



Let Your Gentleness Be Known to Everyone

*By Douglas Scalise
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There are times in my life when I wonder if I am accomplishing anything devoting myself to preaching and teaching, because sometimes I will talk about a subject, like gentleness, and immediately afterward someone will act or speak in a harsh or condemning fashion. I feel as if I might as well have been speaking Swahili, because there is no personal application, even on the day the words were spoken; they were left harmlessly on the church floor as people leave.

One time I led a Bible study in Ocean Park, Maine, on Paul's letter to the Philippians. The last day was about chapter four and I talked about this verse, "Let your gentleness be known to everyone." In addition to Jill, my father came to the Bible study each morning and my mother was also there on the last morning. We walked home afterwards and when we got to my parents' cottage, one of their dogs was on their bed. My father was angry about this and he proceeded to hit Keke *with his Bible* while I said to no avail, "Let your gentleness be known to everyone." My father, sensing my disapproval and perhaps feeling a little embarrassed, said

something like, "I thought she needed a strong dose of the Word."

Now I know it may not seem gentle to share a story like that about my dad when he is not here to defend himself, but I was used in illustrations by him for years! As I have reflected on that brief episode, it occurred to me how characteristic my dad's response has been for Christians and the church, especially as we are perceived by those, like Keke, who are not Christian themselves. Called to imitate the gentleness of Jesus, we are far more adept at responding in an angry, harsh, condemning, judgmental fashion. It seems some Christians find it easier to be angry about the sins and failings of others than to gently try to love them in Jesus' name.

A University of California study demonstrated that 93% of verbal communication occurs through sound (inflection, tonality, voice variety, emphasis, and energy) and look (which includes the speaker's appearance, gestures, movements, and visual aids). Only 7% of the communication is the content. If one were to analyze the tone, facial expressions, and body language of people who are professed

Christians on television, I wonder what message is coming through. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:25 that we are to be "correcting opponents with *gentleness*. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth." How often do we do this or see this practiced? From what I can see, there is not a lot of correcting opponents with gentleness in our culture. Sinners were comfortable in the presence of Jesus, who is holier than any of us, because the message they clearly got from him was a message of gentle love and acceptance that encouraged, enabled, and inspired them to repent. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am *gentle* and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

Gentleness has fallen on hard times. It almost seems gentleness isn't seen as a desirable quality anymore. Men and women want to be strong, assertive, and tough. Who wants to be known as gentle? "Gentleman" used to be a term to describe a man who had learned how to act respectfully and properly with other people. Now we no longer identify people as "ladies and gentlemen," terms that at

continued

least had hopefully a *little* to do with one's behavior and conduct, but as "men and women" or "you guys."

But gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, a Christian virtue, which we are to cultivate, develop, and pursue. In 1 Timothy 6:11, we are told to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, *gentleness*."

One day a young man was walking along an isolated road when he heard something like a crying sound. He couldn't tell for sure what the sound was, but it seemed to be coming from underneath a bridge. As he approached the bridge, the sound got louder and then he saw a pathetic sight. Lying in the muddy river bed was a puppy about two months old. It had a gash on its head and was covered with mud. Its front legs were swollen where they had been tightly bound with cords.

The young man was immediately moved with compassion and wanted to help the dog, but as he approached, the dog stopped crying, snarled his lip and growled. But the young man did not give up. He sat down and started gently talking to the dog. It took a long time, but eventually the dog stopped growling and the man was able to inch forward. He eventually touched the dog and began unwrapping the tightly bound cord. The young man carried the dog home, cared for its wounds, and gave it food and water and a warm bed. Even with all of this, the dog continued to snarl and growl every time its savior approached, but the young man continued to treat the dog with gentle kindness. Weeks went by and the man continued caring for the puppy. Then one day as the man approached, the dog wagged its tail. Consistent love and gentle kindness had won, and a lifelong friendship of trust and loyalty began.¹

