

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON TWENTY-THREE: RUTH 1:21a

"I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty."

Naomi experienced a horrific loss. She was bereft of not only her husband but her sons, as well. She left Bethlehem as part of a nuclear family. She returned the sole survivor.

Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem in search of food. Their intentions were good - to preserve the lives of their sickly children. They must have found hope in Moab because they "continued there" (v.2).

It must have been a shock to Naomi when it was her husband, not one of the less than healthy sons, that died. This death left her in a worse position. We don't know how old the boys were when their father died. But we do know that they were not robust. Both sons died at a relatively young age.

It's no wonder Naomi had a negative outlook on life. She believed the Almighty God had stripped her of her family. How could she fight that? She couldn't. So she accepted her situation as God's will for her life. But she was admittedly bitter about it.

While she did not rebel against God, or turn her back on Him, she also did not give Him credit for her blessings. Naomi was so focused on what she believed God had taken away from her that she could not see the things He had given.

Naomi did not return to Bethlehem empty. She returned with a daughter-in-law who loved her and pledged a lifetime of loyalty. Although she did not see it then, Naomi returned with the means to the redemption of her family's inheritance and the raising up of an heir to secure the family name. The Lord had brought her home again full to overflowing with a daughter-in-law who would prove to be better than seven sons (see v. 4:15).

Like Naomi, we tend to focus on our loss. We see only the negative. We're hurting. We want things to go back to the way they were. We want a cosmic Reset button.

Like Naomi, we acknowledge God is in control. He has the right to conform circumstances to His will. And we accept this is so.

But, unlike Naomi, let us not miss the blessings God bestows in the midst of our sorrows. Look for the positive. It is there. Ruth stood by Naomi's side, but Naomi didn't see her as a gift from God.

Scripture assures us that God does not give us more burdens than we can handle. In the midst of the trial He give us grace for the day. Every day. We are renewed and refreshed.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My heath cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2