"The Life God Loves to Partner With"

Ruth 2

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 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 challenges us that if people of other races, nationalities, or religions live on our block and we don't like it, to "get a providential life"!

- How integrated was your neighborhood when you were growing up? How did you feel about that?
- How integrated is the neighborhood where you live now? How do you feel about that?
- How would you feel if someone of another nationality moved in on your block? Would you be the first to take them a welcome dinner?

Strength through Scripture:

Read Ruth 2:1-17.

1. Joe shares five marks of a convergent heart of someone who, like Ruth, is at the bottom. The first is hardworking (see verse 2). How did Ruth's choice to do some hard work bring her into a place where she could be a part of God's providential plan? Can you see how God may have providentially put you in your workplace to be a testimony through honest hard work?

2. The second mark of a convergent heart that Ruth demonstrates is humility (see verse 7). If you had been Ruth, how tempting would it have been to have the attitude, "If you knew my life story, you wouldn't push me around"?

Notes:

"May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls." Ruth 2:13

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3. The third mark of a convergent heart that Ruth models is gratitude (see verse 10). If you're really honest, how much do you tend to think that life owes you a living?

4. The fourth mark Ruth illustrates is being willing to reach out, from the bottom, to bless someone else (see verse 11). What made Ruth the talk of the town in that regard?

5. The fifth mark Ruth reveals is trusting in God's care (see verse 12). Do you know anyone like the motion picture executive's Christian maid, who trusted God and put herself under His overseeing power so that she was free to be industrious, humble, grateful, and to reach out and help others?

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. Joe shares three marks of a convergent heart of someone who, like Boaz, is at the top. The first is aligning one's resources with the passions and purposes of God. How did Boaz align himself with God's burden and plan for the poor and for foreigners?

2. The second mark of a convergent heart that Boaz displays is that he became God to Ruth. Did it ever cross your mind concerning the people you are praying for that maybe you are the answer to their prayers—that it's time for you to "become God" to them?

3. The third mark Boaz exhibits is abundant generosity. He takes his resources, at sacrifice , to share with the poor and needy. Do you have a "Boaz" living in your heart?

Strength through Reflection:

1. Do the exercise in the "Call to Action" below.

2. Are you going to compete or converge with God's provident work in your life?

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Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Thank God for what we can learn from the examples of Ruth and Boaz.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Thank You, Father, that whether my circumstances are at the top or at the bottom I can have a heart that converges with Your providence. I want to partner with You to be a blessing to others. Help me to align my resources with Your passions and purposes. Just as You are so abundantly generous, may I be moved from greed to generosity. As I trust in Your care, I commit myself to a life of hard work, humility, gratitude, and service."

Closing Call to Action:

Make a list of your resources: money, time, energy, spiritual gifts, skills or talents.

Now ask God to let you take a portion of that list to somebody's heart who is in need. Sometimes it's little stuff—a phone call, a hug, a check.

If you're going to converge your life with the providential plan of God, you need to understand that God has given you much in order that you might bless someone who doesn't have much.

Notes:

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