

Ruth 1: Trusting God in Difficult Seasons

The story of Ruth begins in a dark time in Israel's history. The period of the Judges was marked by confusion, moral decline, and people doing whatever seemed right in their own eyes. But even in the midst of chaos, God was working in the lives of those who were open to Him.

A Family in Crisis

Elimelech, whose name means *"My God is King,"* lived in Bethlehem with his wife, Naomi (*"Pleasant"*), and their two sons. But when a famine struck, they left their homeland and moved to Moab, a foreign land that did not worship God.

Elimelech likely thought he was doing the best thing for his family, seeking food and security. But moving away from God's people and His land came at a cost. Elimelech died in Moab, leaving Naomi a widow. Then, her two sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, but after ten years, both of her sons also died.

Naomi had left Bethlehem full, but now she felt empty. With no husband, no sons, and no security, she decided to return home. She had heard that God had once again blessed Israel with food, and she longed to go back.

Choosing Between Comfort and Commitment

Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab, return to their families, and remarry. She had nothing left to offer them. Orpah tearfully said goodbye and returned home. But Ruth refused to leave. Instead, she made one of the most beautiful statements of loyalty in the Bible:

"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. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth wasn't just committing to Naomi—she was committing to Naomi's God. She was leaving behind her homeland, her culture, and her old life to follow the one true God.

Naomi's Bitterness and God's Redemption

When Naomi returned to Bethlehem, the people were excited to see her. But she responded with sorrow:

"Do not call me Naomi (Pleasant); call me Mara (Bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty." (Ruth 1:20-21)

Naomi believed her story was over. She had lost everything and felt like God had abandoned her. But she didn't realize that God was still working behind the scenes. She thought she had returned to Bethlehem empty, but she wasn't alone—Ruth was with her. And through Ruth, God would bring incredible blessings that Naomi couldn't see yet.

Personal Application: Trusting God in Difficult Seasons

1. Be Careful Where You Seek Security

- Elimelech left Bethlehem because of a famine, but in seeking physical security, he moved his family away from God's people. Sometimes, when life gets hard, we are tempted to make decisions based on what seems best instead of seeking God's direction.
- Instead of running to comfort or worldly solutions, we should ask: *"God, where do You want me to be? How do You want me to respond to this season?"*

2. God Can Bring Beauty Out of Brokenness

- Naomi thought her life was over, but she couldn't see what God was doing. Even in our hardest seasons, God is still working.
- Maybe you've experienced loss, disappointment, or feel like you have nothing left. God is not finished with your story. Naomi's sorrow would soon turn to joy, and yours can too.

3. Commit to God, Even When It's Hard

- Ruth's decision to follow Naomi was not easy. She left behind her home, her gods, and everything familiar. But she chose to follow the true God, and He honored her faithfulness.
- Sometimes, following Jesus means leaving behind things that are comfortable. It may mean choosing faith over fear, obedience over convenience, or trusting God when you don't understand.

4. Bitterness Blinds Us to God's Blessings

- Naomi was so focused on what she had lost that she didn't see the blessing God had given her in Ruth.
- When we allow bitterness to take root, it makes us blind to the ways God is providing for us. Instead of focusing on what we've lost, we should look at what God is still doing.

5. God's Plan is Greater Than We Can Imagine

- Naomi thought she was coming home empty, but she didn't know that Ruth would one day become the great-grandmother of King David—and part of the family line of Jesus!
- What may seem like the end of the road could be the beginning of God's greatest work in your life.

Conclusion: Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

The story of Ruth reminds us that God is always working, even when we can't see it. If you are in a difficult season, don't give up. Trust that God is writing a bigger story than you can imagine.

Just like Naomi and Ruth, we must choose to trust God, even when we don't understand. When we surrender to Him, He takes our brokenness and turns it into something beautiful.

Naomi thought she had returned empty, but she was about to see just how full God's blessings would be. **And the same is true for us—God is not finished with our story.**