

## NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

### LESSON TWENTY-FIVE COMMENTS

Dear Loved Ones,

I recently watched a Bill Gaither program that featured various artists and groups. This day the artist was Josh Turner. Many people know him to be a country artist. He did a great job. He seemed to genuinely sing gospel songs from his heart. When Bill Gaither sat and talked to him, he asked him what made him RETURN to his roots. Josh had been raised in a Christian home. He said he had various spiritual experiences throughout his life but did not go into much detail. How often do we hear of artists who were raised in Christian homes but find themselves using their God-given talents for their own benefit and end up losing their way in the middle of fame, fortune, and what they consider to be success? It is so exciting to hear of those who return to God, but so many have not yet turned back to God. My heart aches when I hear these stories. I ache for them as well as their parents. I can't help but wonder what happened. Sure, it is tempting to seek success. Satan loves to tempt us with things that seem good. Isn't that how it all started?

We can do our best to raise our children for the Lord, but Satan will always find an opportunity to make them question their roots, upbringing, and foundation. Today's schools and colleges are filled with teachings that are anti-God based. Sometimes it is even our own fault. We aren't always the best example of walking closely with God. Sometimes our kids can't seem to see the value of serving God. When children mature, it is natural for them to question our teachings. Their experiences aren't always positive. We make many mistakes. I know our family has made plenty of mistakes, in spite of our diligent goal to teach our children the truth of God's Word. Only their own strong personal relationship with the Lord is what will keep them, and even then, there are many opportunities for them to fall away. My constant prayers are for family members who need to return to a closer walk with the Lord. A few don't even want to recognize that they once had a relationship with the Lord. They have turned their back on God. It is so hard to think about. Some have children and I am very concerned that they are not giving those children an opportunity to know God. How can they not feel concerned about what will happen to them when they die, or when Jesus comes. How can they not acknowledge the experience they once had or the decisions they once made. How will they feel if they go to heaven, but then they denied their children an opportunity to know God? Today's struggles are temporary, but our future matters. We miss out on so much that God has for us when we dedicate our lives to Him.

Naomi, seemed to know God and God's truth but when tough times came, even though the land that was filled with idols, it didn't seem so bad compared to their present need. We constantly make choices, do we do things God's way, even if the cost seems great at the time? It seemed to make sense to Naomi, just like it did to Eve when the fruit looked good and Satan convinced her that the consequences may not be that bad. She was probably a good loving wife and mother wanting to take care of her family. I would find it to be a very hard decision too. Sometimes we do things for our own satisfaction and sometimes we even do things that we think are unselfish reasons, but God can't honor decisions we make on our own against His will. There is no other way to put it. Then again, hardship is not necessarily a sign of not following God. Naomi's choice was to remain in an arid land of God's choosing or to flee to the bountiful one that God had roped off. Escaping to easier terrain is all too tempting when we're weary and in the middle of hardship. We question why God would let us live in these tough circumstances. I remember how hard it was for my husband when we first started to

struggle with our church not receiving the funds needed to keep the church functioning. He was always taught that if God is in it, it would succeed. We saw God do amazing miracles and many lives were changed yet the struggles were very real. Success isn't always what we think it should be. God often takes us through times of trials, testing, and even allows us to suffer for a time. Yet God is faithful. He still wants to see if we will be faithful. Sometimes we fail and look for an easier way. Sometimes we can't see what God is doing and certainly not why. Other times we just don't care what God wants. We want to be in charge of our lives. God was faithful to us in many ways, but it was often not in the way we expected. We have been blessed with an amazing family. That is certainly no small blessing.

Once again, the key to this verse is the word RETURN to remind us that obedience is still better than sacrifice. Whether we once knew God, but walked away or, like Ruth, have not experienced God as our Redeemer, we can make the choice to Return to God. His plan is perfect, even if in our minds, it doesn't appear to be what we expect It to look like at the time.

In the next few lessons, we will see how God redeems, reconciles, and renews Naomi and Ruth as they RETURN to God. They will discover God's greater plan. We often don't understand God's ways, but if we allow Him to continue to do His will in our lives, we will find that God gives us hope, and provides all that we need to serve Him. He wants to abundantly shower us with love, joy, and peace that only He can give us. He never promised to make us look successful, or to give us a life without challenges. He did promise to supply all our needs and to draw near to us as we draw near to Him.

Our story applies to each of us individually, but also to the church, and to our nation. We all need to RETURN to God. God will allow us to do our own thing for a season, but there are also many consequences when we think we can do a better job of life than He can. The story of Naomi and Ruth has much to teach us. I praise the Lord for all He has been teaching us through this simple story.

May you have another blessed week.

Love and Prayers,  
Sandy Yates