**Women’s Bible Study — “Significant” Week 5**

***“No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation.”***

1. In the lineage of Jesus, one generation beyond Rahab was Ruth. Her story is so well known that she is one of two women to have a chapter in the Bible with her given name.

2. Our background is significant in who we are. In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. A man, Elimelech, with his wife, Naomi. and two sons Mahlon and Kilion moved from Bethlehem in Judah to Moab because of a famine. While there, Elimelech passed away. Both the sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. After about 10 years, both sons also passed away. When Naomi heard there was more food in her homeland, she decided to go back to Judah. She encouraged both daughters-in-law to go back to their mother’s home. Orpah went back to her family and her gods, but Ruth clung to her mother-in-law. Naomi wanted what was best for the young widows and encouraged them to find husbands. Naomi knew she was beyond finding a husband herself and having more sons.

3. The Jewish people looked down upon the Moabites, who were excluded from participating in Israel’s worship, not just that year, but forever! No peace treaties can be made with them. Deut. 23:6. ***“Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live****.”* This ruling was so strict that it wasn’t forgiven even after 10 generations. The Egyptians who had enslaved the Israelites could worship with them after three generations. Same with the Edomites because they were related to the Israelites. Sometimes, God’s rules can seem confusing. When we have faith, we trust that God knows what he is doing. He is in charge! Even though it doesn’t make sense to us, God has his way to protect us.

Insert story here.

4. Isn’t God a God of mercies? He tells us to “**seek peace and pursue it**.” Psalm 34:14.

We don’t know the mind of God, his laws and rules that don’t make sense to us. Think about children, they know candy tastes so delicious so why not have it for breakfast or lunch? Or play in the street? As parents we know what is best for our children and let them know.

5. Numbers 22 provides an interesting history lesson. Balak, theMoabite King, had a plan to stop the Israelites. He sent for Balaam, a well-known pagan prophet, to put a curse on the Israelites. Balaam wasn’t any match for our God. His plan backfired! **“God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind…he has blessed, and I cannot change it. No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The Lord their God is with them.”** Numbers 23:19-21.

**6. Numbers 24:17-18. “ A star came out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab…but Israel will grow strong.”** Israel has a future, Moab does not!

Unfortunately, God’s people did suffer from their neighbors, the Moabites as the women enticed Israel to engage in idolatry. The penalty for idolatry was death, as experienced by Zimri who was an idolatrous Israelite and many non-virgin women of Moab.

7. Balaam experienced miracles three times through:

 a. his donkey’s speech

 b. his encounter with an angel of the Lord

 c. his God-given speech impediment. “But I can’t say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.” Numbers 22:38

8. The Moabites were determined to be a bad influence. That is why God warned the Israelites. Balaam didn’t seem to realize God’s power. It is easy for use to minimize the small miracles in our lives.

9. We must remember the wonderful things God has done in our lives and give grace when we are subject to having to wait on others and their timing.

10. **What can we praise God for right now in the three areas of health, physical provision, and spiritual needs?** Remember the stories of God’s faithfulness when we get discouraged. Praise God for his provision.

11. Ruth was one of the most unlikely to be chosen for God’s lineage. Women in her time were known to live in fear and incest; seduction and idolatry leading to death.

*12. Conclusion: Even when I don’t understand everything God is doing, remembering the miraculous in my past keeps me focused and following God tenaciously today.*

13. **Takeaway Truth – “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.” Romans 10:12**

**Day 2: Grieving and Going Home**

1. ***Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*** Matthew 7:13-14. Ruth chose a hard path she was totally unfamiliar with by following Naomi.

2. Do we choose the easy path in life or go the hard more difficult path by following Jesus?

3. Ruth feels the Lord’s hand has gone against her. Imagine losing your husband and two sons.

 She struggled trying to understand why God would allow her life to be filled with bitterness, not knowing what her future held for her. God brings beauty out of what seems like hopeless circumstances.

4. Note Ruth’s strength when she said, **“Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.”** Ruth 1:16. What a comfort Ruth was to Naomi. She had total respect for God, using the term “Yahweh,” the national god of ancient Israel and Judah. She was choosing the one true God.

5. Sometimes, we need to let go of what we think is good and move on to what God has planned for us which might even be much better.

6. Conclusion: Life will bring forks in the road—and while choosing the narrow path won’t be easy, it will be wort it.

7. *Takeaway Truth****—“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”* Hebrews 12:1**

**Day 3: Outstanding in the Field**

**“*The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow.”***

 *Psalm 146:9*

1. “Woe is me!” Naomi was eager for sympathy when people noticed her return to Bethlehem.

 She complained and focused on what was wrong in her life. She didn’t even acknowledge Ruth’s loyalty and companionship.

2. What practical steps can we take to combat self-centeredness? Reader: Psalm 100: 1-5 gives us good advice.

3. Did you know that in the NIV, giving “thanks” is cited 48 times?

4. **God provides** as we saw in the story of Sarah, Leah, and Tamar. God is a defender of widows as Naomi and Ruth discovered. Psalm 68 “God is described as *widows’ defender, champion, protector, justice-giver, and caretaker.*

5. In Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22, God put in place a law that would feed the hungry: the foreigners, widows and orphans, an early welfare system. In our Society today, the government provides welfare programs to assist the needy, but also churches play a huge part in caring for those less fortunate as seen in outreaches such as food banks and preparing and delivering meals to the sick.

6. God has promised a reward for us as seen in Deuteronomy 24:19…***so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.***

7. Ruth was a go-getter as seen in her work ethic. Ruth 2:3, tells us, “as it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. Even though Boaz’s men were directed to leave behind some gleanings for the poor, Ruth gathered about 30 pounds of grain and threshed it the same day before going home. This was way more than expected for a day’s work from a woman.

