

Session 1

By Alistair Begg

Announcer:

Mr. Begg is a wonderful servant of God. He almost twisted my arm, as he said, I keep it simple. So this is this is it. As we introduce our brother in Christ, he's the husband of one wife. He has three children. Two of them are here. He he likes the introduction that the apostle Paul gives: Paul, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Alistar, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, my friend, is going to come and open the word and you are going to praise God for it. Let's thank him for coming back to Biola.

Begg:

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. You want this or not? Yeah, so this is just a fake thing, is it? It warms up. How do you warm it up? OK, I'm on this. And. All right. It's wonderful to be here. It's certainly a thrill. You're such a lovely audience, I'd love to take you home with us. I'd love to take you home. That's for those of you who are under over the age of 30. It's a privilege to be in the company of the Dunns and also Dr. Hutchinson. And as always, with Pastor Hafer here and to be in the environment where I get the opportunity of being with my children is a special benefit. And I don't take that for granted either.

I hope that all of you have a Bible, because if you don't, then you won't be able to check and see whether what I'm saying is actually in the Bible. And that is, of course, a very important process in something that's called the Memorial Bible Conference. And but I'm sure since you're such a bright group that you'd already figure that out and you're able to turn with me to the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, to Ruth in the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, numbers, Deuteronomy Joshua, judges Ruth. And then first and second, Samuel. And I'd like to take the time to read the first chapter, and I would like to ask you if you would be good enough to read forward into the book for the remaining three sessions that we have.

We come together again tonight. And at the end of the session tonight, we have the opportunity of questions and answers. I always look forward to that time. I'm already looking forward to it this evening. And for those of you come if you come prepared for that, I can guarantee that I can answer all the questions. I know that the Bible has the answers and we may be able to find the majority of them and those that we can will look for later on. But it should be a wonderful time. And I look forward to the interaction with you. I purposefully want to end your hearing. Read this first chapter because some of us may not have read Ruth recently and some of us may never have read Ruth at all. And so this allows us then to have a context.

In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land and a man from Bethlehem and Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Mohammad. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two

sons were Melen and Chilian, they were everyth writes from Bethlehem Juda and they went to Moab and lived there. Now, Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about 10 years, both male and Chilian also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

When she heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters in law prepared to return home from there with her two daughters in law. She left the place where she'd been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. Then Naomi said her two daughters in law go back to each of you to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you as you have shown to your dead and to me.

May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband. Then she kissed them and they wept aloud and said to her, We will go back with you to your people. But Naomi said, return home, my daughters, why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husband's return home? My daughters. I'm too old to have another husband, even if I thought there was still hope for me, even if I had a husband tonight and then give birth to sons, would you wait until they grew up?

Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you because the Lord's hand has gone out against me at this. They wept again. Then or Porchester, mother in law, goodbye. But Ruth clung to her. Looks at Naomi, your sister in law is going back to her people and their gods go back with her, but Ruth replied, Don't urged me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go. And where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God. My God, where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything, but death separates you and me.

When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem, when they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them and the women exclaimed, Can this be Naomi!? Don't call me Naomi. She told them, Call me Mara, because the almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me. The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me. So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by Ruth the more, but that's her daughter in law arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning. Keep your Bibles open there, won't you, and let's just ask God's help.

God, our father, we thank you this morning that as we sit here in this corner of Southern California, very, very far removed both by time and by geography from the events that we've just

been reading about. That your word is. Ever true and ever relevant. It's going to take quite a bit of convincing for some of us to get a hold of that. Certainly I'm incapable of impressing upon this congregation the wonder and importance and relevance of it all together. Speaker and listeners, for we all listen. We ask that the spirit of God will do for us what we're unable to do for ourselves. And clean our hearts to the truth. Open our minds that we might think. And bring our wills into alignment with your truth. Then we will go on our way thankful for having had this time with our Bibles open before us in our prayer to God and let our cry come on to you for Jesus sake. Amen.

Well, I invite you then to, in one sense, disengage from your immediate environment. This little pocket of life here, nestled in behind the five, is unlike many other places in the whole world, frankly, and if you doubt that and you only need to go somewhere else in the country and return to it, and you realize that there are dynamics that are represented in living your life here in an environment that is frantic and in many ways frenetic.

