

Ruth 1:1-5

How to Remain Faithful to God in the Midst of Life's Difficulties

We need to have a goal for our life to help us stay on track and focused.
Our goal should be to REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD.

We can remain faithful to God in the midst of life's difficulties when we...

1. Focus on who God is
2. Fight against our flesh
3. Follow God's leading

As we dive into the book of Ruth written by an unnamed earthly author, we see a true historical account written in beautiful story form.

Before we really look at the person of Ruth and the beautiful themes throughout this book, we must start at the beginning. The beginning begins with messy, hard, difficulties. But we can all relate! We all have faced, are facing or will face difficulty.

Difficulties

- Time of the judges- time spiritual, social, political unrest
- Famine- God specifically promised there would always be plenty in the land if Israel was obedient. A famine in the land meant that Israel, as a nation, was not obedient.
- Deaths- not one but three!

1. Focus on who God is.

When we choose to focus on God, we're not choosing to focus on our difficulty.

Difficulties will come. Not a matter of IF but WHEN. They might cloud, blind, even cripple us at first, but we don't have to let that continue. We can make a choice to focus on who God is and not the difficulty in front of us. Grieve if necessary, but don't live there forever.

Nothing we encounter takes God by surprise. He either causes or allows our circumstances.

Example: Job- Satan had to ask God's permission!

Elimelek was an Israelite from the tribe of Judah in the area of Ephrath of Bethlehem. His name means "God is king" but based on his actions here he didn't really live as if God was his king.

It seemed Elimelek was not faithful to his God because he did not focus on who His God was! Had he, he would have remembered that God is...

God of time

God of plenty

God who provides
God who is faithful
God who cares
God who redeems

Let's not make the same mistake. In the midst of difficulty, let's focus on who God is and the power he possesses!

Nothing is impossible for our God!

2. Fight against our flesh

Elimelek did not fight against his flesh. He took matters into his own hands

As humans we are weak because we're fleshly beings. Therefore, we must fight against these fleshly desires.

As believers, we are ambassadors for Christ therefore our reactions matter even in times of difficulty. We have been given the beautiful spirit of God within us! We don't have to respond to life's difficulties on our own because we have the power of God in us to respond by the spirit.

We must fight against our flesh and we do this in 2 ways:

- a. Surrender to God**
- b. Saturate our minds in truth**

A. Surrender to God

- a. -At salvation- surrender our hearts/lives
- b. Daily- surrender our day
- c. Difficulties arise- surrender our difficulties

Choosing to respond the wrong way even though it might feel right in the moment is not honoring to God and its dangerous. Elimelek disobeyed God because it felt right to him in that moment.

We can choose to honor God and respond to difficulty in the spirit or choose to respond in the flesh and regret it.

How we respond to difficulty is important because it impacts our life and family for many years to come.

B. Saturate our mind in God's truth.

We have a very real enemy that likes to breed in our difficulties. He doesn't want us to surrender our difficulty to the Lord. He doesn't want us to come out victorious. His battleground is our mind. He wants us focusing on the negatives of our situations. He

wants us focusing on our feelings instead of truth. So we must fight this spiritual battle and saturate our minds in God's truth so there's no room for the enemies lies.

Phil. 4:8 Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

God's word transforms our minds.

God's word is a gift we've been given.

- don't understand our situation? read God's word
- overwhelmed? read God's word
- fearful? read God's word
- heart is breaking? read God's word

"The bible is not just for motivational purposes and cute quotes. It's the transforming, life changing, curse breaking, soul refreshing, flesh cutting word of God."

Some call it God's love letter to us. The words are written by the One who loves us most and knows exactly what we need.

The One who ultimately wrote this book loves us more than we can ever imagine. His words encourage us and comfort us, but we won't be encouraged and comforted unless we read and saturate our minds in the truth.

3.Follow God's leading

In just these few verses, we've seen the importance of following God's leading and not our own. Elimelek did not and there were consequences. It's debatable if his death and his son's deaths were part of the consequences. Based on the text we at least know they were not living the abundant life God had given them.

Whether our difficulties are out of our hands or by our own making, we can remain faithful to God by following his leading by how we allow him to use our difficulty.

Our difficulties are not an accident. What we've experienced, are experiencing and will experience is purposeful in God's plan for our life. He wastes nothing. What would happen if you allowed God to direct your steps and use your difficulty to help someone else?

We can live stressed, fearful, overwhelmed, guilt ridden, shameful, heartbroken or we can focus on who God is, fight against our flesh and follow God's leading and let him use our difficulty for good to help others.

Our difficulties are not necessarily for everyone's ears, but when we follow God's leading, he will direct us to the people that need to hear it.

It may be that our difficulties are hard to talk about because they are of our own doing. The bible is full of people who made mistakes! Their stories are in there to help us learn from them!

Even when we make mistakes God does not write us off! God is gracious, merciful, loving, forgiving and faithful. He is the God of second chances. If we repent- turn back to him, asking him to forgive us, He will. And he will even use our difficulty for good.

Jesus was born through a line of mistake makers! Even in difficulty, God was moving and working. Nothing was wasted.

May we be women who remain faithful in the midst of life's difficulties.

May we...

- Focus on who God is
- Fight against our flesh
- Follow God's leading

Homework Questions

Why is it important to set goals?

Explain a goal you have set and how it helped your situation.

In your own words, define the word faithful.

Why is setting a goal to remain faithful to God necessary?

As humans, we know we cannot perfectly remain faithful. What strategies can you put into place to help?

Why do we encounter difficulties in this life?

Read Ruth 1:1-5.

How does knowing where this story falls in the big picture of scripture help us understand the context?

We know that God is strategic. Why do you think this beautiful redemptive story begins with difficulty?

Name some ways that we can we learn from other's mistakes?

What does focus mean? Why would making this choice affect our decision making?

Why is it important to grieve for a season but not live there?

What verses in scripture back up the fact that God is sovereign overall and everything we encounter God either causes or allows it?

How does knowing this effect the way you view difficulty?

What information are we given about Elimelek?

What do you see in our text that reveals an unfaithfulness to God?

Name 3 other places in scripture where God has proven his faithfulness.

After reading about those 3 other events, how does that encourage you to remain faithful to Him?

Read Isaiah 26:3. What is the result of focusing on our minds on God and who he is?

In what ways did Elimelek not fight against his flesh?

How is fighting against our flesh important to remaining faithful to God?

Give some examples of when you have not fought against your flesh. What was the outcome?

Why is taking matters into our own hands dangerous?

Read Galatians 5:16-25. Name some works of the flesh. Name some of the fruits of the spirit.

Who does the works of the flesh please? Who does the fruit of the spirit please?

How does walking by the spirit fight the desire of our flesh?

What 2 specific ways, did we say you can fight against the flesh?

- 1.
- 2.

In your own words explain how surrender to God helps fight against the flesh.

How did Elimelek's choices impact his family?

How do our choices impact our families?

Read John 10:10. What is the enemy's intent? What is God's intent?

How does saturating our mind in scripture help us fight against our flesh?

Read Philippians 4:8. How can you implement this in your daily life?

Read Isaiah 30:20-21. Though this text was written to the Israelites, what truths do you see that you too can obey?

Name some difficulties you've experienced.

Do you believe that God can use your difficulty for good? Explain your answer.

What steps do you need to take today to allow God to use your difficulties to help others?