In our relationships—whether parents with children, grandparents and grandchildren, husbands and wives, friends, or even animals—gentleness is a greatly desired and

highly effective quality. It is like oil lubricating an engine. A good mechanic will tell you that changing the oil in your car every 3,000 miles is the single most important thing you can do for the long-term care of your engine. Regular preventative maintenance, with gentleness in our words and deeds, is one of the most important things we can do for the long-term care of smooth-running relationships.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with *gentleness* born of wisdom....The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, *gentle*, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. (James 3:13, 17)

The parents of a young son wanted to teach him responsibility, so they required him to phone home when he arrived at a friend's house a few blocks away. He began to forget, however, as he grew more confident in his ability to get there safely. The first time he forgot, his dad called to be sure he had arrived. He was told the next time it happened, he would have to come home. The father continued, "A few days later, however, the telephone again lay silent, and I knew if he was going to learn he would have to be disciplined. But I didn't want to punish him. I went to the telephone, regretting that his great time would have to be spoiled by his lack of contact with his father. As I dialed, I prayed for wisdom. 'Treat him like I treat you,' the Lord seemed to say. With that, as the telephone rang one time, I hung up. A few seconds later, the phone rang. It was my son. 'I'm here, Dad!' 'What took you so long to call?' I asked. 'We started playing and I forgot. But Dad, I heard the phone ring once and I remembered.' 'I'm glad you remem-

bered,' I said. 'Have fun.' How often does our own lack of gentleness reflect our mistaken belief in a God who enjoys punishing us when we fail to do what we should? The truth is it takes a lot more strength to be gentle than it does to lash out in anger.

When Paul tells us to let our gentleness be known to everyone, he is reminding us that people, especially children, are watching us and learning from us all the time, even when we aren't aware of it:

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I saw you hang my first painting on
the refrigerator, and I wanted to
paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I saw you feed a stray cat, and I
thought it was good to be kind to
animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I saw you make my favorite cake
just for me, and I knew that little
things are special things.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I heard you say a prayer, and I
believed there is a God I could
always talk to.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I felt you kiss me good night, and
I felt loved.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I saw tears come from your eyes,
and I learned that sometimes
things hurt, but it's all right to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I saw that you cared, and I wanted
to be everything that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking,
I looked...and wanted to say
thanks for all the things I saw
when you thought I wasn't
looking.²

The fact of the matter is people are always looking and we learn from what we see and experience. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit others need from us, especially when they are hurting or have made a mistake. Isn't it nice to experience gentleness from others when we have done

something wrong or when we're hurting?

Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1–2, “My friends if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Paul says that one of the signs someone has received the Holy Spirit is the ability to minister to and restore someone in a spirit of gentleness, not a spirit of anger. Evelyn Underhill wrote in *The Spiritual Life*, “All our action must be *peaceful, gentle, and strong*. If we desire a simple test of the quality of our spiritual life, a consideration of the *tranquility, gentleness, and strength with which we deal with the circumstances of our outward life* will serve us better than anything that is based on the loftiness of our religious notions, or fervor of religious feelings.” Gentleness flows from the recognition that we too are tempted, we also transgress and fail in our efforts at becoming like Jesus.

If our heart and spirit are right, when we fail to do what we should, the Holy Spirit will convict and burden us enough. What we need from others is not more condemnation but gentleness. “What were you thinking about? How could you!” These are not gentle phrases. It seems to me one of the qualities of gentleness is the ability to respond calmly instead of with condemnation.

A man related the following story about his wife:

I remember a time when I was sitting on the antique window seat that Helen treasured through the years. Because the original fabric had worn through, Helen had recently recovered it in a handsome corduroy. A heavy storm was in progress, and I sat staring at the rain pelting down on dead autumn leaves. The gloomy look of the garden seemed to match the mood of hopelessness that had come over me. Problems at work had made me fearful of the future. Basic questions that surface with the coming of middle age had made me fearful of life itself.

