



Hope in Life's Losses

RECAP

This week's focus: "Hold on! There's hope in the darkness."

The book of Ruth in our English bible follows the book of Judges and the closing line of "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25 ESV). For a book following the journey of God's people, this is not a good sign. When the book of Ruth opens with the reminder that they were still in that season of history (1:1) and that there was a famine in the land (1:1), we get a double dose of bad news. As a result of the famine, a Jewish family of 4 leaves Bethlehem for the heavenly oasis of...Moab!?!?! Moab is a desert land on the opposite side of the Dead Sea from Israel. It was anything but an oasis. It was also a longtime nemesis of Israel, and this is the land this family heads to. Within 10 years, only one of the original family members remained, Naomi. Her husband and two sons had died, and she only had her two daughters in law with her. These two women loved Naomi, and as a result, Naomi wanted to return their love by giving them her blessing to stay in their motherland of Moab, as she prepared to return home to Bethlehem.

In this exchange, we learn that Naomi is really struggling. Today we would say she was in a hard season of her faith, a desert season. She believed God was out to get her (13) and thought the two widows would be better off returning to their land, people, and their gods (15) instead of returning with her to her land and her God. One stayed. The other, Ruth, refused.

Ruth not only chose Naomi and her land in this exchange, but she also chose Naomi's God (16). In this season of tragic loss and deep pain, a season where Naomi's faith was rocked to the core, it was a Gentile widow from the despised Moabites that clung to the faith of Naomi's ancestors. What a powerful scene!!

Upon returning to Bethlehem, the two worn out widows cause quite the stir (19). Naomi remains trapped in bitterness, so she attempts to change her name (20-21). Things seem dark and unpromising as the chapter unfolds. It opened with a famine and was followed by the death of Naomi's family. All hope was seemingly lost for Naomi until the author gives us a glimpse of what is around the unseen corner, a harvest.

The famine is ending. The pathway from death to life is about to be paved. There is hope in life's losses. The gospel, the good news of life's victory over death, is about to be foreshadowed in this story!



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SHARE (5-10 min)

1. Icebreaker Question: If you could vacation anywhere this summer, where would it be and why?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Ruth 1

2. How did God speak to you through the scripture and the sermon this week? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
3. Ruth opens in an era where, "everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Recall a time or season in life where you just "did what was right in your own eyes" without any regard for God or anyone around you.
4. Ruth opens with a difficult season. What is your typical response to life's harder times? Do you turn towards or away from God? Are you more prone to blame Him or cling to Him?
5. Why do you think the family turned to Moab when the guaranteed food would be found in the fertile land of the Nile River?
6. Naomi's life got turned upside down and it was the Gentile widow who clung to God. Is there a Naomi in your life right now? Someone who needs you to come alongside them and help them cling to the Lord? Share with the group how you might be able to come alongside that person.
7. Share a story of a time when you found encouragement in the Lord from an unlikely source. If you're in a hard season today, who do you see as a Ruth in your life right now?
8. This story opens with famine and ends with the promise of harvest. Share a time in your life that felt like you were living in a metaphorical/spiritual famine. What were the signs the metaphorical harvest was around the corner?

SUPPORT (15 min)

PRAY: Encourage and pray for those in your group that need to be reminded that hope can be found in life's losses and hardships.