

A Bible Study In A Magazine Format

Over the years, I have had an interest in setting up a printed Bible Study using a magazine format.

A magazine format is more than just going with a large format on a glossy page stock.

It involves laying out the information in such a way that the content is not only . . .

**visually inviting,
and
visually interesting,**

BUT IT IS ALSO . . .

visually communicative.

That is, a magazine structure which by its graphic capabilities, is able to highlight the varied elements of any Biblical exposition . . .

**AND . . .
to capture and illuminate the most valuable elements of a profitable Bible study.**

I pray that we have succeeded in accomplishing these goals.

The Biblical Principle Of Selflessness!

- **Love suffereth long, and is kind;**
- **Love envieth not;**
- **Love vaunteth not itself, is not**
- **puffed up,**
- **Doth not behave itself unseemly,**
- **Seeketh not her own,**
- **Is not easily provoked,**
- **Thinketh no evil;**
- **Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but**
- **rejoiceth in the truth;**
- **Beareth all things,**
- **Believeth all things,**
- **Hopeth all things,**
- **Endureth all things.**
- **Love never faileth**

I Corinthians 13:4-8

At the heart of our sinfulness is an enormous selfish spirit. It is our very nature to be concerned with me, myself, and I -- first of all.

It is that selfish spirit which disrupts all relationships!

**For A Copy of
The Book of Ruth
Chapter 2
in a magazine format**

**Contact
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for a FREE pdf or e-copy.**

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Bible Study The Book Of Ruth Chapter 1

Includes

Highlighted Life Principles

Additional Bible Study Information

Concepts Illustrated

All In An Easy To Read Magazine Format



*The following example
may help clarify
this Bible teaching approach*

A Principle Driven Life!

In the world of advertising, the goal is to have us **see and think differently**. New information, facts, visuals, examples, pictures, experts, statistics, explanations, and the like are all seeking to affect and/or change our minds as to **how we see and think**.

For instance -- consider this advertisement . . .

The product is Reddi-Whip. In their commercial, a bright, smiling young lady is seated at the counter of a classic diner. A waitress quickly moves down the counter, towards her, and then says . . .

Waitress: What can I get ya? -- [Now it is set up in 'twos']

Customer: I'd like one of those desserts and some coffee.

Waitress: Sure . . Decaf or Regular

Customer: Regular

Waitress: Cake or Pie?

Customer: Pie

Waitress: Apple or Cherry?

Customer: Cherry



cont'd on next pg.



A Change In Seeing & Thinking

There are many verses which support and illustrate the principle that when you change the way a person **sees and/or thinks**, you provide the kindling for a change in behavior.

Romans 12:1-2 - transformed by the renewing of your minds.

Hebrews 4:14 -- seeing then that we have a Great High Priest

II Peter 3:11 -- Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved,

Hebrews 11:27 -- seeing Him who is invisible

Luke 10:36 -- Which now of these three, thinkest thou

Matthew 3:9 -- And think not to say within yourselves

Luke 13:4 -- think ye that they were sinners above all men

John 4:29 -- Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did

Hebrews 12:3 -- For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners . . .

lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

II Peter 3:1 -- stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance

Romans 8:28 -- And we know that all things work together for good

Matthew 3:9 -- And think not to say within yourselves

II Peter 1:9 -- But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off



**A Change In
Seeing & Thinking**

cont'd from pg. 15

- Conviction to Lead, The: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters by Al Mohler
- The Shepherd Leader by Timothy Wittmer
- Spiritual Leadership by J. Oswald Sanders
- The Book on Leadership by John MacArthur
- Spurgeon on Leadership by Larry J. Michael
- The Mentor Leader by Tony Dungy.
- The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons From 1 Corinthians by Don Carson.
- The Making of a Christian Leader by Ted Engstrom.
- Building Leaders by Aubrey Malphurs.
- Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda by Henry and Richard Blackaby.
- Lead Like Jesus by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges.

All you "moralists," repent of your teaching and preaching about principles of leadership found in the Scriptures -- "Nehemiah, like every other part of Scripture, points to Christ and His Gospel"

While all Scripture assumes Christ, all Scripture is not about Christ.

Because Bible characters or events exemplify faith, grace, mercy, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, the power of God, or the greatness of God's glory, such does not mean that we find "types" of Christ in these narratives or that the narratives are "typological repositories" worthy of drawing out some extended analogy with the redemptive "scarlet thread" of Scripture.

- It means that such specific examples of faith, grace, mercy, and self-sacrifice exemplify the qualities which marked our Lord and which therefore ought to mark God's people.
- It means that God is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- It means that the Lord God works in Old Testament days as He did in New Testament days.
- It means that Jesus is the express image of the Father and that He reflects the Word given to the Old Testament saints, and is Himself the fleshed out reality of godly living.

It would be easy to provide repeated examples of this fantastical trend. Modern-day preaching and teaching has descended in a swamp of absurdity (and many times has diminished Christ in so doing).

There is no lack of examples and the lengths to which writers and speakers have gone to come up with the novel and new. It now goes under the name

of "Biblical theology." Don't ask me why, because I always assumed from my days in seminary that you had "systematic theology" and "biblical theology." That the former was a study of the compilation of passages found throughout the Bible which supported the various doctrines, and that the latter was an examination of the theology taught in a particular book of the Bible¹.

The obvious question is, "Where does such an approach end?" That is the very question that must be asked when it comes to an allegorical treatment of Scriptural passages. What are the "guidelines" or "hermeneutical rules" of interpretation once we move away from the "historical-grammatical" approach towards Scripture (which typically is stated as "a literal, grammatical, historical, contextual understanding of Scripture")?

What has always marked us out has been our method of biblical interpretation. We believed, taught, and practiced a historical-grammatical approach. We have rejected an allegorical, mystical, or metaphorical approach. However, this Christological trend is a clear movement towards an allegorical handling of Scripture.

**Stay with
"the simplicity that is in Christ."
II Corinthians 11:3**

Again, all such biblical characters and accounts **assume Christ** working in the lives of His people, but not all narrative accounts and biblical characters are about or designed to illustrate the actual redemptive story of Christ. Merely because there is a trait that a biblical character exhibits (Boaz's compassion on a stranger), or a biblical event (the Red Sea, Jonah in the great fish) which pictures God's working in history, such does not mean that the character or event is a picture of Christ, or an illustration of the story of redemption.

The rule of biblical interpretation has been - "Do not make a person a "type" of Christ if the Bible does not." There are clear passages that connect Adam, Moses, Elijah, David, Melchizedek, Jonah in the great fish, the nation of Israel - ("Israel my son") to the redemption story line. Some may fairly say a "type of Christ." Outside of the clearly declared biblically connected characters and events, we should exercise the utmost caution. Speak where Scripture speaks, and stay away from one's own imaginative, or even absurd, speculations and thinking [see links to my published article on Christological preaching²].