You need to turn away from that for a moment and go back in time, some three thousand years far away from the high tech environment, from the laptop computers, from all of the abilities to interact with friends and family across the world by means of Internet connection into a place and a time that we can only begin to contemplate by using our minds very carefully and asking for our imaginations to be stimulated. We're going in these four studies in this book, not

necessarily to receive a blast from the past, I think that would be rather adventuresome on my part or precocious to suggest that it may be.

I haven't asked God to give us a blast from the past, but at least a breath from the past or a breeze, if you like, a breeze that will come to renew our spirits, to stir our hope, to realign our wills with God. What we're really dealing with here in this book is classic Old Testament illustration of the true

[break in tape here]

- twenty eight, which each of you knows, and we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, for those who have been called according to his purpose. When Paul writes to the church in Rome and Romans Chapter 15, he tells them that everything that was written in the past was written in order that it might teach us and in order that we might, through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures, have hope. Now, what we need to remind ourselves of as we sit before the Bible is that God knows you. The issue is about the university and the sense that we share this in a very corporate way. The word of God is applicable to the vastness of our culture today as we wrestle with everything that we've already seen in the morning news.

But in a very special and particular way, God deigns to bring his word to bear upon individual lives, and if you just look at the company, you look around, look across, look beside you, you say to yourself, well, look at me. I'm just one in the midst of this large sea of faces.

And it's hard for as many times to realize that God, who fashioned your DNA, who made you exactly as you are, who purposefully created you, has chosen in this day to speak directly to you from his word, given that he knows everything about you, the good and the bad and the ugly, the mistakes and disappointments of your past, the circumstances of your present, your dreams and aspirations for the future and the marvel of it all that we then in the 21st century could go back to twelve hundred B.C. and read a story concerning the village life of Judah, and all of a sudden it comes and grips our hearts.

So try then as best you can to get underneath the burden of this book, when you read the first chapter and we read it together, it's clear that Bethlehem was buzzing. Of course, it wouldn't take much for a little place like Bethlehem to buzz. And the reason on this particular day was that Naomi was back and animated conversations were clearly triggered by the sightings. In verse 19, the people were saying to one another, it says the whole town was stirred because these two ladies are showing up. And they were saying to one another, do you think that that's Naomi? And

some of them would have said in the in the bazaar, I don't think it's Naomi. Naomi was a lot fatter than that. Yes. But I think she's been through a lot. Somebody else would have said, you know, she's lost a husband and she's lost sons. And she's she's she's a shadow of herself. I think it's it's probably her. And eventually, as the community began to process the sightings of these women, it became apparent.

She had left some time 10 years earlier, her husband, Elimelech, has decided that they should do this. She'd gone off with her sons because here in Bethlehem, among the hills of Judah would. Afterwards, David would look after the sheep in the same location where the shepherds would hear the angels sing concerning the birth of the Lord Jesus. In the same geographic setting, this man Elimelech, had woken up one morning and he said to his wife and his sons, We're out of here. We can only stay here for so long, the larder is empty, the cupboards are bare, there's nothing that we can produce for one another and we need to get out of here and to get on with our lives.

Now, if you are concerned that I am launching immediately into the story without setting its historical context, let me suggest this for those of you who would be concerned, if you recognize that this is set within the framework of time in between the death of Joshua and the coronation of Saul, then you have the framework in which these events unfold and you can go back to your books and you can fill in all the historical background for yourself. Essentially, the camera

narrative narrows down on this little village in this township, while the whole community, in the broader sense is in social upheaval.

And the book of judges, if you read it, is filled with violent invasions, with apostate religion, with unchecked lawlessness. If people had been reading their morning newspapers, which of course they weren't, if they'd been clicking on the television screen, then it would have been stories of civil strife, of national upheaval, of international concern. It was abject chaos. And in the middle of it all, God comes by his spirit and he takes the camera lens and he narrows it down. Now, just onto the face of one lady and her name is Naomi. It's the story of an ordinary lady. Living her ordinary life in an ordinary environment.

