

Shadows of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #34

Journey to Bethlehem

October 8, 2025

The Cost Of Unbelief and Disobedience. His life! __ His two sons! _____ His reputation!
What will it cost him in eternal consequences? He fell "victim" to the spirit of the times!

Wiersbe: Elimelech made a bad decision and exchanged one famine for three funerals.

Ruth 1:4b-5 But about ten years later, ⁵ both Mahlon and Chilion died.

This left Naomi alone without her two sons or her husband.

Naomi lost both her husband and sons through the journey to Moab.

Those who go to the world for help instead of to God are likely to come back like Naomi - a weeping widow bereft of all, or like the Prodigal, repentant in shameful rags.

The situation for widows in ancient culture was bleak. Without children their lives were failures. Without husbands their situation was dire. Since barrenness in the ancient world was always viewed as the problem of the woman, no man would marry Orpah and Ruth since they had demonstrated they were incapable of bearing a child.

➤ They are refugees, belonging neither to Moab nor Israel.

They were outside the patriarchal clan — cut off from its protection and provision.

Their losses were devastating in every way. They were a non-family with no means of providing for themselves. Options for such marginalized women were few and unpleasant.

Completely dependent on the generosity of others, they faced starvation or worse.

When God Saw The Affliction Of His People in Ex.3:7-8, He Sent A Deliverer.

And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. ⁸ So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Key: God SAW the affliction of Naomi. No hope! No future!

God's involvement in her life is constant, though sometimes hidden.

Ruth 1:6-14 Naomi, Ruth & Orpah Begin The Journey To Bethlehem, Judah

Ruth 1:6-7 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

Key Truth: The light of Jehovah begins to shine through the clouds of Naomi's spiritually dark world, and she responds to His light. God's grace [in the tangible form of good news] shines in the midst of Naomi's grief and emotional pain. Naomi would have testified to this truth:

Prov. 25:25 Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.

God moves heaven and earth [rain, sun, fruitful grain harvest] to inspire Naomi to move on.

v. 6: Then She Arose #6965 qum always conveys movement from a lower to a higher position or from Inactivity To Purposeful Action.

Note the interaction between God's sovereignty [provision of "bread"] and man's responsibility [she arose]. Notice the repetition of she. She arose so that she might return...she had heard. This places heavy emphasis on Naomi as the key player in this move to Bethlehem.

Powerful Truth: There is a time when we must choose to RISE UP and

lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us. [inactivity to purposeful action]
We must forget "what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead... pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." [Phil. 3:12-14]

Key: Naomi heard that the Lord had come to the aid of His people and given them bread.

- Good News to the afflicted wanderer.
- She believed the tidings, and her faith brought her back.
- She heard, she believed, she arose so she might return.

Luke 15:16-20 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*. ¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem would determine the destiny of Ruth and of many who would come after her. Naomi arose from her grieving and moved toward God, although had she chosen not to do so, God's purpose of raising up a Redeemer would not have been thwarted. The Gospel of God is good news from a far country. Man has wandered far from God. The good news has reached the world, that God has visited the people in the person of His Son, and given them bread— "The Bread of Life." Oh! that the weary, famished, broken-hearted wanderers who have heard the good tidings would, like Naomi, "Arise so they might return."

The phrase, he arose, described David's arising and moving on after his first son's death.

II Sam. 12:19-20a But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore, David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. ²⁰ Then David arose from the ground, washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped. [accept God's Will]

In the hard times, faith sometimes mean leaving unanswered difficulties in the hands of God. Such faith will be strengthened by keeping in the front of our minds the ways God has helped us in the past. [David Atkinson]

Atkinson: Faith is a journey of trust and growth; it is a moving mobile, not a still life. When some parts swing for a time in the shadow, we trust that they will again emerge into the light as they have many times before. To keep our faith alive in the dark times, we must meditate on the great acts of God in the past.
Isa. 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, there is none else; I am God; there is none like Me.

Powerful Truth: It is vital for us to look expectantly for the hand of the LORD in every event in our lives.

Heb. 12:10ff God is in the process of training up His children to full maturity, that we "may share His holiness"

Rom. 8:28-29 that we may be "conformed to the image of His Son."