- You beg before you accept a questionable job.
- You fail before you cheat.
- You take a lower grade before you cheat.
- You stay at your position before you compromise.

It is not -- “You got to do what you’ve got to do.” Not according to . . .

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| • Ruth | • Elijah |
| • Moses | • Daniel |
| • Joseph | • Esther |
| • Mordecai | • Nehemiah |
| • Elisha | |
| • Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego | |

Ruth . . . selflessly gave away her future, because she operated on the principle of “love”.



Is Boaz a “Type” of Christ?

Many would make “Boaz” a type of Christ. There are some difficulties in doing that, not to mention that there is not one New Testament writer or speaker that comes even remotely close to such an approach. The only mention of Boaz and Ruth in the whole N.T. is in the genealogy found in Matthew and Luke.

The most serious difficulty in making Boaz an example of Christ is that Boaz is not the legitimate, legal, true kinsman redeemer -- “howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.” - Ruth 3:12 Boaz ultimately assumes the role of the kinsman redeemer, but he is not the legally qualified. Boaz has to approach the one who is legally the true kinsman redeemer, and receive permission to assume that role. And only if the legitimate redeemer relinquishes his right as kinsman redeemer can Boaz take that position. How does that fit the story of Redemption?

Nevertheless, Boaz and Ruth both exemplify some great biblical principles and truths, so-called “moralisms” as Leehman would say, which exemplify what it means to be Christ-like! If there are those who want to try to jump the hurdle of “kinsman redeemer,” go for it and engage in the theological and mental gymnastics to make Boaz a type. That is what happens when one seizes upon the phrase “kinsman *redeemer*,” and thereby feels the need to make Boaz “a type” of Christ.

Speak Where Scripture Speaks

I say all this because there is a fad that devalues the worth of identifying the many truths and principles of Scripture, which are designed to change the way God’s people **see and think** as they live out their lives seeking to reflect Christ.

The stated usefulness of the Scriptures is found in II Timothy 3:16 . . .

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

Scripture is designed to . . .

- give us doctrine (This is typically called both systematic theology and biblical theology.)
- reprove the walk of some of God’s people
- correct the path that some of God’s people are on
- instruct what it means to live a “right” life in the eyes of God.

Three of the four stated purposes involve the Christian’s walk!

Indeed, the Scriptures give us the doctrines which involve the redemptive plan and program of God. However, it gives us more than that! It also gives us fleshed out examples and directly stated principles and truths that are designed to guide our lives as believers! **The book of Ruth provides some very valuable principles about godly thinking!**



¹ Biblical Theology: “[Originally]. . . biblical theology is limited to a collation and restatement of biblical data, without the logical analysis and dialectical correlation between texts that systematic theology emphasizes.
[The change took place with . . .]The work of Gregory Beale, Kevin Vanhoozer, Geerhardus Vos . . . Graeme Goldsworthy (According to Plan, Gospel and Kingdom), and Vaughan Roberts (God’s Big Picture) have helped popularize this approach to the Bible. They summarize the message of the Bible as being about “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule and blessing” (in Graeme Goldsworthy, Gospel and Kingdom, Paternoster, 1981). -- (Wikipedia)

² [Link to my published article on Christological Preaching & The Theater of the Absurd / January 2017:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ui78rs5jsput57m/Baptist%20Bulletin%20Jan%202017%20%20Christological%20preaching.pdf?dl=0>
Full, unedited companion article:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/y2w7captxowec2/Theater%20of%20the%20Absurd%20Preaching.pdf?dl=0>

A Principle Driven Life

I have often thought about writing a book that paralleled that of Rick Warren’s, “A Purpose Driven Life.” Mine would be called, “A Principle Driven Life.”

After 50 years of teaching in Christian colleges and universities, preaching, and teaching, I have tried to focus on the practical. Now I know that there are many, if not all, who have that as their goal. I mean -- who teaches and preaches without that target in mind? -- “I want to be impractical, in the clouds!”

However, I also know that some (maybe many) who have that as their aim, think that they are, but are not. If you are fair-minded, you well know that to be the reality in many a church. You too have struggled, listening and wondering when the pastor is going to get to the application, the practical! After all that has been said, what does that look like in life? Often the application is trite, far too short, and simplistic -- “Now, we as God’s people need to be more compassionate (or whatever the ‘topic’) towards one another . . . yada . . . yada . . . yada . . . Let us pray.”

As you sit with Bible open and listen, you are thinking of some very life affecting applications, or hoping that the message is leading somewhere that reaches that destination.

You also know when you have heard a good or great sermon which both develops a biblical truth and then brings it down to where you and others are in life. As you leave, you say, “That was good!” What you are really responding to is that it spoke to life and living, and gave you something to think about as you lived life as a believer.

You are really no different that the many others who are listening, who have to live and work in the real world tomorrow morning, or have already had a rough week, and are again hoping that there will something which will aid them in their walk as a believer, at home or in this world!

It is not that the teaching or preaching was not biblical or theological -- but that is just about all it was - theology / doctrine. In essence, it was a class in either systematic theology, where we go from passage to passage on a word or thought found in our passage, or where all the words and every word is defined and explained, but never connected to the main argument of the passage.

Practical preaching and teaching are built on this premise that . . .

We are to live out our Christian lives by the application of new and different biblical principles and truths which change the way we see and think about life.

We came into the Christian life, after being inundated with the world’s vantage and thinking. After we are brought into the kingdom of His dear Son, after we move from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, we begin **seeing and thinking** differently.

That is why Romans 12:1-2 states that we are transformed by the renewing of our **minds**.

It Is Principles Which Control The Way We See & Think, Which Provide The Filter For Our Vantages & Decisions.

cont’d from previous page

May I suggest that this is the aim of Scriptural truths and principles? It is to have us **see and think differently!**

It is biblical truths and principles that are designed to operate, and build a mental mesh, through which our thoughts, decisions, choices, vantages, viewpoints, conclusions, and evaluations must process and pass. That as we make decisions and choices, hundreds of choices and decisions every day we now come to godly decisions.

It is biblical truths and principles which we want our children to hear speaking to them as they make decisions and walk through life, right now alongside of us, and someday without us, no longer actually speaking to them in person.

It is biblical truths and principles which ought to push and prod us, our children, fellow believers, and

the church, to make wise and discerning choices in light of those principles and truths. There are many

- **directly stated** truths and principles found throughout the “grammatical” pages of Scripture (Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Psalms, and the N.T. Epistles),

as well as many . . .

- **illustrated** principles and truths found in the narrative pages of the Bible (most of the O.T. and the Gospels, the book of Acts, and Revelation).

The various narrative accounts of Scripture flesh out in real terms what godly and ungodly living looks like (or does not look like). Various biblical characters, who are believers, reflect in real life settings what it means to walk like one who names Jehovah as their God.

It is biblical truths and principles which are also illustrated throughout the pages of Scripture . . .

