

*The Family Tree – ancestry.com/biblebegats©*

**Ruth 4:1-22**

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When I was in college working on my bachelors in Social Work, I learned all about doing genograms for family counseling. I was very interested in working with families in crisis, taking their history, learning about those who came before them and how those lives affected the lives of the current family.

I guess I was interested because my own family was a bit chaotic – big and wonderful and loud and crazy. A little dysfunctional at times but not too different than any other large family. I saw a meme on Facebook that I shared, thinking it was kind of fitting for my family.

It said “Our family is just one tent away from a full-blown circus.” Later, my brothers, sisters and I were talking about how our mom had so much fun having lots of kids and how she took every crisis, every argument (or knockdown, drag out fight), everything in stride. She had been an only child and she loved having six crazy loud children.

So when I shared that meme “Our family is just one tent away from a full-blown circus,” my sister, Cindy, said “And mom was the ring leader!” That she was. She had a great sense of humor and the patience of Job.

Was she perfect? Of course not. She was very human. She could get her feelings hurt fairly easy. She could get so mad her black eyes would look like burning coals. Sometimes she would slam her bedroom door in anger and frustration. And there were a few other things that I won’t tell you – little things she would not like for me to tell.

But I think it’s so interesting to look back at history with a genogram. Because when working on that with families, they tell you who the person was or is; when they were born and were they still living; if not, how and when did they die. Where did they live? What were their personalities; what habits – good or bad did they have? Were they patient and kind or mean as an angry hornet? Were they generous or stingy? Prejudiced or open to all?

Oh, the stories you hear if you just starting asking the family – the kids and the adults will tell you all kind of fun facts. And then the real fun begins as we look at the current family and all their personalities and issues. And we often see a common thread – an influence from those that went before that were passed down from generation to generation. Some things seemed to be hereditary and some characteristics were passed down from experience and tradition and habit.

You’ve probably heard the story of the young bride who was fixing a Christmas ham for the first time. She cut off the ends and put the rest of the ham in the big roasting pan to bake, leaving a lot of space around it.

Her new husband asked why she cut off those ends like that?  
She answered, “Because that’s the way my mother always does it.”

So, she called her mother and asked why she cut off those ends of the ham. Her mother said the same thing – “Because that’s how my mom did it.” So, they asked Grandma, whose reply was the same.

But great grandma was still living so they asked her. “Great Granny, why did you cut off the ends of the ham?”

Great Granny replied, “Well I had to because the ham was too big for the pan.”

We are influenced greatly by our ancestors. We have more of them in us than we often realize. Which brings us back to Ruth and Boaz.

Today we learn that Boaz kept his promise to see if the man who was the closer relative to Naomi’s husband and sons would honor his responsibility to marry Ruth. Boaz was wise in making sure this interaction took place in town in front of witnesses. Everything was full of integrity and respect.

We don’t ever hear the name of this close relative. Perhaps it just didn’t matter. Or perhaps he was not particularly as respectable as Boaz. When Boaz suggests first that this man take over and be in charge of Ruth’s husband’s land, he was all in! Of course he wanted more land. That was to his benefit.

But when Boaz finished telling him that the deal also involved marrying Ruth, that was a different story. We aren’t told why he didn’t want to marry her. Maybe it was just that he didn’t want a wife. Or another wife. Maybe he wasn’t thrilled with marrying a foreigner – a Moabite woman. Maybe he didn’t want children who were a mixed breed. Impure. Whatever the reason, once he found out marriage was part of the package, he backed out. He was part of the family tree but not a significant part for our interest. I’m thinking it’s probably a real good thing he said no.

And the people that day, who witnessed the negotiations, gave this blessing: ‘We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah,’(even further back on the family tree), who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem; and, through the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.’

So Boaz kept his promise and married Ruth. He loved her and took care of her and Naomi with kindness and devotion, integrity and loyalty. He was an upstanding, righteous man in the community and in God’s eyes as well.

And we have established over and over that Ruth was the same. Faithful and loving, selfless in putting her mother-in-law, Naomi, first; she was loyal and full of integrity in all her actions.

God brought these two people together and that union was blessed and used to carry out God’s amazing plan.

Here we have the family tree, taken straight from *ancestry.com/biblebegats*. (I just made that up.) We learn that Boaz and Ruth were married and she conceived a son whom they named Obed; Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David – the anointed, beloved king of Israel.

So we look closer at the genogram and ask, “what were the traits David had that were passed down from his ancestors? And we can hear the family – the children and grandchildren telling about Great great grandfather, Boaz – the “pillar of the community,” respected by all for his honesty and integrity, his great kindness and loyalty. David’s great grandfather – a man to look up to. A faithful, righteous man.

And this is Ruth – David’s own great grandmother. Not even of Jewish blood – a foreigner; an immigrant – who went beyond the call of duty to love and take care of her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi; Ruth, a young woman in a strange land who dared to make herself vulnerable for the sake of her mother-in-law.

She was a hard worker, a woman full of love and kindness; loyalty and faithful to the end, refusing to turn her back on her bereaved mother-in-law. Willing to do what she had to do to take care of Naomi. And in the end, God worked it all out for the good.

Their great grandson, David – who was a simple, faithful, very young shepherd boy, was chosen and anointed by God to be a great king. He made huge mistakes, he was very human. But David was loved by many and was especially loved and used mightily by God. David was loyal, kind-hearted (most of the time), he was faithful to the Lord.

The point is, we can see Ruth and Boaz’ influence on David and how that family history was so important. God worked his purpose out through those two people; people of outstanding character.

And Naomi – her sad, hopeless heart was changed to joy and thanksgiving. For, just as her women friends said, “May this child (this grandchild you have been given) be a restorer of life, her life was filled to the brim with blessings. Her life was restored from bitterness to sweetness.

But the greatest thing of all about this story – this family history – is that David, the great grandson of Boaz and Ruth was a part of the line of ancestry that led down to the Jesus – the Messiah – the real, true Restorer of Life.

What’s in your family tree – your history? How have your ancestors influenced you or what have they passed down to you over the generations? I think it’s so interesting to trace that thread of bloodline. We can learn a lot about our family and ourselves by look back.

But I think what is even more important is for us to see that we too are a part of the family tree of God. When we are baptized, we are grafted into the family. We are not Jews – not Israelites – but we all come from God’s creation. And we are all his children.

If you look at your Christian family tree, you will see that you come from a royal line – for you are a child of the King – Jesus, the Messiah. The relative of King David, the great grandson of Ruth and Boaz.

Looks like God had a plan all along. This is the family tree of the family of Jesus – the Restorer of Life. For he is that. He has restored us death to life; from sin to righteousness; from sorrow to joy.

Thanks be to God!

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