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Happily *Forever* After

His Family Tree, Part 4

Selected Scripture

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Fairy tales grab our attention and let us dream about ideal situations with heroes and rescues and exceeding joy. The Bible is not a fairy tale, but instead has real and true stories with those same components. In the genealogy in Matthew 1, Matthew reminds us of one such true story where a young woman in desperate need found a virtuous man who fell in love with her and redeemed her from her downtrodden situation. The story of Boaz and Ruth finding love in an unexpected way is a heartwarming story during the time of the judges in Israel and was referenced by Matthew to remind his audience specifically of one descendant from this couple who would one day redeem all mankind forever because of His great love.

Discussion Points:

Fairy tales can be interesting teaching moments for parents. Many give great moral lessons and encourage children to have a positive outlook in life. Unfortunately, because of the fictional storytelling of our time, teaching Bible stories can sometimes miss the important point that the narratives in the Bible actually happened.

- Have you ever had difficulty imagining a Bible story happening in real life?
- How can you effectively sort out reality from fiction?
- What can a parent do in order to distinguish Biblical teaching from the fiction of fairy tales?
- How can parents make sure not to just teach Bible stories to show a moral of the story?
- What are some of the flawed ways you have seen the Bible being taught to children?
- What are some of the good ways you have seen the Bible being taught to children?

Discussion Guide cont.

Everything about the union of Boaz and Ruth was unexpected and unlikely, yet it all happened. Two broken people that had committed to following God were put together to glorify Him in a big way.

- What made Ruth an unexpected person to be in the line leading to the Messiah?
- What made Boaz an unexpected redeemer for an outcast like Ruth?
- What was the driving force of their relationship that made all the unlikely and uncommon things work?
- What does the relationship of Boaz and Ruth teach us about what is needed to make a marriage succeed?

Boaz and Ruth lived in a time period where people were very selfish. They were always concerned about themselves as they did what was right in their own eyes. Boaz and Ruth swam against the strong current of their cultural norms to follow after God with their lives. In our world today, the majority of people still do what is right in their own eyes.

- How can we, as Christians, respond to the culture and live for God when it seems we are very outnumbered?
- Why is it important to examine how we live our lives to see what we value?
- Why is it important to measure our conduct with the Biblical standard and not just with the majority opinion?
- What kind of impact would living the Biblical standard have on the lives of people around you?
- Are you following after God or after your own heart and desires of your eyes?

The story of Boaz and Ruth gives us a grand picture of the redemption that Jesus Christ made more than 1000 years later when he came from that very family to offer his very life in order to give it to those he loved. It also gives a peek into what Christ is offering to His Bride when he comes to redeem the church.

- With all of this in mind, why do you think Matthew included Ruth in his genealogical record at the beginning of his gospel account?
- In what ways do we tend to miss the astounding nature of the redemption that is through Christ Jesus?
- How can we be sure to grasp the full picture of God's grace for us?

Discussion Guide cont.

Gospel Connection:

Matthew wasn't messing around when he chronicled the family tree of Jesus. The genealogy functioned somewhat like an introduction to set the scene for the life of Christ, but it brings too much richness to the providence of God to just be skipped or overlooked. Reminding his audience of ancient, true fairytale-like stories brought a better fullness to the redemption that Jesus offered to all those who believe in Him. He came to die in order that we might be saved from our helpless state and experience love, life, and peace with Him forever. He is the Ultimate Savior for the most helpless damsel in distress imaginable.

Practical Implications:

- Think:** How does the story of Boaz and Ruth change affect your understanding of the gospel?
- Pray:** Thank God for sending Jesus to redeem us. Ask Him to continue cleansing you and praise Him for how you have already experienced a part of His redemption in your life.
- Do:** Read the story of Boaz and Ruth again and reflect on all that God's redemption entails.

Happily Forever After

His Family Tree, Part 4

Selected Scripture

For those of you who raised daughters, perhaps, like me, you spent some time over the years with your little girls in your lap, reading to them what we call fairy tales.

