



Naomi

“Women Who Dared”

“The town women said to Naomi, “Blessed be GOD! He didn't leave you without family to carry on your life. May this baby grow up to be famous in Israel! He'll make you young again! He'll take care of you in old age. And this daughter-in-law who has brought him into the world and loves you so much, why, she's worth more to you than seven sons! Naomi took the baby and held him in her arms, cuddling him, cooing over him, waiting on him hand and foot. The neighborhood women started calling him “Naomi's baby boy!” But his real name was Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.”

Ruth 4:14-17 from THE MESSAGE

Someone once said “Life is like a grindstone, it can either grind you down or polish you.” The choice is yours. God can change our bitterness; God can help us accept that things could be a lot worse, and sometimes we even see blessings after hardships. This was the choice left to Naomi.

During the time of judges there was a great famine in the land of Judah. Naomi, her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion heard that there was food in Moab so they moved there. The most difficult part may have been moving to a land where they had no relatives and the people worshipped a different God. They had worshipped the God of Israel, but the Moabites worshipped a god called Chemosh. While they were there the sons married two Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth.

Most of us have heard more about Ruth. After they had been in Moab for approximately ten years, all three of the men died and left Naomi with only two daughters-in-law. The three widows were very close but they were left with no means for support. Naomi could not own land as a woman, so they had only the mercy of others.

Naomi heard that things had returned to normal in Judah and she wanted to return home to Bethlehem because that was her home and she had relatives there. Plus, that was the land that worshipped the God of Israel who she also worshipped.

She told both of the daughters-in-law to stay with their people. Orpah did as Naomi had suggested, but Ruth went to Judah with Naomi. One of the most often quoted speeches is given by Ruth when she tells Naomi “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” Now Ruth was the one in a strange land. Naomi was a woman with a mission. She wanted to take care of Ruth, who in turn would take care of her. She sent Ruth out to glean the fields. Many think she knew that Ruth would be given food. Also the fields she sent Ruth to were owned by Boaz, a relative.

Eventually, Ruth married Boaz and they had a son. Naomi took great joy in this as she helped to raise the child, Obed. He would become the grandfather of King David in the lineage of Mary.

Naomi was blessed in her grief over the loss of her husband and two sons. As she helped others through their grief she was also strengthened. The other women in the town told Naomi that her daughter-in-law would take care of her as well as the child that was born to Ruth and Boaz. We never hear if that happened or not. We want to assume it did. The women in the town even called the baby Obed, Naomi's baby. In Romans 12:10, we are told “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” Naomi and Ruth both gave up a lot, but in return they gained much more. They allowed the problems to enhance their lives through each other rather than becoming bitter at their losses.

Prayer: Dear God, You have given us so much and yet we always want the good, but don't stop to realize that we must also have the sorrows to help strengthen us in our relationship with You. Help us to depend on You and know that You will be there to help us and give us strength for those days when all seems to go wrong. Amen

1. Do you believe that God can change the bitterness of your hard experiences? Explain.
2. Knowing that nothing can bring back a loved one you have lost, have situations following this allowed you to let God change your sorrow?
3. Do you believe that God is in control of all circumstances?
4. Was Naomi's faith in God a vital part of her acceptance of her situation in life?

5. Can we sometimes have people who are like family and be closer to us than our blood relatives?
6. This passage speaks of the kindness of in-laws. When there are so many “bad” things said about in-laws are you fortunate enough to be able to say good things about yours?

The entire story of Naomi is told in the book of Ruth.

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