

# "Kind of Like Ruth"

By Allan Pole



Theme: A life well lived is found in caring for others.

Texts: Ruth 1:1-9, 2:17-22, 3:10-12 and Matthew 1:5-6

Here's a thought: When life rains on a person, kindness holds out an umbrella.

Robert Fulghum says it so beautifully in his book "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten":

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sand pile at Sunday school. These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work each day some. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

The Book of Ruth is not often studied and quoted but it carries an important message. It is nestled in the Historical Books of the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) that describe God's relationship with the people of Israel and the events that shaped this relationship. The Book of Ruth has just four chapters and the word "kindness" is used three times in the book (New International Version).

**Kindness Comes from the Lord**



Introductions are made and the stage is set for a great story in Ruth 1:1-8:

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. 3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. 6 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. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. 8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, 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. NIV

Life certainly has its ups and downs. Naomi had lived through a famine then through the deaths of her husband and sons. She had to make a change in order to survive. In the middle of such a deep valley in her life, Naomi speaks a great blessing over her daughters-in-law, "May the Lord show *kindness* to you ..."

Kindness is listed amongst the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. We all carry traits of God that are broken and blurred, but kindness is all too rare in our hearts and in our society.

Let me be clear – none of us can earn our way into heaven by being kind to others. None of us can produce the fruit of the Spirit of kindness by trying hard enough. The Lord is the source and the giver of kindness.

It is no coincidence that so many charities we know and appreciate today have their roots in men and women of faith who knew Jesus Christ and His kindness.

Stop and consider the kindness that the Lord has shown to you throughout

your life – events, people and provision all come to mind. Let's take a moment to offer thanks for His kindness.

Kindness Comes from the Lord  
**Kindness Focuses on Others**



A woman writes of her experience as a teacher:

I was testing the children in my Sunday school class to see if they understood the concept of getting to heaven. I asked them, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?"

"NO!" the children answered.

"If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?"

Again, the answer was, "NO!"

By now I was starting to smile. Hey, this was fun!

"Well, then, if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children, and loved my husband, would that get me into Heaven?" I asked them again.

Again, they all answered, "NO!"

I was just bursting with pride for them.

Well, I continued, "then how can I get into heaven?"

A five-year-old boy shouted out, "YOU GOTTA BE DEAD!"

After the men in the lives of Naomi, Ruth and Orpah had been suddenly and tragically taken they were left vulnerable – without protection and provision. Naomi headed for her homeland of Judah and decided to release her daughters-in-law to return to their families in Moab.

Orpah chose to leave Naomi for normal, fulfilling pursuits. We can certainly understand why Orpah went back to her homeland after her husband had died. She wanted to be back in familiar, comfortable surroundings where she could settle down, remarry and raise a family. No one could blame her for this.

When life rains on a person, kindness holds out an umbrella.

Ruth made some decisions that reveal an extraordinary heart of kindness. Ruth decided to stay with Naomi and to serve the Lord with her. Ruth would leave everything that was comfortable and familiar to her and start a new life in Judah. She knew there were no government departments or social agencies that would take care of her mother-in-law. Ruth knew that Naomi was advancing in years while she still had a good part of her life ahead of her. So instead of focusing on her own wants and needs she committed herself to serving Naomi and the God of Israel.

A Japanese Proverb observes, "A kind word can warm three months of winter."

The two women arrived in Bethlehem just at the beginning of the barley harvest. Ruth went right to work, realizing that no food hampers were going to be delivered to their doorstep. Gleaning was a means by which an agriculture-based society provided for the less fortunate. Harvesters would leave stalks of grain behind for poor, hungry and motivated citizens to gather for their families. Ruth "happened" to enter the field of a man named Boaz. Was it a coincidence?

Ruth 2:17-22 reveals the plan of God through these circumstances:

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 kinsman-redeemers." 21 Then Ruth the Moabitess 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 his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." NIV

Since Naomi's husband had died and their two sons had died, Ruth had another opportunity to show kindness to her mother-in-law. Without a male

heir the land that once rightfully belonged to Naomi's deceased husband would be lost permanently. This would leave Naomi with no long-term means to generate revenue. As the opportunity arose, however, Naomi came up with a plan to redeem or buy back the real estate that was once in their immediate family.

Aesop, the man who wrote Aesop's Fables, concluded, "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."

At any point, Ruth could have walked out and returned to Moab to settle down, find a young husband, have children and live out her days in a normal, comfortable manner. Instead, out of kindness expressed for Naomi she followed through on Naomi's plan and approached Boaz.

Boaz recognized her selflessness and kindness in Ruth 3:10-11:

10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This *kindness* is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. 11 And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character." NIV

In Bethlehem, Ruth was permitted to glean in the field of Boaz, a wealthy kinsman of Elimelech. At Naomi's urging, Ruth asked for protection from Boaz as next of kin - a reflection of the Hebrew law. After a closer relative waived his right to buy the family property and provide Elimelech an heir, Boaz married Ruth. Their son, Obed, was considered one of Naomi's family, according to the custom of the day. Naomi became a grandmother through the kindness of her daughter-in-law Ruth!

What act of kindness could you do for someone this week? What kind word could you bless someone with this week?

Kindness Comes from the Lord  
Kindness Focuses on Others

### **The Lord Rewards Kindness**



I have a question for you. What kind of man was Boaz before he married?  
Ruthless. ☺

Actually, both Ruth and Boaz were known by family, friends, employees and co-workers as kind people.

Ruth is mentioned one other time in the Bible outside the Book of Ruth. It is interesting that we hear nothing further of Orpah, Ruth's sister-in-law. Could she be a dyslexic ancestor of Oprah? 🤔 Hmmm ...

Genealogies appear in various parts of the Bible and usually only the fathers are listed and not the mothers. It is a great honour in the Jewish culture to be in the lineage of significant historical figures. To be found in the genealogy of the Messiah is truly amazing!

We tend to gloss over these lists of people, but let's take another look at Matthew 1:5-6:

5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was *Ruth*, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David. NIV

Ruth was from the country of Moab, so by birth she had no right to become the grandmother of King David and 1,300 years later to be noted as an ancestor of the Messiah, King Jesus. In the midst of billions of people that have lived in obscurity, Ruth's name is forever etched in the family tree of kings! The Lord rewarded Ruth's kindness.

When I was a boy I suffered from asthma and hay fever. Being allergic to hay and growing up on a farm was a tough combination during the summer months. When the air was thick with dust and pollen I would suffer through some sleepless nights coughing and sneezing. I vividly remember, though, my mom enduring some sleepless nights at my side setting up and filling the vaporizer, fetching me a glass of water, offering me cough syrup and just being beside my bed while I tried to relax and breathe deeply. Isn't it amazing how such acts of kindness can make an impression on us?

As you pass on the Lord's kindness to other people you will make far more impact in this world than you had ever dreamed possible. When you build your life upon the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, acts and words of kindness can lay up for yourself eternal treasures in heaven.

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A life well lived is found in caring for others.

