

ENTITLED



Entitled Sermon Series

Message 3 of 4

Ruth 1:15-18

“Opportunities that Come with Inviting Others into Our Lives”

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Introduction

Well hey there, and welcome back! I trust that you have been prayerful about what God would have in your life. Today we get an example of what it looks like to invite other people into our lives. Here in God's Word, in the Book of Ruth. So follow along with me here, in Ruth chapter 1.

Opening Prayer

Before we go there though, I'm just going to start us off with prayer, asking for God's help with that. Pray with me if you will: Father, as we've prayed before, we just thank you so much for Your Word... that it's good, it's perfect, we can rely on it, that You didn't set us here without any help, but God, You gave us Your Holy Spirit. You gave us Your Word to guide us here. Thank You for calling us to do amazing things. Thank You for saving us. Jesus, thank You for your death and resurrection, making salvation possible for each and every one of us. I pray that we would take that seriously, and as it says in Your Word, that we would be doers of Your Word, and not just hears. Let what we hear today not just go in one ear and out the other, but Father would you let it just change our lives? Soften our hearts to whatever it is that You have for us. Holy Spirit guide us today, and it's in Jesus' Name we pray, amen.

Background Information

Well hey, I hope you have your Bible! Open to Ruth chapter 1. Whether it's a paper Bible or your Bible app, go to Ruth chapter 1. We're going to start in verse 15, and before we do that, I want to give you just a little bit of context about the Book of Ruth, rather than just diving right in. There's a lot of story that goes along with this, and the more that we understand the story, the better it can impact our lives today.

In the Book of Ruth there's this family who are Israelites, and there's this famine within the nation of Israel. It starts off in the Book of Ruth saying “It's in the time of judges,” and it kind of reminds us of these really dark times in Israel's history, these really hard times that they went

through, where they weren't serving the Lord. So, that's where they find themselves and they don't have any food, and so they go to a neighboring country. They're actually enemies of Israel, the Moab country. So, they go out to the land of the Moabites and they start their lives. There's the mom, Naomi. She has her husband and her two sons. Her two sons out in Moab end up marrying a couple Moabite ladies and then it says that not only Naomi's husband dies, but also her two sons! So she's left with just her two new daughter-in-laws.

Then, she hears, as she's working out in the fields, that the land of Israel isn't going through famines any longer, and it's a little bit better, so she decides, "Hey, there's nothing holding me here in Moab any longer. I'm going to go back home." She goes to her two new daughter-in-laws and she's like, "Hey, listen I'm going back home. There's nothing tying you to me any longer. You stay here, you know, start your own life. I'm going to head back to my old life." So one of her daughter-in-law says, "All right, you know, that's cool, I'm cool with that, I'll go out here to Moab, and kind of start my new life here." The other daughter, Ruth, says, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no!"

Ruth 1:15-18

And that's where we pick it up right here in Ruth chapter 1, take a look here with me in verse 15 this is what it says, "See your sister"--this is Naomi talking to Ruth it says—"see your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister-in-law. But Ruth said to her, 'do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you, for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death Parts me from you.'" And in verse 18 it says, "**When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.**"

Today I want to talk to you about what it looks like to invite other people into your life. I trust that you've been praying, as I've encouraged you in the earlier messages in the sermon series, to just be praying about what God would have for you in regards to foster care... in regards to inviting other people into your life. I want to take a look at this passage here in Ruth chapter 1 and see what opportunities arise when you do that.

Opening Illustration

Before we do that though I want to just share a statistic with you that I saw recently: I saw recently that a recent study revealed that one in three Americans today feel lonely at least once a week. Just put that into perspective one out of every three—look around at the people that you are sitting with here today-- one out of every three, on average, one out of every three people, feels lonely at least once a week! Those numbers go up with young people. With young people one and three young people feel lonely not just once a week... but once a day! I want you to think about that just for a moment. There are young people in your life, that are very, very lonely... that feel very alone. In fact, some people would call it an epidemic of loneliness. The Bible tells us that we don't have to live in isolation. In fact, God didn't create us to live in isolation. He created us to live alongside other people so what does inviting other people into your life give you? What opportunities arise when you invite other people into your life?

