

I. RUTH: TIMES OF TRANSITION ARE TIMES OF DECISION

Life stages are opportunities to make defining choices.

- **Choose your community wisely:** Surround yourself with people who will draw you closer to God.
- **The reward of faithfulness:** Despite being a Gentile, Ruth's faithfulness led her to become the great-grandmother of King David and placed her directly in the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

Ruth 1:16–17 (NIV) "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.'"

Psalms 1:1 (NIV) Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV) "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"

2. JOSEPH: STAYING FAITHFUL TO GOD WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Faithfulness isn't dependent on perfect circumstances.

- **Be faithful with the small things:** Joseph was faithful even when he had very little, and when he was managing what belonged to someone else.
- **Reject excuses:** He did not use his calamities and the miscarriages of justice against him as an excuse to give any less than his best.
- **Commit to holiness:** Flee sin. Never use difficult circumstances as an excuse to "reward" yourself with sin.
- **Trust God's sovereign timing:** Trust that God will work things out! (Remember the principle from Jeremiah: Seek the prosperity of the city where you are in exile!) Ultimately, God put Joseph in charge of an entire nation.

Genesis 45:8 (NIV) "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt."

Genesis 50:20 (NIV) "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

3. GIDEON: AVOIDING PITFALLS BY STAYING SECURE IN GOD'S CALL

Let God define your identity, not the world around you.

- **Accept God's view of you:** God gave Gideon an identity that was totally detached from his most obvious, limiting circumstances: "Mighty warrior"!
- **Break generational idols:** You must actively resist the idolatry that has been passed down to you through your family or culture.
- **Depend on God's strength:** Trust God for a victory that challenges you but brings greater glory to Him. Do not just rely on your own abilities and resources.
- **Stay humble and content:** Refuse to let the world define who you are—whether you are in bad circumstances or victorious ones (like when they asked him to rule over them as king). Be content with who God calls you to be.
- **A final warning:** Worship God alone. Do not create idols or stumbling blocks for the people who follow you.

Judges 6:11–12 (NIV) The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah... where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."

Judges 6:25–26 (NIV) The Lord said to him, "...Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God..."

Judges 7:2 (NIV) The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.'"

Judges 8:27 (NIV) Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

4. CALEB: FINISHING WELL BY STANDING IN FAITH

Maintain a spirit of faith from beginning to end.

- **Have a "we can do it" faith:** Caleb boldly believed, "We can surely take the land," even when others doubted.
- **Claim your promise:** Because of his unwavering faith, he received his inheritance alongside the next generation.

Numbers 13:30 (NIV) Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

Joshua 14:10–14 (NIV) "Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses... So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said." Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. So Hebron has belonged to Caleb... because he followed the Lord, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly.