"God's Heart in Our Hands"

Ruth 4

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you to watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell shares about an occasion when he was behind a guy in the grocery store express lane—restricted to 10 items or less—who had 16 items. Although Joe's initial reaction was one of anger, he then wondered what it would mean to show love to him.

- How do you feel when you get behind someone in the express lane who has too many items? (Could the person with too many items be you?!)
- What would it mean for you to "love your neighbor as yourself" in this situation?

Strength through Scripture:

Read Ruth 3:10-18.

1. How did Ruth take God's heart into her hands and show Naomi hesed (loyal love) when she refused to turn around and go home (Ruth 1)?

2. Read the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. How can you see yourself in the priest and the Levite? How can you see yourself in the Samaritan?

Notes:

"The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!" Ruth 4:14

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3. Read Luke 7:18-22. What does this tell us about Jesus' credentials of messiahship and, in turn, about God's heart for rescue?

4. Joe shares about Arloa Sutter and Breakthrough Urban Ministries in Chicago. Are you aware of a similar frontline rescue ministry? How are you involved (or how could you get involved)?

5. Read Matthew 22:34-40. Do you tend to try to separate these two commandments by emphasizing one but not the other?

Digging Deeper:

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

1. To what extent can you identify with the disciples (in John 9), who saw a blind man and became curious about why he was born blind—whereas Jesus saw an opportunity for rescue?

2. Read Isaiah 58. What was the difference between the Israelites' perspective on fasting and God's perspective?

3. Read Ezekiel 16:49-50. How does this passage compare to how we typically think of Sodom and the reason it was judged?

Strength through Reflection:

1. What holds you back from being willing to be a rescuer in your world and allowing God to use you to bless people?

2. Read the "Call to Action" below. Like the previous segment, the challenge is to reach out to one person with God's love. Have you identified that person? How have you loved (or how could you love) that person as you love yourself?

Notes:

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Notes:

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Tell God that you don't want to merely love yourself, but that you want to love others as you love yourself. You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Thank You, Father God, for the examples You provided for us in Ruth and Boaz: people who took Your heart into their hands. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to our world that the lame might walk, the blind might see, and the hungry might be fed. I want to be a participant in Your plans and purposes of rescue, dear God, by taking Your heart into my hands—rather than being one of those who fades into insignificance by saying, 'No thanks; I'll just pass that by.' Rather, I want to love the Lord my God, and I want to love my neighbor as myself."

Closing Call to Action:

The golden rule is "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and one of Jesus' two greatest commandments is "Love your neighbor as yourself."

How do we love ourselves? By taking care of our needs and being patient with and kind to ourselves.

Find someone in your world who is hurting, broken, or confused. This may be a member of your own family—a child, spouse, or in-law. After identifying a person, ask yourself: If I were that person, how would I want to be helped and blessed? Then express the love of God in that way and obey the second of the greatest commandments from Matthew 22:39, to love that person as you love yourself.

And that's how you prove your love to God. The first of the two greatest commandments is to love the Lord your God. You can't separate the two. If you say, "God, I love You," He says, "Well, let Me watch how you love others. Then I'll know."

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