

GOD IS WORKING IN YOUR LIFE

God will sometimes empty you in order to fill you.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ This story begins with a famine in the land that cause a family to leave Bethlehem to settle in Moab for a while.
- ❖ Within the space of ten years the father and two sons die, leaving the Jewish mother Naomi with two Moabite daughters-in-law. Then comes the first reference to God’s direct intervention in the plot: **Ruth 1:6 – Naomi hears that the Lord has come to the aid of His people.**
- ❖ Originally, the family had only intended to go to Moab for a while and then to return. Naomi is now going with the original plan. The thing she hadn’t counted on was that her return would be without her husband and her sons (Ruth 1:13).
- ❖ But Naomi was not alone. She had picked up a vessel of destiny God had prepared, though she didn’t realize it.
- ❖ The name Naomi means pleasantness, and so she was—so much so that when she departed for Bethlehem her Moabite daughters-in-law wanted to go with her. Despite her genuine attempt to dissuade them, they both insisted.
- ❖ Then she presented them with the facts: the land of Moab was doing well and there were good prospects for the ladies to set themselves up with bright futures with Moabite men.
- ❖ But even if Naomi remarried and had more sons, it simply wasn’t practical from an age-gap point-of-view for the women to wait to marry one of them, as the normal custom dictated.
- ❖ Orpah responded with what was practical. She took Naomi’s advice and returned to Moab.
- ❖ Ruth on the other hand responded in faith, choosing to cling to her access to the true God.
- ❖ Upon Naomi’s return to Bethlehem, everyone was stirred and asked, “Can this be Naomi?” But she said, “Don’t call me Naomi. Rather, call me Mara (bitterness) because I went away full but the Lord has returned me emptied” (vv. 20-21).
- ❖ We don’t tend to deal well with loss. It’s easier to see what’s past rather than what’s possible.
- ❖ But you actually cannot live in the past. You can try, yet the only life that can truly be lived is the present, and how we live the present sets up our future.
- ❖ Somehow Ruth grasped the importance of this. She realized that her foreign status in Bethlehem was not final. She suggested that she go into the fields to glean after the reapers, a practice that was sanctioned in the Mosaic Law. You would think Naomi would have been the one to suggest this but, possibly still depressed, she did not.

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Ruth 1:1-5, 16; 4:5-6

- ❖ “By chance” Ruth ended up working in a field that belonged to Boaz, a relative of Naomi’s husband. Because the story of Ruth’s kindness to Naomi had made the rounds, Boaz was very kind to her and allowed her to work in his field until the harvest was over.
- ❖ Through Ruth’s faith, Naomi’s initiative returned. She realized she would not be around forever and she wanted to set Ruth up for a comfortable life. So she appealed to the provisions of the Mosaic Law and had Ruth approach Boaz (3:1-5).
- ❖ Boaz acknowledged Ruth as a woman of character. Promising her to do what was right under the Law, Boaz approached the relative who had first rights to the land Naomi owned. The man eventually decided to pass on the opportunity, which paved the way for Boaz to take Ruth as his wife.
- ❖ The Lord enabled Ruth to conceive through Boaz. Ruth gave birth to Obed, who became Jesse’s father, and Jesse fathered King David (4:17).
- ❖ The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer” (4:14). So Naomi ended up with offspring after all, and God made her full again.
- ❖ Naomi’s story reinforces a timeless truth: God will sometimes empty you in order to fill you.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. The Book of Ruth tells us that Naomi, being “full”, had moved from Bethlehem to Moab in order to avoid famine. When she returned to Bethlehem once again, she described herself as being empty (1:20). What were the situations that caused Naomi to describe herself in these vastly different terms?
2. As we progress through the Book of Ruth, what occurred to make Naomi “full” once again?
3. What are the types of empty spaces one desires God to fill? What steps can a person take in order to fill these empty spaces?




Prayer Time




Lord, I am willing to lose whatever I need to lose in order to be filled by Your presence and Your word. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2018

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week’s message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

 (Reminds me/Confirms)
  (New idea)
  (Think about)

 (Do this)
  (Speaks to my heart)
  (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Start-up: When you eat, do you have a stopping point? How does your body let you know you are full?

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
 CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
 Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline