

DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

A TIME FOR DECIDING

RUTH 1:6-18

10/3

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

MAIN POINT

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

INTRODUCTION

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

Have you ever been faced with an impossible, gut-wrenching decision? How did you arrive at your choice and what was the outcome?

How did God meet you in the middle of these circumstances?

All of us have faced hard choices and forks in our road that determined the trajectory of our lives for years to come. Sometimes we wrestle with determining the Lord's will for our lives is. There are many examples in scripture of people who were clearly in the center of God's will and yet faced difficult if not impossible circumstances. God specializes in turning what looks like our mess into His sovereign plan, as we will see unfold in the lives of Naomi and Ruth. While we may know the end of the story, let's put ourselves in their shoes and feel what they felt as they traverse back to Israel not knowing what lies ahead.

UNDERSTANDING

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

READ RUTH 1:6-14.

After losing their husbands, what did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to do (vv. 8-9)? Why do you think she did this?

What is significant about Naomi weeping with Orpah and Ruth (v. 10, 14)? What does this tell us about Naomi's relationship with her daughters-in-law?

Read John 11:32-37. Why did Jesus weep with Mary?

The Bible calls us to "rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). Naomi demonstrated her love for Ruth and Orpah by weeping with them in the aftermath of a personal tragedy. Jesus did something similar with Mary when she lost her brother, Lazarus. In John 11, Jesus had told His disciples (v. 4) and Mary (v. 23) that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead so that they would believe. But instead of going directly to the tomb and raising Jesus from the dead, however, Jesus chose to seek out Mary and weep with her. This tells us something very important about Jesus and His mission. In weeping with Mary, Jesus demonstrated personal care for her. More importantly, He communicated to her that He too hates death and came to do something about it.

Naomi said "the Lord's hand has turned against me" (v. 13). What does this reveal about her belief in God? Why was she incorrect to believe that God was against her? Can you relate to Naomi? When have you felt at times that God wasn't in your corner because of your circumstances?

Naomi was correct in seeing God's hand in the events that had transpired. First Samuel 2:6 says, "The Lord brings death and gives life; He sends some to Sheol, and He raises others up." While God is sovereign over life and death, His allowance of Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah to lose their husbands does not mean that He was against her.

READ RUTH 1:15-18.

What did Ruth's commitment to go with Naomi mean to her? What did Ruth give up to go with Naomi to Bethlehem? Has anyone ever given up something significant in order to be committed to you?

How does Ruth's statement in verses 16-17 mirror what happens when we receive and begin to follow Christ?

Naomi referred to Orpah and Ruth as her daughters three times in these verses. The affection Naomi felt for these women was very real. She came to love them and wanted what was best for them. Since Naomi had no other sons for them to marry, she encouraged them to return to their mothers so they might be cared for. While Orpah accepted this kindness, Ruth remained with Naomi and expressed belief and confidence in the God of Israel when Naomi appeared to have very little. Naomi believed that her lot in life was evidence of God's judgment, but the rest of the story demonstrates that this was not the case. Ruth's commitment to Naomi was more than a vow of friendship, but rather a decision that had far-reaching spiritual significance. Ruth was denying the idols of her Moabite background and clinging to the one true God.

APPLICATION

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

In what area of your life do you need to trust in God's providence? What is one step you can take this week to help you trust Him?

What are some practical ways we as a group might demonstrate our commitment to one another in times of difficulty?

PRAYER

As you close, thank God for His sovereignty. 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 opportunities to minister to those around you who are struggling through a difficult trial and thank God for His ultimate provision in Jesus Christ.

COMMENTARY

RUTH 1:6-18

1:6-9. Naomi had little choice but to leave Moab and return home, a move encouraged by the news that the Lord was providing food there. This points to repentance on the part of the Hebrews and their restoration. Naomi asked the Lord's blessing upon her daughters-in-law in the form of His faithful love. This is a covenantal term that combines love and faithfulness, mercy and grace—all the positive aspects of committed relationship. It is a remarkable request that the Lord's favor should be shown in this way to covenant outsiders like these foreign women. The women were sad to part. They wept loudly as they embraced.

1:10-14. Orpah and Ruth repeated their desire to return to Israel with Naomi. Once again, however, Naomi pressed them both to return, on the grounds that the best prospect of remarriage lay among their own people. Naomi assumed that no other family in Bethlehem would be interested in marrying Moabite women, and she emphasized the certainty of there being no other children from her own line. She was probably at least 50 years old at this time. Even if she were to have more children at once, by the time they grew up Orpah and Ruth would be too old to have children. Besides, Naomi argued, she was herself under a curse: the Lord's hand had turned against her. There is no hint of Naomi taking any personal responsibility or expressing repentance for her own actions in leaving the promised land. Convinced by Naomi's arguments, Orpah took her leave of Naomi, but Ruth clung to her—the same word used in Gen. 2:24 to describe the marriage bond.

1:15-18. The intensity of Naomi's attempts to dissuade her Moabite daughters-in-law from accompanying her back to Bethlehem suggests that she was not completely motivated by concern for their well-being. Their presence would have been a constant and embarrassing reminder of her tragic sojourn in Moab. Yet Ruth was

not so easily dissuaded. In a crescendo of commitment, she bound herself to go with Naomi and to live with her. In fact, she would even die and be buried where Naomi was—the greatest possible commitment in the ancient world. She sealed her commitment with a self-imprecatory oath, taken in the personal name of Naomi’s God, Yahweh. Naomi’s response to this moving speech was remarkably curt. Literally, the Hebrew in verse 18 says, “She stopped talking to her.”