



Our first lesson this coming Sunday comes from Ruth. While one of the shortest books in the Bible, it's one of the longer stories – and what a story. A Jewish man, his wife, and two sons lived in Bethlehem. When a famine strikes, he moves the family to Moab in order to survive. The man dies and the two sons take wives. After about ten years, both sons also die, so the wife/mom, Naomi, decides to return to Bethlehem and her extended family. Ruth refuses to let her go alone, so she accompanies her mother-in-law on the long journey. Eventually Ruth meets Boaz, they get married, and everyone lives happily ever after.

This is a story of loyalty, perseverance, love (and lust), and kindness; and it's one of those stories that makes you feel good about people and God.

The story is set in the time of the Judges, and the book is placed between Judges and 1 Samuel because it turns out that Ruth and Boaz become the great-grandparents of David, son of Jesse, who will become king of Israel after Saul.

The Book of Deuteronomy is the last book of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) and records Moses' narration of the Law to the Israelites before he dies and before they cross over into the Promised Land. This is both Moses' farewell address and his instruction to the people about the importance of loyalty to God. Toward the end, Moses requires the Israelites to swear an oath upholding the law and their covenant with God.

In this recitation of the Law there's this: *“No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation . . . because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey out of Egypt . . .”*
(Deut. 23:3-4)

God's law is clear and is not to be broken: Foreigners are not to be admitted into the assembly of the LORD (this basically prevented intermarriage) for ever.

But Ruth, a Moabite, married Boaz, a Jew, and became the great-grandparents of David, only three generations later; **AND** she gets a book in the Bible named after her.

Be very careful around people who quote Scripture as an unchangeable monolith carved in stone for all time; because Scripture will contradict itself in places and even God is willing to revise the law when appropriate.

The point of Scripture isn't to lay down laws set in stone to hold us accountable – the point of Scripture is to provide a guide to a right relationship with God. And when it comes right down to it, God will always choose justice, kindness, and mercy over an unchanging monolithic law.

Do justice. Love kindness. And walk humbly with God.

Blessings,

Todd+