Now, that ought to give encouragement to many of us, because many of us are not extraordinary or we may dream of being extraordinary, but we're not. The majority of certainly it's true for me. Just an ordinary man. Living in a very ordinary place, Cleveland. Fulfilling ordinary responsibilities. And the pressure on us, not least of all within the Christian community, is, you know, if you want to know that God is interested in you, if you want to know that God has concerns for you, if you want to know that God has plans for you, then what you need to become is extraordinary because he likes to deal in the extraordinary. In the spectacular, in the dramatic. But, of course, that flies in the face of human experience, as well as in the study of the Bible.

So in this environment, then? We fastened in on what's taking place. I have three words that I want to give you, but those of you who care about taking notes and for those of you who don't want us to be able to remember the three words, I'll tell you what they are so that you can know that we are making progress through the study and that the morning is not going to drift into oblivion. I should warn you that I'll probably spend longer on the first point than I do on the remaining two so that those of you who are going to extrapolate from the length of time under the first words say, oh, golly, we're you know, we're here to about 12 with this sucker. So it's not going to be like that.

All right. So three words are famine, bereavement, and return. Famine, bereavement return. First of all, famine. In the midst of the saga of disobedience and defeat, which was in the book of judges always followed by supplication and salvation, in other words, the people of God disobeyed God found themselves in dire trouble, came back and said, I'm sorry, God, I won't do it again. You restored them and they went along for a little while, only to once again disobey God, find themselves in defeat, come back to God and say, I'm sorry, I won't do it again.

And you restored them only to go through the process again is that actually we should all be able to identify with this very, very clearly because it's the story of our lives. Disobedience, defeat. I'm sorry. Help me. Thank you. Disobedience, defeat. I'm sorry. Really sorry. Help me. Help me.

Help me. Thank you. And now I'm going to get it. And then off we go again. And it is in the midst of this for the nation of Judah that they find that famine has hit the land.

When the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, that means there was no food. That means people were in real difficulty. In other words, they were experiencing what most of us probably have never experienced. And we are where they they were in Bethlehem, six miles south of Jerusalem, on the eastern ridge of the central mountain range, just east of the main highway that led down and leads down to Hebron and to Beersheba. If you visited Bethlehem, the very name means House of Bread.

And it was a very productive arena, producing wheat and barley and olives and almonds and grapes and all of them in abundance so that people who grew up in Bethlehem said, you know, you can always get something to eat in Bethlehem. In fact, you will see when you drive into the town, that's an anachronism. But you see when you come into that, says Bethlehem, the house of Bread. And what an irony that the house of bread runs out of bread, that the place of abundance becomes the place of poverty, that the place of blessing becomes the experience of great difficulty.

And so the people get up in the morning and they say, well, what are we going to do today? And some says, well, we'll just we'll just have to cut it out or maybe we can go out and find something and come back. But this morning, Elimelech wakes up and he says, you know, what we're going to do is we are going to head out to Moab. Now, Elimelech had a name that meant the Lord is my king. So presumably when his parents gave it to him, they would have said, we hope that Elimelech is going to grow up and always trust God and he seems to have done a fairly good job.

But here on this particular morning, he decides that he's going to make this decision to head into the country of Moab. And for us this morning, we say big deal, Elimelech, random Moab. You know, write that down on your notes and and think about it for two seconds. Elimelech went to Moab. Is there any significance in this? Yes. And I'll tell you what it is. The presence of God was believed to be especially linked to the land of Judah. Therefore, for the people of God to move from the land of God was at least symbolically, to step out from the presence of God.

So what you see in this opening verse is not simply that they decided to move their home, but there was actually a cataclysmic seismic shift, if you like, in the mentality of Elimelech, which was not going to affect simply Elimelech, but also Naomi and also his sons, because remember, none of us lives to ourselves nor dies to ourselves. Our actions are never isolated. We may think that they are, but they they affect the people around us. And on this particular day, Elimelech

saying to himself, it's right for me. I'm the husband. I'm the father. I'm supposed to provide for my family.