- Joseph: It is God who sent me to Egypt.
- Esther: The Lord has put you there for such a time as this.
- Ruth: Just be where you are and He will direct your path.
- Abraham: Fear or mistrust can lead to scheming.
- David: We are out of place when we take power into our hands and touch the Lord’s anointed.
- Daniel: Continue your godly disciples even when evil is determined against you.
- Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego: Stand tall when facing the powers that be.
- Nehemiah: Love of God’s name causes one to step up to meet a need in God’s work.
- Elijah: Discouragement can follow great peaks.
- Elisha: Walk away from advantage & wealth - Naaman
- Gehazi: The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil - Pierced themselves with many sorrows.
- Isaiah: When a radical political change takes place, the Lord is still on the throne.
- The Woman at the Well: Men are without excuse because she understood it clearly!
- Nicodemus: The resurrection ought to cause one to leave the shadows of discipleship.
- Peter: Never say never.
- Thomas: We walk by faith and not by sight (or Don’t miss Sunday services, you never know who is going to show up.).
- Barnabas: The church needs people whose gift is encouragement.
- Paul: As Promised To Abraham, the Gospel is to all nations.
- Tribulation Earth Dwellers: There is no level of pain which can promise repentance.

. . . which show us how we ought to conduct our lives, and run the race that is set before us.

his family. Maybe it took such a wrong turn to get on to this glorious destination. Kind of like Joseph -- the hatred of the brothers is what got him to Egypt and second only to Pharaoh!

“Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab”

It’s becoming painfully obvious that she needs to get back, not because she is any more principled. You know why some people turn around? To the pragmatist, “pain” is not a desired “end.” You see that’s what’s happening here is becoming painfully obvious that the family made a terrible mistake and it is finally time to go back home. Naomi is still “pragmatic” in her thinking and you can see that in her conversation with her daughters-in-law.

The Lord has purposefully and pointedly chosen to include her conversation with Orpah and Ruth. Listen to Naomi’s argument as she talks to them.

She starts out saying, look at reality (1:8ff). Don’t return with me because - and here is Naomi’s argument -- look at the “end.” If you look at the “end,” is doesn’t look good for you. Things will not get any better for you in the land of Bethlehem. Why go back with me because there are no more sons in my womb that they could be your husbands. Turn again my daughters because I’m too old to have a husband. Even if I should have hope of marrying and having children, and were married today, you wouldn’t have time to wait for them to grow up.

The argument is about how the whole story will end if you return with me. You aren’t going to get married as Moabites and your only hope is with me, and I offer no hope. There is no good ending to this story for either one of you!

Orpah is persuaded by the argument, and maybe easily persuaded, I don’t know. Nevertheless, the argument strikes a chord with Orpah -- “You know what you are saying is true. I’m going to go home. The reality is obvious!” That is why the name of the book is not “Orpah.” It is named “Ruth” because Ruth is the only one operating on principle!

As Orpah is walking back and Ruth is still there, Naomi tries to persuade Ruth again -- “Ruth, look you can catch up with her yet . . . She’s just . . . she’s just a little ways down the road . . . Run and catch up with her and go back. You don’t need to return with me.”

See what makes Ruth’s stand out is that she’s not pragmatic! She’s not moved by the pragmatic argument. Her heart does not respond to Naomi’s pragmatism. Ruth says, “intreat me not.” -- quit it!

cont’d from pg. 13

No matter where a text is located in the plot line, it should always be preached with the entire plot line in view.

How does my text contribute to the headline?... that’s the question we should always be asking. . . .

Biblical theology centers our churches on the power of the Gospel, not on moralism . . .”

This is the absurdity we get into when we try to hammer Samson into a type of Christ, and/or try to argue that all Scripture is specifically / directly about Christ! I mean, who would ever think that the account of Samson is about wasted potential? -- being gifted by God with great opportunity and powers, only to be useless in God’s work because of sensuality -- Such moralism!

Samson is one of the most immoral biblical characters, rivaled only by Lot. To draw connecting dots between either one and Christ is ludicrous! The next connecting of dots will be between Jephthah, Barak, Rahab, or Deborah because they are declared as people of great faith in Hebrews 11.

Interestingly, Leeman goes on to criticize those who would preach biblical principles of leadership from the book of Nehemiah . . .

“Nehemiah . . . an example of how to be a good leader? . . . have you read the last chapter of Nehemiah . . . what’s the point of Nehemiah . . . human leadership does not cut it . . . the Gospel according to Nehemiah is not about human leadership, it is to point to our need for a different sort of leader . . . a God-man, a Messiah . . . When you understand that . . . Nehemiah, like every other part of Scripture, points to Christ and His Gospel, that changes the way you are going to read your Bible. and centers our churches on the power of the Gospel and not on moralism.”

Apparently Leeman maintains that the Bible does not teach and illustrate the nature of biblical leadership, in contrast to this world’s vantage. Such an approach is “moralism.” I mean -- really -- who would ever conclude that the Bible would include anything about life and living, about leadership? The Bible is only about the story and plan of redemption and the coming of Jesus as the Messiah!

Leeman will have his hands full with the many Bible teachers, preachers, and seminar leaders who see Nehemiah as a great book out of which to teach wise principles of leadership.

cont’d on pg. 17

Biblical Principles & Truths: Directly Stated & Illustrated

It is biblical truths and principles, which are directly stated throughout the pages of Scripture . . .

- Love one another
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12).
- Make no provision for the lust of the flesh.
- Do not cause your brother to stumble.
- Abstain from all appearance of evil.
- Men ought always to pray and not to faint.
- Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.
- Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.
- The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
- I will never leave you or forsake you.
- If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.
- Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth.
- Be not weary in well-doing, you shall reap if you faint not.
- Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time.
- Trust in the Lord . . . lean not to your own understanding . . . and He shall direct your paths.
- Repay not evil for evil.
- Do all for the glory of God.
- Whatsoever things are right . . . think on these things.
- Be ye holy for I am holy.
- There is safety in the counsel of many.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Submit yourselves to one another.
- Love your wife.
- Submit to the loving leadership of your husband.
- Draw near unto God and He will draw near unto thee.
- Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- Do not steal.
- Worship the Lord God and serve only Him.
- Whosoever wishes to be great must be a servant.
- Boast not about tomorrow.

. . . which ought to control our thinking, decisions, choices, vantages, and practices.

Quit talking to me like that. Don't try to persuade me to leave or turn away from following after you.

You know why Ruth is the only principled one? It is because something really happened in her heart and it because of what is mentioned in 1:16 -- "thy God my God." Ruth really was a believer and because of a combination of her personality, temperament, experiences, and new found shared faith she followed a principle. "Selflessness" was the principle that operated!

“Love”

The opposite of “love” is not “hate;” it is “selfishness. Selfishness expresses itself in hatred, but is not its opposite. The essence of our sinfulness is an enormous selfish spirit which constantly exerts itself in all of our relationships.

