

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON TWENTY-ONE: RUTH 1:19b

"And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?"

After a ten-year absence, Naomi returns home. She brings along with her a young Moabite woman. Her sudden appearance in this strange fashion causes an uproar in Bethlehem.

Scripture tells us that when Naomi and Ruth walked into town "all the city was moved about them." The Hebrew word translated "moved" means "to make an uproar; agitate greatly." It is akin "to put in commotion," and carries with it the idea of making a noise. The note in the margin of my Bible simply indicates the city was "excited because of" them.

Naomi was well remembered by the people of Bethlehem. The question, "is this Naomi?" makes it obvious that the Naomi they see before them is different than the Naomi who left town ten years earlier.

Grief, pain, suffering, and loss alters us. No one comes out of a tragedy unchanged. Now, that change can include some positive aspects as well as negative.

For example, difficult times may drive us to our knees. It's during the time when we are weakest that we rely more heavily on the Lord. During a season of sorrow we may grow closer to the Lord than ever before.

When a Christian is confronted with a life-changing event it is an opportunity for the local church to show love and support. It is amazing to watch as people step up offering all manner of support and encouragement. And when tragedy strikes someone else, you will follow their example and offer the comfort and support you yourself once received.

Naomi left town with a husband and two sons by her side. The Naomi who stands before them now has only a Gentile woman as her companion. Where was Naomi's family? Who was this stranger? Where has Naomi been, and what has happened to her?

No wonder the city is in an uproar. What will Naomi do now? Where will she live? The people knew that the land that had belonged to Elimelech was now in the hands of another. Due to Naomi's long absence she had forfeited her estate by neglecting her financial obligation. It was obvious by her appearance that she would not be able to redeem her lost inheritance.

The Bible doesn't tell us if anyone offered Naomi and Ruth a place to stay, even temporarily. Did anyone offer them a meal? The Jewish people valued hospitality so it may be that Naomi and Ruth had their most basic needs met by the women of Bethlehem. At least for a time.

Naomi and Ruth were entering a new chapter in their lives. Their husbands were gone, as was the way of life they enjoyed together. A season of sorrow and grief had followed. And, while the pain of loss would never go away completely, the time to move on and make a new life had come. Naomi and Ruth were making that new life together in Bethlehem.

Have you reached the point where you are ready to move on to a new life? A new normal. A new focus. You don't have to do it alone. Naomi had Ruth and a town full of old friends. You have the women of the Naomi-Ruth Connection. We want to help.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and

sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." I John 4:7, 10-11