It's right for him to provide for his family. But in the decision that he makes to go to Moab, essentially what happens is this. It is a triumph of pragmatism over faith. It is a triumph of pragmatism over faith. And it involved him in violating the clear instructions of the word of God. You'll have to check this yourselves. But back in Deuteronomy twenty three, the word of God to the people was no ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the Assembly of the Lord. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live. Now, I'd like to process this information and he said, I know the Bible says this.

But look at us here. Surely God doesn't want me to obey the Bible. He wants me to use my common sense. So he's now on the knife edge that is addressed in Proverbs three, isn't he, which we all know because our grandmothers wrote it into the Bible, that they gave us trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insights. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

The same crisis that came to Abraham when he didn't have a child. And as he wrestles with it, pragmatism says, why don't you go and take one of your servant girls as your wife. That way

you'll produce a child, because after all, God wants you to have a child and surely really doesn't want you to go on like this ad infinitum.

Some of you in here this morning and you're wrestling with those kind of decisions. It's the question of will I trust God or will I just launch out knowing what the Bible says, but knowing how I feel and knowing what my expectations are? Listen, young people always err on the side of faith, always err on the side of faith when you can't unscramble the equation or their Elimelech chose not to. And off they go to Moab, a mountainous region at the end of the Dead Sea, featuring a fertile plateau that was about twenty five miles along, several thousand feet above the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. And so they went off to live for a while, verse one in the country of Moab.

The man's name, his wife's name, son's names, and they went to Moab, verse 2, and they lived there and so life would have gone to the people in Bethlehem said, I wonder how Elimelech is getting on. Anybody had a postcard from Elimelech? Anybody heard from Naomi? What about you? You used to play with with Chilian. Has Chilian have been visiting? That's the kind of thing you see when you read the Bible. You've got to remember, these are real people in real time. This is not somebody sat down here and invented a story. This is this is Mr. Elimelech and his wife that buzzed off to MOAB. Their house is vacant. New people moved in.

People said, you know, they don't keep the garden the way Elimelech at the garden. I like Elimelech better. I mean, these people have a dog. I don't like their dog. It was much quieter when Naomi was here. Oh, this new lady. You should hear her talk. Naomi, she was a lovely lady. And those boys, such nice boys, you know, they looked a little sickly, but they were nice boys. I wonder whatever became of them. Well, of course, the world is going to trickle back from famine in Juda to bereavement in Moab.

Now, Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. So the security and the protection that Elimelech was seeking for his family never materialized, and not only do we discover here in the record that Naomi lost her husband, but she also lost her sons. But before she lost her son, she picked up a couple of daughter in law's. And the weddings would have helped ease the loss of her husband. But of course, when they had the winnings, it would have been obvious that Elimelech was missing.

Some of us have had those weddings. Some of us look forward to weddings and we know that our dad won't be there or our mom won't be there. It makes a difference. And they only lived through that - people saying to her you must be looking forward to the wedding. Oh, yes, she said, I'm looking forward to the wedding, but I do so much miss Elimelech. Well, I'm sure that is exciting for you to be looking forward to welcoming these two lovely girls into your life and it

will probably help and doubtless there's going to be the sound of little feet coming along sooner or later. The way that people always talk. You know, I'm sure you'll have little grandchildren soon enough.

But not only does she get no grandchildren. But her two sons die as well. And they married Moabite women, and after they had lived it about 10 years, incidentally, that after they had lived there about 10 years, I don't think that means that after they married, the more about women and lived for 10 years, you can check this yourself and do it as your homework. But I think they, after they had lived it about 10 years, is a reference to the totality of the time that Naomi and Elimelech had had lived there. So I don't think you've got the impression here - and I check this out and I'm not going into the details of it for you. You shouldn't think that these two women were married for 10 years and then they moved back. The girl that goes back and hooks up with Boaz, if you read ahead - was probably in her late teens.

