

WEEK 2 – CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

MONDAY: Choose to love



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.'"*

Good relationships are one of the foundations of cultivating resilience and resilience develops the ability to face and endure adversity and grow in faith.

This week we will be looking at a relationship which stood firm and which encouraged resilience in times of challenge.

Ruth is a wonderful example of this and models for us her relationship with Naomi – the age gap was fairly great, the difference in faith could have been a difficulty, yet Ruth chose to go with Naomi because of the relationship that had developed between them. They had become family and looked out for one another as they travelled and settled into a new life.

What are the lessons we can learn from this relationship?

Ruth was steadfast in her relationship. When Naomi proposed that Ruth return to her home she clung to Naomi and refused to turn around.

Naomi was instrumental in sending Ruth to glean in the fields belonging to Boaz (see Ruth 2 : 1,2) and so a new chapter in Ruth's life began and a part of God's plan was put into action.

Reflection:

In these difficult times how can we hold onto and further develop our relationships in challenging circumstances?

Could we be more intentional about staying in contact?



Prayer: Our God, we long to live in friendship and to learn how to encourage one another in hope. Please guide us as we choose daily to love, support and patiently stay steadfast in our relationships. AMEN

TUESDAY – Love between friends



1 Samuel 18: 1-3 (NLT) *"After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home. And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself."*

The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David: This happened *after* David had finished speaking to Saul. Jonathan heard David give an extended explanation of his heart, his faith in the living God, and Jonathan *knew* that he and David had the same heart. They could not be such close friends until Jonathan knew that about David.

The way most people think, Jonathan was the one who had the most to fear from David's success. Yet he loved David, because what they had in common – a real relationship with the LORD God – was bigger than any difference. (Enduringword.com)

Love between friends – friends who came from very different backgrounds – one a shepherd, the other a prince.

So what was it that bound them together in this friendship? It could only be the love that they had for the LORD God.

Friendships with unlikely people can be the trigger to expand our love, to understand the things that make us different and more importantly the things that bind us together.

Finding common ground can grow us both in our faith and in our determination to overcome adversity together.

Reflection:

Have you ever met a person that you just knew you would like to have as a friend? Is it possible to be more intentional about making new friends?



Prayer: Lord our God and our closest friend, teach us to walk in friendship and may our love for You be evident as we learn to know and to grow in understanding for each other. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Practice empathy



Job 2: 11-13 *"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him..... So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great."*

When Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place: This passage introduces three remarkable friends of Job. Their names were Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. These men came to Job in his hour of need.

For they had made an appointment: "The fact that they met by *appointment* shows that they were already acquaintances who felt it would be better to come *together*." (Andersen)

To come and mourn with him, and to comfort him: Their intended goal was good and noble. They came to be with him, to share his sorrow, and to bring some relief to Job (and to comfort him).

And did not recognize him: The boils left Job with a horrific, disfigured appearance. Upon seeing Job, his three friends were instantly gripped with grief and mourning as if one had died.

They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, *and no one spoke a word to him*: This was a wonderful display of comfort and common cause with Job. They shared in his afflicted state, acting as if they were similarly afflicted. They offered no statement except for their compassionate presence. (Enduringword.com)

Reflection:

Showing up for our friends can be a powerful way of showing empathy and being of comfort.



Prayer: God give us the wisdom to know when to speak and when to remain silent. AMEN

THURSDAY – It's okay not to be okay



John 11: 21-23 (NIV) *"'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You whatever You ask.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'"*

'Lazarus,' the Greek form of Eleazar = God is my Help. What a wonderful name for a man who was a close friend of Jesus. And yet, when he was sick and word was sent regarding his condition, Jesus did not arrive immediately.

Jesus had a close relationship with this family. When Lazarus was sick it was natural for them to bring their need to Jesus. It was expected that if He miraculously met the needs of so many others, He would meet their need also.

Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick: Mary and Martha did not specifically ask Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. They felt they did not need to, that it was enough to simply tell Jesus what the problem was. (Enduringword.com)

When Jesus arrived in Bethany Martha's greeting was "Lord if you had been there my brother would not have died.

Martha was honest about her expectations and also the fact that she was not satisfied with the outcome of Lazarus' illness. She told Jesus as soon as He arrived of her disappointment and Jesus listened carefully to her words before acting.

Reflection:

Who do you turn to when disappointment or sorrow comes your way? God hears our spoken and unspoken prayers and friends in Christ can be a comfort when there are no words of our own to express our deepest pain.



Prayer: Our God, thank you that You understand our sadness, our disappointments and unmet expectations. Give us the courage to be honest with You and with our trusted friends that we may grow in resilience and understanding. AMEN

FRIDAY – Resilient friendship



John 15: 15 (NIV) *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. **Instead, I have called you friends,** for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

James 2: 15-16 *Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?*

I have called you friends! Jesus came to live amongst us to teach us how to live our lives. Can you imagine a closer friend, someone who knows and understands you, who loves you unconditionally, someone who listens to, cares for and loves you beyond measure?

Jesus made close friends. He called on ordinary people to help His ministry. He was vulnerable and called His disciples to pray with Him. When pressure mounted, Jesus knew the value of spending time with God and also with His trusted friends. Jesus was a great listener, a resilient friend who taught us the true meaning of friendship.

James 2: 15-16 reminds us that loving others is about friendship, caring, and taking the time to listen, to clothe and to feed the hungry. It's an expression of the way in which Jesus lived.

Reflection : If you want friends, be a friend – increase your social investments, practice hospitality; keep in touch with people, do some unexpected kindness. Smile often, develop a habit of generosity and thankfulness. Learn to listen. Ask how you can help, forgive quickly, be vulnerable, and offer others the opportunity to open up.



Prayer: How we long God, to understand more fully what it is to be Your friend, and how we long to live in deep friendship with one another.

Please lead us into lives of resilience as we allow You to shape and form our very being. AMEN