That's the guiding principle motivating Ruth's decision -- "I'm going to show love, selflessness, self-sacrifice, and compassion towards my mother-in-law. That was the guiding principle by which Ruth made her decision. Ruth gives away her future. She gives away her future and she goes with a gray haired worn out widow. I'm all in.

**I'm not going to leave,
I am going to love!**

I'll go with you . . .
with no advantage,
with no gain,
with no perceived benefit to me,
with a lot of unanswered questions in my mind,
with a loving concern for you and your welfare.

If you or I made that kind of decision people would probably ask us why and/or would ask us all kinds of questions like . . .

- You're doing what?
- You're going back where?
- Where are you going to live?
- How are you going to survive?
- Do you have a job?
- Do you have any friends?
- Are there some family members back there who will help you?

A principled person may have such questions, and may have no answers to the questions, but the operating principle pushes back against all those thoughts and says . . .

- I just have to do what is right!
- I can't answer all those questions.

- I don't know how it will work out.
- I don't know how we're going to make it.
- I don't know what's going to happen.
- I don't know since I've never been in this country.

"Principled Thinking" is willing to plow through all unanswered questions! The outcomes are not what generates feelings of satisfaction, but the devotion to one's settled beliefs. All is not well that ends well! All is well, whether it ends well or not if we have maintained our integrity and commitment to our principles.

God is not obligated to have things "turn out well." It may not turn out so well. God is not a pragmatist. He is principled. Read the second half of Hebrews 11 and see how some things ended! The Bible is replete with principled people who faced death and even died, standing on principle. The Bible is also replete with pragmatic people who refused to stand on principle but enjoyed success.

Even when things turn out bad, God is glorified because you operated on principle. Look at Joseph and Mrs. Potiphar -- Did things get better when Joseph operated on principle?

"Joseph, you gotta do what you gotta do." -- Not with Joseph!

"Joseph, you are in Egypt. Think a minute! You've got to do what you've got to do if you are going to survive!

Joseph's response . . .

"No, I don't have to do that. How can I do this great sin against my master and before God. In fact, my master has put everything in my hands and he knows nothing of what I do. I can't be dishonest and unfaithful to the charge I've been given." Principle says "No" -- That is not who I am and it is not what I can do."

Some may be saying, "I'm stuck in one of those famines. There's a real need in my life". . .

- I need to pass this test.
- I need a job.
- I need to be married.
- I need to be accepted in this-or-that program or college.
- I need the promotion or position.

You operate on principle

- You starve before you steal.
- You stay single before you marry an unbeliever.

cont'd from pg. 4

Waitress: Oil or Cream?

Now there is a puzzled look on the young ladies face . . .
The expression implies, "What do you mean oil or cream?"

The waitress responds to the puzzled face by reaching from behind and below the counter. She retrieves two products and holds up . . .
-- a colorful Reddi-Wip spray container in her right hand, and
-- a plain blue flat container of some brand of "cool-whip" in her left hand . . . and again says . . .



Waitress: "Oil (hand gestures with cool whip product) or Cream (hand gestures with Reddi-Wip Can)?"
Customer: Cream . . . Please

The commercial then says . . .

"When other toppings are made with hydrogenated oil, the real dairy cream is in ready whip - a sure an easy choice. Nothing is more real than Reddi-wip."



The waitress puts on a nice daub of Reddi-Wip onto the Cherry Pie, turns around to put the can away. . .

As the customer dips her finger into the Reddi-Wip topping, and then licking it off of her finger . . .

Waitress: (the waitress - turning back around) -- "fork or spoon?"

(too late, she has already tasted it with her finger and is licking the whipped cream off of her fingers)



***A Masterful Example Of How A Change
In Seeing Or Thinking
Can Accomplish A Change In Behavior!***



This advertisement is a GREAT example of effecting a change by changing the way one **sees and/or thinks!** Do you see what they are hoping to accomplish? It is an outstanding strategy, all designed to **change the thinking and perceptions** of the customer and ultimately us, the viewers.

The strategy is to have the watcher **see and think** differently about the product. Reddi-Wip wants customers **to look at** a "cool-whip" type product as a fast whipped oil product, and to see Reddi-Wip as an actual milk/cream product.

The aim is to have the consumer's vantage changed. Next time the buyer picks up a container of "cool-whip" **they may well now see** it as whipped oil, and not real dairy cream. The aim is to have the customer **think**, "You are just eating fast whipped hydrogenated oil when you eat that. I never knew that before!"

The customer may not have known that about the ingredients of such "cool-whip" products, but now --- a new "truth" has been added to the mental mesh through which we process life.

Before, the buyer may not have known exactly what "cool-whip" was, but now when that information is added to their thinking and seeing, when that "truth" about the difference between these products is realized, they may well **see and think differently.**



Pragmatism Is The Thinking Pattern that Tempts Us When Facing Times Of Trial & Pain.

Pragmatism Defined

“Pragmatism, school of philosophy, dominant in the United States in the first quarter of the 20th century, based on the principle that the usefulness, workability, and practicality of ideas, policies, and proposals are the criteria of their merit. It stresses the priority of action over doctrine, of experience over fixed principles, and it holds that ideas borrow their meanings from their consequences and their truths from their verification. Thus, ideas are essentially instruments and plans of action.” -- (Encyclopedia Britannica).

“You gotta do what you gotta do.”

“The end justifies the means.”

“Look, we got it done -- didn’t we!”

“It worked out at the end. Maybe it was a little messy, but it worked out.”

Ruth: Chapter 1 Pragmatic or Principled

All the questions of who, what, where, and when are answered in the first verses of the book of Ruth. It is designed to set out the context of this story. The context is so very important if you are going to understand the actions of the individuals, and the decisions which are made throughout these brief four chapters.

When: When do all the events take place -- in the days when the judges ruled.

The writer includes this statement because he wanted the reader to know that the events are occurring in the days of the judges. Historically, that’s between 1,200 to 1,000 B.C. That was between the time of Joshua’s death and the appointing of Israel’s first king, Saul.