Whether it was Snow White or Sleeping Beauty or Rapunzel or Cinderella – it always involved the same kind of story line – a damsel in distress and a prince who comes to save the day.

We all enjoy a good story and a good ending like fairytales where they live happily ever after. And no Dad – at least I would hope not – has ever finished one of those fairytales and then looked their little girl in the face and said, “Nobody really believes this stuff . . . it’s just make believe and it’ll never come true . . . ever.”

If you said that to your little girl, there’s another story written about you entitled, *Scrooge!*

There is a fairy tale, so to speak, that did indeed come true. Matthew chapter 1 is the family tree of Jesus Christ and it’s nothing less than a story line that informs us that – believe it or not – the prince did arrive.

He came just at the right time to rescue us all and sweep us into His bridal party as His bride. And because he rescued us, we who belong to Him will live – get this – happily ever after!

This isn’t a fairy tale; this isn’t make believe; this one’s for real. Centuries before the coming of Christ, embedded in His family tree is an illustration of a literal love story.

As we’ve studied this chapter, we’ve seen how Matthew drops commentary here and there in this legal document that shouldn’t really list anything other than father to son or grandfather to grandson.

But as we’ve discovered together, Matthew has selected names of individuals while skipping over others – to make numerous points.

And we’ve also discovered that Matthew has introduced the names of 5 women into this document – which was a highly unusual thing to do – but highly informative and instructive.

In fact, if you go down to **verse 16**, Matthew uses language to support the fact of the virgin birth. He carefully changes the normal flow of language so that it reads, ***Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.***

Matthew hasn’t given any throw away lines or names in this family tree of the Messiah. If you’ll look back at the ***middle part of verse 5***, you’ll notice the curious, and rather obvious, insertion of yet another woman – ***Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth.***

Why mention this particular mother’s name here? I believe Matthew has mentioned her name so that we, throughout the New Testament era, will pull over on the interstate of truth and take a closer look.

The dramatic account of Ruth and Boaz provides the only detailed example in the Bible of the Hebrew *goel* – the kinsman redeemer.

The Law of Moses allowed for the marriage of a widow to a near relative – or kinsman – someone kindred; in the south we refer to them as kin folk. And you probably sent some of them Christmas cards this week. Other kin folk you might actually be staying away from.

In the Old Testament practice of kinsman redeemer, the closest family relative, or kinsman, was given the opportunity to marry the widow, but only if he chose to marry her and only if he was willing to purchase her family estate and settle all her debts as well as provide for her an inheritance.

This practice illustrated the coming Redeemer who would win His bride, settle all her sin debt and give her an eternal inheritance.

Boaz will do for Ruth what Jesus will do for you.

I appreciate the way J. Vernon McGee pointed out that the average treatment of salvation is as if it were a cold transaction; a thousand times no – the Book of Ruth declares that redemption is not a business transaction, it is a love story!ⁱ

Well let's dust off this love story. In fact, I think of the Book of Ruth as a fairytale that came true, so turn back in your Old Testament to the Book of Ruth and let me make a few observations that play into the love story between Christ and His bride, the church.

While you're turning, you ought to know that, for centuries in Jewish history, Ruth was one of five scrolls read annually at a Jewish feast. While Esther would be read at the Feast of Purim and Ecclesiastes would be read at the Feast of Tabernacles, I found it wonderfully ordained by God that Ruth would be read during the Feast of Weeks, otherwise known as Pentecost.

It isn't a coincidence that the reading of this story at Pentecost of Boaz winning his bride would coincide centuries later at Pentecost, on that very day, with the church – the Bride of Christ – brought into existence by her Kinsman Redeemer, the Lord Jesus.

Now, whenever my wife and I have couples around our table, or we're out to eat with a couple, invariably my wife will ask them, "Now, tell us when and where you met each other; give us your story."

Usually it's the wife that has all the details down pat. And that's exactly where Samuel, the author of this account; begins.

You'll notice *verse 1* begins, "***Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife*** (that would be Naomi) ***and his two sons.***"

It would be too easy to skip over this kind of opening line and get to the good stuff. But it sets the stage for what happens.

