



Lesson 55: Ruth and Naomi

Scriptural Basis:



Ruth 1:1-22

Overview:

Elimelech and his family leave Bethlehem at a time of severe famine, and move to Moab. While living there, Elimelech's sons marry Moabite women - Orpah and Ruth. Over the course of some time, Elimelech and both his sons die, leaving three widowed women. Elimelech's wife, Naomi gets word the Lord visited Bethlehem and the famine has ended, so she decides to move back. She tells her daughters-in-law to go back to their hometowns, and try to find new husbands. Orpah agrees to the plan and returns to *her people and her gods*, but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi and moving to her country *and worshipping Naomi's God*. Naomi and Ruth move back to Bethlehem empty handed and with no one to care for them.

Things to consider:

The loss of a husband was normally a social and economic tragedy. This was doubly so for Naomi because she lost her husband *and* sons. She returned to Bethlehem having no means of support. Ruth didn't just do a nice thing by wanting to stay with Naomi, she actually passed up the opportunity of finding a new husband that would take care of her when she chose to be devoted to Naomi, and Naomi's God.

Bible Study for Preparation:



Read Ruth 1:1-22. Meditate on the dichotomy the text presents of Orpah returning to her people and her god, but Ruth choosing to become one of Naomi's people and follow Naomi's God (the one true God). Another dichotomy in the text is that Naomi left Israel "full" but returned "empty" (Ruth 1:21), but God was with her the entire time. The name Naomi means "sweet, pleasant," which gives us an idea of Naomi's basic character. We see her giving her blessing to Ruth and Orpah when she tells them to return to their mothers' homes so that they might find new husbands: she kisses them and asks that the Lord deal kindly with them (Ruth 1:8-14). But her heartache in Moab was more than Naomi could bear. When she and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem, the women of the town greet Naomi by name, but she cries, "Don't call me Naomi. . . . Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. Though she experienced hard and bitter circumstances that were beyond her control, Naomi understood that the affliction came from the God who is sovereign in all things.

Teaching the lesson:

A: Review – Last week – Samson: a strong and weak man

B: Bible verse memory activity

C. Story

D. Additional activity