Point #1: We get to have life-long companionship

Take a look here at Ruth chapter 1. Naomi is saying, “Hey, go out and don't be around me any longer! I want to go back home. You don't have to be with me. You're not tied to me! My sons, they died! There there's no connection any longer!” Naomi, she's saying, “You don't have to be with me!” And Ruth is saying, “Hey I want to be with you... I want to be in a relationship with you. So what does that look like? What opportunity arise when you invite other people into your life? The first opportunity is that you have lifelong companionship.

Point #1 Support

The book of Hebrews, in chapter 10 says, **“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”** Again, God didn't create you to live in isolation! Listen it's hard enough to be a Christian in today's age! It's near impossible to do that alone! God didn't create you to be in isolation. He created you to be in relationship with others, specifically with other believers, but also to reach out to others as well to show them the love of Christ.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 will put it like this, **“And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A three-fold chord is not quickly broken.”** When you invite others into your life you have this companionship that the Bible is talking about that! Hey listen, God didn't create you to live in isolation! He created you to live in relationship with others and when you invite others into your life, whether it be through foster care, whether it be through friendship, God says, “Hey, that's a good thing! I created you to live with other people.” Are there hardships with other people, of course yeah! I would be lying to you to say, “Hey everything is going to be all dandy! Just have a ton of people in your life and there's never ever going to be a conflict.” Of course, we know that's just simply not the case, right? But those conflicts are worth it. Why? Because companionship is worth it. Because that's how God created us to live.

When we punish people, one of the most severe punishments out there is isolation. Think about solitary confinement with incarceration, that's a punishment! Why? Because it hurts us to be isolated from other people. Don't isolate yourself!

Point #2: We get to teach others what we know

Take a look back with me in Ruth chapter 1 in verse 16, it says that Ruth says to Naomi, **“Don't urge me to leave you, or to return from following you, for where you go I'll go, where you lodge I'll lodge. Your people shall be my people.”** Ruth is literally saying to Naomi, “Hey, I want you to teach me what you know. I want you to teach me culturally. I want to be a part of your culture. I want to be with you. Teach me what you know. When you invite other people into your life, you have the amazing opportunity to teach them.

Point #2 Support

I shared with you earlier in this sermon series that my wife is a middle school English teacher, and again all props to her! Out of all the things in the world she wanted to teach seventh and eighth graders how to read and write. I mean that's just mind blowing to me and she comes home every day after school just completely wiped out. She's tired and yet I can see a look on her face that says, "Man what I did today, was awesome. I am satisfied because I did what God wanted me to do." When you teach other people what you know, when you teach them mistakes that you've learned, when you teach them how to love Jesus, when you show them the way of Jesus, man, this is a good thing, and it's yes tiring in your life, yes there's conflicts, yes there's relational strife, but it's a really, really good thing.

That's why in 2 Timothy, as Paul is writing to Timothy, here a young pastor as we talked about earlier on in this series, he says this, in 2 Timothy Chapter 2, that: **"The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone"--look at this—"able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponent with gentleness. God May perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth."** When you teach other people Scriptural truths, when you teach them God's truth and say, "This is what God has for us in our lives," this is a good thing! God designed us to do that! Not to just keep these truths to ourselves but to gently come alongside others and say, "This is what God has for us." That's one of the most loving things that you can do, and again, we do that with gentleness and respect as Scripture tells us, but this is a really, really good thing. God calls us to do this, and we can't do it in isolation. We can't do it alone. We've got to invite other people into our lives to say, "Hey, can I show you how to love Jesus? Can I show you how to follow Him? Can I show you these truths that are in Scripture?"

Again teaching someone can be really, really tiring. We've discussed that already and it can be really, really hard, but it's definitely worth it. This is why Colossians chapter 3 will say, **"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly"--look at this—"teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God."** It calls us to teach other people. It encourages them in their faith, and it also encourages you in your faith. They say that there's no better way to learn something and to really internalize it into your life than to teach it, and I think that that's true. I think that echoes what Scripture is giving us here, a scriptural truth that says that we are to go out and do this and I want to encourage you to, because this is oftentimes very difficult, but this is what the book of James chapter 5, tells us that, **"My brothers if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that who whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."** I hope that encourages you when you see someone who is wandering from the truth, that maybe was a believer before, now is wandering, or maybe someone who has never accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, you see them wandering... I hope that the Book of James in chapter 5, it encourages you here to say, "Hey, listen, this is a really good thing. Come alongside him. Help him to come to the truth, the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God, He is God Himself. He came, was born, lived a sinless life, and died a horrific death on the cross for our sins, and then three days later rose back from the grave, giving us new life in Him. That's the Gospel! That's what we are to teach other people and Scripture says that this is the only

way that we are saved, and so we should be burdened for others that don't know the same truth and we should invite them into our lives.

