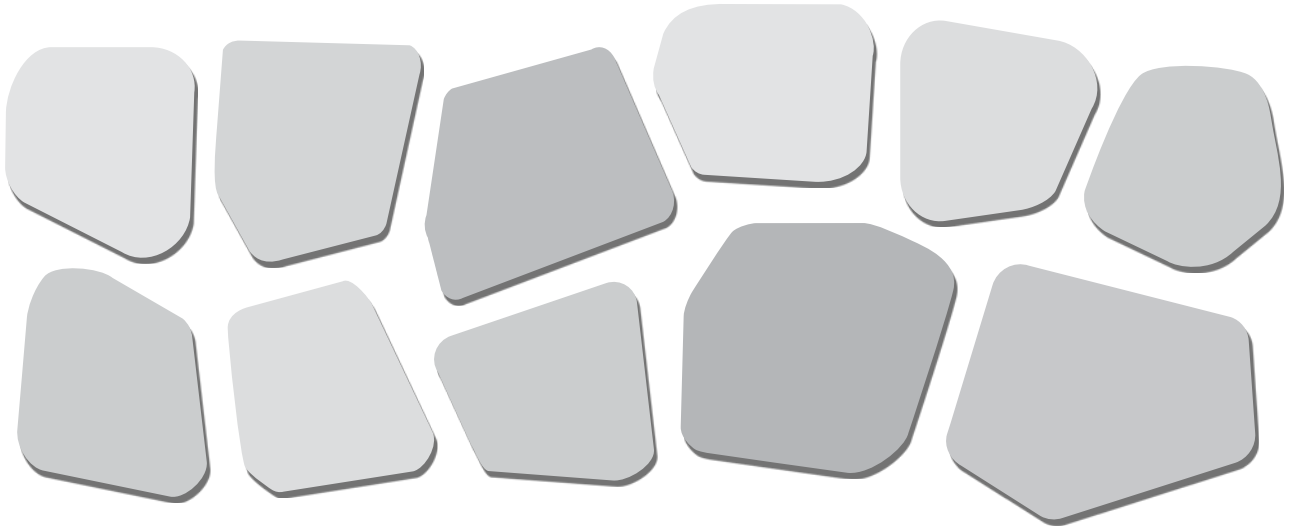


~ Aging with Grace Handout ~

CHAPTER 8: NAOMI

Ruth 1–4

1. . . . *ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls* (Jer. 6:16b).



Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12b-13).

2. Growing in Grace Principles from Chapter 7

- (1) There is no age, sin, or suffering that negates the prayer promise of Hebrews 4:14-16: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, . . . Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” If we are in Christ, we have access to the inner place behind the curtain where we find grace to grow and flourish in every relationship and situation.
- (2) Thinking biblically means thinking big and long—thinking big thoughts about God and praying for spiritual eyes to see His long story of redemption being written in our lives.
- (3) Going behind the curtain where Jesus is, and remembering His covenant faithfulness and love, ignites hope and fuels praise—elements of flourishing.
- (4) We flourish in old age when we look back and praise the Lord that all things worked together according to His purpose to make us more like Jesus and nothing ever separated us from His love (Rom. 8:28-39). This long view of the redemptive story God is writing

in our lives equips us to help the younger generation see the beauty and significance of each part of their story.

- (5) When we put down the pen, stop trying to write our story or the stories of others, and wholeheartedly trust the author of our story to write His gospel story in our lives, we begin to see the mundane and the miserable moments as essential sentences that eventually become a majestic story of grace, because the plot of dirt where we die is also the place where we flourish.
- (6) We flourish when we bow in submission and gratitude to the One who was “delivered up for our transgressions and raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25) and look with expectation to the appointed day of our glorification.

Sharon Better and Susan Hunt, *Aging with Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2021), 136, 138, 139, 141, 146, 149.

