

SESSION 2

Shara and Ruth

I have been serving the Lord in Africa for nine years and much has changed about me in those nine years. I was excited beyond words when I got the call to serve in South Africa in 2009. I felt that the nine short-term mission trips on which I served and led had somewhat prepared me. The time finally came and I set out on this journey to which the Lord called me, leaving behind family, friends, and the comforts of my home.

When I arrived in South Africa I was told that I would be going to a township and spending some time there. Two days later I set out to Middelburg with someone I barely knew and on public transportation that I had never experienced. I was nervous but trusted that the Lord was with me and that I would be okay. Also, I thought of it as a little adventure and that I would have many during my missionary service.

As time went by and after I had settled into my new home in Durban, I often asked myself if I had made the right decision. I had doubts from time to time. I was in a place where I had much to learn and was listening day-in and day-out to a language that I didn't know but would come to understand a little. In time I became part of the village of Ntshongweni where I spent almost every day of my service. I am a natural observer and that helped me a lot. I learned to listen and to ask questions.

Life in South Africa did not come without its challenges including culture shock, making many mistakes, and feeling like I didn't belong, to name a few, and it is when faced with challenges that you must surrender all to the Lord and not try too hard to come up with solutions on your own. After two-and-a-half years, I left my home in South Africa and transitioned to serve the Lord in Kenya.

It was a blessing to continue my service for the Lord in Kenya. I was looking forward to the lessons that the Lord would teach me. When I arrived in Kenya many things were different, but I wasn't too nervous; I just had new things to learn. Many of my experiences in South Africa prepared me for Kenya. The biggest one was taking public transportation. I quickly learned how to find my way around, and I didn't have to depend on anyone or feel that I was inconveniencing anyone to help me.

SHARA AND RUTH

One of my early challenges was finding a place to call home. Our LCMS office manager assisted me in identifying apartments and accompanied me to see them. I had to consider things such as safety of the area and proximity to a grocery store and to other places where I could get all that I needed for daily life. I remember the angst that I felt for almost a week as I tried to make a final decision. I finally called my mother and immediately she asked me what was wrong. I told her that I could not think straight to make a decision about where I wanted to live. I did tell her that there was one place that when I walked out on the patio, it felt like home. I decided on that place and it was my home, my safe haven, and my happy place for many years.

There have been many ups and downs, joys and sorrows throughout my nine years as a missionary. I find the greatest joy in relationships, being with people, getting to know them, and many times just being present. I have many relationships in many different countries and I work hard on nurturing and building them. I have learned a lot and I still have much to learn. God has stretched me when I didn't think that it was possible to be stretched any more. I have grown tremendously in my faith and in my love for our Heavenly Father. I have learned to be patient, humble, and trusting. Trust has been my biggest lesson. God has taught me that every day when I walk out of my house that I must trust Him in all things. I have seen the Lord provide when I didn't think that it was possible. I am thankful for the hard lessons God has taught me. I am a much better version of myself today than I was when I came on the mission field.

I have the opportunity to spend time in many villages and even in refugee camps and to be with the women in all of those places. The ladies freely share stories about their lives and many of the stories are hard to hear. I am free to share my faith and love that the Father has given to me with them. All of those times end with laughter, singing, and hugs. I am also encouraged by their faith and hope in Christ, particularly from the ladies in the refugee camps. Life there is hard and it is by God's grace that they are there. He provides for them in many ways.

I would say that I identify with Ruth. I am from the island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean and I have lived in several countries

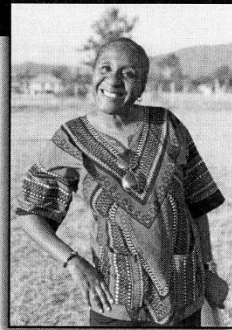
throughout my life. I call several places home and that did not come easily. With the Lord's help and provision, I have learned to be part of the culture and life in those countries. I am part of God's family throughout the world. I share a special bond with many families that are not part of my biological family. Just as the Lord showed His enduring love to Ruth, He has allowed me to show love and faithfulness to many. *Your people shall be my people and your God my God* (Ruth 1:6).



SHARA'S BIO

Shara Osiro — I was born on the island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. My family and I moved to the U.S. Virgin Islands when I was eight years old. I moved to the mainland to the state of Georgia around the age of 22 to finish my studies. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology. I served in the Army National Guard and Reserves

for 10 years. My mother lives in Florida along with my only brother and his family. My father went home to be with Jesus eight years ago. I have lived in Kenya now for six years. God blessed me to be joined in marriage to Michael Osiro, the most amazing man of God, in February of 2017. Michael is Kenyan but he lived in the USA in Arkansas and California for 16



years. I am blessed to serve the Lord and to be a part of His mission.

Discussion and Study

If you could contact Shara by email, text, letter, or card, what would you say to her to encourage and thank her for the service she gives to the Lord and His Church?

In The Lutheran Study Bible the introduction to the Book of Ruth states,

“The Book of Ruth is a beautiful story in the history of King David’s family, illustrating how God guides history for the sake of His people. He works through suffering and redemption to preserve His people and to welcome the nations. These aspects of the Book point to the birth of Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, who descends from Ruth and Boaz. Though the Book of Ruth is not a love story, it beautifully illustrates the Lord’s enduring love for you. As you read Ruth, consider how the Lord calls you to show love and faithfulness to your family and your neighbors, for whom Christ lived and gave His life” (TLSB pg. 423).

Turn to the Book of Ruth and read the entire story. As you read, mark passages that speak to you and your life. In The Lutheran Study Bible (p. 423), the outline for Ruth is divided into four acts.

Act I: The Dilemma (Chapter 1)

What is the dilemma for Ruth?

What dilemma did Shara face?

What dilemma have you been challenged with recently?

Act II: The Hope (Chapter 2)

Who enters the "stage" for Ruth and what does he do (vv. 1-17) and offer her (vv. 18-23)?

What is your definition of "hope"?

When you have felt hopeless, what brought you new hope?

Act III: The Risk (Chapter 3)

Naomi and Ruth were risk takers. What was Naomi's strategy for Ruth?

Ruth does what Naomi says and then offers a challenge to Boaz that includes redemption and marriage. Using your study Bible or device search for the biblical reference of redemption in Ruth's time.

Shara gives us a beautiful testimony of living her life for the Lord. Knowing that you have been redeemed by Jesus, how does that knowledge make you free to live your life today?

Act IV: The Solution (Chapter 4)

How does Boaz act to solve the dilemma?

Now comes the amazing ending for this family (vv. 13-22). What did you discover?

As God's children we are truly blessed to have the opportunity to be His witnesses. Whose life will you touch today with an act of kindness or gift of love?

+ *In closing, say a special prayer for Shara and the ministry she and her husband share and for your witness to those who surround you.*



