

# Surviving The Difficulties of Life (Part 2)

Sunday, April 15, 2018  
10:30 AM

## **John 16:1 (NIV)**

**16** “All this I have told you so that you will not fall away.

## **John 16:33 (NIV)**

**33** “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have **trouble**. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

**Difficulties can be tragic...** The loss of a loved one, a terminal illness, a life-threatening health crises, financial ruin, a deadly accident, a disastrous storm or other catastrophic natural disaster, terrorism, violent attack.

- Two testimonies from this week

**Difficulties can be ongoing...** Financial hardship, plaguing health problems, family problems, relationship battles, unanswered prayer.

**Difficulties can be heartbreaking, frustrating and annoying...** A bad job situation, hectic schedules, traffic, accidents, relationship breakups, your kids school, bills that need paid, rude people, life in general.

I don't have to tell you about difficulties. What we want to know is how can I survive?

God laid this message on my heart about a year ago to preach through the book of Ruth as means of showing people how to deal with the difficulties of life; but the more time I spend reading the book of Ruth, the more the Holy Spirit unpacks for me

1. It wasn't a **sin** to leave Bethlehem because of the famine  
But sometimes our search for answers from the difficulties of life separates us from our faith and connection with God
2. Surviving the difficulties of life begins as we realize that despite our troubles, God is a **good** God and has **help** for us
3. There is often a **journey** back to, or for some the first time, that place of faith and relationship with God.

4. We will have to make a choice as to where we will look for strength and provision
5. If we are to make it through we must cling to God
6. Difficulties may change us, but they don't have to define us

If I could summarize these thoughts from Ruth Chapter 1 it would be...

**CLING TO GOD**

## Ruth 2 (NIV)

### Ruth Meets Boaz in the Grain Field

**2** Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

**2** And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." **3** So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

**4** Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!"

"The Lord bless you!" they answered.

**5** Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"

**6** The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. **7** She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

**8** So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. **9** Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

**10** At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

**11** Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. **12** May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

**13** "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants."

**14** At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar."

When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. **15** As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. **16** Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”

**17** So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. **18** She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

**19** Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!”

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said.

**20** “The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.”

**21** Then Ruth the Moabite said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’”

**22** Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”

**23** So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

If I were to summarize this second message it would be getting our focus off of the difficulty and on to God

1. There is a man. (Verse 1, 20)

After the great difficulties are described in chapter 1 we are told with great foreshadowing at the beginning of chapter 2 that there was a man. We don't know yet what difference this is going to make but we will soon learn that it makes all the difference in the world

This is the "BUT GOD" moment of the book of Ruth. One that we will look more at next week as we get into chapter 3

I have a problem.... BUT GOD

I can't see a solution... BUT GOD

There is no hope... BUT GOD

There's no way out... BUT GOD

There is a man and this man is Jesus

With this opening verse the author seeks to get our attention off of the problems and get us looking at the solution

Oh that we would get our eyes off of the problem for just a minute so that we can begin to see the solution

Sometimes we are so focused on THE difficulty that we fail to see what God wants to do for us.

Like Peter when he was walking on water (Matthew 14) , we start out in faith with our eyes on Jesus.... But when he saw the wind... when we get our focus on the difficulty.... He was afraid and began to sink.... He cried out Lord save me.... And immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.... Oh you of little faith why did you doubt

You may choose to focus on the fact that there is a difficulty but I choose to focus on the fact that there is a man

Elimelek... means God is my King

Boaz... means in him is strength.

In fact, Solomon would later name one of the two main pillars of the temple  
BOAZ

This understanding that there is a man and that in Him is strength is foundational to our survival of lives difficulties. It sets the stage for everything else that Ruth chapter 2 has to teach us

## 2. Don't give up on life (Verse 2)

There was a notable difference between Ruth and Naomi. While Naomi had not completely lost her faith, she had already begun to give up on life. She blamed God and saw little hope for a future

Ruth, however, demonstrates a characteristic important to our survival of the difficulties of life.

It is important that we not give up on life

She got up and said I'm going to keep living. She could have stayed there and given up all hope and just waited to die. Instead she said I'm going out to the fields and pick up the grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor. In other words, I don't know how this is going to turn out, but I'm not giving up

When we believe that God is the author, sustainer, and resurrector of life, we will not give up. But sometimes this kind of faith needs to be stirred up by The Lord Himself

I think of Jairus in the New Testament... his daughter was sick so he went to get Jesus for help. but as they were on the way, they were delayed by another woman who need healing. By the time Jesus was finished with that woman, someone from the home of Jairus came to tell him that his daughter was already dead. They said don't bother the teacher anymore. In essence they were saying give up on life. It's too late. Nothing can be done. But Jesus said...