8. We are called to work hard because of our gift of salvation.Idle hands create environments of disruptive busybodies, gossiping or idly scrolling through social media.

9. Who was Boaz? He was a wealthy, God-fearing Israelite, a son of a foreign woman with compassion for the poor. His mother was Rahab, a relative of Naomi’s deceased husband. He cared for Ruth’s safety and told her not to go into any other fields. He was generous with providing a lunch and invited her to help herself to water as she worked.

10. **How often do we isolate ourselves and care only for our own family?** Our world would be a better place if we would yield to the unexpected opportunities in serving others.

11. Characteristics of Ruth: humble, good reputation, hard-working and obedient. Boaz showed respect to women, generous provision and provided protection.

12. **Think of a time that God provided for you unexpectedly?**

13. Conclusion: “God directs the paths of those who trust Him, providing all they need as they cling **tenaciously to Him.**

**14. Takeaway Truth—*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and learn not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.***

 **Proverbs 3:5-6**

**Day 4. Midnight at the Threshing Floor**

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

1. Naomi realized there wasn’t hope for her to marry again and have a son for Ruth. She never lost hope in finding a husband for Ruth. ***“My daughter, I must find a home for you where you will be well provided for.”*** Ruth 3:1

2. Naomi gave Ruth the following instructions, **“*Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 4When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.***Ruth3:3-4.

3. Let us note the difference in how each of these ladies approached the men. Tamar was in a disguise pretending to be a prostitute; whereas Ruth perfumed herself and put on her best clothes and waited until midnight before approaching Boaz when he was asleep. Remember she had put in a full day’s work and now had to wait up until midnight for the plan to work. Lying at a man’s feet was the least scandalous choice to make for a midnight encounter.

4. In the Hebrew culture, transactions were sealed with the feet, removal of a sandal, was very much like our handshake or a signature. If a man refused to marry a widow, she could have his sandal removed and spit in his face in public. A huge disgrace for a family to be known as “the Family of the Unsandaled.”

5. Life can be hard, waiting for the birth of your child while in labor…just a few more hours. In Hebrews 12, Paul encourages us to “fix our eyes on Jesus…so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

6. Can you relate to a desperate prayer…praying for a family member who is extremely ill, crying out to Jesus for a wayward relative or a heartfelt request that your husband would attend church with you?

7. When Boaz stirred, he replied in Ruth 2:12 “*May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under who wings you have come to take refuge.”* Ruth asked Boaz, “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer of our family.” Ruth showed Boaz respect and he responded with his generosity.

8. Reader Ezekiel16:8 **“*I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your …body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine.”*** referring to the people of Israel. See also Luke 13:34 referencing his people as a hen gathering her chicks under her wings. Think about God’s care of Adam and Eve as they were driven out of the Garden of Eden. He clothed them providing protection from the elements and covering their nakedness.

9. After the midnight event, Boaz knew that caring for Naomi and Ruth were more important than his wealth. He was willing to provide lifelong security for both ladies. Luke 12:33 reminds us of kindhearted Boaz, “***give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

10. Boaz took the opportunity to gain a wife of noble character. “***She is worth far more than rubies”.*** Proverbs 31:10

11. Let’s not overlook others that seem unlikely to make something of themselves. Rachel gave the example of Susan Boyle, a learning-disabled child of a miner who has become a singing sensation.

12. Conclusion: Fixing your eyes on Christ, your Redeemer, keeps you moving forward when the finish lines feels far ahead.

**13. Takeaway Truth—” Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.” Proverbs 19:17**

Day 5 the Famine’s Fairytale Ending

***Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”***

**Isaiah 43:1**

1. ***Treat young men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.***1 Timothy 5:2*.* Boaz cautioned Ruth when he said, ***“No one must know that a woman came to the threshing* *floor.***” Ruth 3:14.

2. Boaz wasted no time in taking care of Ruth as a kinsman redeemer. He sent her back to Naomi with six measures of grain. He knew another relative was in line before him. He went to the town gate with ten elders to wait for the kinsman-redeemer who was a closer relative. When he came to the gate Boaz told him about Naomi’s husband Elimelech who had passed. Naomi was willing to sell his land and suggested to him to buy it with the condition that he would marry the widow. He refused so Boaz fulfilled the agreement.

3. We may think that Ruth was living as a slave, but in reality, redeemed for her meant freedom from poverty. She went from being a pagan in her childhood, excluded from believers to a woman included in the bloodline of Christ. Her hunger days were over!

4. One of the greatest gifts Ruth received for her faithfulness to follow Naomi was a Christian husband, a son and Naomi’s bitterness was gone. The women in the town recognized that Ruth had been a blessing to Naomi. In Ruth 4:15b “…**For your daughter in law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, have given him birth.”**

5. Can we endure through all our struggles? Sometimes we just can’t make it on our own. In Chronicles 16:9. King Asa was told, “For **the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”** King Asa relied on himself, but not Ruth. She clung to the Lord victoriously.

6. Rachel reminded us that we are to worship at the altar of the Lord. Stop trying to do it all on your own. 2 Chronicles 13:18 King Abijah, **“*the people of Judah were victorious because they relied on the Lord, the God of their ancestors.”***

7. By working hard, we may get the house, the job or the family we want, but just think what it might have been if we let God’s direction lead us.

8. Conclusion: God’s fairytale ending for us is even better than an any ending we could imagine—and He will give us the strength to reach the goal when we are women of true tenacity, clinging to Him.

**9. Takeaway Truth – *Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty one of Jacob.”******Isaiah 60:16***