

*Heart Condition*  
**FIVE**

## *The Fixed Heart*



**RUTH**



# *The Fixed Heart*

## RUTH

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.  
Ruth 1:16



### *pulse point*

A fixed heart  
decisively  
follows God.



### *Analysis*

Ruth was an example of someone who was unshakable and noteworthy for her steadfastness in the face of hardship. Learning to develop the quality of steadfastness is vital to having a heart that is fixed on Christ. It is possible to be dedicated and unmovable in unstable times.

### *Ruth*

Ruth was from the country of Moab and was the wife of Mahlon. Her husband Mahlon was the son of Elimelech and Naomi. Ruth also had a sister-in-law named Orpah, who was married to Mahlon's only brother, Chilion. The Bible doesn't mention how the men died, but simply states that Elimelech died, followed by his sons, leaving three widows: Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah (Ruth 1:3–5). Naomi ordered Ruth and Orpah to "return each to her mother's house" (Ruth 1:8). Orpah wept but obeyed and returned to her family. Ruth did not.

“And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. Ruth 1:4”

### *Observation One*

**Ruth made a ..... decision in choosing to follow Naomi.**

“And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. Ruth 1:8–9”

Naomi was in the depths of grief, and it is possible that she didn’t even want the company of her daughters-in-law at this point in her life. Imagine it: Naomi’s husband Elimelech died, leaving her with their two sons. Then the sons marry, and before they could have families of their own, each son passed away. The daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, were reminders of her loss.

Ruth had an opportunity to “return to her mother’s house” and go on with her life. Granted, Ruth was also a new widow dealing with grief of her own. Naomi’s suggestion included that the daughters-in-law “find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.” In other words, perhaps Orpah and Ruth could remarry one day. This is a suggestion commonly made to younger widows in particular, but it is not always





the desire of the widow to have another husband. Because people are irreplaceable, remarriage may not have appealed to Ruth at that point in her life.

Ruth and Naomi had a special relationship, which obviously factored into Ruth’s decision to go with Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1: 18–19). Nothing Naomi said could change Ruth’s mind. This had to have been a difficult choice. Naomi was bitter with grief (Ruth 1: 20–21), and Ruth was going to live among people who were not her own. How many of us would choose a strange land over our own family and friends? This decision was born in a *fixed heart*.

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RELEVANCE ONE

Following God includes making selfless .....

“Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. Psalm 63:7–8

He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour. Proverbs 21:21”

The phrase “followeth hard” means that we are going to *cling to* God no matter what. It also means that we will *keep close to Him*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Strong. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Updated Edition, Hendrickson, 2009—“followeth hard.”

Selfish choices can lead us down paths that can have painful outcomes. Since life already delivers doses of pain, there is no need for us to add to that. Selfless choices bring blessings to our lives as we live in a way that honors Christ.

Following God may take us places that we would not choose to go, but once we see what He has in mind for us, we wouldn't trade it for anything. God has a way of giving us more than we deserve in exchange for simple obedience. Following God is following righteousness, and He rewards us with *life, righteousness, and honour*.

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*Observation Two*

Ruth focused on meeting the ..... needs.

“And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. Ruth 2:2

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Ruth 2:8-9”



## define

The *gleanings* were portions that fell to the ground in the harvesting process. Those who needed food could come after the reapers to collect the gleanings for themselves.



Because Ruth knew that she and Naomi would need food, she focused on meeting that need by harvesting from the nearby barleycorn fields. The word for *corn* also refers to grains in general, making it likely that Ruth was actually harvesting ears of barleycorn.<sup>2</sup> Ruth 2:7 refers to the *crop* as *sheaves*, which is consistent with barley.

Ruth wasn't working as a laborer for the owner of the field. She was merely gathering up the leftovers after the reapers had harvested the crop (Ruth 2:3). Since God had already instructed the Israelites to leave some of the gleanings for the poor (Lev. 23:22), the law protected Ruth as she gathered up the leftover crops.

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## RELEVANCE TWO

Staying properly ..... is vital to maintaining a fixed heart.



The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Psalm 145:14–16

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1–2



<sup>2</sup> James Strong. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Updated Edition, Hendrickson, 2009—"corn."

Our daily lives are so busy that we're often trying to do several things at a time. We call this multitasking, but we're really trading focus for a sidetracked approach to living. We tend to go from one task to another, creating stress due to several incomplete projects.

What would happen if we gave up the habit of multitasking and asked God to give us a priority for the next hour instead? Notice that we're not asking for priorities in the plural, but for a single item to be finished before moving on to the next important item. God isn't tangling us up in knots. We're doing that to ourselves through multifocal living, which is living without a single focal point. God knows what we need each day, and He has a plan for every moment of each day.

