

LIVING A BROKEN LIFE: DYING TO LIVE IN ORDINARY LIFE

Brian Trainer
John 12:20-26; Ruth

Midwest Singles Retreat
May 31 – June 1, 2013

SESSION 1: John 12:20-26 — Die and Life

Vv. 20-22 — It's not about the Greeks who want to see Jesus.

The simple truth of a life that will perpetuate itself — die!

Principle — For there to be a fruitful life, there must be a selfless death (v. 24 — notice the personal aspect of this in verse 23).

Illustration — The investment of Warren Buffett compared to that of Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, and Roger Youderian, Nate Saint, and Jim Elliot at Palm Beach (details in the audio notes)

Application — The simplicity of the Christian life: if you want to be fruitful and reproduce/perpetuate yourself, then you must die daily to "your life in this world" (i.e., agenda, plans, affections, goals, etc.). We're not talking about full-time Christian service; we're talking about "life is ministry"...merely mimicking what Christ has done for us.

1. Take your walk with God seriously.
2. Invest in eternity regardless of vocation and location.
3. Be willing to be radical. Abnormal.
4. Trust God, really trust God, through life and death.

SESSIONS 2-3: The Book of Ruth — Living An Ordinary, Broken Life

Naomi — A life that refuses to be broken:

1. *View sovereignty as divine animosity* ("against me") — "God is against me...God doesn't want my best or care if I'm happy. God is using me, and I'm just a cog in the machine." God's goodness is always for someone else (vv. 6, 8, 9).
2. *View life without any perspective*, forgetting any good in the past and neglecting any future hope — Naomi was only in her mid-40s, but she sounds like a lady on the doorstep of death.
3. *View of self is victimization and self-pity* — Notice in chapter 2 that self-pity leads to paralysis...she's doing nothing.

Ruth — A life that is willing to be broken: (She doesn't theologize...she just assumes theological truth, and it is fleshed out in her life.)

Her situation is identical to Naomi's, but her outcome is much different (cf. 2:8-16)...Why? The answer is in how they handled their broken situation.

1. *She took a step of faith, initiative* (v. 2). — In Hebrews 11, "by faith" is always followed by a verb. Faith is always active within the Christian life. ... In this generation, we should be challenged to "just do it" and consider taking "faith risks."
2. *She worked hard within sovereign silence.* — All she does is what she knows she ought to be doing in that particular moment, even when the heavens are seemingly silent (9 months pass between chapters 1 and 2). She is in a holding pattern, but is patient.
3. *She dealt with difficulty without discouragement.* — She hangs in there.
4. *She expresses gratitude for each small gift* (vv. 10, 13). — Ruth understood grace better than most of us...whenever she received something good, she knew she didn't deserve it (2:8-16).
5. *She focused on serving others* (v. 18; cf. v. 14).
6. *She trusted in God's sovereign provision day by day.*

From Ruth, we learn that a boring life can be a broken/fruitful life...that's the kind of life that most of us live.

SESSION 4: Ruth 3

Vv. 1-5 — The Plot

In light of all the background we've considered on Moab, Bethlehem, the time of the Judges (last few chapters of Judges), and Genesis 37 (the time of the harvest being combined with immorality) this can only be interpreted as seduction.

Vv. 6-13 — Ruth's Action

Boaz obviously doesn't expect anyone to be there; he could have been with the other men, but wasn't — that is the start of his integrity.

She's impressing him with his responsibility to play the part of a kinsman, she's speaking biblically (3:9; cf. 2:12), she's alone with him in the middle of the night, she's seducing her with her appearance, and she asks him to marry her — and all of Bethlehem would have done what Boaz refuses to do; yet, he does fulfill what God's responsibility is for him to her (vv. 10-13), because she was a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31 is the only other place where this word is used). Here is a man of integrity and a woman of virtue at a time when "every man does that which is right in his own eyes."

Vv. 14-chapter 4 — God's Blessing

God is using here very ordinary people to bring forth incredible fruit (i.e., David). This happened because Boaz and Ruth allowed themselves to be placed in the ground wherever God wanted them, and allowed themselves to be crushed (practical theology, maintaining integrity and virtue when it was difficult).