I started to light my pipe and accidentally spilled some hot ash, which burned a hole right in the center of the window seat cover. Seeing what had happened, Helen calmly threaded a needle and stitched a beautiful flower over the charred spot. When I looked at the finished work, I realized it was a striking symbol of our long life together, and my spirits began to soar. I had married a repairer of broken spirits, a healer of wounds, a woman whose very presence was an antidote to fear. Moreover, I understood, perhaps for the very first time, that it was Helen's deep and abiding trust in God's goodness that made it possible for her to be a source of light and a harbinger of hope in times of darkness and despair.³

“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and *gentleness*, with patience, bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:1–2). If you have a washing machine, there is a gentle cycle for very delicate items. The machine doesn't spin as hard and it has a lighter rinse so the garment isn't damaged. People also do better when treated with the gentle cycle. I began with a dog story, which was kind of the opposite of the television show about the dog whisperer. There was also a movie, *The Horse Whisperer*. There is something to be said for being gentle to preserve relationships and to communicate with animals and with other people. Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

*O Lord, may I speak with the gentleness of love.
Let me speak with understanding and hope.
Take away all thought of prejudice and judgment.
Take away doubt, anger, and self-searching motives.
Purify my heart and mind that my soul may touch
The souls of others with your love. ❧*

¹ Alice Gray, *Stories for the Heart & More Stories for the Heart* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 98.

² William J. Bausch, *A World of Stories for Preachers & Teachers* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 327.

³ Bausch, 347.

My Choice, My Story

By Meredith Hunter



When I was a young lady, I met a young man at church who intrigued me, charmed me, and eventually won my heart. He was gregarious, self-assured, charismatic, engaging, intelligent, driven,

fun, creative, romantic, and he was refreshingly passionate about the things of God. Married for over twenty years, on the surface my life looked charmed. I had three healthy children, a husband with a successful

business, and a lifestyle that others only dreamed of having. We attended church regularly, were involved in a small home group, participated in ministry opportunities, and enjoyed the blessing of close friends and

family. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? The truth of my life and of my family, however, was something quite different from what others observed. Then one day I made a choice that changed everything.

Raised in a Christian home, I was immersed in a culture that taught biblical truths and principles that created the framework for my life: how I looked on the outside, how I behaved, how I engaged the world around me, how I interacted with God, and, fundamentally, how I thought. Like you, my beliefs and values were shaped by the influences in my life. So, as a young woman, committing myself in marriage to a man, I believed as I had been taught—that marriage was a lifetime commitment, and no matter what challenges life presented, our faith in God's sovereignty and his power would see us through. I was taught that my husband had ultimate authority in the home, and my role was to support him and defer to his authority when we could not agree. A good wife would meet his needs and by honoring him, she was honoring God. When adversity came, a good Christian would "take up her cross," suffer in silence and "count it as nothing compared to the sufferings of Christ." To complain meant you were not "content in all circumstances," to question or challenge your partner meant you did not "submit to your husband." My life was to be a reflection of Christ, so I was to extend grace and mercy (undeserved favor), and forgive without limits, just as Christ had done for me. If Christ was willing to die for me, how could I not respond by living a life of selfless devotion?

When I was a child, one of the popular choruses taught in Sunday school—whose words are imprinted on my heart—went something like this: "Jesus and others and you, what a wonderful way to spell JOY. Jesus and others and you, in the life of each girl and each boy. 'J' is for Jesus because he takes first place; 'O' is for

others we meet face to face; 'Y' is for you in whatever you do. So, put yourself *last* and spell JOY!" Do you hear the message? The path of joy, the path of the life abundant, the path to living a life surrendered to Christ meant that my needs were to come last—if at all. I was taught this, my church reinforced it, and I needed to live by it. At least, so I thought.

But it is in our mind, where our thoughts take hold, that choices are made and actions are taken. In order to take different actions, I had to think



differently. I could not choose another way without changing my thinking—without believing differently about what God wanted from me as a wife, a woman, a follower of Christ. And yet the implications of thinking differently paralyzed me with fear. I did not just fear the price I would pay in my marriage. I was equally afraid of the judgment and condemnation of others in my faith community and most importantly of God. And so I remained in my prison.

