

MADE TO BE IN COMMUNITY PART TWO

THE LESSON: RUTH 1+4

In the beginning, at the time of creation, God recognized that it was “not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). The companionship of animals and the meaningful work of tending the garden were not enough. In order to thrive, human beings need community. Various translations of Psalm 68:6 tell us that God settles “the solitary”, or “the lonely” in “a home”, or “in families”. All of scripture echoes the story of a God who sees and cares, not just about those who seem destined for the spotlight, but those on the fringes too.

Christian marriage is a great blessing that enriches the lives of husbands and wives with a uniquely beautiful companionship. But not every believer marries. And no marriage is without challenging times. And even those blessed with a healthy marriage may someday experience the loss of a spouse, finding themselves alone once again. None of us knows what the future holds. But believers know that God will be with us through whatever comes. And in the Church, each one of us may find a community, a place of belonging, and a spiritual family.

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The Old Testament book of Ruth tells the love story of the virtuous young widow Ruth and the godly man Boaz. But it also tells the story of Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law. Naomi was an unlikely protagonist. She was an old woman who had moved to a strange land with her husband and two sons. The sons married, but then both they and Naomi’s husband died. She felt very alone. Upon returning to her own country again, she said, “I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty” (Ruth 1:21). Can you sense the grief and bitterness of those words? Yet God saw Naomi and God cared about Naomi. Let’s take a look at how things played out for her.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Spend some time praying with the words of this prayer throughout the week. Ask God to open your eyes to the people in your life who may be feeling overlooked and to show you how best to reach out to them in love.

O loving Father, we commend to thy gracious keeping all who are near and dear to us. Have mercy upon any who are sick, and comfort those who are in pain, anxiety or sorrow. Awaken all who are careless about eternal things. Bless those who are young and in health, that they may give the days of their strength unto thee. Comfort the aged and infirm, that thy peace may rest upon them. Hallow the ties of kindred, that we may help, and not hinder, one another in all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS, FROM THE “FAMILY PRAYERS” SECTION OF THE BCP, P. 732)

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RUTH 1+4: **BLESSINGS FOR NAOMI**

1 ⁷So Naomi set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me... ¹³it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.” ¹⁴Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. 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. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” ¹⁸And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more...

4 ¹³So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” ¹⁶Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷And the women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.