So what you have is they move, the dad dies, the sons marry, sons die. And it's just going from bad to worse. And here's Naomi sitting in our house saying to herself, Oh, God. Is this it? First of all, we're starving to death in Judah. I'm just being an obedient wife, I go where my husband says that's what it says in the Bible. That's what I was supposed to do. He said, we're going to Moab. I didn't think it was a great idea, but I went to Moab. No sooner did I get over here, God, thinking that everything's going to brighten up. And he snaps it. We have a couple of weddings, now my boys [snaps] gone as well. And here I am with these two girls.

You think you've got troubles this morning? You do have troubles this morning, all of us have our own private life. It's not even really known to the people nearest and dearest to us. We have our own set of circumstances. We can look back on times when we chose pragmatism over faith, where we moved out from under the shadow of God's jurisdiction, where we then lived with the implications of what that meant. Some of us may actually be living there this morning.

And suddenly, this ancient story from this place so far away seems so apropos, is he are we about to turn tragedy into triumph in the way that he did for Joseph carted off into enslavement in Egypt? Is this going to turn around? Is this story going to have a wonderful ending, as it did for Mohamed, for Moses liberated with the people from the land of Egypt? The sorry scene is hard to miss, left without her sons and her husband, a lonely widow abandoned in a foreign land, without the protection and provision of a husband and living in a male dominated society.

You can read your twenty first century back into this, you say, wow, I wish you could get a job with Microsoft or something. You know, she's a bright lady. Yeah, well, you know, she can work and she can work from home on the Internet. You know, she just she didn't have to go anywhere. No, no, you don't understand. This is three thousand years ago. A male dominated culture, she is

no longer under the protection of a husband, she no longer is able to say, and these are my two sons and they will look after me. She is a picture of abject pity.

And God looks down into the tragic picture she faces are declining years with no children to care for her and no grandchildren to come over and say, Hey, Grandma, we want to come over and see you. No prospect of that. Driven from our homeland by famine, cruelly robbed of our loved ones by death, one of Israel's family units is tottering on the brink of extinction. If Naomi is going to get out of this one with any sense of heritage at all, then it will only be the work of God. So her back's up against the wall. It's often a good place to be. Many times before God does something of peculiar interest and effectiveness in the life of His children, we find ourselves completely backed up against the wall. Famine, bereavement, thirdly, finally return.

Some good news from home there, our six when she had in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and our daughters in law prepared to return home from there. All of a sudden, into the darkness comes a little sunshine. God intervenes by providing food for his people. Notice the phrase God had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them. Do you realize that God provides food for you. I don't mean intellectually. Have you ever thought about it? If you ever had a kind of cathartic moment in the middle of a supermarket aisle? I don't mean when you looked at the amount of dog food and cat food that there is, but you just looked at the immensity of the provision and you said yourself, where did all this stuff come from?

Of course, if you haven't thought about it in these terms at all and you're thinking simply in terms of a computerized restocking processes that you're interested in, in in the work of your studies, then you won't be reminded ultimately that it is God who stacks the shelves. Do you give thanks for your food? I didn't ask you, do you mumble something before you eat? I asked you, do you give thanks for your food? When is the last time that when you gave thanks for your food, the tears smarted in your eyes? If ever. Because it suddenly dawned upon you. God, my heavenly Father provided this for me. Why me?

So often it is out of the mouths of children that we get the greatest insights and encouragements, I was just in Scotland 10 days ago on very spiritual business, playing golf for a week, and I went to the home of one of my sisters and into the company of two of my nieces. And they've already begun to grow, but there's still enough of the tiny element about them to stir the hearts of the adults, and I love for the wee-est one, Suzanna, to do the grace. And I always ask her if she would do the grace, she's now taking up percussion, so she has drumsticks, she's got a whole gig going now that's taking it to a whole new level. But she she has a little song that she sings that you may sing as well. I don't know. But it goes and this is how she does it:

[singing] "Thank you for the world. So sweet. Thank you for the food we eat." That's her accent. "Thank you for the birds that sing-aling-aling. Thank you, God, for everything." And I look in her tiny little faces, I put her to bed at night and I said, you know. Susanna. You're teaching me things that are just so important to be reminded of. All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above. So thank the Lord or thank the Lord. For all his love, do you know that one of the great evidences of God's work within your life is a thankful heart? The very opposite of an embittered, complaining, groaning, moaning existence. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

