

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON TWENTY-THREE COMMENTS

Dear Loved Ones,

This week's lesson hits home for some us. **"I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty."** Some of us also had fullness in our families but suddenly felt empty. Like Naomi, we weren't totally empty. We still had family that cared about us, but our loss still seemed to be unbearable at first. Naomi had to make a decision. She chose to return to her land, which meant that she was also choosing to go forward on a new journey. As she did, she began to experience hope. It started with the devotion and love that Ruth gave her. It must have still seemed like a new treacherous journey. It was a daily effort to walk toward another land with so many unknowns. Naomi couldn't see the hope or the blessing of her devoted daughter in law at first. She was weighed down with her own feelings. She also didn't seem to realize that she still had much worth. She thought she had nothing to offer Ruth. Yet Ruth treasured her. What a blessing!

God has truly given each of us the blessing of stronger relationships through our weakness and grief. This group has certainly been a part of that blessing.

Sandy recently had to remember the loss of her husband. He had to be taken to the hospital. Because of CoVid, she could not communicate before he passed away. The same month a year later, she lost her mom. The situation was much different, but in her month of dealing with her loss it was another emotional struggle. She has been a tremendous blessing to me, in spite of her own loss. Besides all she has done to provide the lessons that have blessed us all, she continues to teach Sunday School and care for her daughter who has health issues. God has continued to enrich her life with family and friends and she is seeing God use her in many ways.

My sister also suddenly lost her husband from Covid two weeks after my husband died. She also did not have an opportunity to say good-bye. Both husbands died in November. What made it harder for her is that she suddenly lost her only son a few years earlier. He was very close to her and was starting his post college life. She has been a tremendous blessing to me. We have leaned on each other in many ways. God also has continued to use her in Bible studies and through teaching children weekly. She still has a daughter who has many health issues, so she has been able to devote much of her time to helping her daughter. She has also been able to spend much more time with her grandchildren who adore her.

I also technically lost my husband to Covid, but he was hospital bound for 6 months before he passed away. I shared some of my struggle with my article in the last lesson. I can't begin to tell you how much new relationships, like many of you, have meant to me. In spite of my children also missing their father, they have been amazing in their help to me. I am sure Sandy and my sister would say the same thing of their children and families. God has definitely given each of us a stronger appreciation for those relationships. I am so grateful for my kids, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The kids that live nearby have been especially amazing in providing daily/weekly needs. Those who are farther away have contributed in many ways as well. I have been blessed with the opportunity to visit them since my husband went to Heaven. My prayer is that I can continue to be a blessing to them and each of you through continued prayer. We know God still has a plan for us. Our desire is to be blessing to you and others.

Most of all, God has given us a deeper need to look to Him daily for direction in our journeys and has caused us to develop deeper relationship with Him. I shared the struggles that we have been facing to explain that our journeys have been very real and seem tougher at certain times, but I also want you to know that God has been at work in our lives to heal our hearts, restore our strength, deepened our relationships, and use us for His glory this year.

Naomi's journey brought her into a deeper relationship with her daughter in law. They kept going forward. As they took one step at a time God directed their path and as our story unfolds, we will see that God provided much more than their daily needs. He gave them a future and used them for His glory. In fact, even though they couldn't begin to see God's full plan, He used them for our salvation through Jesus. How amazing!!!

Whether we have experienced loss or not, we can deepen our relationship with him and renew our appreciation for those relationships that God has given us. God especially wants us to cherish those who provide positive encouragement in our lives and He wants us to do the same for them.

I once did a study on the word "daily". In Acts 2:27 God tells us that when God established His church through the power of the Holy Spirit the people began to worship and praise God. "*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were to be saved.*" God wants to provide our needs through our relationship with Him. He also wants us to come together in relationships that bring us into deeper relationships others and draw them closer to Him. It is a daily effort to give God control of our lives and ask how He wants to use us.

My husband always taught the congregation that we have a daily decision to go backward or forward. There is no standing still with God. Going forward brings us into God's best plan for our lives. It is a choice we make. The journey is sometimes tough but when we realize we can't do it on our own, we are at the best place to receive God's best. Our daily devotion to Him and others may be a great way to see God add others to the Kingdom.

Thank you for your prayers. We are praying for you as well. May this week's journey be filled with God's best

Love and prayers always,

Sandy Yates