a boy named Jack who climbed a giant beanstalk. But today, I want to tell you a story about a very special shoe in the Bible, one that literally changed the course of history.

Slide 3:

Now, you may remember a story as a child about a girl who became a princess because a glass slipper fit her foot just right, or a nursery rhyme about a woman who actually lived in a giant shoe but had so many children she didn’t know what to do. There is even a Dutch fable that is told where a pair of wooden shoes is the reason that all of Holland has progressed to where it is today. But those are just stories...pretend...once upon a time make believe stories meant to entertain or to teach children valuable lessons.

Slide 4: Unlike fables and legends...

But unlike fables and legends, the story I am going to tell you today isn’t a made-up story at all. It is a true account that covers several hundred years and, as all stories from the Old Testament do, ultimately points to Jesus Christ and those who believe in Him today. God’s Word is HISTORY. And God’s Word is HIS STORY. So, in order for me to tell you this tale of duty and deceit, responsibility and romance, we have to go to the book of Ruth and look at just a few verses from the fourth chapter.

Slide 5: An Unusual Text

Now, as far as most stories go, this is a rather unusual portion of Scripture. Just like at the beginning of the New Testament when Matthew begins his gospel by telling you every person that was born from Abraham to Christ, today’s text takes a look at 10 generations. We’re going to see why it is important that it is 10 generations and not 11. We’re going to look at the life of one of the key figures in the book of

Ruth, and at the end, we're going to ask that all-important question, "What will you do with your shoe?"

Slide 6: Ruth 4:18-22

So, let's read the passage together:

Now this is the genealogy of Perez:

Perez begot Hezron;

Hezron begot Ram,

and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon,

and Nahshon begot Salmon;

Salmon begot Boaz,

and Boaz begot Obed;

Obed begot Jesse,

and Jesse begot David.

Now, I can see right now that just reading this passage has you so excited about the story that I could stop right here....but I won't. So, let's move on and look at...

Slide 7: The Ancestry of Boaz

Before we begin the part of the story that opens up to the life of Boaz, the main character in the book of Ruth besides Ruth herself, I want to go back to the first name on the list and give you a little background that sets the stage for the heart of our story.

The first name on the list is Perez, or Phares. If you go all the way back to Genesis 38, you find the story of Perez and how his life got off to a rocky start. In the days before Perez was conceived, his mother Tamar was married to the oldest son of Judah. Now, you remember that there were twelve tribes of Israel, and Judah was the forefather of one of those tribes. So, Tamar was married to Judah's oldest son whose name was Er. But, before Er and Tamar could have any children, Er died. So, the custom in those days was that if a brother died having left no children, the next brother would take the woman as a wife and raise up a child in his brother's name. So, after Er died, his brother Onan married Tamar. But Onan was mad about the entire situation and refused to do his duty as a brother. This angered God, and Onan died.

Now the next brother's name was Shelah, but he was just a boy. Because of this, Judah sent Tamar home and told her to wait until Shelah grows up, then she could

have him as a husband. But, if you read carefully, Judah had no intention of losing another son over this woman.

Realizing that she had been abandoned as a widow, Tamar comes up with a plan. Judah's wife passes away, so he goes to visit with her family. Tamar puts on a disguise and waits for him along the road. Thinking that Tamar was a woman of low reputation, Judah goes in to her and gives her his ring and belt as security for payment.

Now here is where the plot thickens. Judah finds out that his widowed daughter-in-law has been expecting a child for three months. What he fails to realize is that it is HIS child. Forgetting his own immorality, Judah calls for Tamar with the intention of burning her alive. Judah is demanding to know who the father of the child is, but Tamar brings out the ring and belt and says, "I am with child by whomever is the owner of these." Judah is suddenly humbled by the whole ordeal. He admits that he had done wrong, both in denying his son to Tamar and by wanting to punish her for a sin he was equally guilty of. Tamar ultimately finds out she is having twins, but there was some confusion as to which of the twins was born first. So, they call the boy Perez, which means, "A breach."

In the book of Ruth, Judah isn't mentioned at all. After wandering for 40 years in the wilderness, the descendants of Jacob conquered the promised land. The tribe of Judah settled in the area we now know is Jerusalem, but the sons of Perez lived in a little sheep town just south of Jerusalem called Ephrathah...but you probably know it as Bethlehem.

