

THE NEXT GENERATION

A SERMON STARTER FROM LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Ruth 1: 16-18

¹⁶ But Ruth said,

*'Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!'*

*Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.*

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.

*May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!'*

¹⁸ When Naomi saw that she was determined
to go with her, she said no more to her.

Along a bend in the White Nile River in the world's youngest country, a team of nurses lives and works in a clinic that saves lives by doing everything within their power to usher in South Sudan's next generation.

Plastic IV bags hang from a pair of trees in the clinic's courtyard, bringing life-saving fluid and medicine to mothers stricken with malaria. The nurses live in tents, and they volunteer for this duty that keeps them in primitive conditions away from their loved ones. "They choose to work here because they say, 'this is our family,'" says missionary Nancy McGaughey, a nurse who supports their work.

The concept of 'this is family' harkens to one of the Bible's most celebrated stories about family and loyalty. In Ruth 1, Ruth pledges her loyalty to Naomi. It is a passage that is often celebrated at weddings as an expression of blending families. Yet, we also might consider this passage as a commitment to a new generation. Naomi's commitment to the family ultimately led to Ruth's marriage to Boaz, and the genealogy of Jesus Christ was established. Naomi's commitment led to new generations, in which the author and perfecter of our faith was born.



Nancy McGaughey, a reproductive health and nutrition advisor with IMA World Health, speaks with patient Deborah Nyanduk, 36, as she prepares for a tetanus shot at the John Dau Foundation clinic compound in Duk Padiet in South Sudan's Jonglei state.

THIS SUNDAY, MARCH 8 IS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.

It is a day in which we celebrate the gifts women bring to our life universal as much as we commemorate the women in our own lives. It is a time that we reflect on how we might continue to improve the opportunities for the next generation of women, our sisters in the family of God.

Biblical Israel's focus on the next generation and those that would follow ensured its survival. In a world of tumult and conflict, focusing on the generation to follow provides a light by which to guide a journey that often seems off course. The commitment to the next generation of life helps to guide a team of nurses in one of the most dangerous countries in which to be a mother in childbirth on the planet. The commitment of Ruth to Naomi's family helped that family to survive famine and ensure a lineage for Jesus. If Ruth's commitment to a family — and the next generation — ultimately brought about our Savior in Jesus Christ, what might we hope for in our commitment to women and girls of the generations to come?

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