

# Week 3: Walking Away from Bitterness

## Opening.

Naomi decides to return to her homeland out of sheer necessity and duty. After all the trials and troubles she's been through, she determines to return to the Promised Land. She enters the land carrying a lot of trauma. After all her pain, what was her greatest need? It was an intimate relationship with God. As a child of God she needed only to "return." Walking away from God was what brought all the pain and bitterness. It would take some time for her to completely experience the joy of former days, but it would change dramatically if she would just make the decision to include God in her life.

**Scripture.** Ruth 1:6-18

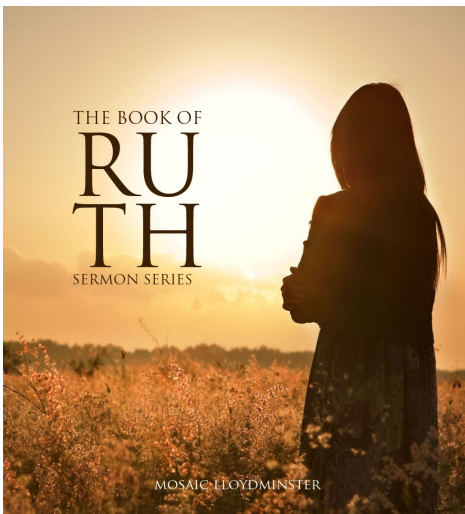
## Observation.

- The text tells us that Naomi and Ruth made their way back to Bethlehem (verse 19). Fact is, the distance between Moab and Bethlehem is only 80 kilometers (that's like Lloydminster to Mannville AB or Paynton SK). By foot, that trek would have taken Naomi and Ruth 5 to 6 days.
- As soon as they arrived, the whole town was stirred. Bethlehem was a small farming village where everyone knew everybody. This also indicates that Naomi's husband Elimelech comes from a prominent family. However, when people recognized her, she immediately told them to stop calling her Naomi (pleasant, beautiful) and start calling her Mara (bitter) (verse 20).
- Naomi explains in verse 21 why she decided to change her name. The pain, heartache, and disappointment that Naomi felt were legitimate. She carried a lot of burden and harbored a lot of bitterness. It may sound insensitive, but we must ask, "Who created her problems?" The answer: She and her husband. When Elimelech moved to Moab they moved outside of God's will for their lives.
- In verse 20, Naomi and Ruth returned at the start of the barley harvest. This verse is a nuance, that puts more weight on Naomi's experience, seeing the fruitfulness of the land and life they gave up on many years ago.

## Application.

- In verse 13 "the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!" in verse 20 "the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." In verse 21, "the Almighty has afflicted me." Like Naomi, we usually blame God for our troubles. Can you share of a time when you blamed God for your troubles?
- Walking away from God's will means leaving His blessing, purpose and protection. In Deuteronomy 28, the people of God are commanded "to fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands" and the result is "blessings will come on you and accompany you." If we know that obedience brings blessings, why do you think do people still want to disobey and do their own thing?
- Leaving bitterness behind means the need to return to God's will. The Hebrew word for *return* is *teshuvah*, which also means repentance which involves four spiritual steps: 1) realization, 2) regret/remorse, 3) confession before God; and 4) acceptance of the future. The whole message of the Bible is God's invitation for us to return. What is God telling you turn away from?

**Prayer.** Is there an area of your life that you need to surrender to God?



## SCRIPTURE

### Ruth 1:19-22

19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.

21 I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