Over the years, fear and all its manifestations had become my companion. Fear went to bed with me at night. Fear arose with me in the morning and fear walked through my days. Yet, you would not have known it. I smiled, I laughed, and I functioned. I performed well. In fact, the reflection in the mirror did not even disclose fear. I hid the truth even from myself. I needed to be what I believed I *should* be—obedient. What I didn't

know was that my fear was the impact of abuse and that God did not want or need my performance—he wanted my love. But how could I authentically love a God who required that I live a life in denial of my inherent value? Wasn't that what God required of me? How could God sanction abuse?

It took a very long time for me to understand that I was living with abuse and that God does *not* sanction it. When I reflect on my relationship with my former husband, I can see the red flags were there, the moments in the courtship that would have caused alarm in a more informed person. In fact, others tried to warn me that there was an inherent problem in the relational dynamic. But I brushed off their concerns, nurtured my dreams, and marched headlong into marriage and committing it to God—just like so many others before me.

Within twenty-four hours of the wedding, however, I came face to face with a person I did not recognize. My life with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde had begun. This person in no way resembled the person I had committed my life to. This was in no way the person I had just given myself to in every sense of the word. This person was a stranger and I felt hurt, betrayed, and fearful. The impact of his words and actions traveled through me like shockwaves. I recall the horror of that moment as if it were yesterday. But the horror of my experience could not drown out the resounding voice of my convictions—that I was committed for life and that my die was cast. I immediately and desperately tried to appeal to the man whom I had married to resurface—to reclaim his bride and treasure her the way God had intended. I vowed to myself in that moment to do all I could to never allow that man to return—that stranger who was so threatening to my emotional and psychological safety.

What I did not realize was that his return was inevitable, as my husband's behavior was not contingent

on my ability to be the perfect wife and Christian. For over twenty years, I believed I was in some measure responsible for my husband's behavior. My Christian culture taught me that if I could just be more patient, more kind, more longsuffering, more forgiving, more gracious, or more selfless, my life would reflect more of what God intended for me. My relationship with my husband would be one of equality, mutuality, and connectedness, and my home would be a place where peace and harmony were the norm and God was honored and glorified in and through it all! It would be a given that if I behaved myself, he would behave himself. Not so. There seemed to be no relationship between my effort and his response.

Instead, I lived in a world of confusion and uncertainty, where I walked on eggshells and waited for the next hurtful and destructive encounter. How do I begin to express what it was like to live a life devoted to someone who said he loved me but whose actions betrayed him. I never knew the truth. His actions told one story and his words—his life to the world—told another. Should I hold onto a truth I wanted to believe, or the truth that was being lived out in front of me? More than anything, I wanted to be loved and cherished. I wanted to believe I was an irreplaceable treasure in his life. And sometimes I believed him. I wanted to believe him. That made it even more confusing. There were times where he showered me with love and attention, where my life took on value in his eyes and my contribution to our relationship was honored. But before long, and without any real reason I could understand, his perception of me would shift and I soon found myself being told I was no longer desired, wanted, or loved. Different controlling strategies were employed to have the desired effect so he remained central, superior, and deserving. My needs were secondary to his, his capabilities

were greater than mine, and he was deserving of privileges that I was not. Essential to his survival was a need to be in a position of power and control. I neither understood nor valued that need, but I inherently knew it was not in line with my core beliefs and values.

I knew that his anger and rage were highly disproportionate to the conflict. I knew that no matter what I may have done to trigger his rage, I did not deserve the verbal assault or threats that followed. I knew he was making up lies to justify his choices and was requiring me to accept them as truth. I knew that alienating me left me feeling alone, abandoned, and scared. I knew his hurtful, critical words wounded me deeply and eroded my sense of self until I was unrecognizable. I knew his physical size and strength scared me. I knew that having the wind knocked out of me was not nearly as painful as being told I was to blame for all his unhappiness. I knew I was being punished when he slept with another woman. And I knew that forgiveness was not something you could demand from another.

What I did not realize was that...my husband's behavior was not contingent on my ability to be the perfect wife and Christian.

And yet I stayed. And I hoped. I hoped that the God in whom I put my trust would work a miracle. I believed that by choosing anything other than staying in the marriage I was minimizing the power of God and essentially making a declaration of my inability to put my faith in God. I could not do that! That was the greatest obstacle of all. How could I reconcile what I believed about God's power to transform and a choice to leave my marriage?

