

# Explore the Bible: Redeemed and Secure

February 8, 2017

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Feb. 26 focuses on Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17.*

As time has passed so quickly, I now find myself the father of two grown sons and two grandchildren. I hear many others my age often ponder how life got by them so quickly so that their babies became grown adults.

Now and then, I find myself wondering what kind of spiritual legacy I will leave my children and my grandchildren. What will they know of God and of Christ because I was their father and grandfather? These ponderings are common, especially among people of faith.

Many of us don't care as much about what we leave our children in terms of financial inheritance as we care about leaving them a witness of faith that fought the good fight and finished the race. Money and fortune can be gained and lost. Faith sustains us no matter the changes that come our way.

Most of the things we want our children to possess, especially values, are caught more than taught. However, when given the chance to speak and the right moment in which to do so, one of the things I have strived hard to drive home to my sons has been that, when it's all said and done, no one should matter more than your family.

Your family will be there for you when everyone else walks away, and we should be there for our family just the same.

## **Old Testament perspective on family**

The Old Testament is chock-full of imperfect people. Even our earliest faith

forefathers, from Moses to Noah to David, committed sins that forever shaped their destinies, but God used to bring his purposes to completion. God historically has used even man's worst betrayals to accomplish his divine will, and God still does.

Yet the Old Testament also is full of people who give witness to the primacy of family. If there were ever a day more than the one in which we live when this witness is needed, it would be difficult to discern when that might be.

In a discussion with a professional colleague, we were bemoaning that so many children being raised in this generation have no clue what "normal" family might be. Another colleague chimed in, "What's normal anymore?"

It's a sad question but one we must not neglect at least attempting to answer by the way we live. There is such cross-pollination today between biblical morals and the morality of our culture that we are likely raising the most confused generation in the history of humanity.

### **Honoring promises, giving priority to family**

It is easily agreed marital standards matured beyond those in Ruth's day by the time of Christ. It can be confusing to read Old Testament texts and get lost in the details of the intermarriage of family. We must dig deeper to get to the central meaning of this text.

Beyond the oddity to our generation of Boaz being willing to marry a relative, the larger point is that neither Naomi nor Boaz were willing to allow Ruth to be abandoned to a life without the protection of family. In Ruth's day and time, to be widowed and have no family was akin to a life sentence in a prison of immorality not of her choosing.

In response to that concern, Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you" (Ruth 3:1). For an aging mother-in-law to seek familial security was the equivalent of purchasing a life insurance policy for

her. That's why Naomi pointed out Boaz to Ruth.

Once Ruth disclosed her identity to Boaz, he took up the torch of building security for Ruth. Boaz attempted to get another kinsman to take on responsibility for becoming Ruth's husband. However, because of the man's previous commitments, he could not take Ruth as his wife and left the responsibility to Boaz. It was then Boaz kept his promise and took Ruth as his wife.

In an interesting twist of faith history, it was in this marriage that Jesus' family tree was rooted. Jesus, the Savior of the world, could trace his own faith back to two people who so prioritized family that one man was willing to change the course of his life in order to keep the promise of family for Ruth.

### **Discovering our spiritual DNA**

For Christmas this past year, my wife gave me a kit that will allow me to trace my DNA back many generations. I know very little about my family beyond my great-grandparents. My paternal family migrated to Texas from Indiana, where they were Mennonites. Because there were no Mennonite churches in southeast Texas at the turn of the 20th century, half of the family became Methodist, and the other half became Baptist.

I want to know more. I want to know as much as I can about my physical and spiritual origin. I can't wait to see the test results.

What I do know of my paternal family is that, when my parents, grandparents and great-grandparents suffered the Great Depression, two World Wars and even the Spanish-American War, their faith survived intact.

I am who I am today because my family kept promises to each other and to God. Through things they taught, but more because of how they lived, I am

who I am today.

Often, we all-but skip over the first chapter of Matthew in our hurry to get to the Gospel. When we do so, we overlook the family tree of Jesus. It's a tree that includes the names of Boaz and Ruth, as well as others we might have written off as scoundrels.

Yet, it was from that very human family that our Savior descended, was born into this world to be crucified for our sins and raised from the dead for our eternal hope.

When researching our hope, family is a great place to start looking.

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