The Loving God at work – Session 5

**First Thoughts**

Some friends were ‘chalet-sitting’ for friends in Switzerland. The chalet had a basement accessed from outside through a very, very old door with a very, very old lock, turned by a very, very large, forged iron key. Now the basement had a table tennis table and one evening, their son, 8, took the key and got the basement ready to play. After they’d finished he couldn’t find the key. Panic soared as they searched.

It was getting late, so the Dad suggested praying and looking again in the morning. Just then what popped into his mind was the incident in 2 Kings 6 when one of Elisha’s young prophets drops a valuable, borrowed, iron axe-head into the River Jordan. The young prophet tells Elisha. And Elisha throws a stick into the Jordan and the axe-head rises to the surface. They prayed to the God of Elisha who can find lost iron and went to bed. The following morning, they went looking for the lost key. Ten seconds later, the dad saw it on the cobblestone path that led to the basement door. They’d looked there several times the previous evening.

The way God acted in the young prophet’s life boosted their faith to seek a similar miracle. Of course, God responds as he wills. But still, the Bible reminds us of what’s possible when God gets involved.

As we reflect on what we learn about the God of Ruth and Boaz and Naomi from this book, how might it shape our living and our praying?

**Focus on the Theme**

1. In what ways have you seen God act in your life? Answering prayer? Apparent coincidences that turn out to be significant? Miraculous provision?

**What does the Bible Say?**

1. There are two occasions when we are told that God has *directly* intervened in events in the book of Ruth – coming to the aid of his people by providing food for them (1:6) and enabling Ruth to have a son (4:13). What might the phrases ‘as it turned out’ and ‘something startled the man’ in the verses (2:3 and 3:7-8) teach us about how God may also have been working?
2. There are many appeals in the book for God to bless people. How does God answer these three?

**Prayers of blessing**

The book of Ruth teems with examples of people praying for God’s blessing on others. There’s Naomi for Ruth and Orpah (1:8-9); Boaz for his workers and his workers for him (2:4); Boaz for Ruth (2:12, 3:10); Naomi for Boaz (2:20); the elders and the people for Ruth, Boaz, and his offspring (4:11-12); and there’s the townswomen for Obed (4:14). It is sometimes said that the Lord’s hand is not very prominent in the book of Ruth. Yet as history unfolds, we see all these prayers of blessing, except perhaps Naomi’s prayer for Orpah, being answered in glorious and surprising ways.

1. What has changed for Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz in the year or so between the end of chapter 1 and the end of chapter 4?
2. Reflecting on your answers above, and your reading of the book so far, how would you describe the God that Ruth worships?

**Going Deeper**

1. In the book of Judges, there is an overall pattern, though with variations, in the people’s behaviour and in the way God works for the benefit of his people – see below.

How would you compare the way God seems to be working in the book of Ruth with the way he works in Judges?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Judges | Ruth |
| Who he works with | * High profile leaders
* Often flawed characters
* With military prowess
 |  |
| When he works | * In national crisis
 |  |
| Why  | * Compassion
* Response to repentant prayer
* Fulfil his purpose for Israel
 |  |
| How | * Miraculous intervention
* Supernatural empowering (e.g. Samson’s strength)
 |  |

What conclusions do you draw from this?

1. How might Romans 8:28 help Naomi reflect on her life between leaving for Moab and holding Obed in her arms?

**Living it Out**

1. Share a situation in your life that God radically transformed. How does it affect your attitude to any current or future challenges?
2. At first glance, it may seem God isn’t particularly involved in the story of Ruth. How could you become more alert to how God is working in your life day by day?
3. The people of Bethlehem pray for Ruth and Boaz that the impact of their lives would continue for generations (4:11-12). What multi-generational prayers might you pray for your frontline, your family, your church, your town, your nation?