

# DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

## LOSS AND EMPTINESS

RUTH 1:1-5

9/26

BE SURE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE COMMENTARY AT THE END AS A HELPFUL REFERENCE FOR DISCUSSION.

## MAIN POINT

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God can redeem the wounds & losses of our past so that we might grow in our relationship with Him and with others.

## INTRODUCTION

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As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Do any of your past afflictions, losses, or trials still affect you in the present? In what way?**

**Do you ever fear that your past experiences will keep you from serving God and ministering to others in the present? Why?**

We have all experienced difficulties, losses, and afflictions in life and we are all faced with determining how those past experiences will affect us in the present. If anyone had reason to let their past hinder them, it was Naomi, however as we begin the story of Ruth, we will see how God continued to love Naomi in the face of her bitterness, redeemed her past, and secured her future.

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# UNDERSTANDING

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Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**READ RUTH 1:1-5.**

**Make a list of the events in these five verses. Who are the characters? Where are they from? Where did they go? What happened to them?**

**Why might Naomi's situation be even more difficult than a similar situation would be for a woman today?**

**As you feel led, share with the group about a time of loss, trial, or struggle that you experienced and how God may have used that to grow your relationship with Him and others.**

Because of a famine in Israel, the family was living on Moab. In the course of ten years, Naomi lost her husband and two sons. Naomi and her two daughters-in-law were now widows. In ancient Israel, however, women did not have the rights and opportunities that they have today. In Naomi's time, when a woman lost her husband, it was the responsibility of the sons to provide for her. With both of her sons deceased, Naomi was in a terrifying predicament.

# APPLICATION

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Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Why should times of struggle be times to turn to God rather than away from Him?**

**When we are bitter why is it important to surround ourselves with people who will let us know how much God cares for us? Who are you willing to share your hurts with? Is there something you need to share now?**

## PRAYER

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As you close, thank God for His provision. Ask that even when our lives are difficult He would allow us to see His faithful love for us and protection over us. Pray for those around you who are struggling and thank God for His ultimate provision in Jesus Christ.

## COMMENTARY

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### RUTH 1:1-5

1:1. During the time of the judges identifies the events of this story as taking place during a time when “everyone did whatever he wanted” (lit “what was right in his own eyes”), when “there was no king in Israel” (Judg. 21:25). During the time of the judges, a famine in the land probably would have been part of God’s judgment on His people for their apostasy from Him, pursuing the Baals and Ashtoreths (Judg. 2:11-15). This famine even affected Bethlehem, whose Hebrew name means “house of bread.” As a result, one family from that city did what was right in their own eyes and left the promised land, going to live in the pagan land of Moab, where economic prospects seemed brighter. Somewhere along the way, that temporary move turned into a permanent stay.

1:2. Elimelech means “My God is king,” which heightens the irony of his behavior in doing “whatever he wanted” because in those days “there was no king in Israel” (Judg. 21:25). His wife’s name, Naomi, means “Pleasant,” which evokes Ps. 16:6: “The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.” In contrast, she and her husband were dissatisfied with the boundary lines assigned them by God. The names of their sons, Mahlon and Chilion, seem related to words for sickness and mortality.

1:3-5. In the land of Moab, Naomi’s husband died and she was left with her two sons. The Hebrew verb left is related to the word remnant and often describes those who survive an outpouring of God’s wrath. Her sons then took Moabite women as their wives, contrary to the law that forbade marrying women from nations that served other gods (Deut. 7:3-4). Moabite women in particular had a reputation for leading Israelites astray after other gods (Num. 25). It must have seemed evident that the hand of the Lord was against Naomi in judgment.