



MORE PASSION

Pleasing God more means believing God Can When I know I Can't

SUMMARY

We have become a very goal-oriented society, and, while that isn't a bad thing, we often fail to make the greatest purpose our greatest pursuit. With a myriad of options and opportunities, it is so easy for us to get distracted by and begin to drift towards things that aren't necessarily bad things, but they interfere with or take the place of what should be our greatest desire – to please God. This year, let's determine that our life is going to abound with and increase in those things that our Heavenly takes great delight in.

REVIEW

We began this series by establishing the theme for our church this year: **MORE AND MORE - DETERMINED TO PLEASE THE LORD MORE IN 2024.**

We want to abound and increase in the things that God takes great delight in. It's a journey marked by **INTENSITY, INTEGRITY, INTERACTION** (with the Father and the family of God), and **INVESTMENT.**

We've found that it is possible for God to be pleased, for us to know what pleases God, and for us to please God with our life.

With that foundation, we began to consider some key elements that need to be in our life if we are going to please God more.

The first element is **MORE TRUST**. Pleasing God more begins with trusting God most.

The second element is **MORE DISCERNMENT**. Pleasing God more means living right in a world that is wrong.

The third element is **MORE OBEDIENCE**. Pleasing God more means obeying God first.

The fourth element is **MORE FEAR**. Pleasing God more means loving God most.

The fifth element is **MORE WORSHIP**. Pleasing God more means honoring God first.

The sixth element is **MORE CONSISTENCY**. Pleasing God more means staying faithful through it all.

Last week, we found that the seventh element is **MORE COURAGE**. Our key statement was this: **PLEASING GOD MORE MEANS STEPPING UP WHEN NO ONE ELSE WILL**.

We found that God has given us the principles and the resources that lead to victory. Yes, we are in a spiritual conflict, but God has not called us to **COWER** in fear before our enemies, to be **CONQUERED** by our enemies, or to be held **CAPTIVE** by our circumstances; instead, we are to have to courage to step up even when it means that we have to do so alone.

MESSAGE

To find the next key element to living life in a way that pleases God more, we are actually going to remain in the same period of time as the Judges that we considered last week. In that same time, there was a lady through whom God was going to continue moving His plan forward. Her name is Ruth, and I firmly believe that the story (book) of her life fits in Judges chapter 12.

When the book of Ruth opens, we find that there was a famine in Bethlehemjudah. Ruth didn't live there, but the reality is that what took place there eventually impacted her life. Let me say it this way: the best thing that happened in Ruth's life was the famine in Bethlehem.

God can do **MIRACULOUS** things in very **DIFFICULT** and even **DIRE** situations. There might not have been anything pleasant about the problem, but God saw some incredible potential and He unlocked some incredible opportunities. Hey! You might not like what's happening, but that doesn't change the fact that God knows what He's doing. The truth of the matter is that...

What we find as an uncomfortable situation may simply be proof that God is up to something.

What we identify as a problem might simply be a testimony that God is currently doing something in our life.

What we view as a dead end may very well be the place where God opens a door that we could not open or makes a way that we could not see all to advance His perfect plan.

The Apostle Paul, in Philippians 1:6, says it this way: *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

Instead of taking matters into our own hands, we need to learn to trust that God can and that God will.

God can bring about **MARVELOUS** things through **MAJOR MISTAKES**. Elimelech and Naomi made a very bad decision that took them and their family outside of the will of God. It was a decision that not only caused them to miss out on what God did back in Bethlehem, but it cost their family dearly. The truth of the matter is that there is a right way and a wrong way to respond to the difficulties that come into our life.

Someone said it this way, “When trouble comes to our lives, we have one of three choices: to endure, to escape or to enlist. If we simply endure, then the trial becomes our master, and we end up hard and bitter. If we try to escape, we will miss the God intended purpose of the trial and what He wants to achieve through it. If we enlist our trials, then they become our servants instead of our master and work for us and God will work through them to achieve great things.”

Here’s the thing: it’s a very dangerous thing to venture outside of God’s will for your life (don’t do it, it just isn’t worth it), but it’s wonderful to know that God doesn’t make mistakes and that God is able to bring something good out of our mistakes.

Romans 8:28 says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

God can do **MIGHTY** things in and through the lives of those who are humble, those who are faithful, and those who are willing. It is so easy to look at life and get so focused on the many problems that are in our life and the many mistakes that we have made with our life and forget that God can still do mighty things in, with, and through our life. And that is essentially what the book of Ruth is all about.

Ruth 1:6-13 says, *“Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. 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. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me."

