

## NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

### LESSONS NINE & TEN COMMENTS

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I write this week's memo to you, I am very grateful for the opportunity to spend extra time with family recently.

As I read our story of Naomi and Ruth, I can't help but think of what it must have been like for Naomi to follow her husband to an unknown land that offered food in the time of famine. How much did she know about God's hand on her homeland versus the Moabites? Being hungry, caring for her husband and children had to be very important to her. It sounds like she should have been justified in trying to do what would be best for her family. Hunger is a very strong incentive. Even when I am not hungry (I probably haven't even genuinely experienced real hunger except while purposely fasting) I still have a very strong desire to eat regularly. It is probably one of my toughest struggles. Self-control or God-control is quite a daily challenge for many of us. So I find it easy to understand how this family would want to look at greener grass or a more abundant food supply. It was a natural thing to do. The problem is that God often doesn't ask us to do the natural things. He wants us to trust Him and obey Him regardless of what we see or think. His way is supernatural. God had roped off the land of the Moabites (they were the enemy of Israel), but it enticed the family to seek something that looked good for them. It seems that it was the same thing that enticed Eve and Adam. Satan often uses our eyes and feelings to deceive us. It may have even seemed like it was worth it for a while. After all, her son's lived there for at least 10 years and married there. Naomi was probably a very loving person. Her daughter-in-laws evidently felt attached enough to her to be willing to leave their own families.

Naomi may have been raised to honor God. Now she suddenly realized that she needed to return to her God fearing land and her people. She felt very alone. Her daughter-in-laws were not her blood relatives. She knew she had to make a decision to return to her people. It may have even crossed her mind that if she returned alone no one would be very aware of her leaving Bethlehem to go to the forbidden land. In spite of her own feelings, she prepared to take Orpah and Ruth with her. I imagine that she cared for them deeply and that they cared for her as well. They had the comfort of being in this together and could be there for each other. However, Naomi began to think about what this meant for her daughter in laws. Even though she may have wanted them with her, she realized that she had very little to offer them. She strongly encouraged them to stay. Orpah almost stayed with her but then chose to stay. Ruth continued and together they made the journey. Naomi was the only one that made both journeys. She had already experienced what it meant to prepare for moving and taking a long trip. Last year I moved from a large home to a small condo. It was a quick, emotional, and exhausting trip even with family help. Naomi and Ruth had to plan and work hard to prepare for survival of the journey. It wasn't a short hop or skip over the border. They had no cell phone, no preserved food that they did not prepare for themselves, no transportation provided. They had each other and a basic foundation of Naomi remembering her heritage in God. God could have met Naomi's needs in Israel. We have to wonder how much different it may have been, but God met her where she was at this time. He meets us where we are too. He made a way for her to turn back to God and to bring Ruth into God's will.

Do you ever feel like you missed God's direction because you weren't looking to Him first? Do you ever feel like you would just like to do what feels good or seems to make sense rather than seeking God?

No matter how many poor decisions we have made or still make, God is ready to reach out to us with loving arms and lift us up into his care. It doesn't mean that we won't face the consequences of our decisions. My husband always said that if a woman goes to the alter asking for forgiveness for getting pregnant outside of God's plan, she will be forgiven but the pregnancy is still there. God can now use that pregnancy as a blessing, in spite of any sin that may have been committed. God always has a better plan. It is our job to give Him control. We can receive His best blessings when we follow Him.

God also uses trials, tests and sufferings in our lives to draw us closer to Him and show Himself faithful through any circumstances. Many of our challenges are not a result of disobedience. He wants a deeper intimacy with us in which we learn to look to Him to meet our needs and to love us like a father that is more protective, stronger, more loving, caring and wiser than any earthly father ever could be.

I have decided to share 2 lessons with you today because I think it is important to see that sometimes we face consequences because of our own self wills and sometimes we have to live through hardships that we don't understand even if we are following God's plans for our lives. God's plan is always the best plan even if it doesn't always seem best for us. He is all knowing and desires to use every circumstance for our good and His glory. Our good may not seem good to us but He is a Sovereign God who loves us. We always say "What's the worst thing that can happen?" It could be death but even that to a Christian means eternity with our Lord. The bottom line is that we can trust Him and remember that He has everything we need to go forward in His care. God does not promise an easy life, but it will be a fulfilling life when we walk with Him.

Have a great week.

Love and prayers,

Sandy Yates