The “historical date” is less important than what is happening during this period of time. To understand the importance of the words, “the days in which the judges ruled” one only needs to go back to the last verse of the previous book, the book of Judges (cp. 17:6, 18:1, 19:10). Yes, it was a time

SALMON & RAHAB - CANNANITE

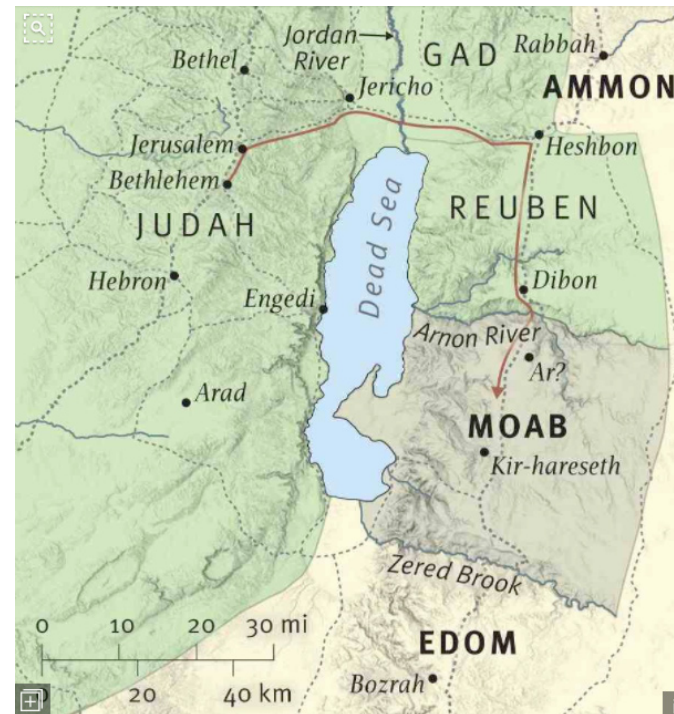
BOAZ & RUTH - MOABITE

OBED & ?

JESSE & ?

DAVID & BATHSHEBA

DAVID & SOLOMON



Context Matters

Have you received a personal letter, and upon opening it up, you first of all turned to the last page and looked at who it was that wrote the letter?

Why? -- Because the context matters. You will read the words of that letter differently if it was written by a sibling, or by a friend, or by your mom or dad, or by a critic.

That is why we so dislike receiving anonymous letters. “Who is writing it” matters, because we read with a context in mind.

“I was raised in the 60’s”

And I was! As soon as I say that, there are many who know what that means. In fact, I do not know if there is another generation that makes such a reference. Maybe some day there will be a generation which says, “I was raised in the 00’s or the 10’s -- referring to the millennial or selfie generations.

The 60’s refer to a period of time when a significant cultural shift took place -- Woodstock, the Vietnam War, protest, riots, free sex, JFK, the great society, free speech, hippies, and MLK. Today, we are called the baby boomers!

A New Testament Counter-part

There is a “Reality Wall” that sooner or later people hit. Some, but not all, find themselves finally looking at the events of life and thinking about going “back home” and try to get things back where they should be.

A New Testament parallel is the account of the Prodigal Son who also travelled into a far country. When things got worse he joined himself to a citizen of that land. Because that’s what you do when you’re really in trouble. Let’s see if I can find someone else who can help us. And then when things get worse, he found himself slopping pigs - (Until “he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go. . .”). There’s bread available at my dad’s house, and if I were just a servant I would at least have some bread.

One would have thought that the death of her husband and their dad such would have jarred them, would have pushed them enough to rethink their original move and now it was time to “go back home.” Surely the death of one son, and then the next would then do it?

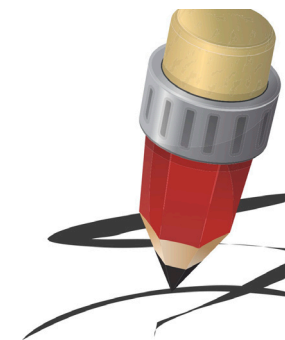
No, it is not until the hearing about bread in Bethlehem that Naomi was willing to make such a move.

The parable of the Prodigal Son ended okay . . . really pretty good for him??

Remember where we started. We started with a famine that was a national crisis. Not all families went to Moab. Elimelech made a choice to take his family to Moab to resolve the pressure he believed he was facing. He did what he believed he needed to do because his focus was on the end, not on the means of securing that end. His goal was survival, to save the family from dying in Bethlehem. What he thought he would avoid, his family actually experienced, and in some ways even worse.

**The problems
you may believe
you are avoid-
ing by your
pragmatic deci-
sion may well
be exactly what
happens at the
end!**

He was a pragmatist and you’ll see as the story quickly proceeds that this pragmatic mentality just keeps showing up over and over -- “Hey you got to do what you’ve got to do.”



cont’d from pg. 11

Biblical theology is then learning to read the Bible in that way. Like Jesus read it, like the apostles read it.

So let’s go back to the lion killing, jawbone swinging Samson. How does Samson help us to understand the Bible story line as a whole? How could a sermon, or a talk, or a family devotion about Samson help its hearers be born-again through the living and abiding Word of God?

Well, notice that Samson was a God anointed judge, endowed with power through the Holy Spirit, who is betrayed by one he loved, and was handed over to the enemies of God’s people, in order to rescue God’s people, by giving his life to those very enemies.

Does that sound like anyone else?

Could it be that Samson is a type of Christ? Preparing us for the coming of the real God, Holy Spirit anointed judge, who would rescue His people from their enemies by giving his life to those enemies.

Samson’s strength is indeed striking, - he fells a 1,000 Philistines with a jaw bone of a donkey, but how much more striking is the strength of Christ, who coming on the last day we are told with a sword coming out of His mouth, with which to strike down the nations and the enemies of God treading the wine press of the fury of the wrath of the God Almighty.

only this Judge is perfect and good

Samson’s death is also striking he defeats his enemies and rescues God’s people through his death

and of course we know that it was Samson’s pride and folly which lead to his death

not so with Jesus

who deliberately went to his death in humility

Samson should indeed provoke our wonder, but wonder of Christ, not of Samson

When we preach Samson this way do you think that someone can be born again? .. I think so.

cont’d on pg. 15 - right

To avoid a principled decision you may have to also convince yourself that the pragmatic decision is only temporary - “to sojourn.” That’s how prag-

✓

Other Pragmatist:

The Apple Doesn’t Fall Far From The Tree!

Elimelech’s two sons learn “pragmatism” very well during life and living in the home. They saw it fleshed out in word and deed.

What do they do after dad dies? Doesn’t dad’s death jar them enough to cause them to think about going back to Bethlehem?

Well, you gotta do what you gotta do -- marry Moabites, settle in, secure a dowry, and get connected with some families of the land.

Sounds like Lot’s pattern, more and more entrenched in the land!

The Spirit of God again by a quick and short detailing of events, makes it clear that this decision was as wrong as that taken by their father, with the same results!

matic people calm their conscience. They say to themselves, and to others around them, that this is only temporary. They are taking this road for only a short period of time.

Notice that so very early in the first chapter, within a few verses (Ruth 1:4), just as the characters are identified and the story hardly develops, only one person is now alive. The inspired Spirit of God knows how to drive home the truth!

To avoid a principled decision you may have to also quiet your conscience and convince yourself that the pragmatic decision is only temporary - “to sojourn.”

After ten years, . . .

- and only after everything has been lost, including the family inheritance, the very land which was given to each and every family since the days of Joshua,
- and only after she heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread (Ruth 1:6)

. . . Naomi makes another pragmatic “family “decision to return to Bethlehem.

Do not think her decision was a principled decision. It was as pragmatic as the one made by her husband, who sojourned for the same reason, because there was food in Moab.

