

Text: Ruth 1-4

Title: “What Girls Need Most”

HOME.HOPE VIDEO

Find the book of Ruth in the OT. It comes right after Judges and just before I Samuel. This is one of the most tender and heartwarming stories in the Bible. I’m continuing the series entitled “Home/Hope,” but the next couple of weeks I’ll be talking about the hope we find in God’s word for parenting. Today, “What Girls Need Most.” As we watch Ruth’s life unfold here in this little book we see what it takes for a girl and a woman to take her place in God’s glorious purposes. After all, that’s what we should desire most for our girls. There are four chapters to the book of Ruth and in Ruth’s life:

CHAPTER 1 – We first meet Ruth in the ancient land of Moab, where she is living with her mother-in-law Naomi. They have both suffered a terrible loss; both of their husbands died leaving them alone. Naomi is an older Israelite woman and decides to return to her hometown of Bethlehem. Ruth is from Moab, but she pledges her loyalty to Naomi, who has become more like a mother to her. **Read Ruth 1:16-17.**

CHAPTER 2 - Naomi and Ruth set out on the long journey, arriving in Judea in time for the barley harvest. And here is where Ruth’s story becomes a love story. Ruth needs food so she decides to take advantage of a law that requires harvesters to leave some grain in the field that can be picked up by the poor and hungry. It’s called gleaning. **Read Ruth 2:3.**

In the wonderful providence of God Ruth has ended up in the field of a distant relative of Naomi, a godly man named Boaz. God has orchestrated this encounter to bring about His purposes in Ruth’s life. Boaz notices Ruth and it seems to be love at first sight. He has learned of Ruth’s kindness to Naomi, and he senses that there’s something really special about this young lady.

CHAPTER 3. Boaz is man who has the means to deliver Ruth from a terrible situation. She is a widow with no children. She has no means of support. But because Boaz is a relative of Naomi and the nearest male family member, he can marry Ruth and rescue her. He is what they called a “kinsman redeemer.” Then Ruth does something surprising ... she courageously proposes to Boaz. And Boaz responds. **Read Ruth 3:10-13.**

CHAPTER 4. Ruth and Boaz get married. It was literally a match made in heaven. **Read Ruth 4:13.**

ILLUSTRATION – The girls in my family are big fans of the American Girl dolls. Both of my granddaughters have them. They usually make a trip to the American Girl store in Dallas on their birthdays or at Christmas ... and I have had the misfortune of having to tag along on a few of those trips. As a result I have come to know more about American Girl dolls than any male should have to. I’ve learned that each American Girl doll has a story. You don’t just buy a doll;

you buy a doll with a story. For instance, my granddaughter Caroline has a doll named Caroline Abbot. Her story takes place in the early 1800s where she is a brave young girl whose father has been lost at sea and she has all kinds of adventures in search of him. (I told you, I know more about these dolls than a male should know!)

God has written the story of our daughters' lives. What they need more than anything else is to find their place in that story, in God's great redemptive work. That's part of our job as parents.

Ruth became a woman God used in His great work of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ. The book of Ruth ends with a listing of the generations after her. Ruth married Boaz and they had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse was the father of a man who was a key figure in God's great work of redemption ... a man named David. Ruth had no way of knowing that she would become great-grandmother of David, and the great-great grandmother of Solomon, the two most important kings in Israel's history. But it doesn't end there. We go into the NT and find in Matthew the genealogy of Jesus (the ancient version of Ancestry.com). Ruth is listed there as the great-grandmother of David. And twenty-eight generations later in this family tree Jesus is born to Mary, whose husband is Joseph. And Ruth is an important branch in that tree.

Little did Ruth know that when she arrived in Judea with her mother-in-law Naomi that they would settle in a little town called Bethlehem. God orchestrated the circumstances of her life so that 1200 years later, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, would also be born in Bethlehem.

For those of us who have been entrusted with the task of raising daughters, we have the opportunity to help them find their place in the great purposes of God. That's the highest aim we can have for our children and our grandchildren ... it's not to meet and marry a rich guy ... it's not to make sure they get into the right sorority ... it's not for them to be a beauty queen. The highest aim we can have for our daughters is for them to fit into God's glorious purposes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

From the story of Ruth we can see some important things that our daughters need in order to take their place in the glorious purposes of God. They need...

1. THE INFLUENCE OF GODLY PEOPLE

Ruth was raised in a pagan land by pagan parents. But God brought Naomi, her mother-in-law, into her life to move Ruth to desire a relationship with the One True God. All through the book we see Naomi giving Ruth wise counsel and helping her make good decisions in order to follow God's plan for her life. Like Ruth, our young ladies need others to stand with them as they fulfill God's purpose for their lives. They need parents, grandparents, teachers and leaders to cheer them on and encourage them. We're not to just let our kids grow up; they are to be brought up.