After years of well-intentioned counselors and Christian marriage conferences, the day finally came when I met someone within my faith community who understood that what I was experiencing was abuse and that my husband was abusive. Through their counsel, I gave myself permission to think differently, to challenge my understanding of what God intended for me, and to work toward congruence of my beliefs, values, and life experience. In that there was real hope.

Awareness changed everything. I will never forget that day, the day when I felt another horror—the horror of recognition. I was a victim of abuse. I was not battered physically, but I had all the wounds and scars of decades of abuse. Finally, I had some clarity. The fog lifted and I was able to see how my actions would never elicit the response I longed for from my husband. He operated from one set of fundamental beliefs and I operated from another. I recognized that I had been living through cycles of abuse, and I acknowledged that without changing his core beliefs change would never happen. I appealed to my husband to get appropriate counseling. But he could not own his abuse long enough to get the help he needed. I knew that until he recognized that his belief system dictated his behavior and that his behavior in his intimate relationships was abusive, he would not change. And I did not believe that God required me to be a victim of his abuse. I believed that God wanted something much more. I believed that my responsibility to my children and to my God was to create an environment where they felt safe and valued, a context where the individual was honored and respected.

Finally, when an abusive episode occurred that demanded I respond from a place of awareness around abuse and not from a position of fear, I made my choice. His response was to mount a campaign of lies and deception among our children, friends,


family, and faith community. The legal process that ensued was a platform for his ongoing need for power and control, and the financial and emotional toll was enormous. How does one begin to tally the losses? They are beyond measure and the grief has been overwhelming. I could never have imagined the degree of loss and grief. The grief of course is not just for the marriage lost but for the hopes and dreams of a lifetime, for the hopes and dreams of my children, and for the ongoing struggle of surviving with an abusive co-parent.

Would I ever have thought that some of those who were closest to my painful reality were those who would turn their face from me when I needed their compassion the most? Would I ever have guessed that the church that showered me with support and encouragement when I lost my mother

to cancer would not be willing to offer comfort to me when I grieved the loss of my marriage? Would I have thought that people would be so invested in their black-and-white world that they could not imagine a world with shades of gray? Would I have believed that judgment and condemnation were so much easier for people than resurrecting the courage to ask what happened?

On the other hand, would I have known the emancipation of my spirit? Would I have known the liberation of a life congruent with my values and beliefs? Would I have known the intimacy of a love relationship with God that is only possible when you value and love yourself? Would I have known the joy of discovering my “self,” my interests, my strengths, my gifts? Would I have known a life that embraces truth and fosters authenticity in myself and others?

Would I have known the richness of friendships that were nurtured and then thrived in a season of drought? Would I have known the unspeakable gift of experiencing God’s grace in the midst of my suffering? Would I have known how I would feel when he made his guiding presence known when I needed it most, or when his love was demonstrated in undeniable ways when I needed to be loved the most? Would I have known the indescribable gift of a life no longer governed by abuse?

I had a choice. I chose to live without abuse and to honor God’s plan for marriage, to no longer be a witness to my own destruction, to honor the value God placed on my life, and to create another reality for my children, where a spirit of entitlement does not predominate but rather a spirit of acceptance and unconditional love. 



Justice for All: Overcoming Barriers to Peace and Safety in the Christian Home

May 13–15, 2011

Columbia Bible College

Abbotsford (Vancouver) British Columbia, Canada

The PASCH 2011 conference is an event that will appeal to faith community members, clergy, victim/survivors, advocates, therapists, health-care workers, academics, criminal justice personnel, and others working in the field of domestic violence. We will have innovative plenary sessions, breakout sessions, music and poetry; and Barb Fisher-Townsend, Program Committee chair, is considering constituencies to receive the call for papers, which will be sent out in spring 2010, breakout session themes and participants, and keynote speakers.