The Lord decided to include the reasonings of Naomi, which were not thoughts of obedience or repentance. It’s not principle because principle says that whether or not there was bread in Bethlehem,

we are going back to the land of promise.

Interestingly, when she returns it is at the end of barley season, during the harvest. That fact indicates that the land of Bethlehem-Judah had already been blessed with favorable weather for a sufficient period of time to even consider planting seed for a possible harvest.

Now only Naomi is walking back to the place where one of the worst decisions of their family life was made. Sometimes what you believe to be a necessary decision and even a good decision can turn out to be one of the worst decisions you have ever made! Does that reality frighten you as you face a decision about ? ? ? ? That is why the Scriptures say, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” and “In all thy ways, acknowledge Him.”

Sometimes, what you believe to be a necessary decision, or a good decision, or the right decision, can turn out to be one of the worst decisions you have ever made in life and/or for your family!



That fatal decision led to an even greater time of crisis and the end that was sought -- saving their lives -- was what was lost by the whole family, save Naomi -- by God’s grace.

Who thought the “sojourn” would end this way. . .

- Three funerals later
- Naomi bitter about it all
- Orpah back home with her gods
- Ruth working in a field to keep them both alive
- Having to sell the family’s inheritance
- Nothing hopeful on the horizon

. . . But it ends well at the end. “**All’s well that ends well!**” I mean by the time you get to chapter four it’s really a pretty good story! I mean . . . as long as it ends okay -- right?

Because you see the pragmatist is only interested in how it all ends. That’s what the pragmatist keeps looking at -- the end. As long as it ended okay -- a little messy, but a great rags to riches ending! Who wouldn’t want the life of Ruth -- when it ends!

In fact, maybe we would not have had such a good ending had Elimelech not gone to Moab with

These lives of Bible characters, recorded and found in the various narrative portions of Scripture, embody some of the very characteristics of the Lord Jesus Himself [This fact causes some misdirected and even absurd Bible teaching which is discussed in a “side-bar” beginning on page 9].

Both the directly stated, as well as the “narrative-illustrated” truths and principles are what we ought to hide in our hearts “that we might not sin against Thee.”

Both the directly stated, as well as the “narrative-illustrated” truths and principles are part of the “re-proof, correction, and instruction” that Paul states are three-fourths of the purpose of the inspired Scriptures.

Both the directly stated and the illustrated truths and principles can be found singularly or recurrently throughout one and/or both testaments.

Both the grammatical and narrative arguments of Scripture teach the truths and principles that ought to guide **the way see we and the way we think.**

The various narrative accounts in both testaments flesh out in real terms what godly and ungodly living looks like. Various biblical characters, who are believers or unbelievers, reflect what it means or does not mean to walk like one who names the name of Christ. The various biblical figures embody and illustrate some of the very characteristics of the Lord Jesus Himself. If you want to be “Christ-like” look to their lives, actions, choices, hardships, trials, victories, etc.

Biblical Principles & Truths

Indeed, the Scriptures give us the doctrines which involve the redemptive plan and program of God. However, they give us more than that! They also give us fleshed out examples and directly stated principles and truths that are designed to guide our lives as believers!

The book of Ruth offers many helpful truths and principles that help God’s people walk like Jesus would have us walk, else much of the details which are included in the book of Ruth (i.e. the fullness of the conversations which are recorded) would be unnecessary if it were only about God’s redemptive plan. There are obvious life lessons about compassion, love, selflessness, devotion, God’s providential guidance as His people walk, morality, and godliness, all during the days of the Judges (Judges 21:25; Ruth 1:1).

Oh, the book of Ruth furthers the story of redemption. It is about God’s plan of redemption, through Ruth, a Gentile believer (because through

Abraham would all the nations be blessed), and through the line of Judah, and specifically through the line of David (Ruth and Boaz - Obed - Jesse - David). However, it is also about the walk of a godly man and woman when doing the right thing was not woven into the culture of the day!

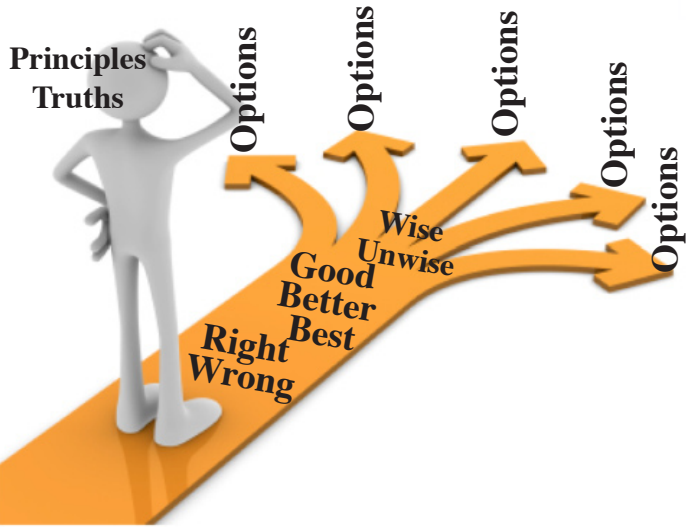
That is what this commentary on Ruth is about -- principles and truths that ought to guide and direct the way God’s people see and think as they run their race, which is set before them, in our generation!

The examination of the book of Ruth . . .

- It is not a “commentary on the obvious.”
- It is not a “word by word” discussion of every biblical concept which is alluded to in various verses. (That is necessary, but what is done in the study.)
- It is not “spring-boarding” where we take a word and preach that biblical or theological concept.
- It is not even about the grand story of redemption.

This examination is designed to highlight some of the most practical principles of life and living . . .

- which ought to cause us to see and think differently about life and living in our century
- which ought to cause the readers and listeners to see and think differently
- which ought to cause the readers to finally see and think -- “oil or cream?” -- Really, I never thought or saw life and living in God’s world that way!



Who: The “who” is Elimelech and his family. They are land owners in Judah and members of the tribe of Judah. We are also told that his family is small, composed of four individuals -- mom, dad, and two boys. There is no question that this is the sum of his family as seen in the progression of the story.

When-Where-Why-What-Who
In the days when God’s people did what they wanted to do, in Bethlehem Judah, during a national famine which pressed all the families of the land, one family decided to make a decision to just take a short-term trip to the land inhabited by the Moabites, in order to survive the famine.

MOABITES

- **ORIGIN:** Lot had two daughters (Genesis 19:34ff) and the oldest daughter bore Moab, and the younger daughter bore Ammon. Thereby we have the Moabites and Ammonites.

Famous Facts About Moab

- Balak, King of Moab, who entreated Baalam to curse Israel (Numbers 22).
- Moses began giving the law in Moab (Deuteronomy 1:5).
- Moses died in the land of Moab (Deuteronomy 34:5).
- Eglon, King of Moab during the days of the judges (Judges 3:12ff).