Point #3: We get to share our faith

So what else does in inviting other people give you the opportunity to do? Take a look here with me again in verse 16. So Ruth says to Naomi **“do not urge me to leave you, or to return from following you, for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I'll lodge, and your people shall be my people.”** Look at this, at the end, and it says, “And your God my God...” your God my God, there was something that Ruth saw in Naomi's life and she said, “There's something different about Naomi. Yeah, I'm a Moabite, I've grown up with all these Moabite gods and all these false deities and, you know, there's just something off about these, but there's something in Naomi's life I want... that I want that in my life... I want her God to be my God. Naomi got this amazing opportunity by having Ruth in her life to show her what it looks like to follow the one true God, and when you invite other people into your life you get that same opportunity to share your faith.

Point #3 Support

You get the same opportunity to fulfill what Jesus told us all to do in the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28 when He said, **“Go therefore make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold I am with you always to the end of the age.”** God calls us all to go out and make disciples. You can't do that if you live in isolation! If you spend all day every day alone you can't go out and make disciples, and so, Jesus, He's calling us to do this, and in the book of Ruth, it shows us this amazing example of where Naomi was actually able to do that with Ruth, to say, “Hey this is the one true God, this is what it looks like to follow Him, and again, what does Jesus say in John 14:6? That He is **“The way, the truth, and life that no one comes to the Father except through Him.”** It's only through Jesus with which we are saved. Jesus's death on the cross and resurrection from the grave... that's it! That's the only way that we are saved, and again it should burden us when we look around at our lives, at our neighbors, and our friends, and at our unbelieving co-workers, and saying, “Hey listen that burdens me, I want you to know the truth... I want you to love Jesus... I want you to be following Jesus! He's done an amazing work in my life, and I want to show you that that same thing, what He's done in my life. So look at this, you have to invite other people into your life in order to make that process happen.

Application

So knowing this, knowing that these are the opportunities that come along with inviting other people into our lives, that we get a lifelong companionship, we get to teach others what we know, and we get to share our faith, what should we do? Because again, what does the Book of James tell us that we shouldn't just be hearers of the Word, but doers, also.

Application Point #1: Knowing this, we should be diligent to ask God who we should invite into our lives

So look at this: knowing this then, we should be diligent to ask God who we should ask into our lives. We should be prayerful, asking God, “All right, who do You want me to invite in my life? Is it my neighbor? Is it my coworker? Is it a certain family member? Is it becoming a foster parent?” Who is it in your life? Who have you been praying for with God? What has He been putting on your heart? You need to be diligent about asking God who He wants you to invite into your life so that you can fulfill what Jesus told us all to do.

Application Point #1 Support

During The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:16, He says this, **“Let in the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to God, your Father who is in Heaven.”** The Book of Romans, in chapter 15, kind of echoes this when it says, **“You who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please yourself.”** So look at what Romans chapter 15 is saying. It's saying that there is an obligation on all of us who follow Jesus. We have an obligation to— look at this— to “bear with the failings of the weak not just to please ourselves,” not just to live the way that we want, to live not just to have the best house, or the awesome Jeep Gladiator in the driveway, right (that that's my dream maybe not yours)? But, listen, you have an obligation just to say, “Hey, I'm not living for myself! Again, I'm living for God's kingdom!”

And it's a mindset shift that we all need to have! As we've talked about earlier, we need to have this mindset shift to say, “My life isn't just for me, my life is for God and His glory, and building up His kingdom. I don't want to go to Florida and collect seashells for the rest of my life in retirement, I want to collect souls in Heaven! That's what God calls us to do Galatians 6:2, it says that, **“We are to bear one another's burdens, and so”—look at this—“fulfill the law of Christ.”** When you bear with one another's burdens, when you sit with the weak, when you sit with those who are hurting you, bear one another's burdens, look at what Galatians 6:2 says, that that's fulfilling the law of Christ! This is doing what God wants you to do in your life!