Heb. 12:2ff Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith in the race of faith. So keep your eyes fixed on Jesus as the way to navigate life's challenges with hope and confidence.

Ps. 23:4 as you "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," even as your dreams seem to die and all earthly hope seems lost.

The "valley" symbolizes any perilous journey or moment of deep darkness and fear, and the "shadow of death" refers to the terrifying nature of these situations.

To face life's most frightening and dangerous trials and difficult experiences with courage, not fear, because our Good Shepherd is present to provide comfort, protection, and guidance.

Faith Over Fear: Jer. 32:27 Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?

Remember: Lam. 3:21-24 God's promise of His faithfulness every morning, even when the clouds seem to hide His face.

Heb. 11:27ff That's when faith walks out and takes God at His Word and is enabled to see "Him Who is unseen."

Ruth 1:7 Therefore, she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

➤ There cannot be a returning without a separation.

II Cor. 6:17 Come out from among them and be ye separate.

They had begun their return to the House of Bread, Bethlehem, and the Land of Praise, Judah.

➤ This is a good journey for us all to begin when circumstances appear humanly hopeless!

Return: #7725 shub/shuv Shub essentially refers to a reversal or change of direction, an "about face." Shub is a key word in Ruth 1: It is used 10 times.

Man's Responsibility In Repentance: Observe the central role of our heart

Joshua 24:23 Incline your heart unto the Lord your God.

Jer. 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD & remove the foreskins of your heart.

Hosea 10:12 Break up your fallow ground, usually cultivated land that is allowed to lie idle during the growing season, for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you.

All these expressions of man's activity are pictured in the Hebrew verb shub which combines the two requisites of repentance -- turn from evil and turn to God and to good.

Key Truth: Repentance is a gift of His grace.

Rom. 2:4 Or do you have no regard for the wealth of His kindness and tolerance and patience [in withholding His wrath]? Are you [actually] unaware or ignorant [of the fact] that God's kindness leads you to repentance [that is, to change your inner self, your old way of thinking—seek His purpose for your life]? [AMP]

The Test of Love: An Invitation to Exit

Ruth 1:8-9 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

⁹ The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."

Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

- a formal act to release them from obligation
- Naomi, bitter from loss, offers her daughters-in-law an exit strategy.

Ruth 1:10-13 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

- Both Ruth & Orpah seem earnest. But those who would follow the religion of Jesus Christ must endure trials in the race of faith.

¹¹But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? ¹² No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? ¹³ Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! for it grieves me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

Naomi declares she has nothing to offer them. Naomi has God who will meet Ruth's need!

- God's Law of Gleaning provides food for the widows.

The Law of the Kinsman Redeemer will provide a husband for Ruth in the land of promise.

- Boaz, the Kinsmen Redeemer, is a relative of Elimelech.

Ruth 1:14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again:

and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Orpah took the exit strategy. Why did Orpah turn back? Was not Bethlehem in her eye?

Yes, but Moab was in her heart. "Remember Lot's wife."

There are many Orpahs who, through adversity or excitement, run well for a time, but who ultimately forsakes the race, like Demas, because they love the world.

There is no neutral standing! It must be either back to your people and your gods, or "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Those who name the Name of Jesus must depart from all iniquity. There may be mouth profession where there is heart division. To trust in profession is to lean on a shadow.

Ruth 1:15 And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law.

Ruth 1:16-17 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: ¹⁷ Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

One follows no more, the other clings as for very life.

➤ The unstable kiss and go back. The steadfast mind leaves all and presses on. "Wilt thou go with this man?" was asked of Rebekah. Her reply was, "I will go." In Luke 14 they began to make excuses why they could not attend the great feast.

Ruth 1:18 When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Ruth abandoned her lifelong home and her pagan gods to unite with the God of Israel. Her decision 3000+ years ago was more than a step towards Bethlehem. It was a momentous decision to both follow Naomi and Naomi's God who had also become her God.

- Ruth resolved to go with Naomi without knowing what the future held for her.
- She had stood the required test. Now all the obstacles, all the arguments were removed.

Making Wise Decisions

1. A New Determination
 - Spiritual encounter that results in a turning point
2. A New Direction

Ruth 1:16 Wherever you go, that is where I am going.

