

Pastor Jim Jackson, 1/15/17
Ruth—Life, Loss, Love and Legacy, pt. 2
Ruth 1:6-22

Naomi leaves EMPTY

Instead of staying near relatives for support or choosing another place in Israel, Elimilech leads his family to Moab and his two sons marry Moabite women. Later, all three men die and are buried outside the Promised Land leaving the three women destitute. *Godly leadership takes into account those who are being led* (Deut. 11:18-20; Eph. 5:25-28; 1 Pet. 3:7). This decision has life-altering consequences for Naomi, and while in the fields of Moab, she hears the famine is over and decides to return to Israel empty handed. Wisdom on the front end of a decision averts regret on the back end (Prov. 3:4, 5). *Believers should patiently wait for God as His answers might be later, but never late* (Ps. 40:1, 2)!

Naomi goes with SUPPORT

Upon telling her daughter-in-laws she is leaving for Bethlehem, both Orpah and Ruth offer to go. Naomi refuses as she has no way of supporting them or knowing what will happen. So Naomi, being in her fifties/sixties and beyond childbearing, tells them to return to their mother's homes and gods and get husbands—sadly showing the women haven't been changed by Elimilech's time in Moab. *Despite disappointment and hardship, the people of God must be the people of God wherever they go.* Orpah kisses Naomi goodbye, but Ruth clings (Heb. *daw-bak*, 'cling/glue together'; Gen. 2:24) to her, refusing to leave. Ruth then makes a beautiful, life-altering oath to be loyal to Naomi and her God until death. Friends can be closer than blood relatives, as commitment dictates relationship value (Prov. 17:17; 18:24; 27:10; Eccl. 4:10). By going with Naomi, Ruth is losing everything as well, but has gained a relationship with God and an unbreakable sisterhood. *The greatest relationships in life come through commitment and sacrifice.*

Naomi returns BITTER

Arriving in Bethlehem, her former friends and relatives are excited to see her but when they call her Naomi ('pleasant one') she wants to be renamed Mara ('bitter'). She views her circumstances as a curse from God for her sin. *Hard times are not always judgement from God, but even when they are, God's goodness, mercy, and love show through in time* (Num. 4:24-26; Ps. 30:5; Micah 7:18)!