Pragmatism Vs. Principle
Pragmatic Decision Making: That’s exactly what’s happening throughout chapter one. It is a compilation of a number of people who are making pragmatic decisions. There is only one person who makes a principled decision! Her name is Ruth.

Now when I say, “pragmatic decisions” that is not to be confused with “practical decisions.” Being “pragmatic” is more than just being practical. There’s nothing wrong with being practical. I make practical decisions most every day. For instance, I follow the recommended schedule for having my car’s oil changed. That is for a very practical reason. It is so I don’t have to replace the entire engine. Oil is cheaper than the car’s engine. Having the oil changed every 3-5,000 miles costs about

\$500 over a period of 100,000 miles. That is far cheaper than the cost of replacing the engine, in a period which is far less than 100,000 miles. It is a very practical and wise decision.

You and I make practical decisions all the time and at times there is an “end benefit” to being practical. But it is not the “end” that is in sight, but the means to the end is also part of “pragmatism.”

Practical Decision

Buy it when it is on sale
Put the tools back in place
Further one’s education
Turn off the lights when they are not needed
Drive through the night with the children asleep
Rise up early and relax with your cup of coffee
Buy your plane tickets early, before the price goes up
Save your money for when . . .
Leave earlier, to miss the traffic
Get your gas tank filled now, before you are . . .

Being “pragmatic” is more than being practical. Being “pragmatic” carries the idea that something is being done without a consideration of the means of what is right or wrong, or good or bad, or good - better - best. A choice is being made with primarily the sole view of getting to a desired “end,” regardless of the “means.” If the “means” are fair, or honest, okay -- that works. But the “means” are not the factor which determines what is done. The “end” is the primary determining factor.

Crooks Can Be Principled

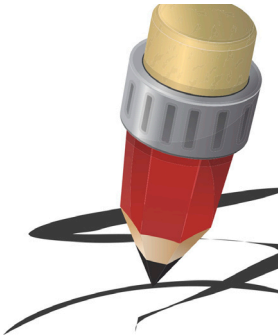
The “means” is not all that important unless improper means won’t get me to the end. Some people will follow the fair, good, and right because it is what they understand will get them to their desired ends, not because they believe in principled living.

By the way, even “crooks” can operate on principles. We say it this way, “There is even honor among thieves.”

The opposite of pragmatic is principled.
You cannot be principled and pragmatic.

Pragmatic & Principled Living Never Co-exist Peacefully Together

One can either operate pragmatically or they can



“Boaz & Ruth-Obed-Jesse-David Not too bad!”

Have you been involved in a project, a really sloppy project? It was poorly planned and executed and it caused you a lot of frustration and anxiety. You communicated your feelings as to how it was carried out. But at the end, it all worked out. Then those involved said to you, “Look . . . see . . . it all worked out.” Indeed it did . . . maybe . . . but that does not mean it was done the way it should have been done!

I can imagine someone like Elimelech saying, “Look, it all worked out at the end. In fact it turned out rather well at the end. Whether or not I should have left Bethlehem, what does it matter? Look how it ended! Boaz - Ruth - Obed - Jesse - David -- huh -- not bad at the end!”

operate on principle. One can do what works, regardless of right or wrong, or one can act on a fixed principle. Pragmatism emphasizes the “end” more than the means. It is the end that’s important! As long as you accomplish the “end.” The “means” is not all that important (unless being improper means that I won’t get me to my desired end).

- The pragmatist: “I got it done!”
The principled: “But how did you get it done?”
- The pragmatist: “Well, I got it done, that’s what matters at the end!”
The principled: “Not really!”

I would like to assure you that God is concerned about the means, not just the end! Do not think that God is not interested in methodology or “means”-- He is! In fact, He is more interested in methodology than He is in the “accomplished end.”

Maybe Just As Pragmatic!

Let it also be noted that not all who did not go to Moab and stayed in the land were principled. One can be pragmatic and not make the move. There are many pragmatic factors that would lead one to not make the move that Elimelech did.

- If you believed that they could survive the famine and it was not necessary to move to accomplish that end.
- If you had additional resources that Elimelech did not have available to them.
- If one were a pragmatic optimist about the days ahead.
- If you lacked the resources to make the move and/or the resources to make the move could be used for surviving the famine.
- If you were part of a larger or more diverse family on which you could lean on through the days of the famine.
- If you had it worse than Elimelech, but you didn’t perceive it as worse.
- If you had it far better than Elimelech, but got a little more panicked.
- If you had no choices or alternatives available to you and had to stay in Bethlehem.
- If there were factors that forced you to stay, otherwise you would have been in “Moab.”

The calculations that families made in Bethlehem may have been principled or just as pragmatic.

cont’d from pg. 9

It is amazing what present-day teachers and preachers, who rely on only the words of Scripture, connect dots that the writers themselves never connected. For instance, Joseph is never even mentioned as a great man of faith in the book of Hebrews in relationship to what we might well point to but for his sure and certain hope that one day the land which was promised to Abraham would be that land of Israel’s promise!

In fact, this new fad of interpreting the Scriptures would be seen as strange indeed by the believers of Old Testament times. As they read the O.T. Scriptures, they would not have grasped the fullness of the redemptive story. Now that is not to say there are no “types” or “dots” that are now clear, but what did the believers of O.T. days learn when they read the book of Ruth, or when they read the story of Samson or Joseph?

There are some clear, practical, illustrative principles and truths that flow alongside the story of redemption.

While all Scripture assume Christ, all Scripture is not about Christ or the scarlet cord that runs through Genesis to Revelation. It is about believers who were justified by faith, who were redeemed by the blood of a promised Messiah, and who sought to live out their faith in real and tangible ways, in everyday life and living!

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”
I Corinthians 10:11

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.
Hebrews 12:1

The Absurd Exemplified!

Here is a transcript of a present-day example of a “Bible teacher” who attempts to draw a parallel between Samson and the Lord Jesus (by Jonathan Leeman of 9Marks).

“Do you understand that the story of Samson in Judges 14-16 is connected to the story of Jesus Christ. . . . The whole O.T. is pointing to Jesus. What kind of book is the Bible? It’s a book, which in all of its diversity, tells one story and it’s a story about Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

cont’d on pg. 13 - right

In fact, let me flip the coin to the other side. Even if our actions and decisions do not work out at the end, He still focused on what principles we were operating. Were we principled in what we did and how we did it? If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego went up in smoke they were still principled in their decision not to bow.

Elimelech moved to Moab because “You’ve gotta do what you gotta do.” That is what’s happening throughout chapter one. Elimelech is a pragmatist and he was focused on what he has to do in order to survive -- “We’re facing a famine, and if we are going to survive, we need to move to Moab. Them’s just the realities of life.”

Like the very first verse and the very first introductory words pointed out -- It was the days of the judges, a day when people did what was right in their own eyes. It was not a day when being principled mattered to most. There may have been many other pragmatists, and probably were, based on the spirit of that age. But there were also many who did what was right in their own eyes.