The conference opens on Friday evening with a prayer session; and on Saturday, there will be two plenary sessions and a selection of breakout workshops, panels, and presentations. On Sunday morning, there will be a plenary session followed by a worship service and the conference wrap-up at noon. While the conference schedule is certainly not finalized, we wish to offer breakout sessions on the following topics:

- Men who have acted abusively and batterer intervention
- The impact of abuse on children
- The broken marriage covenant
- Incest and pornography
- Other issues as appropriate

We will also organize a Friday preconference workshop that will offer CEUs to specific target groups. We are excited about this conference and invite feedback about topics, speakers, and so forth. Please contact the program chair Barb Fisher-Townsend at fisher.townsend@unb.ca.



Making it in Bethlehem

By Catherine Clark Kroeger

“How can I make it on my own?” wailed a victim who feared to leave an extremely dangerous situation. How often this fear robs people of the courage to move out into a new life! One of our favorite Bible stories speaks to just this question. It is that of the widow Ruth who left her own surroundings to make a new life in Bethlehem with her destitute mother-in-law: “Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Her promise sounded so beautiful when she said it, but as Ruth watched the back of her sister-in-law returning to her own Moabite people, the reality began to look grimmer. She could not, like Orpah, simply allow her widowed mother-in-law to totter along to a distant home where there were no longer close relatives to care for her. Somehow she would have to find a way to support Naomi and herself in an alien land, with a strange language, customs, patterns of worship, and ways of earning a living.

Ruth had anticipated the relief that her mother-in-law would feel at being again in familiar surroundings. Instead she fell apart in utter demoralization: “Do not call me Naomi [pleasant] but Mara [bitter]” (Ruth 1:20–21). Naomi’s old friends barely recognized her, and they could think of little to offer to the young foreigner who accompanied her. Ruth’s one hope lay in the new God she had learned to trust.

As the morning dawned, she had to find a way to help herself. She knew of the Israelite custom of allowing the poor to follow after the harvesters to pick up what had been dropped of the grain. This daughter of a well-to-do Moabite family had no choice but to accept her role as a pauper gleaning the leavings of the rich. Her foreign style of clothing identified her as an impoverished immigrant, and her struggles to use the Hebrew language soon made her a butt of merriment. And then there were some who tried to be too familiar. She clenched her teeth and worked on so that none would see her chin quiver. The miserable monotony of the hot day was suddenly broken by the arrival of the landowner of the field, Boaz, an older man with a kind face. He was soon to single her out, for he recognized in her the young woman who had shown such courageous devotion in the care of Naomi. Surely this was a sign of her new faith in Israel’s God. Noting how hard she worked, he insisted she be treated with decency and that all harassment must stop at once. She was welcome to drink from the water supplied for the field hands and to have lunch from their rations, and she was not to be disbarred from her full share of the grain that fell upon the ground during reaping operation. An extra handful or two would do no harm.

At the end of the day, Ruth’s hard toil had proved productive and there was barley to bring home for Naomi. The old woman’s spirits soared as she perceived the provision for their immediate needs and the prospect of subsequent protection from her dead

husband’s kinsman. Never again was Ruth to find survival so desperate.

Although the next morning Ruth still ached from her hard work, she had to take advantage of every day of the harvest season—and Boaz had encouraged her to remain in his fields as the harvest of one crop succeeded another. The work was hard and hot, but daily the store of grain grew. That was all very well for now, but how were they to survive the winter?

As Naomi’s depression lifted, she came to suspect that her husband’s kinsman might have formed an attachment for Ruth he dared not express. There was in ancient Israel legislation not only to feed the poor but also to provide young widows with a spouse from among the dead husband’s kinfolk. True, he was not the kinsman with first legal claim to Ruth’s hand, but surely he was the kindest, the one truly concerned for her welfare. In the full harvest moon, Ruth followed the instructions of her mother-in-law and on the threshing floor dared to reveal her inclination. Incredulously, Boaz perceived her willingness to choose him: “May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich” (Ruth 3:10).

And so the widowed immigrant found love and care for both herself and Naomi. In time, she would become the ancestress of King David and ultimately of the Messiah. More than that, her story has served as a model for those who must learn to support themselves in the hardest of circumstances. ❧



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