



True Love

Illustrations from the Book of Ruth

DEFINITION: True love is a love that involves understanding and purpose!

"May he (Obed) be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." Ruth 4:15

Love...it is an important concept in Scripture. The word is found over five hundred times in our Bibles, although it is used only once in the Book of Ruth, which will serve as the basis for this study. Let us, first, seek to define love.

What is love? Love is a feeling—a strong emotional attachment. The Bible tells us, for instance, concerning Jonathan and David: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). But love is more than a feeling. Love is also an action. Scripture often speaks of "agape" love...a love of both understanding and purpose. This type of love is illustrated in that most familiar Bible passage: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God understood our need for salvation and in love His purpose was to meet that essential need of every human being by sending Jesus! But love is more than purposeful action. It is also the very essence of God. The Bible says: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It further explains: "Love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7). True love proceeds from God to us and enables us to love. The Bible says: "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19 NIV).

In this study we will seek to further define the nature of that true love proceeding from God, which is to reveal itself in our lives. May God bless our study!

ILLUSTRATION 1: True love does not seek control over but rather blessings for others!

Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Ruth 1:8-9a

ILLUSTRATION 2: True love involves genuine devotion to others and to God!

Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried." Ruth 1:16-17a

ILLUSTRATION 3: True love supports others amidst the great sorrows of life!

She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Ruth 1:20-22a

ILLUSTRATION 4: True love seeks to serve and expends itself in service to others!

Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." Ruth 2:2

ILLUSTRATION 5: True love is genuine and characterizes every relationship in life!

Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered him, "The LORD bless you." Ruth 2:4

ILLUSTRATION 6: True love seeks to protect and provide for others!

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." Ruth 2:8-9

ILLUSTRATION 7: The exercise of true love leads to a good reputation and personal blessing!

Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." Ruth 2:11-12

ILLUSTRATION 8: True love is generous and giving in its dealings with others.

Boaz said to her [Ruth] at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her." Ruth 2:14-16

ILLUSTRATION 9: True love is willing to sacrifice itself to secure the future of others.

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?" Ruth 3:1

ILLUSTRATION 10: True love both honors God and seeks to uphold the reputation of others!

"Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning." So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Ruth 3:12-14

ILLUSTRATION 11: True love is rewarded by God!

Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." Ruth 4:13-15