So, with the blessings of God and with fields at his disposal, we come to the story of Boaz, a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some years had passed since the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan, and Boaz wasn't the young man he once was. But he owns a portion of a field that he cultivates and hires workers to help him to plow, and plant, and harvest.

Slide 8: Two Views of Ancestry

But before we go on with our story, I want to point out that the children of Israel took their ancestry very seriously. In fact, by the time Jesus came into the world, they were so proud of being children of Abraham that they rejected the Messiah sent by the God of Abraham. What had happened was that they forgot why keeping their heritage was so important to God...

Slide 9: "I take PRIDE in my lineage."

For many of the Jews of the Old Testament, they missed completely what God was up to. He had called out a people for Himself for the greatest purpose of any people who would ever live. Their purpose was to bring declare God's word, first to their own nation, and also to the whole world. They were to proclaim Jehovah as the only, the one true God...and ultimately, through their lineage, the Messiah, the Savior would come into the world. They were to keep a law filled with sacrifices, but those sacrifices weren't to take away sin...they pointed to the One who would one day come and take away sin. So, they became proud of the fact that they had a direct bloodline to Abraham, and they were proud of the fact that they were (mostly) keepers of the Law.

Slide 10: "My Family's history Is for the Glory of God."

But what they should have been doing all along is humbly waiting for God to finish the work He had started in them. The law wasn't there to make them proud. It was there to make them HUMBLE. They weren't supposed to be keeping their lineage to show how much better they were than everyone else. They were to keep their lineage to show to the whole world that when God says He's going to do something, He DOES it. I felt that it was important going into the heart of our story to know the difference between these two ways of thinking.

And by now, I know what you must be thinking...

Slide 11: What does ANY of this have to do with a SHOE?

So, let's get back to Boaz....hold on...

Slide 12: Meanwhile, back in the land of the Moabites.

The story takes a kind of sidestep to the land of Moab. The Israelites generally despised the Moabites. First, they came from one of the daughters of Lot who seduced their father after escaping Sodom and Gomorrah. Then, after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, the king of Moab hired a man to curse them. Then, when that didn't work because of a talking donkey, the Moabite women seduced the men of Israel into worshiping Baal and defiling themselves with Moabite fertility rites. Because of the Moabites and because of Israel's sin, God ended up killing 24,000 Israelites in punishment.

So, in the days of Boaz, a famine hit right in the middle of Canaan. A man named Elimilech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons relocated to Moab for food. And, while they were there, the two boys took wives of the dreaded Moabites. Then tragedy struck. First, Elimilech died, then one son, then the next. The famine was over, and Naomi decided to go home, but she knew she couldn't take care of even one daughter on her own, much less two. She told both of her daughters-in-law to go back to Moab, back to their people, back to their gods. Naomi was bitter. She didn't want either of those Moabite girls around.

But one of those girls, the one named Ruth, wouldn't leave. She pledged herself not only to care for Naomi but made a vow that she would serve Jehovah God all the days of her life. And they went back to Bethlehem.

Now, let me give you the short version of what happens next. Ruth goes to work as a poor beggar, gleaning in the fields of Naomi's relatives. She happens on the field of Boaz who immediately recognizes her beauty and value. Over time, a relationship develops, and through a series of events that I encourage you to go and read yourself, Boaz decides that he wants to be the one to take Ruth as his wife and to raise up children in the name of her late husband.

But there is a problem...

Slide 13: Love, Interrupted

The way that fulfilling the duty of a nearer kinsman and taking the wife of the deceased worked was that the closest kin to the one who had died had first claim on the wife and all that the man owned. By marrying the widow, he came into possession of all the dead man's land and possessions. And despite the love that had grown between Boaz and Ruth, there was one man standing in the way...a man one step closer to Ruth's late husband, one who had the right to marry Ruth and take everything that she and Naomi owned. But Boaz had a plan...

Slide 14: The Shoe and Its Legacy

Boaz went to the city gate where the men of Bethlehem settled matters, and he sat down and waited for the closer relative to arrive. When he got there, he got ten men as witnesses and said, "As you probably know, Naomi is back in town, and it's time to settle the estate of her husband and sons. What I want to know is, are

you going to claim them and redeem them for yourself?” Right then, the nearer kinsman said, “Yes, I will take it.” But then, Boaz went on...”But, if you do, you will have to marry the widow of Naomi’s son...Ruth, a Moabite woman. That’s the law.”