What I want to do today is give you 5 points to serve as an outline as we fly through this narrative, and the first one is the fact that this was:

1. An Unexpected Setting

You see, these opening words – ***Now it came about in the days when the judges governed*** – this kind of historical remark makes the redemption of Ruth even more unexpected.

In fact, if you look over to the last verse of the ***Book of Judges*** – just across the page – we're told what kind of days these days were like – the last verse of the Book of Judges records; ***In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).***

These were not the days when widows were offered any help. These were not the days of moral character and pure relationships. These were not the days of worship and obedience to God.

These were not the days when farmers would follow the Law of Moses and allow the corners of their fields to go unharvested so that poor people, including widows, could come into their fields and glean – and survive.

These were not the days when anybody was willing to give anything away.

These *were* the days of the judges and the days of the judges were the days when ***everyone did what was right in their own eyes.***

But not one farmer; he was that rare individual who, during these days, followed after the law of God – and he's going to get a wife out of it too; how great is that?!

I say all of that to make the application for us all that it's never an easy time to live the right way.

I can't imagine any time in history when culture can't be defined in these terms – ***everyone did what was right in their own eyes.*** Boaz and Ruth weren't living in a time – and neither are you –

- when godly relationships are typical;

- when sacrificial giving to others is normal;
- when moral character is common;
- when trusting God is easy.

Here's Boaz, harvesting perhaps his first crop in 7 years, according to Biblical history, and yet he's leaving grain for widows to glean.

It's not always easy to do the right thing, but doing the right thing is always right. So right off the bat, this love story has an unexpected setting.

2. Secondly, this is an unlikely couple.

We learn from chapter 1 that Ruth is a Moabite. She's a pagan girl with an idolatrous past. In fact, according to the Law of Moses, the Moabites were never allowed into the Tabernacle precinct to worship. Beyond that, we're told very little about Ruth's past.

We're given more information about Boaz if you look over at *chapter 2 and verse 1. Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.*

He was related to Naomi's late husband – many believe Boaz is a nephew – and we're told here that he was *a man of great wealth*. This Hebrew phrase is somewhat elastic in meaning. It's translated *valiant warrior* in *Joshua 6:2*.

In fact, when the angel of God came to one of Israel's judges by the name of Gideon, the angel used this same phrase in calling Gideon *O valiant warrior*.

Since Boaz lived in the days of the judges, Old Testament scholars believe that Boaz, having been given the same description as Gideon, was not only a military veteran, but one of the men who had volunteered to serve with Gideon; some scholars go so far as to say that Boaz earned this commendation of a valiant warrior, because he had been – more than likely – one of Gideon's 300 valiant men.

This adjective also shows up as a reference to *moral influence (1 Samuel 9:1)*.

Finally, the word is used to refer to literal *material wealth* – and since the context here refers to Ruth gleaning in his fields, Samuel is more than likely dropping in the fact that Boaz is clearly capable of eliminating the poverty of these two widows, should he choose to do so.

Boaz was actually all three – valiant, influential and wealthy.

What we also know is that it would be highly unlikely for a man of valor and moral influence and wealth like Boaz to be interested in someone like Ruth. But he was!

Why? Because, as he informs her later on,

- he has heard all about her new found faith in the God of Israel;
- he has heard about her kindness and commitment to Naomi;
- he has heard about the fact that she didn't stay in Moab and get another husband, but gave everything up – her family, her heritage, her idols, her belongings, her future potential marriage and family.

Boaz has heard all about the fact that Ruth walked away from it all when she said to Naomi, *where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God (Ruth 1:16)*.

As far as this older bachelor was concerned – who had evidently turned down a few candidates himself over the years – this was the kind of woman he had been looking for his entire life.

3. Third, you have an unlikely courtship.

Over the course of several months, Boaz has been making sure Ruth went home with enough grain to take care of her needs and Naomi's as well.

For months now, Naomi had already figured it out. It's obvious that Boaz loves Ruth. Ruth doesn't get it, but Naomi does.

