

Family Bible Series for May 7: There is no substitute for caring for one another

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There is no substitute for caring for one another

- Ruth 1:15-17; 2:2-7, 10-12; 4:13-17

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Adoniram Judson was a Baptist missionary to Burma for almost 40 years. His motto was “devoted for life.”

During the month of May, our lessons will center upon women of devotion. Each Sunday, we will look at a devout woman from the pages of Scripture who served God faithfully. This week, we will look at Ruth, who was a woman of character, grace and service. From her example, we learn about caring for other people.

Commitment to care for others (Ruth 1:15-17)

It was a sad scenario for three women during the days of the judges. Naomi and her husband lived with their two sons in Moab.

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Sadly, all three men died and left three widows. Naomi planned to return to her homeland of Judah and insisted her two widowed daughters-in-law remain in Moab and remarry. One of the women, Orpah, did so. However, the other daughter-in-law, Ruth, committed to continue with Naomi and care for her.

Ruth uttered the famous words, which we often hear in wedding ceremonies: “Don’t urge me to leave you or turn back from you. Where you go, I will go; and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God, my God” (v. 16). Ruth committed to die with Naomi and pledged that only death would separate them (v. 17).

How do you define “commitment”? One minister defined the word by saying: “Commitment is offering God a blank sheet of paper with your name signed at the bottom of the page. Then, you allow him to fill in the blanks.”

Often, Christians are called upon to care for others. This frequently involves a commitment on their part to be a caregiver. Yet, God will bless them and empower their care.

Take the initiative to care for others (Ruth 2:2-7)

After Ruth committed to care for her mother-in-law, they returned to Naomi's home in Bethlehem. Once there, Ruth took the initiative to provide for the more aged Naomi. It was not easy for two women to make a living in a male-dominated society, so Ruth went to the fields to gather up leftover grain (v. 2)

When the owner of the field, Boaz, inquired about Ruth, the foreman replied she was the Moabitess who came back to Judah with Naomi. The foreman noticed Ruth's aggressiveness by stating, "She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter" (v. 7).

Often, Christians will meet the needs of another person if they are backed into a corner and forced to do so. However, God blesses those people who take the initiative and are aggressive in caring for someone else and meeting needs. Is there someone in need whom God has placed upon your heart? Take the initiative to care for needs.

Sacrifice in the care of others (Ruth 2:10-12)

Boaz was impressed with Ruth's commitment. He invited her to stay with his servant girls. She wondered aloud why she, a foreigner, had found such favor in his eyes (v. 10). Boaz mentioned the sacrifice Ruth made in order to take care of her mother-in-law (v. 11). He said: "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord" (v. 12).

Both God and others notice when you sacrifice to care for another. Many Christians must sacrifice personally in order to care for others. Whether it is an aging parent, raising a grandchild or some other need, God will bless such a sacrifice.

Elisabeth Elliot was the wife of former missionary Jim Elliot. They served among the tribal people of Ecuador until Jim was killed by the natives. As a new widow with a 10-month-old daughter, Elisabeth chose to remain among the savage tribe and show them Christ. Elisabeth once said: "To be a follower of Christ means, sooner or later, a personal encounter with the cross. And the cross always entails loss."

God blesses those who care for others (Ruth 4:13-17)

God blessed Ruth tremendously for her commitment to care. Other women of the community noticed Ruth's godly devotion and declared to Naomi that her daughter-in-law had been better to her than seven sons (v. 15).

Ruth married Boaz, and they had a son, Obed, who became the grandfather of David, one of the greatest kings in Israel's history. Also, God blessed the lineage of Ruth and brought forth his Son, Jesus, as a descendant. God will honor those who selflessly care for others.

The elderly woman stood in a long line at the post office. Eventually, she made her way to the front of the line and asked for a book of stamps. A gentleman nearby said, "There is a machine in front that will give you a book of stamps and you will not have to stand in line." The woman replied, "But, the machine won't ask me about my arthritis."

There is no substitute for the human touch. Perhaps God wants to use you to care for someone in need beginning today.

Discussion questions

- What is the most difficult part of caring for another?

- What sacrifices are you willing to make to care for others?
- How have you seen God's blessings when you care for others?



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