



Daily Devotionals

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RUTH 1:8-14 STEADFAST LOVE

Written by Rev. Dr. Charles D. (Chuck) Alley, Ph.D., Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Va.

⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me." ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹¹ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?" ¹² Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— ¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD'S hand has gone out against me!" ¹⁴ At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.

The depression of emptiness can lead us to despair and in our despair we isolate ourselves and perfect our emptiness. Naomi is well aware that her life is empty, as is her future due to the emptiness of her womb. All that remains to her are two widowed daughters-in-law for whom she cannot provide. Perhaps she is thinking that the women are just saying with her because they think they will be taken care of in Israel or maybe she just wants to be totally alone and get it over with. Whatever her thinking, she releases them from any feelings of obligation by telling them to go home. Ruth refuses to leave, highlighting her selfless love and faithfulness to Naomi through which she is even willing to remain with her mother-in-law in her desolation.

This is no dime-store romance novel, but a love story where one is willing to give up her life for another just because she has a relationship with that one. At this point in the story it is a love that costs the lover everything even though there is no indication of her receiving any return. As Jesus later said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

The message of Scripture is that we need never be totally alone for we are loved by God in Christ. Even when we turn away from him, he does not turn away from us. But there is also the other side of the message. Do we love Jesus enough to cling to him no matter the circumstances? Are we willing to acknowledge him when it is to our advantage, but quick to diminish, ignore or deny our relationship with him when we deem the cost to be too high? Yes, he has died for us. How willing are we to give up ourselves for him?

Lord Jesus, you have demonstrated your love for me by dying on the cross and you have promised to be with me always and under all circumstances. Empower me through the Holy Spirit to live a life that demonstrates my love for you. Deliver me from depression and despair through the knowledge of your steadfast love for me. Give me the love for you and my neighbors that I might manifest a selfless love in my life that will serve as an icon of your love in this world. May I cling to you at all times and under all circumstances. Amen.

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