

September 30. Read Galatians 4:4-7. Have you been to the bottom, looking up to find some glimmer of hope? Broken, beaten, ashamed, and confused, reeling from the mistakes you've made. You lost all your money from a gambling addiction and now face bankruptcy. You skimmed a bit of money off the top at work and now people are noticing. You entered into an emotional affair with someone from your past while married. The stories and circumstances are endless, but you are not. Someone who hit a point where all hope was lost was Ruth. She was from a corrupted and sinful country where people were considered too far to ever be accepted by God. She lost her husband before conceiving a child, which in that time was considered a very unfavorable situation. She would travel to an unknown land where she knew no one but her bitter mother-in-law and although she pursued righteousness, she made her fair share of mistakes. The great thing about Ruth's story is that it didn't end in the midst of her trial. We have the fortunate advantage to look at her story from a thirty thousand foot perspective and see the fingerprints of God all over her life. One day we too will see them on our own life and that's hope for today! God sent His only Son to Earth to pay the price for our sin and bondage, setting us free and allowing us to enter into the family of God as heirs. A new start is possible and a fresh hope is available to you regardless of your past. There is a journey involved and we will take a look at that journey over the next few days

October 1. 2 Corinthians 5:17. Grace is the unmerited favor of God; it's getting all the good things we've been given in life and beyond even though we don't deserve it. We don't deserve salvation, healing, redemption, blessings, and all the other wonderful gifts that come from God. However, we serve a gracious and loving God! Did Ruth earn or deserve her redemption and acceptance? Of course not. But God was good to the Gentile woman and not only provided for her, but gave her more than she ever could have hoped for. She even has a place in the lineage of Christ! When we commit to making God first in our life we are made a new creation. 2 Corinthians says that the old is gone; your past is non-existent. Isaiah paints the picture that our sin made us crimson red yet we can be as white as snow. Picture that! From bright red to pure as white (and without blemish). That's the power of grace. Your past does not define you. It will shape you, determine some consequences, and potentially cause some future obstacles because we are human, but it will never trump God's vision of who we are and where we are going. Fight any hold the past may have over you and embrace the new creation God has fashioned in His strong hands. Your purpose moving forward from this point requires you accepting God's grace and walking in the freedom He has given you from slavery. Do that and you will be one step closer to flourishing with vibrant God colors.

October 2. Read 1 Peter 5:10. Have you ever heard the phrase, “leave it better than you found it?” That’s what Jesus does with our lives. He takes a tattered, broken, marked person and makes them better than ever before. When Jesus goes to work on us we become unrecognizable to the people who knew us before. God’s definition of restoration doesn’t just mean putting us back together, but it means to go above and beyond in making us better than before. We’re always in far better shape after Jesus has gone to work on us than before. It doesn't mean we won't suffer or feel the growing pains because we will. 1 Peter 5 shares that we will suffer a bit but that God will restore us. That’s not a “maybe” or “if He feels like it.” It’s a promise that God will restore His people to a better place.

You might feel like your past has left you too broken to be of any use. You might feel so used and ashamed that God could never use someone like you. You’re not the only one because I’ve felt that. But these are lies the enemy wants us to believe to keep us down so that we won’t fulfill God’s purpose for our lives. Rebuke these thoughts and remind yourself of these scriptures we are learning about regarding our future!

October 3. Read Jeremiah 30:12 & 17. When God puts us back together there’s more than an external picture of being put back together like a broken vase, or the cleansing of red to white. God does an internal working in our heart, soul, and mind that is a healing of sorts as well. He wants to reach down into the innermost parts of your soul where no one else can go to mend and fill with grace. To rid you of shame, guilt, sorrow, pain, insecurity, and more. These are works only God can do; no human has the ability to fill your void and depths of the heart. Jeremiah 30:12 says in one breath that our hurt is incurable, and indeed it feels like that sometimes doesn’t it? But then in the next breath, verse 17, God says He will heal and restore. At first glance it appears these two verses contradict each other, however, it’s more of a message about how proper healing takes place. Proper healing doesn’t come when we bypass the process and seek the world’s comforts. Rather, it comes when we seek God. The difference between healing and not healing lies in the source. You want your heaviness to lift and your soul to feel peace? Then turn to God. Do you desire to feel free from the shame and condemnation? Turn to God. Do you imagine what it feels like to experience wholeness and restoration? Turn to God. He’s the answer to your healing. When we pursue God we experience grace, restoration, and healing that no past can grip onto. No longer can it hold you back from what God has in store. Tomorrow we look at how purpose prevails.

October 4. Read Isaiah 61:3. Although this process may seem slow, especially if you're in the middle of it, it will be worth it. Reflecting on Ruth again, she sure knew what long-suffering felt like. She could have given up at some many "bumps" in the road, but she didn't. She persevered and experience grace, restoration, and healing. In the process, God was working out her purpose and on the other side, she experienced such incredible blessing! Ruth was not too far gone and neither are you. Broken can be restored. Sorrow can turn into joy. Empty can be filled. Worthless can be valued. Not good enough can be desired. Ashamed can fade and confidence can arise. God has a plan for you regardless of your past choices, upbringing, culture, treatment, and projected image of who you are. Because God sees His child when He looks at you and sees someone of immense value. With value comes purpose. Isaiah 61:3 paints a beautiful picture that God wants to give you a crown of beauty for ashes. To take the brokenness of your past and use it for something glorious. Furthermore, your dreams matter to Him! He has put something inside of you, a seed of sorts that He wants to nurture through your pain and long-suffering and birth at a very specific time. Ruth married a godly man and conceived a son, who was the grandfather of King David, who would lead to the King of Kings! There is nothing more valuable in this Universe to God than you. He sent His Son to die in your place and claim the victory over sin so that you would no longer have to live in bondage to your past. Step into what He has done and is doing in your life and live the purpose you are called to live.

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