That’s when the nearer kinsman did a complete 180. “I’ve changed my mind. If I marry a Moabite, it will mess up my entire legacy. If you want the woman and the land, it’s all yours.” Now, the law said that Ruth had the right to take the man’s shoe from off of his foot and spit in his face and that from that day on he would be known as the man who gave up his shoe. But in this story, the man took off his own shoe and gave it to Boaz, a token of their agreement and an exchange of legacy.

Now, by this time, the entire village of Bethlehem had heard of Ruth’s devotion, care, and faith. They celebrated the marriage and spoke blessings on Boaz and Ruth and their descendants, and they spoke this blessing, “May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.” And the Lord did give them a child. His name was Obed. And Obed went on to have a son named Jesse. And although Jesse had many sons, it was his youngest...David, the one who looked after the sheep would become David, the giant-slayer...David, the king of Israel...David, the ancestor of the Messiah and Savior to come.

So, we know about Boaz, and we know about Ruth, and we certainly know about David. But what happened to the nearer kinsman who gave Ruth up to protect his own legacy and inheritance? We don’t even know his name!

So that’s this story....a part of history....Boaz got the shoe, the land, and the bride because he was willing to marry Ruth, the Moabitess.

But what is in this story for us today, thousands of years later?

Slide 15: Our Shoe: The legacy of those we win with the GOSPEL.

Isaiah 52 proclaims “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them who bring good news.” Ephesians 6 says that the armor for our feet is being prepared to share the gospel of peace. Our shoes are “good news” shoes, and our legacy, the one that brings God glory, is that we tell His story and make disciples. It is our

job, both individually as Christians and collectively as the church to get outside these walls and tell the story.

Slide 16:

Now you remember that a while ago, I told you about two different ways that the Jewish people looked at keeping the law and maintaining their legacy? Well, the same thing is true about what we think about our legacy as believers in Christ.

Slide 17: “Being a Christian makes me look good!”

One way is the self-centered, self-focused approach. “I got saved, and God made me a better person. Now, I’m better than I used to be, and not the way other bad people still are.” It’s all about “ME.”

Slide 18: **“Being a Christian makes GOD look good!”**

This is the Christian that says, “I want everything in my life, my works, my testimony, my attitude and my words, to bring God glory and bring other people to know Him.” This one is all about Jesus!

Let me put it another way...

Slide 19: “If being a Christian Makes you better, And if getting better Makes you proud, You’re not getting BETTER!” God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble, and those that walk humbly in the grace of God are doing all they can to help others know Him like they do.

What will you do with your SHOE? What is your gospel legacy? How is your life bringing others to Christ?

Slide 20:

Greg Laurie of the Harvest Christian Fellowship said this:

“Statistics tell us that 95 % of all Christians have never led someone to Christ. It doesn’t have to be that way. The problem is that for many, the Great Commission is perceived more as the Great Suggestion. For others, the Great Commission is the Great Omission.” And then he says...“Let’s DO this!”

Very quickly, and I’m done...Let me give you four things to take with you as you leave here today.

Slide 21-24: How to Keep Our Gospel Legacy:

- 1. Know that you are saved – You are not going to tell someone else about Jesus if you're having doubts yourself. Settle the issue. God is faithful. Know that you are saved because He doesn't lie.**
- 2. Keep your story handy – Peter wrote to the early church to always be ready to give your answer to anyone who might ask what your reason is for the hope they see in you. Don't wait to think about it. Have it with you everywhere you go.**
- 3. Share whether convenient or not – You can't wait forever for the perfect opportunity to just fall in your lap. Sometimes it will be hard. Sometimes you may get blowback. The good news is that Jesus promises a special blessing on you if that happens. But the greatest blessing of all are the ones who were just waiting for you to say something, who are on the very threshold of giving their lives to Christ.**
- 4. And the last thing is this: Don't rest until you have led at least one person to come to know Christ. Ask God not to let you leave this earth without having brought at least one person into His kingdom, without keeping just one man, woman, boy, or girl, from going to that awful place called hell. Until you've led at least one to Jesus, make it your mission in life to keep telling the story.**

When you got saved, that was the day somebody gave you your gospel shoes.

Boaz, from today's story was the one who ended up with his shoe. He begat Obed, Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David from whose line would one day come Jesus the Christ, the son of David, the Savior of the world—OUR Savior. What will your legacy be?

Slide 25:

Now...what will you do with your shoe?

Invitation