There may have been others who also left Judah or went over to Moab. I doubt that this family was the singular family who decided to make that move. And there probably were some other families who were just as pragmatic if they reflected the spirit of this age.

And there may have been many who did not go, but who were just as pragmatic and unprincipled. “Going” didn’t determine whether you were pragmatic. Not “Going” didn’t determine if you were principled. Whether you stayed in Judah or not didn’t mean you were principled or pragmatic.

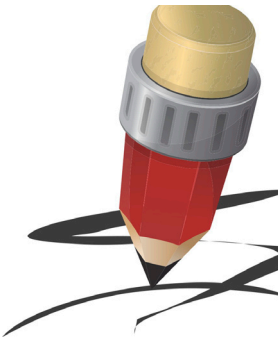
The fact that Elimelech’s move to survive the famine was outside of the will of God is supported by the rest of the story. The details are juxtaposed for us by the Spirit of God, in a quick and concise way. The details included for our obvious consideration are . . .

- The frank and honest testimony of Naomi which attests to the wrongness of that move (1:13)!
- Other families did not move to Moab, and survived (like Boaz). Those families were still in Bethlehem when Naomi returned.
- At least Naomi clearly understood that it was the Lord who blesses and curses (1:6). Moab was not the answer to such temporal blessing.
- The events which transpired in Moab are stacked up, one upon another, in the very beginning verses, which highlight the disastrous results of that move.
- The marriage of the two sons to Moabites,

and the death of both of them, are stated in a quick and concise way. Also, the fact that such marriages were clearly forbidden, no less to the enemy of Israel, are all designed to speak loudly as to the wrongness of both the geographical move and the sons’ marital decisions.

“It’s only for a short period of time. You understand this isn’t what we really want to do. This is what we have to do. But this is just temporary until resolving the problem. We will be back just as soon as we are able.”

When doing wrong, one way to quiet the conscience is to think that the decision is only temporary, and/or that we will be able to turn around later and pick up at the point we left off.



When Elimelech left Bethlehem he was leaving a community of faith! It’s not like us. We can pick up and go somewhere else in the United States and find another good Bible believing church. We can do that and still be connected with the fellowship of believers, but he was leaving behind his community of faith. He was making a decision to leave Israel, the land of promise! -- because “You’ve got to do what you’ve got to do!”

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Biblical Principles

There are those who struggle with the principles and truths of Scripture because they cite an exception. Some might say, “Well this-or-that principle is generally true.” (In fact, that is precisely how most handle the book of Proverbs.)

However, just like any promise of Scripture we might cite or quote, various other truths interact with it (There is more that could be said at this time and I sought to address that issue in a magazine article published by me last year.)

However, we must never forget that one of the ever present principles and truths of Scripture that is always operating in each and every situation, midst the operation of any and all biblical principles and promises, **and which causes the “exceptions to the rule”** and with which we therefore struggle, is . . .

God’s grace!
God’s patience!
God’s mercy!

There is no sure and certain outcome when one fails to follow the principles, truths, or laws because the Lord is always gracious, and He hath not rewarded us according to our transgression!

when God’s people pretty much did as they wanted to do. That fact is placed in the very beginning of the book because we are to read what is happening in light of the cultural setting.

Where: Initially, it is taking place in Bethlehem-Judah, that is the city of Bethlehem located in Judah, not Bethlehem-Zebulun, which located in northern Palestine. Just like we have cities with the same name (Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri), they also had two cities which were called “Bethlehem.”

Moab is the land to which the family moves. Moab is East of Judah, across the Jordan River. It was inhabited by the children of Moab, the descendants of one of Lot’s daughters.

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Moab

Nothing good comes to mind when the words “Moab” or “Moabitish” was spoken - “ugh” ! Just like today, there are cities, and even lands, which when mentioned in no way call up pleasant thoughts.

“Hawaii” calls up pleasant thoughts. Maui calls up even more appealing images. But mention some American cities and the images are of gambling, immorality, or impolite residents. Mention some countries and thoughts of repression, subjugation, ill-treatment, exploitation, extreme poverty, drugs, and danger are called to mind.

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Bethlehem-Judah

- Rachel was buried there - “Ephrath” - Gen. 35:9; 48:7
- Mentioned previous by Joshua - Joshua 19:15
- The city of David - II Samuel 5:7
- Fortified by Rehoboam - II Chronicles 11:6
- 123 people lived there in the days of Ezra - Ezra 2:21
- “Little among the thousands” - Micah 5:2
- Home of Joseph & Birth city of Jesus

Why: Why did one family leave Bethlehem? There was a famine in the land. This national crisis frames out a context which is also important in understanding the story. This is not a story of a single family’s personal crisis but of a national crisis which affects all the families of the land. Virtually all the inhabitants of this small town of Bethlehem-Judah were facing the same crisis but most worked their way through the crisis together. In contrast, the Elimelech family left.

What: What did that family do to address the crisis? This family made a decision **to briefly leave Bethlehem, to sojourn**, to cross over to the land Moab, to leave the land of promise.

Today’s Trend In Preaching About Bible Characters

I stated that the various biblical characters, who are the focus of many of the narrative accounts of Scripture, reflect what it means to walk like one who names the name of Christ. They walk a life of godliness and faith. Therefore, these Bible characters embody some of the very characteristics of the Lord Himself.

The “Christ-likeness” of these biblical characters has created a tendency for present-day commentators, teachers, and preachers to identify many such characters as a “type of Christ.”

Along with this, because various men are identified as godly or as men of faith (Hebrews 11), there is an added tendency for present-day commentators, teachers, and preachers to identify many such characters as a “type of Christ.”

Just because an Old Testament Bible character exhibits some of the same characteristics that mark the Lord Jesus, or are examples of godliness or faith, does not mean that they are a “type of Christ.” Bible characters may be selfless, sacrificial, gracious, merciful, loving, powerful performers of miracles, godly, of great faith, etc. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the picture or details of their lives and/or experiences are meant to support the conclusion that they are “a type of Christ.” To read something from a narrative account relating to a godly man of faith, which happens to reflect the very nature and being of our Lord Jesus, does not mean that the individual was meant to be a picture of Christ and His redemptive program.

While Joseph . . .

- was hated by his brothers, and
- was falsely charged by Mrs. Potiphar, and
- found himself in jail with two inmates (each who had a dream interpreted for them) and
- one who was raised back to a bright future, and
- the other a dismal end

. . . Joseph is not a type of Jesus, who was hanging on the cross with two “criminals” next to him!

Of course, Joseph’s character reflected the “Christ-likeness” we read about in the N.T. and there may be parts of his experience that could be creatively paralleled to that of the Lord Jesus. But nowhere in the Scriptures is there any intimation that Joseph, or many other biblical characters, are “types of Christ” or illustrations of the redemptive story that runs from Genesis to Revelation.

cont’d on pg. 11 - right