How is it going, Naomi? Not good. I lost my husband, I lost my boys, I spend the afternoons with Naomi, with Ruth and Taupo, but I just had some good news. The House of Bread is back in business. Bethlehem has food. I'm going home. If she'd lived in the 20th century and she had a Walkman. She would have been glad, you know, to click it on and have Paul Simon get her ready for the journey, you know? She's sitting in a railway station, you know, got a ticket for our destination. Homeward bound, I wish I was homeward bound home where my thoughts are escaping home when the music's playing home, when all these memories are waiting for me. You've got to understand, this is what's happening to the lady. Don't read your Bible like Naomi went home. Very interesting.

No, this is a lady. This is a lady who hasn't slept with her husband for years because he's been dead. All of the fulfillment of marital bliss has been gone to her. She has no enjoyment of all of that which she set out on the journey of life, which she was without food. She was without a

husband. She's without kids. She's busted. And suddenly the sunshine just breaks through and she says, We're going home. We're going home. We say, well, hurry up and get her home because we want to get out of here. I couldn't agree more.

Verse Seven. Verse seven. We need to get her home because we start with her at home this evening. You say, well, she doesn't get home for ages. Look at all the verses. Don't worry. Trust me. Verse seven. When I have to I can do it you know. Verse seven. She leads the exodus out. You see her there with her two daughters in law. She left the place where she had been living. She folds it up. You remember Fiddler on the Roof when you see all the thing and they nuthatches down and shut it all up and they get the carts and they move out. That's the kind of thing this is not Naomi with a U-Haul, you know, and a scooter attached to the back of it. This is a very rural setup.

So she shuts it all down. She sets out on the road that would take her back to the land of Judah. She gets far enough away from Moab to ensure that she couldn't be urged to remain there, and yet she's not so far away that she can't urge the two girls to go back. So she reaches a point on the journey where she says, OK, I'm far enough along the road that I know for sure I'm not going back. But she turns to the girls and says, listen, let's just stop here and have a coffee. I want to say a couple of things to you. I really think it's better if you go back. I mean, look at me. But you've got your life's in front of you. I love you both and I want you to go back, go back to your

mother's house. The very phrase mother's house creates the context in the hubristic mind of love and marriage, the place where marriages are arranged.

So what she's seeing is if you want to have a future, go back, go back to your mother's house, go back to security, go back to opportunity. If you come with me. Sure, there's food in the land of bread. But beyond that, I can't offer you very much. I will no longer be able to show kindness to you. I can only commit you to God's care. Find your rest, find your civility, find your fulfillment in all of the possibilities there of remarriage, may the Lord grant kindness to each of you, may you find rest in the home of another husband, a wonderful selflessness about Naomi.

When people get old, you know, they often get cranky. If you notice that, you say, well, you don't have to wait till they get old. You should you should meet my roommate. But the fact is, if she's like that now, it's going to be much worse if you had 30 years to it. However, she wakes up in the morning now, like, well, pity help her husband because she won't wake up like that, because when you get old, you just become an extension of what you are. If you talk a lot when you're young, you're completely unbearable. By the time you get to 65. You sit down with a guy on the plane, as you say, what the world is this guy's problem? Well, he started that when he was about 12 and nobody ever cuffed him on the back of the head. And so we have to live with it now. Four and a half hours on the plane nonstop, OK?

When people get old, they become a projection of what they are in their youth. That's why the decisions you make in your youth and the character traits that you establish right now that you think you've got a lot of time to fix. Let me tell you, by the time you're in your early 20s, you are pretty well fixed. Character traits, oh, God can intervene Grace overrules. There are many developments for you yet, but listen carefully. I have watched now and I'm an old man and I have seen the way in which people are simply an extension of what they were in, the decisions that they made in their in their late teens and early 20s.

Anyway, that's half the point. She could have been the kind of person said, oh, don't leave me. You know, look at me. I'm an old person, don't leave me on my own. Right. She could have done that. And the girls would want to go out and party and everything. Go get a new husband. No, no, no, no. You got to stay with me. She doesn't do that. Why? Selflessness is a wonderful thing. Selflessness, self forgetfulness is a great thing, you see, it's a number one prerequisite in Christian living, it's a number one prerequisite in preaching. Be yourself and forget yourself. You want to live for Christ. Be yourself and forget yourself. You want to follow YHWH? Do it.