3. Prayer

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
Make me to know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation;
for You I wait all the day long.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will make me full of gladness with Your presence*

Ps. 119:105, Ps. 25:4-5, ACTS 2:28

4. The Grace of the Law

Finally, we turn to the law of God because sometimes we need to do things just because God says so. In the garden, God told Adam and Eve not to eat the tree, but he never told them why. Some of us simply hate to follow a direction unless we know all the reasons why the direction was given, how it will benefit us, and so on. But God was saying to Adam and Eve, I think, “Obey this direction, not because you understand, but because you recognize that I am your God and that you are not.” They failed in this. But every day we have the opportunity to put this right. Do God’s will, not because it is exciting (though it will eventually be an adventure), not because it will meet your needs (though it will eventually be a joy), not because you understand why this is the path of wisdom (though it will eventually become more clear.) Do it because he is your Lord and Savior and you are not. Do it because it is the law of the Lord. And if you do it—if you obey him even in the little things—you will know God, know yourself, find God’s grace, love your neighbor, and simply honor him as God. Not a bad deal.

Timothy Keller, “The Grace of the Law,” TimothyKeller.com, January 1, 2009,
<https://timothykeller.com/blog/2009/1/1/the-grace-of-the-law>

5. *A Sacred Sorrow*

In Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed the unbroken Presence of God. It was immediate and intimate. His *hesed*, an untranslatable Hebrew word often rendered “loving kindness,” was a given, reliable as the fresh, newly created air they both breathed.

Then, in a moment when the Presence seemed somehow impossibly absent, in some forgotten corner of the garden, Satan, the Accuser and ultimate cause of all lament, called into question the *hesed* of God . . .

And so the bite was taken . . . The bite was only a consequent act of disbelief. It was the denial and doubting of God’s *hesed* that led to the dis-belief that caused the two prodigals to be driven into the wilderness of His absence, never to return . . .

As the two outcasts made their stumbling way out of the garden, the *hesed* of God caused an innocent animal to be sacrificed to make garments to cover the nakedness of the first couple . . . By such sacrifices their sins would be covered until the time when they would be washed away by a final torrential wave of *hesed* that would break down the hillside of Golgotha, as One who was Himself the Presence of God would cry out in lament . . .

God would redeem their disobedience and sorrow, transforming it by means of His *hesed* into a pathway back to the loving-kindness of His Presence.

Michael Card, *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), 15-16.

- **Ephesians 3:14-21**

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant _____ to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in _____ inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in _____ hearts through faith—that _____, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that _____ may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that _____ ask or think, according to the power at work within _____, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- **Walking It Out**



You have coordinated the women’s ministry in your church for several years. You are nearing retirement from a highly productive career and look forward to giving more time to the women’s ministry. The pastor tells you they have assigned an elder to evaluate and oversee the women’s ministry. You begin to sense they want to make changes, including replacing you. How can you be missional? How can you show *hesed*? How can you flourish?

Bonus: Go to www.agingwithgrace.online to review *Aging with Grace – Ask an Older Woman* five-minute video for this lesson with storyteller Judy Didier: “What would I tell my twenty-something self?”

Additional resources: *Ask an Older Woman* videos with Susan Hunt and Sharon Betters.

Flourishing and Fruitful Women

Lettie Cowman

God has so ordered, that in pressing on in duty we shall find the truest, richest comfort for ourselves. Sitting down to brood over our sorrows, the darkness deepens about us and creeps into our heart, and our strength changes to weakness. But, if we turn away from the gloom, and take up the tasks and duties to which God has called us, the light will come again and we will grow stronger.

Lettie B. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*. Edited by James Reimann
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), March 11.



Call Back

*If you have gone a little way ahead of me, call back –
Twill cheer my heart and help my feet along the stony track;
And if, perchance,
Faith's light is dim,
Because the oil is low
Your call will guide my lagging course as wearily I go.*

*Call back, and tell me that He went with you into the storm
Call back, and say He kept you
When the forest's roots were torn;
That, when the heavens thundered, and the earthquake shook the hill,
He bore you up,
And held you where the very air was still.*

*Oh Friend, call back, and tell me for I cannot see your face,
They say it glows with triumph and your feet bound in the race;
But there are mists between us
And my spirit eyes are dim
And I cannot see the glory,
Though I long for word of Him.*

*But if you'll say He heard you when your prayer was but a cry,
And if you'll say He saw you through the night's sin-darkened sky –
If you have gone a little way ahead,
Oh friend, call back –
Twill cheer my heart and help my feet along the stony track.*

Author unknown, as quoted in Lettie B. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*. Edited by James Reimann
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), December 19.