So if our daughters are to take their place in God's great purposes in the world they need the influence of godly people. They also need...

2. TRUST IN AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD

When we first meet Ruth she didn't worship the One True God; she had spent her life worshipping idols in a pagan land. But Ruth learned from Naomi that she could know and trust God. We as parents, grandparents and teachers have to be concerned about helping our daughters to know, love and obey God. When they are grown and think back upon the influence we have had on them will they say, "My mom, my dad, my grandparents taught me that the most important thing in life is to know, love and obey God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Boaz recognized that somewhere in her journey Ruth had come to trust in God.

Ruth 2:12b - May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

She had become like a young bird that had flown to be securely nestled under the protective wings of its parent. I'm going to talk more about this as I wrap up, but if we fail at this ... if we fail to successfully pass our faith to our kids we have ultimately failed. They are going to face more challenges that you and I can imagine. The only way they will make it is to be nestled safely under the wings of God through Jesus Christ.

There's something else girls need to find their place in God's purposes:

3. UPRIGHT CHARACTER

As you read Ruth's story you see she wasn't afraid of hard work, but her real strength was strength of character more than strength of muscles. And this attracted Boaz to Ruth. He said...

Ruth 3:11b - All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.

What does this "noble character" mean? It means...

MORAL PURITY

The NASB says in v.11 that Ruth is a "woman of excellence." From the earliest days of their lives girls need to have this as the ultimate goal in life ... to live with moral excellence and purity. This is the life we are all called to in Jesus Christ. Noble character also means...

FAITHFULNESS

When Boaz sees Ruth across a crowded field, he has already heard about her character. She had been loyal, faithful and selfless toward her mother-in-law Naomi.

Ruth 2:11 - Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.

The quality of loyal love is so important. This is not something that comes naturally to us. We are naturally selfish, but Jesus comes to change us to make us loving toward others. It’s the kind of love that Ruth will bring into her marriage with Boaz. Noble character also means...

HUMILITY

As a gleaner, Ruth had to let go of her pride and pick up the scattered grain to feed her family. She felt no shame in working long and hard to care for one she loved, even though it was humble work. Noble character also means...

COURAGE

I think about how this young girl had the courage to leave her home, her culture, even her gods behind her to follow Naomi to a new life among the people of God. And we need to model for our kids the courage of obedience to God’s will for our lives.

Listen boys and girls! You can’t control your reputation, because everyone’s entitled to their own opinion. But, you have full and total control of your character. We need to help our girls possess an upright character.

Here’s something else they need from the earliest days of their lives:

4. A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH MEN

Now I want to be careful here because a girl’s value in God’s eyes, and a girl’s place in God’s purposes, aren’t determined by whether or not she is married, or even what men think of her. But how she relates to men is very important.

If Ruth had gone after the younger men and had not waited on God to lead her to the man she was to marry she would have missed being in on the redemptive purposes of God. Ruth paid attention to God’s direction and she found herself in the arms of a man who would love her unconditionally.

Now this is so important for our daughters. Before they run to the arms of man, they need to first run to the arms of God. If they get that out of order there will be much heartache in their lives. Ruth had this in the right order. Remember what Boaz said about Ruth ...

Ruth 2:12b - May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

So she first found refuge under the wings of God. That’s where her sense of worth and value come from; not from the arms of a man. So then when it comes time for Ruth to commit herself to a man notice how it is described. As Boaz and the field workers laid down to sleep for the night, Ruth went over and lay down at the feet of Boaz. When Boaz awakens and finds her lying there look at what happened:

Ruth 3:9 - “Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.”

That phrase, “spread the corner of your garment” is literally, “Spread your wings over me.” It’s the very same word used to describe how Ruth had first taken refuge under the loving wings of the Lord God. Then she took refuge under the wings of her husband, Boaz.

Girls like that grow into young women whom God will use in His great Kingdom’s purposes.

ILLUSTRATION – Perhaps you’ve heard of the great revival that rocked the nation of Ireland in 1904-05. The repercussions of that great movement of God were felt around Great Britain, Europe and even here in the United States. There were many pastors and preachers that God used to spread the wildfire of revival around Wales, but the first spark came in a Sunday evening service at a small church where a young teenager named Florrie Evans stood to her feet and with great passion said, “Oh, I love the Lord Jesus with all my heart.” The passion of that girl spread through the church and into the community, and ultimately around the nation of Wales. A revival that shook the world started with one girl’s testimony, “Oh, I love the Lord Jesus with all my heart.”