

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?...

A Video Bible Study Series

(John 6:68, NIV)

EPISODE 1 – BELONGING IN COMMUNITY

REIMAGINE COMMUNITY SERIES (RUTH 1-2)

- God created us to belong with others and feel loved. But as Christians, belonging goes much further. **God created us for community.** He created Eve to be a companion for Adam. He brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt as a community. God’s own Son, Jesus, called His disciples to follow Him as a community. Through the Holy Spirit, these disciples became the first people to start the early Church.
- We are not meant to be alone. God made us to be in Christian community. In community we love each other, grow in our faith, study the Bible, and pray together. We also rejoice in each other’s triumphs and help each other in struggles.
- Some Christian communities can be large, such as a thriving church, or small, like two believers praying together. 1 John 1:7 reads, ***“Suppose we walk in the light, just as He [God] is in the light. Then we share life with one another. And the blood of Jesus, His Son, makes us pure from all sin.”***
- Whether big or small, God intends us to be in community. It is vital that we come together for fellowship, prayer, worship, study of the Word, and to serve others. In this Bible study we will learn about the importance of Christian community, and how Jesus is at the center of all community, whether large or small.



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- One example of belonging in community is found in the **Book of Ruth, chapters 1-2**. The story takes place at a time when there wasn't enough food in the land of Judah. A man named Elimelech from Bethlehem went to live in the country of Moab with his wife Naomi and their two sons.
- While in Moab, the man died. Naomi was left with her two sons. The sons married women from Moab. One was named Orpah. The other was named Ruth. Naomi's family lived in Moab for about ten years. Then her two sons also died. Naomi was left without her husband and two sons.
- Naomi heard the Lord was providing food for the people in Judah. So, Naomi and her two daughters-in-law prepared to go from Moab back to her home in Bethlehem. They started out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.
- Naomi said to Ruth and Orpah, "Both of you go back. You were kind to your husbands, who have died. You have also been kind to me. May the Lord be just as kind to you and help each of you find rest in the home of another husband."
- Then Naomi kissed them goodbye. Ruth and Orpah broke down and wept loudly. They said to her, "We'll go back to your people with you."
- But Naomi said, "Go home, my daughters. Why would you want to come with me? I'm too old to have another husband. Suppose I married a man tonight. And later I had sons by him. Would you wait until they grew up? Would you stay single until you could marry them? No, my daughters. My life is more bitter than yours. The Lord's power has turned against me!"
- You might be wondering why it was so important for Ruth and Orpah to get married again. In Biblical times a husband gave his wife security and protection. Without a husband a woman was more vulnerable. It was also a custom that if a woman lost her husband, the husband's brother would marry her. But there were no brothers to marry Ruth and Orpah. Naomi told them to go back to Moab because she didn't have anything to offer to secure their futures.

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- When Orpah and Ruth heard this from Naomi, they broke down and wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye. But Ruth held on to her. “Look,” said Naomi. “Your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.”
- But Ruth replied, “Where you go, I’ll go. Where you stay, I’ll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die, I’ll die. And there my body will be buried. I won’t let even death separate you from me.”
- Naomi realized that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. So, she stopped trying to make her go back.
- Talk about commitment! Ruth was taking a risk leaving her family and gods and going to a strange land as a young widow. But she was committed to Naomi, and willingly sacrificed her future to follow her back to Bethlehem.
- Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem when people were beginning to harvest the barley. Ruth said to Naomi, “Let me go out in the fields. I’ll pick up the grain that has been left.” Ruth entered a field and began to pick up the grain behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field that belonged to Boaz, who was a relative from Naomi’s husband’s family.
- Why was Ruth picking up grain? Because this was food for her and Naomi. Remember, neither of them had husbands to provide for them. They were on their own to find food. Ruth was careful not to take any of the main grain that belonged to Boaz, but instead picked up the leftover grain behind the workers. This is called gleaning.
- Boaz noticed Ruth. He asked the man in charge of his workers, “Who does that young woman belong to?” The man replied, “She’s from Moab. She came back from there with Naomi. She asked to pick up the grain behind the harvesters. She has been working here from morning until now.”
- Boaz went over to Ruth. He said, “Dear woman, listen to me. Don’t pick up grain in any other field. Stay here with the women who work for me. Walk behind the women who are gathering it. Pick up the grain that is left. I’ve told the men not to bother you. When you are thirsty, go and get a drink. Take water from the jars the men have filled.”

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- Boaz owned the field and therefore could have chosen to run Ruth off his land, especially since she was a foreigner. Instead, he showed kindness because he was impressed with her dedication to Naomi.
- When Ruth saw Boaz's kindness, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why are you being so kind to me? I'm from another country."
- Boaz replied, "I've been told all about you. I've heard about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. I know that you left your country. You came to live with people you don't know. May the Lord bless you richly. You have come to Him to find safety under His care."
- Ruth picked up the grain in the field until evening. Then she carried it back to town. Naomi saw how much she had gathered. She asked, "Where did you pick up grain today? Where did you work? May the man who noticed you be blessed!"
- Ruth replied, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."
- "May the Lord bless him!" Naomi said. "He is a close relative of ours. He's one of our family protectors."
- We read later in Ruth chapter 4 how God blessed Ruth through her marriage to Boaz. They had a son and called him Obed. He became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. Do you know who came from David's family line many years later? Jesus!
- God opened Ruth's heart to remain committed to Naomi. Ruth left her family and her customs behind and chose to belong in community with Naomi and the one true God. God worked through Ruth, and she became part of the direct family line leading to Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is at the center of all Christian community, large or small. Just as God worked through the community of Naomi and Ruth, He works through us in our Christian communities through Jesus Christ. God created us to belong in community and share fellowship with others.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the struggles that happened to Naomi?

- Naomi and her husband Elimelech left Bethlehem because there wasn't enough food. They went to live in the country of Moab. While there, Elimelech died. Naomi's two sons married women from Moab. Then they also died. Naomi was left without her husband and two sons.

2. What did Naomi say to Ruth and Orpah on the road back to Bethlehem?

- Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to go back to Moab and to their families.

3. How did Ruth and Orpah respond?

- Ruth and Orpah broke down and wept loudly. They said that they would go to Bethlehem with Naomi. But Naomi insisted they stay in Moab, stating that she was too old to find another husband and could not promise sons for them to marry.

4. What did Ruth give up so she could stay with Naomi and return to Bethlehem?

- Ruth left her family, gods, and customs behind in Moab to go with Naomi back to Bethlehem. Ruth was taking a risk going to a strange land as a young widow. But she loved Naomi and willingly sacrificed her future to be in community with her.

5. Was Boaz upset that Ruth was gleaning in his field? What did he say to her?

- No, Boaz wasn't upset at all. In fact, he was impressed with Ruth because of her commitment to Naomi. Boaz showed kindness to Ruth by telling her to stay in his field and pick up the grain behind the women who worked for him. Boaz also offered water to Ruth whenever she got thirsty.

6. What do we learn at the end of the Book of Ruth?

- Ruth and Boaz got married and had a son called Obed. Obed went on to become the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. And from David's family line came Jesus Christ!

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PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. Think about a Christian community you belong to, whether it be your Friendship group, your church, or another small group. Who can you invite to belong in your community today?
2. Do you have the boldness to share with others what Christ means to you? If not, pray for boldness to share the love of Christ with others.

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