- Lord, I will not leave You and wherever You lead, I will follow.

3. A New Dependence

Ruth 1:16 Where you are, I will lodge. I am coming under the shadow of your wings.

- Jesus, in spite of all my problems, I will look to You. I will put my dependence on You.
- I look to You to supply my every need.

4. A New Desire

Ruth 1:16 Thy people shall be my people.

- I no longer desire the Moabites or fellowship with pagans. I want to be with the people of God. I desire to go to Bethlehem, Judah, the House of Bread in the Land of Praise.

5. A New Devotion

Ruth 1:16 Thy God shall be my God.

- Ruth is turning from idolatry and her immoral gods.

6. A New Dedication

Ruth 1:17 Wherever you die, I will die.

- Ruth declared she would not turn back from Bethlehem.
- We are to love the Lord Jesus unto death.

7. A New Destiny

Ruth 1:17 Wherever you are buried, I will be buried with you.

- Nothing would separate her from the one she loved.
- Ruth will become the bride of Boaz, a type of Jesus Christ.
- She will be in the direct lineage of Jesus Christ.
- She will be the great-grandmother of King David.

Our decisions determine our destiny. We have a willing choice. We are free to choose. We are free not to choose. We are not free from the consequences of our choices.

Deut. 30:19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you,
that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing;
therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

Ruth exhibited humility and steadfastness in her decision.

- to be fixed in position, to be unwavering, to be firm in purpose.

Phil. 3:13-14 but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and
reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Rev. 3:11 Hold fast, let no one steal your crown.

Christ desires that we be steadfast in our faith and the outworking of our faith,
that we are unwavering in our belief.

I Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Naomi followed her words with: May the LORD deal kindly [*hesed*] with you.

- *Hesed* encompasses deeds of mercy performed by a more powerful party for the benefit of the weaker one.

Naomi's prayer was more than a casual "Goodbye and God bless you."

- She formally freed the women from any future responsibility toward her.
- Since she will not be in a position in the future to do them *hesed*, she asked God to do it for her.

Hubbard: Naomi's wish provides a glimpse of her utter hopelessness.

Powerless to repay their kindness, her only recourse was to turn them over to God's care.

- This formula occurs in two other OT contexts which involve situations of farewell or parting under adverse circumstances.
- Technical way of bringing an end to a relationship

David Prepares To Depart From Jerusalem: II Sam. 15:13-23

II Sam. 15:13 And there came a messenger to David, saying,

The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

Not knowing the extent of the rebellion, David prepares to flee Jerusalem with the palace guard including David's personal bodyguard. David was willing to risk his own life and abandon his own throne in order to protect the citizens of Jerusalem and the city itself.

II Sam. 15:17-18 And the king went forth, and all the people after him,
and tarried in a place that was far off.

David stops in surprise when he sees Ittai the Gittite, a foreigner who had just arrived yesterday in Jerusalem, along with his family and servants.

- Ittai from Gath came to Jerusalem to be part of David's personal and palace guards.

II Sam. 15:19-20 Then the king turned and said to Ittai, a leader of the men from Gath, "Why are you coming with us? Go on back to King Absalom, for you are a guest in Israel, a foreigner in exile. ²⁰ You arrived only recently, and should I force you today to wander with us? I don't even know where we will go. Go on back and take your kinsmen with you, and may the Lord show you His unfailing love and faithfulness. [NLT]

- David tests Ittai to make sure he understands this commitment.
- David could only offer his company and hardship to Ittai as David wandered the mountains of Israel in rejection.
- David freed Ittai from any future responsibility toward him. Offered an exit strategy

Ittai the Gittite shines on the pages of Biblical history: II Sam. 15:21

"But Ittai replied to the king, 'As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be.'"

This Gentile's testimony of fidelity to David is one of the great confessions of faith and faithfulness in the Bible. His response was reminiscent of Ruth to Naomi when Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her people.

Ittai, an exile, was born in a different kingdom but transferred his life into a new kingdom. Ittai had also counted the cost of his action.

He had already willfully decided three key issues for his life. He determined -

- who his King was • to whom his allegiance belonged, and • to whom his life belonged.

