



MESSAGE GUIDE

FEBRUARY 16, 2025

EVERY NAME HAS A STORY- PART 7: YOUR VALLEYS DON'T DEFINE YOUR STORY



RUTH

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We are in week seven of our series “Every Name Has a Story”, and we’re taking a look at Jesus’ story through the lens of his family tree in Matthew 1.

Recap: The genealogy of Jesus is broken down into three sections, and that’s what we’re using as the overall grid for our preaching and teaching this year:

- Family stories #1—Abraham to David (Matthew 1:1-6a)
- Family stories #2—David to Babylonian exile (Matthew 1:6b-11)
- Family stories #3—Babylonian exile to Jesus (Matthew 1:12-16)
- Summary: “*So all generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations*” (Matthew 1:17, ESV).

For those of you who may be newer to the Christian faith or perhaps even exploring the Christian faith, this may seem a bit confusing. Here are some things that can help us in understanding and applying what we see in these names leading up to the name of Jesus:

- Jesus’ story is embedded in real history.
- Jesus’ story is filled with messiness.
- Every name in Jesus’ family tree has a story we can learn from.

AND in these stories, we can especially see that the valleys these people went through, though part of their stories, didn’t end in the valleys. The valleys in these people’s story didn’t have to define them, and your valleys don’t have to define you.

1. WHEN IN YOUR STORY DID YOU GO THROUGH A “VALLEY” BUT LATER FOUND HOPE OR A NEW DIRECTION?

Let’s take a look into the next part of Jesus’ family tree found in Matthew 1:5-6— “*And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king*” (**Matthew 1:5-6, ESV**).



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Earlier in this series, we learned that the three remarkable attributes of Matthew's genealogical record of Jesus are that: it includes women (which was not normal in a patriarchal society), it includes non-Jews; and it includes stories of disappointment, grief, and loss.

In these two short verses in Matthew 1, we have all three. We have women—Rahab and Ruth—who were both Gentiles/non-Jews, and the story of Ruth is one filled with much disappointment, grief, and loss. This takes us all the way back to the OT book of Ruth.

Read Ruth 1:1-5.

Right out of the gate, this story is filled with disappointment, grief, and loss. There's a famine, so a man, his wife and two sons move from the familiar to the unknown just to survive. The man dies. The two sons take Moabite (Gentile) wives, and then both sons die, leaving Naomi as a grieving widow who then loses both of her sons! Our stories of the human experience don't get much harder than that!

So, Naomi decides she's out of options, and the only thing she can do to survive is return to Bethlehem in Judah where she's from. One daughter in law stays in Moab, but the other one, Ruth, decides to go with Naomi, and it leads to this famous passage:

"For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16b, ESV).

Then, when we come to the end of Ruth 1, we see the depth of despair Naomi experienced. **Read Ruth 1:19-22.**

2. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED DESPAIR LIKE NAOMI? WHAT ATTITUDE DID YOU HAVE TOWARD THE PAIN, DISAPPOINTMENT, GRIEF, OR LOSS?

Naomi has every right to be bitter, to feel that God "has dealt very bitterly with" her, that God has brought her back "empty." But did you notice what is missing? Nothing is said about Ruth and her disappointment, grief, and loss. She was in a deep valley of the shadow of death also, wasn't she? She lost her husband, she moved away from her home country, she really has no future in Bethlehem except a life filled with poverty and pain, and yet there's no mention of her bitterness. In fact, the next thing mentioned in the text about Ruth is how she decides to take action and do something about her and Naomi's horrendous plight.

Read Ruth 2:1-3.



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Ruth had about as much right as Naomi did to sit and wallow rather than stand and act. So why didn't she? How could she rise above, move forward, not let the valley define her? Because, the valley is part of our story, but it doesn't have to be the end of our story.

For Naomi, it seems that she had given up. And we get it! That's normal. But what's "ab"-normal is when someone goes through what Naomi did and is able to become stronger as a result of it. Someone like Ruth.

The rest of the book of Ruth is basically a love story. Boaz is, what the text calls, a "redeemer." In Jewish culture, a "redeemer" refers to a close relative who has the responsibility to "buy back" or rescue a family member in need, particularly a widow, by providing for them, protecting them, and even marrying them, essentially restoring their status and security within the community.

Boaz becomes Ruth's redeemer, and he rescues her and Naomi to give them hope and a future. Now, on this side of the cross of Jesus, it's hard for us not to draw a parallel to our "Redeemer" who buys us back from death, rescues us when we are in need, and provides for us, protect us, and Jesus is even called our Bridegroom, and we are His bride, and He restores our status and security within the eternal Kingdom of God.

"[Jesus Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." (Titus 2:14, ESV).

3. HOW DOES KNOWING JESUS AS YOUR REDEEMER IMPACT YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE'S VALLEYS?

The story of Ruth starts in the valley of despair, and it ends on the mountaintop of hope: **Read Ruth 4:13-17.**

28 generations later, we're introduced to the heir of Boaz the Redeemer, Jesus Christ who redeems us from our sins. So, how did Ruth not get stuck in her valley of despair, grief, and loss? Was it that she was just younger than Naomi, so she had more energy? The answer to this goes back to earlier passage we read from Ruth 1:20-21. Let's widen the lens just a little bit and start with verse 10. When Naomi decides to return home to Bethlehem she urges her daughters in law to stay in Moab.

Read Ruth 1:10-18.



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What do we learn from this?

We learn that there was something that shifted in Ruth that was different than Orpah. Orpah kissed Naomi, but Ruth clung to her. There was something deep and dedicated in her relationship with Naomi. And Ruth made a pledge, didn't she? Not only would she stay with Naomi and go wherever she went, but she pledged that Naomi's God would be her God.

Somehow, Ruth became a believer. Ruth was transformed. And when Ruth was transformed, she wasn't going to stay in the valley of the shadow of death.

What Naomi saw as a dead end, Ruth saw as a doorway. When God was telling His people that they would go through great suffering as a result of their sin and rebellion, He also told them that that valley was not a dead end. He said, "[I will] transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope." (**Hosea 2:15, NLT**).

Whatever valley you have experienced or are stuck in right now, God has made a way for that valley of trouble to be transformed into a gateway of hope. And like Ruth, when she "set out and went and gleaned in the field," we're called upon to do the same thing. With faith in our Redeemer, we can leave the valley of trouble and go through the gateway of hope.

4. HOW HAS THE STORY OF RUTH INSPIRED YOU TO WALK BESIDE SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHO IS GOING THROUGH A VALLEY OF TROUBLE?

NEXT STEPS:

- If you would like to talk with someone about your valley and how to see it transformed into a gateway of hope, text "**HOPE**" to 317-707-6462.
- 2.If you're ready to learn more about what it means to take your next step with Jesus, text "**FOLLOW**" to the same number, and someone will reach out to you.