She does. Girls, you've got to go back. What happens? One says I'm going back. The other one says I'm coming with you. One of them goes back in all the kissing and weeping and protesting that takes place there and those verses 11 and 12 and 13 and 14. Orpah does the expected

sensible thing. I don't know about the seminar this afternoon, but I wrote this down. I think it fits, Orpah takes the blue pill and goes back.

Ruth takes a red pill and goes on. She abandons the known for the unknown, she gives out the prospect of marriage to cling to an ancient, hopeless mother in law who's not exactly singing "The joy of the Lord is my strength," you know, she's not she's not right on top of the world here. She's she's moving, but she's not really there. So it's not like. Well, you know, Naomi, you're so much fun to hang around with because as we'll see this evening, the four of us that come back, if if you look at what she said, she said, you don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara. Call me bitter. OK, well, yeah, OK, yeah. All right, OK. Better, yeah, yeah, well, let me come with you a. This is great. Yeah.

And so in verse 15, Bitter says to her, you know, listen, you're a good runner, you can still get back there. Verse 15. Listen, she's going back to her people and her gods. You go back with her, go on. You make a run for it. You can catch her. And then here in verse 16. Probably the most famous part of the whole book of Ruth, you know, I don't know if I can quote it from the King James version, I memorized it in the King James version. But it goes something like this. And those of you who have King James version, you can check it. It has such a majesty about it.

She turns to she turns to her mother in law and she says, entreat me not to leave the. Nor to return from following after the. For where that would go, I will go. We are now duelist, I will dwell. And thy people shall be my people. And thy God, my God. See, because what had happened in this transition was that Ruth had come in the process of it all to see beyond the emptiness of the Moabites gots to see into all of the vastness of what this lady, Naomi, her mother in law, was on about. She wasn't presented with some triumphalist view. What she I mean, she never came to trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because it looked like a good trip.

Like Naomi said to her, hey, if you trust in the entire way, if you trust in El Shaddai, you know, it's Hey. You know, they're going to get married, you know, all that kind of stuff. It's not that at all. She says, Why don't you trust in how should I trust and how should I look at what else she has done for you?

You don't have any food. You leave, you come to Moab, your husband dies, your two boys die. What kind of God is this? Hey, listen, my friends, if you think for one nanosecond. That the way to reach our contemporary culture. Is with triumphalist stories. Of what Jesus will do to make it fabulous and wonderful and so on, you have rocks in your head. The real need at this hour is for a theology and evangelical theology of suffering.

And evangelical understanding of pain, the ability to say to men and women in all of the challenges of the aftermath of these events, yes, there is great mystery in this. No, there are no guarantees for the children of the king. But let me tell you this.

You can either embrace blind chance or you can fly your kite of foolish optimism or you can lay hold of God's providential care.

The care that undergirded Naomi. And then you go in to the following verses, but. We've had enough. And there's always this evening. And so we'll start. And we'll pick it up here later on if you're brave enough to return, and we'll pray together now. Father, thank you for the simple reminder that you're in the business of shining your light down on ordinary little street corners and little houses. And into the lives of ordinary people. Even in the discomfort and disasters and disappointments of our days.

You're overruling everything according to the internal counsel of your will. And that in all things, you're working for the good of those who love you, of being called according to your purpose, I pray that you will give us a little journey here between now and Friday morning where these characters, Ruth and Naomi Boaz, become our friends. That we're thinking about them

were walking through our days with them, we're learning from them as we learn from your word, bless the remainder of the day, the opportunities of the afternoon, the privileges of the evening, our all of our interactions with one another.

We thank you for your great goodness to us. And we pray that you would help us to please you and honor you and that we might be a help and an encouragement to one another rather than a hindrance as we seek to follow after Christ, for it's in his name, we pray. Amen. Thanks a lot. And hopefully I'll see you later.