1 John 3:17 puts it like this: **“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?”** As we talked about earlier, loving God is a packaged deal with also loving other people. You don't get one without the other! And so, in 1 John 3:17, it makes it very, very clear to say, “Hey, listen if you're not doing this, if you're not inviting other people into your life, if you're not looking at their needs, and saying, “I want to meet those needs,” if you're closing your heart against them, look at this, it says, “God's love does not abide within you.” And that's a harsh reality, and I get that, and again as I shared earlier on in this series, I don't want to motivate you out of guilt. That's not at all my goal here. In fact I think that, that's a really bad way to motivate people. However, I think a really great way to motivate people is just by pointing them to God's word and saying, “This is what God wants us all to do, that we should do this, that we should reach out to other people, that we should look at our brother in need, whether that be a physical need, or a spiritual need, or an emotional need, to walk alongside them and say, “This is who Jesus is.”

And listen, I know that's really hard... and as we said earlier, relationships come with a lot of stress. They come with conflict, they're difficult, they're messy, but I want to encourage you.

Galatians 6:9 tells us, **“Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.”** Don't give up! I don't know who needs to hear it, but don't give up! Keep on reaching out, keep on inviting other people into your life, and be diligent to ask God who that is! The book of 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, tells us to keep on praying continually, that it's not just something that, you know, we just, you know, we prayed on a Sunday morning and, you know, that that's good enough... no! We need to be diligent about this! We need to wake up every morning and say, “God, who do you want in my life? Who do I need to reach out to?” Maybe that means becoming a foster parent. And I know that sounds really scary and you're saying, “Man, I'm going to invite *who* into my life? And that's really difficult, and I don't know what that looks like, and then that's really scary,” but listen, it's again worthwhile! It's what God calls us to do, to reach out to those who are in need, and I can't think of many more people who are in more need than a kid who is put into the foster care system, who doesn't have a safe home to go to at night. That we could reach out to these kids and say, “Hey, you have a chair at my table... you have a room in my house, and I can show you the example of Jesus and what it looks like to follow Jesus. And again, is that really messy? Yes! Is it difficult? Yes! But it's worthwhile! And we need to be diligent to ask God if that's what He would have for us.

Application Point #2: Knowing this, we should be open to the Holy Spirit's leading

And then the next step is simply to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading. It's difficult to know what God wants us to do. If you've ever struggled with that and you're saying, “Man, I just don't know what God wants me to do in my life. There are so many options there's so many things that I could be doing in my life.” What does that look like?

Application Point #2 Support

Romans chapter 12 tells us, **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing you may discern”**--look at this--**“you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, and acceptable, and perfect.”** How do you discern what the will of God is? You don't be conformed to the world, don't listen to them, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. You go to God and say, “Holy Spirit, would you help me? I need your help. Transform me. Make me more like you, and less like me. Make me less like the world and more like You, Jesus. I need You in my life. I need to know what You want me to do.”

The book of Ephesians, in chapter 5, tells us, **“Therefore don't be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.”** Again, how do we do that? We say, “Holy spirit, help me, guide me, soften my my heart to Your truth. In Micah 6:8, it tells us, **“He has told you, oh man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”** Be open to the Holy Spirit's leading, that you may fulfill what Micah 6:8 told us. To do this, to say, “Hey, do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God.”

Application Point #3: Knowing this, we should be faithful to do what God wants us to do

Be open to the Holy Spirit's leading, and then simply do this: not only to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading, is what we are to do, what we're called to do, but also to be faithful with what He wants us to do.

Application Point #3 Support

In James chapter 4:17 it says, **“Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it's a sin.”** If God calls you to do something, you know that, and you fail to do it, and you say, **“You know what, that's cool, but you know what, I don't think I can do that, God.”** And you go on living your life the way that you always have, the Bible tells us that's a sin. And that again should sit heavy with us, that we need to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading and we need to be faithful not only to be open to Him, but also to do what He calls us to do.

As the book of James will tell us to, “Be doers of the word, not just hearers only.” That we should have the mentality that Jesus prayed, in the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew chapter 6 when He says, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven,” that we should look and say, “Okay if this is what's happening in Heaven, people are worshiping Jesus, they're falling on their knees, saying, ‘Holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty,’” right? This is what we want to happen on Earth, and if that's what we want to happen on Earth, it starts right here, in our own hearts, and we need to worship God and then, we need to say, “If that's what's happening in Heaven, I want as many people here on Earth doing that as well, and so I'm going to encourage all those people to do that!

