

“RUTH’S RESILIENCE: THE GOD WHO MEETS US HALFWAY”

RUTH 1-4

Ruth 1

Naomi Loses Her Husband and Sons

1 In the days when the judges ruled,^[a] there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. **2** The man’s name was Elimelek, his wife’s name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

DEFINITION OF RESILIENCE/RESILIENCY

re·sil·ience
/rəˈzilyəns/

noun

noun: **resilience**; noun: **resiliency**; plural noun:
resiliencies

1.

the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. "the often remarkable resilience of so many British institutions"

2.

the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity. "nylon is excellent in wearability and resilience"

Similar: flexibility; pliability; suppleness; plasticity; elasticity,

What is resilience?

Life may not come with a map, but everyone will experience twists and turns, from everyday challenges to traumatic events with more lasting impact, like the death of a loved one, a life-altering accident, or a serious illness.

Each change affects people differently, bringing a unique flood of thoughts, strong emotions and uncertainty. Yet people generally adapt well over time to life-changing situations and stressful situations—in part thanks to resilience.

Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and

relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors.

As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

While these adverse events, much like rough river waters, are certainly painful and difficult, they don't have to determine the outcome of your life. There are many aspects of your life you can control, modify, and grow with. That's the role of resilience. Becoming more resilient not only helps you get through difficult circumstances, it also empowers you to grow and even improve your life along the way.

Like building a muscle, increasing your resilience takes time and intentionality. Focusing on four core components — **connection, wellness, healthy thinking, and meaning**—can empower you to withstand and learn from difficult and traumatic experiences.

Wikipedia article

Psychological resilience is the ability to mentally or emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly.

Resilience exists when the person uses "mental processes and behaviors in promoting personal

assets and protecting self from the potential negative effects of stressors".

In simpler terms, [psychological](#) resilience exists in people who develop psychological and behavioral capabilities that allow them to remain calm during crises/chaos and to move on from the incident without long-term negative consequences.

Resilience is a well of inner resources that allows you to weather the difficulties and challenges you encounter without unnecessary mental, emotional, or physical distress. (Amazon Book on resilience).

Nelson Mandela once said, "Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."

In Resilience: Hard-Won Wisdom for Living a Better Life, Eric Greitens Navy SEAL says, "The first step to building resilience is to take responsibility for who you are and for your life. If you're not willing to do that, stop wasting your time reading this letter. The essence of responsibility is the acceptance of the consequences — good and bad — of your actions."

In the book of Ruth we see these qualities exemplified by two women, Ruth and Naomi. This book shows that with the help of God it is possible to overcome the deepest tragedies and the biggest losses.

It demonstrates that when we experience tragedy we have two choices: either we let ourselves be overcome and overwhelmed by loss. Or we bounce back, take charge of our lives and undertake the necessary steps to get back on our feet and find our new normal.

In the light of the book of Ruth we learn that:

Resilient people:

- 1) Suffer loss and adversity. It's an inevitable part of life.
- 2) Use these inevitable experiences of loss to grow stronger and better as human beings
- 3) Resist blaming God (Naomi's initial response)
- 4) Resist blaming themselves
- 5) Are kind to themselves and tolerant of their imperfections
- 6) Don't cling to others. Don't impose their burdens on others
- 7) Neither do they become overly independent either
- 8) They don't isolate themselves

9) They seek community and are not afraid to ask for help (Ruth and Naomi support each other and live together)

10) They do not allow themselves to become selfish, and actually seek to help others, even in the midst of their pain (Naomi and Ruth both exemplify this).

11) This idea of *generosity* is very important, and will encounter us over and over again. Selfishness and excessive concern for ourselves will only lead to more failure and loss.

Ruth 2

Ruth Meets Boaz in the Grain Field

2 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." **3** So she went out, **entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters.** As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

4 Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!"

“The Lord bless you!” they answered.

5 Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, “Who does that young woman belong to?”

6 The overseer replied, “She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. 7 She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.’ *She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.*”

8 So Boaz said to Ruth, “My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. 9 Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”

11 Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12 May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

Resilient people:

12) *Are willing to start small* on the way to recovery.

13) Have long term vision. They know that healing and recovery (financial, emotional, spiritual, family/relational) take time. We cannot, and should not rush it.

14) Are willing to cut their losses (in divorce, partnerships), compromise, free themselves, and live to fight another day.

15) Are realistic in their expectations of life. Life is naturally hard and often cruel. We live in a fallen world.

John 16:32,33:

32 “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. **You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.**

33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. **In this world you will have trouble (tribulation, KJV). But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

“**Why is this happening to me?**” is not a good question to ask when we’re going through crises or difficult situations. **Job 5:7:**

7

*Yet man is born to trouble
as surely as sparks fly upward.*

The sooner we accept the fact that hardship and suffering are part of every existence, the more resilient we can become, and the easier we will be able to deal with difficult circumstances.

Ecclesiastes 9

A Common Destiny for All

9 So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. **2** All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad,^[a] the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

As it is with the good,

so with the sinful;

as it is with those who take oaths,

so with those who are afraid to take them.

3 This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all.

7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. **8** Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. **9** Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your

toilsome labor under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

**¹¹ I have seen something else under the sun:
The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all.**

*¹² Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come:
As fish are caught in a cruel net,
or birds are taken in a snare,
so people are trapped by evil times
that fall unexpectedly upon them.*

Modern psychologist teach about this idea of accepting that “stuff happens” (they often use a less elegant term) as if this were a psychological revelation and a modern discovery. But this is as old as Time itself, and the Bible certainly has been teaching this for over 3000 years.

“SO:” (the conclusion in Ecclesiastes 9)

7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. 8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. 9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days.

For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. *10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,* for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

This idea of tragedy, failure, setbacks and loss being an integral part of life, and even inevitable, would appear to be one of the most powerful sources of resilience in the human being.

This attitude of realism and soberness, even modesty, regarding what we expect from life would seem to be at the foundation of resiliency and emotional health.

Interestingly enough, the sooner we accommodate ourselves to this humble expectation of what life can offer, the more this seems to pave the way for success, recovery from loss, contentment and even happiness.

For the believer, one final, extraordinary resource offers itself: the fact that God's mercy and provision will very often meet us on the way.

As we do our due diligence and undertake our own modest efforts to find healing and take advantage of modest opportunities that come our way, God's providence will often encounter us and open the door for miraculous restoration and surprising opportunities.

What is required is that we do our part, that we recognize that we have the power to begin the process. We don't need to have it all together, or to perform perfectly. Accepting our inability to change our circumstances is often the beginning of transformation and success.

The believer trusts that as we begin walking by faith, God will show up and prove himself faithful by opening the sea in front of us.

This is the ultimate lesson of Ruth and Naomi's experience.