II Sam. 15:22 So David said to Ittai, "Go, and cross over."

Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who *were* with him crossed over. David put himself between Ittai and other followers in case any armed group with Absalom would pursue David.

Because of Ittai's devotion to David, Ittai will be given a position as a commander of the armies of Israel. [II Sam. 18:2]. However, before this honor was given to Ittai, his commitment to be with the king no matter what the cost meant passing through the Kidron Valley, the valley of mourning; valley of the shadow of death, toward the desert.

II Sam. 15:22-23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over:
the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron,
and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

Challenge: Be a modern day Ittai: As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there assuredly shall your servant be!"

Naomi, bitter from loss, offers her daughters-in-law an exit strategy.

Naomi blesses them with hesed while feeling abandoned herself—seeking their good at her cost.

Hesed: loyal love, stubborn mercy, covenant faithfulness—love without an exit strategy.

Paul Miller: Hesed is translated "steadfast love." It combines commitment with sacrifice.

Hesed is one-way love. Love without an exit strategy. When you love with hesed love, you bind yourself to the object of your love, no matter what the response is. So, if the object of your love snaps at you, you still love that person. If you've had an argument with your spouse in which you were slighted or not heard, you refuse to retaliate through silence or withholding your affection. Your response to the other person is entirely independent of how that person has treated you. Hesed is a stubborn love.

Example of Hesed Love: David & Mephibosheth

The Promise: King David had made a solemn promise to his dearest friend, Jonathan, Saul's son, that he would always show kindness to Jonathan's family after his death.

Jonathan's Son: Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and the grandson of King Saul, was crippled in both feet as a child when his nurse dropped him.

A Royal Threat: In that era, a new king would typically execute all descendants of the previous royal line to secure their throne. Mephibosheth was the last surviving heir of Saul's family, making him a potential threat to David's kingship.

A Search for Kindness: After becoming king, David deliberately searched for any surviving members of Saul's house to show God's kindness through his action.

Ziba's Role: A former servant of Saul, Ziba, informed David of Mephibosheth, who was living in poverty in the city of Lo-debar.

A Promise of Restoration: David sent for Mephibosheth, who was terrified, expecting to be killed. He fell on his face and prostrated himself. David assured him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather, and you shall eat at my table always".

Adoption into the Royal Family: Mephibosheth became like one of the king's sons, receiving his grandfather Saul's lands and property, with Ziba and his family working the land for him. He lived in Jerusalem and ate daily at David's table.

A Grateful and Loyal Heart: Despite his physical condition and humble background, Mephibosheth was grateful and responded to David with humility.

The prodigal son's father is a profound example of hesed love, which is a Hebrew concept of God's compassionate, loyal, and unconditional love that is expressed through actions like deep compassion, lavish forgiveness, and extravagant celebration of a repentant sinner's return. The father's loving kindness, his act of running to embrace and clothe his returning son, and the extravagant feast demonstrate hesed, reflecting God's similar overwhelming and unfailing love for humanity.

Hesed is not simply a feeling but a powerful act of loyalty and compassion that intervenes on behalf of the loved one, even when they don't deserve it.

Words that encompass hesed love: faithfulness, loyalty, covenant keeping, truth,
tender mercies, kindness, long-suffering

God often moves not through loud miracles,

but through the quiet, stubborn, loyal love of people who refuse to leave.

Ruth was offered an exit but refused to take it. She responded with humility.

Ittai was offered an exit but refused to take it. He responded with humility.

This message connects Ruth's radical commitment to the ultimate *hesed* of Jesus Christ, who refused His exit on the cross to become our entrance into grace.

In a disposable world, God shows up through loyal love—hesed—that refuses the exit and embodies His presence in our mess.

Matt. 26:53-54 Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?
How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say that it must happen this way?*"

The ultimate act of hesed is Christ's sacrifice on the cross, where He endured suffering for the sins of humanity.

Rom. 5:8 But God commends [demonstrates] His love toward us,
in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Challenge and Invitation: Discipleship is placed squarely on deliberate choice.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me,
let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

- This action is the start of self-denial.

This call to discipleship involves a commitment to self-denial,

a willingness to endure hardship for His sake, and conformity to His example.

- May I not take the exit ramp.