And again, we can't do that in isolation! You can't do that by sitting at home on your couch watching Netflix every evening. You can't do that by scrolling through reel, after reel, after reel on social media! You have to get out there, you have to say, “All right I'm going to get around other people.” Maybe that looks like joining a small group at church, maybe that looks like joining a group out in your community, maybe that looks like becoming a foster parent... I don't know what that looks like for you. You need to be prayerful in that and be open to the Holy Spirit's leading in your life and then be faithful to do it!

And if you need some wisdom on that and you're saying, “Okay, all right, I hear you, I want to do that, I want to be faithful, I want to invite other people into my life, but I don't even know what that looks like, I need some wisdom with that. Here's the great news: The Bible gives us some encouragement with this and gives us a promise. It's in James chapter 1 verse 5, it says, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all, without reproach, and it'll be given to him.”** If you're anything like me, I need truckloads and truck loads of wisdom in my life, and the Bible tells us, great, all you have to do is ask and God will give you wisdom. That's a promise that the Bible gives to each and every one of us, that if we lack wisdom, we can go to God, we can ask for wisdom, and He will give it to us. And again, you have to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading with this, because often times, when we ask God for wisdom, it's not conventional, right? It's not what we were thinking in the first place. God might lead us to do something that we're kind of afraid of. God might lead us to open up our lives to people who we thought before were kind of scary. God might lead us to go out, to talk with people who are unfamiliar with us, who have different backgrounds than us, and that's okay! And if that scares you right now, I just want to encourage you... that's okay. You can be scared, and you don't have to ignore that feeling, but give that feeling to God, and just tell Him, just be honest with Him, and just say, “All right God, that that kind of scares me and I need You and I need Your wisdom

on how to talk with those people. How do I open up my life to those people? Because I want to do what you've called me to do! I want to go out and make disciples!"

Ending

I've encouraged you throughout this series to just be prayerful and open to the Holy Spirit's leading with this, and I want to encourage you again to do that, but also to just start writing down some names. Maybe there are people in your life already. Unbelieving co-workers, neighbors, family members who are in your life already, and God is leading you to have a relationship with them. Maybe there are groups who God is leading you to be a part of, maybe God is leading you to become a foster parent. If that's the case here's what I want you to do: I want you to start writing down names. I want you to start writing down the names of the people that God wants you to reach out to. I want you to start writing down the names of the groups that God wants you to be a part of. I want you to start writing down if God's calling you to become a foster parent, or to adopt. I want you to write that down. There's something that happens when we start writing things down. I know it's kind of old-school, and you might even be looking around saying, "A pen and paper, like all I have is my phone." Okay, get a pen and a paper, go buy a notebook and pay too much for it at CVS, right? Just go get something, just write it down, because there's something that happens when we write things down, and there's something that happens when it's something physical that's happening on the inside. We take it on the outside and we make it physical and we start praying about that. We start praying over what God is leading us to do and then take that next step and go talk to somebody. Go talk to a good, Christian friend. Go talk to people in your small group and say, "Hey, this is what I feel like God's calling me to do, can you hold me accountable to it? Because man, there's so many times where God can put something on our minds, put something on our hearts and then you're like, "Oh yeah, I'm going to be really faithful with that!" And then, you know, Monday morning hits and then you're like, "Oh man, I got the laundry to do, and I got this traffic to get through, and I got this project at work that I'm working on," and they kind of escape our minds, right? But again, what does the Bible tell us? If God calls us to do something, we know the right thing to do, and we don't do it, for us it's a sin. I don't want to lead you into sin. I want you to be faithful with what God has called you to do, whatever that looks like. So before we close up here today, let me just pray for you and ask for God's help with that.

Closing Prayer

Pray with me if you will. Father, we again just thank You so much for Your Word and I pray that we would be people who are faithful to what You put on our hearts, that we would be open to Your leading, Holy Spirit, that we would invite others into our lives as we've seen an example of what that looks like today in Your Word here in Ruth chapter 1, that we would have the same thing, that we would invite others, that we would show them what it looks like to love You, and to follow You, Jesus, to give You our lives. Would You help us just to worship You all the time, to not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewal of our mind, as it says in Romans 12:2, that that would be the case for us, that we would be transformed by You, Holy Spirit. Soften our hearts. Help us to be open to Your leading, and help us to be faithful with what you call us to do, Jesus, and it's in your precious, life-changing name we pray, amen.