

The Best is Yet to Come

Luck vs Blessing

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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Ruth 2:1-3 (NLT)

1 Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech. 2 One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it." Naomi replied, "All right, my daughter, go ahead." 3 So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

Ruth 2:4-12 (NLT)

4 While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. "The Lord be with you!" he said. "The Lord bless you!" the harvesters replied. 5 Then Boaz asked his foreman, "Who is that young woman over there? Who does she belong to?" 6 And the foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. 7 She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest in the shelter." 8 Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. 9 See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well." 10 Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner." 11 "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. 12 May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done."

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Do you practice certain habits or rituals out of superstition? Eg. reading your horoscope, avoiding #13, pick up a penny for good luck, etc... What causes you to believe in superstitions and luck?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Ruth 2:1-3.** Was Ruth lucky that she landed in Boaz's field? How do you explain the "as it happened" circumstances of life?
- Pastor Troy said blessings come our way through answered prayer and God's mercy. Do you think luck also plays a part? Why or why not?
- **Read Ruth 2:4-12.** Why was Boaz so kind to Ruth? How did God use Boaz to answer Boaz's prayer? Has God ever used you to answer your own prayers?
- **Read Ruth 2:19-23.** What was the responsibility of a family redeemer? Did Ruth know that Boaz was Naomi's family redeemer when she chose that field?
- **Read Proverbs 16:33.** What does this verse teach us about the "randomness" of events in this life? Is there anything that God does not control?
- Pastor Troy said God's sovereignty works 2 ways, an active will and a passive will. Discuss the difference and how God uses both in carrying out His will.
- What does it look like in your life to trust God instead of luck?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Take a step of faith, trusting in God's protection, provision, and sovereignty.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Give thanks to God that He is your provider and protector, that He has a plan for you and for your life, and be thankful that you can trust Him with your future.

Ruth 2:19-23 (NLT)

19 "Where did you gather all this grain today?" Naomi asked. "Where did you work? May the Lord bless the one who helped you!" So Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man in whose field she had worked. She said, "The man I worked with today is named Boaz." 20 "May the Lord bless him!" Naomi told her daughter-in-law. "He is showing his kindness to us as well as to your dead husband. That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers." 21 Then Ruth said, "What's more, Boaz even told me to come back and stay with his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed." 22 "Good!" Naomi exclaimed. "Do as he said, my daughter. Stay with his young women right through the whole harvest. You might be harassed in other fields, but you'll be safe with him." 23 So Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz's fields and gathered grain with them until the end of the barley harvest. Then she continued working with them through the wheat harvest in early summer. And all the while she lived with her mother-in-law.

Question: "What is a blessing according to the Bible?"

Answer: A blessing, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is "the act or words of one that blesses," or "a thing conducive to happiness or welfare." In the Bible, there are several words that are usually translated as "blessing" or "bless." The Hebrew word most often translated "bless" is *barak*, which can mean to praise, congratulate, or salute, and is even used to mean a curse. Genesis 1:22 is the first occurrence, when God blessed the sea creatures and birds, telling them to be fruitful and multiply in the earth. Likewise, in verse 28, God gave the similar blessing to Adam and Eve, adding that they were to exercise dominion over creation. When God called Abram to go to the Promised Land (Genesis 12:1-3), He promised to bless him, make his name great, and through him, to bless all the families of the earth. The blessings here are plainly associated with happiness and welfare, both for Abram and others. In Genesis 22:16-18, God again blesses Abram, and adds that blessing is due to his obedience to God's commands.

God is not the only one who pronounces blessings. When Rebekah left her family to become Isaac's wife (Genesis 24:60), her family blessed her by saying "may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies." When Isaac was ready to die, he pronounced this blessing on his son, Jacob: "May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness—an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed" (Genesis 27:28-29).

Another Hebrew word for blessing is *esher*, which is also translated as happiness. Job 5:17 declares "Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." This blessing is connected to the knowledge that God is at work to direct us in the right path. God's chastisement is actually a display of His love for us, like a parent who disciplines a child who plays in the middle of the street. Psalm 1:1-3 carries that theme further when it states, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." The book of Psalms is full of references to this kind of happy blessing for those who love and fear the Lord God.

In the New Testament, there are two primary Greek words translated as "blessing." *Makarios* carries the meaning of happiness that we just looked at. The Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and Luke 6 describe the happy state of those who find their purpose and fulfillment in God. As in the Psalms, the best life is available for those who love and fear God and order their lives according to His Word. Romans 4:6-8 ties this happy blessing to those whose sins are forgiven, for they know the relationship to God has been restored. *Eulogeo* focuses more on good words or the good report that others give of someone and also describes the blessing that we say over our food (Matthew 26:26). This word is where we get our English word "eulogy," in which we speak well of one who has passed away. Ephesians 1:3 blesses God for all the blessings that He gives us in Christ, and 1 Peter 3:9 instructs us to bless those who mistreat us, because we were called to receive a blessing from God.

Bringing these threads together, we see that a blessing is a statement of good will and happiness that is said about another, as well as the condition that fulfills those good words. God's original design in creation was for His creatures, including mankind, to experience prosperity, peace, and fulfillment, but that design was ruined when sin entered the world. Statements of blessing are a wish for God to restore His favor on others or a declaration of His inherent goodness. The ultimate blessing that God has given is the new life and forgiveness that comes through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. The material blessings we enjoy from day to day are temporary, but the spiritual blessings available to us in Christ encompass time and eternity, as well as material and immaterial things. As the Psalmist said, "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God" (Psalm 146:5).

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