

JOURNEY

Part Four: Unfounded Bitterness Ruth 1:19-22

Settling in **enemy territory** for ten years **changed** Naomi

It changed how **OTHERS viewed her** vs. 19

The city was *'stirred up'* = indicators of poverty, missing family members, new Moabite woman

It changed her **view of HERSELF** vs. 20

Left Israel **Naomi** = *'Gracious; God is Gracious to me'*

Returned home **Mara** = *'Bitterly treated'* – victim of God's dark side
"the Almighty hath caused bitterness to me exceedingly,"

It changed her **view of GOD** vs. 20-21

'Almighty dealt bitterly with me' = He is intentionally **punishing** me
'the LORD brought me back empty' = He has **removed all good**
'the LORD witnessed against me' = He **declared ill will** toward me!
'Almighty has afflicted me' = He did **injury** and **hurt** to me!

But Naomi and Ruth **returned** to Bethlehem anyway! vs. 22

Together Ruth and Naomi start on a Journey **towards** God

Settling down in **enemy territory changes** people! 1 Tim 1:18-20

Auburn Grace Community Church – February 4th, 2024

Life Group Discussion Questions – February 4, 2024

Ruth 1:20-21 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, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

DISCOVER (re-read Ruth 1)

1. Compare and contrast Ruth and Orpah.
2. Define the term "victim mentality". Share about a time when your poor choice(s) brought adversity upon yourself but yet you tried to justify yourself or even looked to blame others. What effect did it have on your relationships? Discuss the importance of taking ownership of lousy decisions.
3. Considering Ruth, have you ever been in a situation where you certainly did not fit in? Where did you go to deal with your shame and humiliation? How have you seen God restore you in those times?

EXPLORE

1. How can we discern that Naomi was well-known in her prior residency in Bethlehem? Did the long residency in Moab change her appearance so that others would not recognize her? (see 1:19) What would the women have been expecting of Naomi on her return? What happened to Naomi's reputation while she was gone? How do our expectations of others skew the way we view them?
2. If you had been gone from your hometown for many years, how would it feel if you returned virtually empty-handed? How did Naomi respond? Can you empathize with her response? Does Naomi truly return empty-handed? What benefits may come from being left empty-handed? What does Naomi's attitude reveal about normal human nature? Why are we prone to embrace bitterness? (see Hebrews 12:15)
3. How might have circumstances been different for Naomi if she'd returned to the Promised Land immediately after Elimelech died? What significant events occurred after his passing? How did this help to move Naomi towards her changed view of God? If you are encamped in enemy territory right now, what can you expect to happen by staying there? By leaving immediately?
4. What did Ruth see in Naomi that would cause her to completely abandon her homeland? Discuss how this is a foretaste of future conversions to faith in Christ. How can we emulate Naomi's character, and also Ruth's, so that others might know Jesus?

EXPERIENCE

1. Why is it a significant notation that Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest? (see 1:22) What happens in terms of relationships during actual harvesting work? How can we intentionally leverage seasons in our lives (seasons of known limited duration) to point to our Kinsman-Redeemer, Lord Jesus?
2. How do you live counter to our culture? Do you daily seek God's will according to His Word, whether it's "politically correct" or the popular thing to do? Can others see, through your righteous living, that you are a child of God?

PRAY

Pray...Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I have stepped outside of Your will for my life. I am defeated every time I do that. But You are the Good Shepherd who constantly seeks to find and restore me to the fold. Thank You, for the radiant joy that is mine when I abide in Your Son and Him in me. Thank You that all Your paths are peace. Amen