In fact, the very first word Ruth ever says to Boaz is the word, "Why?" Back in *chapter 2*

and verse 10 – Ruth’s first recorded words – which is the point of grace – are, ***Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me?***

In other words, “Why are you treating *me* so kindly? Why have you extended such lavish grace on *me*? Who am *I* that you would ever give *me* your attention? Why *me*?”

Listen beloved, one day when you kneel at the feet of your Kinsman Redeemer, one of the first things you’re going to have racing through our hearts and heads is, “Why me?” But that’s the point of grace.

- Did we have anything to offer Christ? No.
- Was there something about our widow tatters that attracted Him? No.
- Were we related to the right people, with the right connections to naturally get His attention? No.
- Why would Jesus redeem us and save us and make us members of His family tree? The answer is – grace.

Unmerited, undeserved, unwarranted, grace!

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me (not a good person,
but a wretch; not a suitable spouse, but a sinner)

I once was blind, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

But God, (Paul writes) being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ . . . so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-5, 7).

Imagine that! God the Father is planning to spend the eternal ages to come demonstrating His grace and kindness to those who have been redeemed through faith in Christ Jesus.

Well, we need to get Boaz and Ruth married off here pretty soon.

4. Let’s call this fourth point An Unusual Proposal.

I’ve always been fascinated hearing about wedding proposals. There are some really creative people out there. In fact, I’d love to be able to propose all over again to my bride and do something unusual or creative.

A few years ago I did a little research. What that means is, “I googled” a search for creative proposals. I came across some examples of how not to propose.

Like one lawyer who worked out a plan with some of his policeman buddies. According to their plan, policeman pulled over his girlfriend on her way home from work; made up some bogus charges and had her park her car, get handcuffed and put into the police car, and driven to the city jail. Once incarcerated, they informed her that she could make only one phone call. Of course she called her lawyer boyfriend who promptly came down to the station, was let into her cell where he told her that the only way they would let her go was if she agreed to marry him.

How romantic is that? She was angry for a very long time! In fact, I couldn’t find out if she said yes or not – I’m hoping she didn’t.

I read about another young man who pretended to have died. He had planned the entire funeral home visitation with his funeral home buddies; he was all dressed in his best suit, lying motionless in his coffin. When his girlfriend arrived, she stood by the casket sobbing. He suddenly sat up and asked her to marry him. After she finally stopped screaming, she slapped him and then said yes. They both need help.

Then I came across a couple of illustrations where several men got it right. I’ll give you one of them.

One guy lived in a different state than his girlfriend and he surprised her with a plane ticket to come visit him. When she arrived, a

limo was waiting for her as planned and the music in the limo was actually a compilation of their favorite songs.

She was taken to a high-end store where a rack of dresses and shoes were waiting for her, personally handpicked by him. She was able to choose her favorite outfit and she was then driven to a salon for a 3-hour treatment; massage, pedicure, manicure, hair styling and makeup.

Following that, she was driven to the entrance of a resort hotel where a horse and buggy awaited her. As she was driven around a small lake to the resort entrance, more than 100 candles lit the path to a red carpet where an orchestra was seated.

As she walked up the stairs, they began to play a song he had composed and he appeared at the top of the stairs and began to sing to her. When she arrived at the top stair, he knelt down on one knee and a huge light board behind him lit up with the words, “Will you marry me?”

Before she could answer, he stood to his feet and sang the finale to his original love song, backed up by this 45-piece orchestra. When he finished, and she said yes, fireworks exploded in the sky above them. That guy makes me sick.

And some wife out there is rethinking what you might have done. I mean, slipping the diamond ring in her banana pudding at Cracker Barrel just doesn’t measure up anymore.

Well, this is a really unusual proposal. And, in this case, Ruth is the one doing the proposing.

Notice **chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight?”**

How did Naomi know that? Listen, Naomi knew everything. This woman has been hearing wedding bells since the first time Ruth came home with 25 pounds of grain in her sack. That didn’t happen by accident! “Ruth, it’s time to let that farmer know he’s the one you want to marry.”

So, **verse 3. Wash yourself.** This Hebrew verb signifies the full treatment. Pedicure, manicure, the Avon lady comes over...