If you're in the habit of marking things in the Word of God, I'd like to draw your attention back to verse 12 where the Bible says, "...I have hope..."

For a few moments, I'd like to consider this thought: **MORE HOPE - PLEASING GOD MORE MEANS BELIEVING GOD CAN WHEN I KNOW I CAN'T.**

The statement that I have drawn your attention to ("...I have hope...") is the very first time that the word *hope* appears in the Bible, and it is spoken by a woman that didn't have it. When Naomi says, "I have hope," it was something that she **WANTED**, it was something that she was **SEARCHING FOR**, it was something that she **NEEDED**, but it was something that she **DID NOT HAVE**. But the reality is that Naomi had allowed her **PROBLEMS**, her **POOR CHOICES**, her **PAIN**, and her **PESSIMISTIC OUTLOOK** to blind her to the fact that when we can't, God still can.

When hardships come, and they will, that doesn't mean that God is done with you, because **HE'S NOT.**

When things don't always go like we want, and they won't, that does not mean that God doesn't have a better plan, because **HE DOES!**

When people hurt you, and they will, that doesn't mean that God hasn't prepared someone to help you, because **HE HAS.**

The reality is that there are times when we need to shake it off (give whatever it is to the Lord and refuse to allow it to continue to impact us negatively and prevent us from getting to where we need to be so that we can move forward in the power, with the peace, and according to the wisdom of the Lord.

While Naomi told Ruth to look for hope in what she used to know, in who she used to be, where she used to live, Ruth found hope in God that propelled her forward to something that was much different, much better, and much more rewarding.

In verse 16, Ruth tells Naomi, "...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."

You see, while Naomi had lost all hope, Ruth had chosen to embrace the hope that can only be found in the Lord.

While Naomi was saying, "I can't," Ruth was saying, "Maybe God can."

While Naomi was saying, "I have nothing left," Ruth was saying, "With God, I have a lot to look forward to."

While Naomi was saying, "I am bitter," Ruth was saying, "I believe that God can still bless and make me better."

It was that hope – that confident expectation – that forever changed Ruth's life.

1) Hope provides us with the **PASSION** to **WANT WHAT IS RIGHT**

Ruth 1:18 says, *"When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her."*

There were a lot of things that Ruth had to learn and there were a lot of things that Ruth had to overcome, but the hope that now filled her heart provided her with a solid foundation upon which to stand, with a clear direction in which to head, and with a strong desire that would not let her turn back.

Are you currently making decisions and doing things that you know that you should not be doing? Perhaps the root problem isn't the options that you have, but a lack of hope and thus a lack of desire to do what is right. Instead of looking forward like Ruth to what a close relationship with God can bring into your life, all you can see are the problems, pains, and poor choices that have filled your past and present.

2) Hope provides us with the **PERSEVERANCE** to **WORK**

Ruth 2:2 says, *"And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace."*

When these two ladies made it to Bethlehem, there were two totally different responses: Naomi was numb, and she isolated herself from everyone that she could and sat in a pool of pity while Ruth stepped forward and did what she could while she could until God made it clear what was next for her.

Ruth 2:23 says, *"So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest..."*

Here's the thing: Ruth's life didn't change immediately. Sure, there were wonderful blessings found along the way, but there was also a certain length of time attached to her next. Day in and day out, Ruth woke up, went to the field, worked in the field, and then went home. Wash, rinse, repeat. Just because we can't "see" the change, doesn't mean that God isn't at work on our change. When you don't know what to do, keep on doing what you know that

you should do until God shows you what you're to do next. That's the kind of perseverance that only hope in the Lord can produce.

3) Hope provides us with the **PATIENCE** to **WAIT FOR GOD'S PLAN**.

Throughout the book, Ruth encountered nine *until's* (Ruth 1:19)(Ruth 2:7, 17, 21) (Ruth 3:3, 13, 14, 18). Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to wait. Patience is a virtue, but patience is something that we all need to learn more and practice more of. The reality is that we don't like to wait, and yet, the moments that God has us wait is because He's moving us forward to something that is wonderful and worth it. Ruth didn't know how things were going to turn out, but she learned that sometimes the best thing that you can do is to sit still. Again, only real hope can produce lasting patience.

Hebrews 6:19 calls hope "*...anchor of the soul...*"

When the book of Ruth closes, it closes with Ruth enjoying the fruit of her hope. God blessed her with a husband, God blessed her with a home, and God blessed her with an honorable mention in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

This world offers a false sense of hope that only leads produces hurt and hopelessness, but the hope that we have in Christ gives us a lot to look and lean forward to, and the wait will be more than worth it.

Romans 8:24-25 says, "*For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*"