

DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

BITTERNESS & HOPE

RUTH 1:19-22

10/10/21

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 had to go through a significant change that was forced upon you? What was that experience like while you were still “in” it?

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Describe what that experience was like and how you might be able to relate to Ruth, a citizen of Moab living in ancient Israel.

At some point in our lives, circumstances will be forced upon us that we didn't plan for. Proverbs 16:9 puts it this way – “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” We are by nature creatures of habit who don't like change, and yet we know change is the only constant in life. From our human/finite point of view, when change or loss is thrust upon us we tend to perceive it as misfortune and an awful trial, which of course it can be.

And yet we have promises from verses like Romans 8:28: “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” And so the challenge before us is to trust the will of our God is for us when it seems like things are not working together for our good. Our discussion and study this week can help us to keep an eternal perspective during seasons of difficult trials and change.

UNDERSTANDING

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

READ RUTH 1:19-22.

Verse 22 mentions that they came back at the beginning of the barley harvest. Why is this significant? How does this show God's amazing providence?

Did Elimelech's decision to leave his homeland ultimately stop God from working in the lives of his family? How have you experienced this in your life?

Naomi and Ruth finally made it to Bethlehem. The people in town stirred because Naomi returned, but without her husband and sons. Instead, she brought a Moabite woman in their place. The names Naomi used for God reflected her belief that He was powerful and able to help her, but her tone showed that she didn't believe He would. The sin in Naomi's life caused her grief. However, the narrator of the story points out that they had returned at the time of harvest. The famine was over, and God was providing for the needs of His people as He always had. Naomi's bitterness kept her from seeing the providence of God. Despite her bitterness, God made provisions for Naomi, much like Christ who died for us while we were still sinners (see Rom. 5:8).

APPLICATION

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

How have you seen difficult circumstances make someone bitter or better?

As you feel led to, share a time when you or someone you know had become hopeless but God's sovereign will prevailed and the situation turned out better than anyone could've imagined.

PRAYER

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

RUTH 1:1-22

1:19-22. The townswomen's question, "Can this be Naomi?" could possibly have been ignoring Ruth's presence. In response, Naomi urged them to rename her Mara since the Lord had made her bitter rather than "pleasant." It was at Marah that the Israelites found only bitter water to drink on their way out of Egypt, and so they grumbled against the Lord (Ex. 15:23-24). Naomi's heart was similarly turned against the Lord, yet the connection also raised hope that the Lord would heal her bitterness and bring her to a place of rest, just as He did for Israel. Naomi had returned physically to Bethlehem from Moab, but would she similarly return to the Lord in repentance?