Next, Naomi says, **Anoint yourself.** Literally, perfume yourself. In other words, you don’t want to smell like the barnyard.

We know from history that even the poor people in ancient days had access to cheap perfume. The royalty of Egypt, 1,000 years before the birth of Christ, had scouting parties all around the known world looking for the latest in perfume.

Naomi says further, **Put on your best clothes.** In a nutshell, “get all dolled up and go down to that threshing floor and let Boaz know how you feel. You need to ask him to redeem you.”

By the way, this is a wonderful analogy to salvation. Jesus Christ can save you – have you asked Him? He can redeem you and pay the debt of your sin and make you a member of His family tree – but have you asked Him to do that for you?

The Apostle Paul wrote, **Call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be saved (Romans 10:13).** Have you called out to Him to save you?

No one is going to heaven unless Jesus has chosen to redeem them and no one is redeemed unless they have called out to Him.

Ruth goes down to the threshing floor and calls for Boaz to literally spread his wings over her in redemption (2:9).

If I can fast forward this proposal, Boaz says yes, gains the right of redemption from another closer relative who isn’t interested in Ruth.

5. And the fifth and final point is what I’ll call an unusual marriage.

Here’s a wealthy, faithful Jewish man, marrying a penniless, Moabite widow. The man who has everything gives to his bride, who has nothing, everything that belongs to him.

Which is what Jesus, our Bridegroom, did for us. He who was rich became poor – you can’t get any poorer than being born in an outdoor

cattle stall. He became poor so that through Him we might be rich (*2 Corinthians 8:9*).

Now if we were able to climb back into this scene in Bethlehem and join the wedding ceremony of Boaz and Ruth, it would have been an elaborate, festive celebration.

If the groom was rich – and Boaz was – he would have worn a headpiece or crown made of gold. It was also the custom of the groom to have his garments perfumed with two special fragrances – frankincense and myrrh.

Here stands Boaz, prefiguring the coming Kinsman Redeemer who will legally descend from his union with Ruth. Centuries later that Kinsman Redeemer will be visited by the Magi who come to home where he is toddling around with Mary chasing after Him and the Magi will give him gold, frankincense and myrrh – the gifts of a groomsman who has come to redeem His bride.

I love the well-wishes of the witnesses at the gate where Boaz legally redeemed Ruth – in *verse 11 of chapter 4* you hear these well-wishers saying, *may you become famous in Bethlehem*.

Oh, they will – they will. Boaz and Ruth will become the great-grandparents of King David. More importantly, they enter the family tree of the coming Kinsman Redeemer – the Messiah – Jesus Christ our Lord.

When I used to read those fairytales to my girls, they always began with the words “Once upon a time” and nearly all of them that I can remember ended with the words, “And they lived happily ever after.”

I can’t help but think how appropriate those words are for all you who’ve been redeemed by your Prince, the Lord Jesus.

Every one of you will live happily ever after, no matter how challenging your story line is at the moment; no matter how painful or disappointing or surprising or difficult.

In fact, for the believer, the concluding lines of your biography – after you take your last breath, your story will close with those same words – And you lived happily ever after,

- forever rejoicing in the presence of your Everlasting Father;
- questions and doubts and struggles forever settled in presence of your Wonderful Counselor;
- rescued at last and taken home by your Prince of Peace;

Let me note one more thing; on the last page of every one of those fairytales I read to my girls were two final words – “The End.”

Not for you! Not for the Bride of Christ – there will never be an end to your “happily ever after.”

Why?

- Because our Kinsman Redeemer was born – thus he became related to us;
- Because He was willing to love us;
- Because He was able to comprehensively pay the price and settle all the debt of our sin.

So, the final words on the last page of the biography of the believer are not going to be the words – “The End”.

They will read instead, “And we lived happily – *forever* – after. And we *will* live happily forever after.

O come let us adore Him
Christ, the Lord.
We’ll praise His name forever.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/24/2017 by Stephen Davey.

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¹ J. Vernon McGee, Ruth: The Romance of Redemption (Thomas Nelson, 1943), p. 14