### **Mark 5:36 (NIV)**

**36** Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

You know the rest of the story. Jesus went to his house and told those who were there that she wasn’t dead but asleep. I think he was saying this for the benefit of Jarius. Don’t give up on life. A few minutes later his daughter was up and eating dinner

How about Lazarus... Martha had given up on life... Mary had given up on life... and rightly so because their brother had been dead for four days... but Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life... He who believes in me though he were dead yet shall he live.... And then he said do you believe this? Even when things look Impossible, we can give up on life because there is a man who is the author, sustainer, and resurrector of life

Have you given up on life because of a difficulty?

### 3. Keep **Moving** - with the intent of moving forward if you can

Ruth got up and went into the fields and began to work gleaning stalks of barley behind the harvesters. It wasn’t easy work or anything that you would expect to get rich off of or even fed much from; but at least she was moving with the intent of moving forward.

This is where so many of us get stuck... and one of the things that keeps us from moving forward is our own bad attitude. Listen, a complaining Spirit will leave us dead in the water.... It will kill what little bit of life you have left in you. One thing you never hear coming out of Ruth’s mouth is a complaining Spirit. She was hopeful, expectant and thankful even though there wasn’t much to be thankful for.

Again, sometimes we are so focused on the difficulty, that we fail to see the good goodness of God in the small things. The gleanings are God’s provision and will sustain you until the fullness of his answer to your difficulty comes

What gleanings has God blessed you with to sustain you through the difficulties of life?

4. Trust in God's provision, protection, and plan for your life

I want you to know that all that happened to Ruth was not by chance. It was God working His plan in her life. It was God who provided for her. It was God who protected her

Plan.... Great grandmother of David... the lineage of Jesus

Provision... gleanings, meal, favor in future gleanings

Protection... safe work environment, no hassle from men looking to take advantage of her. The protection of the command of Boaz...

Ask God to reveal to you His plan, His provision and His protection for your life

### **God Meets a Need**

Thanks to the Ultimate Baby Shower hosted by Family Life Radio, a listener named **Esther** decided to donate her baby items to New Life Pregnancy Center. She had considered selling them, but instead felt called by God to give them away so they could be used to share the love of Christ with families in need. When Esther came in with her donations, the staff helping to unload her car noticed that nearly every item was exactly what a new client named **Jessica\*** had described needing: a stroller and car seat combination, a pack-n-play, bathtub, bouncer and more - all for a baby girl! Excited, they shared with Esther how all of these donations were an answer to prayer for Jessica! She had recently lost her job due to being put on bed rest until her C-section in May, and having just moved to Arizona she still needed nearly everything for her baby girl. When Jessica came into the center for the items, our staff gathered with her to pray, thanking God for the blessings he provided and asking him to care for her through the remainder of her pregnancy. Jessica left with hope, reminded she is loved by God and not alone. \*client name changed

One of the Powerful truths that the Holy Spirit revealed to me in this passage is found in verses 8-9. She is told not to go to someone else's field. To stay and follow the women.

**8** So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. **9** Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along



after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”

God showed me a picture in this verse of the provision, protection and plan of The church - His field - in our lives

There may be problems in any church but it is a lot better than being alone in the world

There is encouragement, direction, and strength, protection and healing that come from being united with other believers.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)**

**9** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: **10** If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. **11** Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? **12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

**1 Samuel 23:16 (NIV)**

**16** And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

5. Invest in the lives of others

The last thing I want to talk about from this chapter that helps us survive the difficulties of life and which helps us get our focus off of the difficulty itself, is to invest in the lives of others.

It is clear to me that Ruth's focus was not just about herself. It was about taking care of Naomi

Look again at Boaz's words to her in verses 11-12

**11** Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.

**12** May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

Also the final statement of Ruth Chapter 2

And she lived with her mother-in-law.

It was her investment in someone else that became the answer to her own need.

**Proverbs 11:25 (NIV)**

**25** A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

The abundance of our provision from God should be intentionally left in the open for those who have need to reap its benefits

**15** As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. **16** Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”

### **Psalm 118:13-17 (NIV)**

**13** I was pushed back and about to fall, but the Lord helped me. **14** The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. **15** Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: “The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things! **16** The Lord’s right hand is lifted high; the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!” **17** I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.

### **Proverbs 18:21 (NIV)**

**21** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

### **Ezekiel 37:1-10 New International Version (NIV)**

**37** The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. **2** He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.

**3** He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”

**4** Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! **5** This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath[a] enter you, and you will come to life. **6** I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

**7** So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. **8** I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

**9** Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” **10** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.