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### *Observation Three*

**Ruth had an excellent .....**

“Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. Ruth 2:10–11



The servant that was in charge of the reapers had heard about Ruth, describing her as the “Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab” (Ruth 2:6). There must have been additional conversation surrounding Ruth’s arrival, because Boaz knew that Ruth had been inseparable from her mother-in-law since the death of Ruth’s husband. This was an unusual arrangement, and it was obvious to Boaz that Ruth had made some sacrifices in her decision to follow Naomi.

Ruth was unaware that her reputation had preceded her, but she soon found out that the kindness that she had extended to her mother-in-law was about to be returned to her. Boaz was not just a friend of the family; he was a relative of Naomi’s late husband, Elimelech. Along with Ruth’s stellar reputation, this relationship also provided for Ruth’s well-being. Ruth’s display of lovingkindness to her mother-in-law had benefits provided by God.

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**RELEVANCE THREE**

**Reputation and moral ..... are related.**

“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. Proverbs 22:1”



Reputation develops as people observe our lives and choices. Moral character demonstrates who we really are both publicly and privately. Ruth had a reputation for being a steadfast and caring daughter-in-law, and that reputation came from many positive character qualities that were already in place before her fiery trial.

The importance of developing godly character is highly underrated. Our character, or the lack thereof, affects our personal and professional lives. Character builds our reputation not the other way around. A bad reputation reveals a lack of character, and a good reputation is a byproduct of good character. Ruth wasn't serving Naomi to build her reputation. She was simply living out the contents of her heart.

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## *Observation Four*

**God blessed Ruth's .....**

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. Ruth 4:13

And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David. Ruth 4:21–22

And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse. Matthew 1:5

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Ruth could never have known where her devotion to Naomi would lead, but God blessed Ruth's devotion with more than Ruth sacrificed. Ultimately, Ruth went from widow to wife and mother. What started out as a journey of grieving became a story of great rejoicing. God knew all along that this was His plan, even though it had some very difficult plot twists.

The marriage of the widow Ruth to Boaz also shows how God is unlimited in His choices. God will use the lives He chooses, imperfections included. Boaz's mother was *Rahab the harlot* (Josh. 6:17), who is listed in the lineage of Christ as well. God chose people who had no royal lineage of their own to be a part of His royal lineage. This left no room for boasting of heritage of any kind. Ruth was a Moabite, and Boaz had a Jewish father and an Amorite mother. God selected these people to be a part of the greatest lineage known to humankind. Clearly, God sees differently than we see. We tend to consider a person's family background as an asset or liability; God makes His selections based on His will.

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RELEVANCE FOUR

The devoted life is the ..... life.

“Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear. Psalm 119:38

But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. Psalm 4:3”

We prefer our lives to be laid out in a plan that is appealing to us. Following God would be so much easier if He would only consult us before mapping out our lives. However, it doesn't work this way, and if we're ever going to live a devoted Christian life, one of the first things we need to surrender to God is our idea bank. We have so many ideas and plans, but God has the Master Plan, complete with His full view of the future.

A devoted life is not devoted to self but to Christ. True devotion is yielding our lives to God as a form of worship. Do we worship God with our lives, or do we just live and “pray” our list of instructions to God? If we're devoted to Christ, He becomes our central focus. God gives the best direction for our lives. Self-direction is like chasing mirages; we think we're seeing clearly, but it's really just our imaginations.

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## *Your Life*

It is often true that we tend to overlook the things that are beneficial for us, while embracing things that rob us. Like a child who would prefer candy to vegetables, we are choosing the candy of unfocused living over the spiritually healthy option of the fixed heart.

When anything or anyone has more of our devotion than Christ does, we will struggle with a divided heart. God is worthy of our dedication, devotion, and eager loyalty. Ruth's life is a picture of the rewarding outcome of the fixed heart. Pause and pray for wisdom to develop a fixed heart. Jot down any areas that may need adjustments to improve your focus.





## Copy That

A fixed heart is a peaceful and purposeful heart. When we focus on yielding to His direction, we benefit from our submission to His will. Copy these verses that are related to the fixed, focused heart.

“O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Psalm 108:1

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“Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. Psalm 112:6–7

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“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10 *(Note: the word right is the same Hebrew word as fixed.)*

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## Apply

- **Continue reading your Proverb-a-Day.** If you have been struggling to make this habit consistent, try using an audio Bible. The main goal is to be in the Word of God daily.
- **Acts 4:32–5:11:** Study this passage to prepare for the lesson on Ananias and Sapphira for the condition of *The Deceitful Heart*.



*pause*

“It is the unseen and the spiritual in people that determines the outward and the actual.”

—Oswald Chambers





## *Study Notes*

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.

