

Finding Hope In A Disappointing World

Lesson Three • Ruth 1:6-15, 19-22

When We Feel God Has Abandoned Us

The Principle:

Our RESPONSE to disappointment in life will determine our walk with God.

When We Feel God Has Abandoned Us...

Like Naomi, we can respond with DESPAIR.

*"It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me!"
Ruth 1:13 NIV*

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." Ruth 1:20-21 NIV

We Respond with Despair When...

1. We Emphasize Our EMPTINESS But Not God's GRACIOUSNESS! *Ruth 1:6-15*

Why Did Naomi Try to Turn Back Ruth and Oprah?

- Perhaps Naomi was trying to block out the MEMORY of her past.

- Perhaps Naomi concluded she had NOTHING to offer.

2. We Emphasize Our BITTERNESS But Not God's GOODNESS! *Ruth 1:19-22*

Naomi's Bitterness Expressed:

- Naomi blamed God for her DISAPPOINTMENT.

Naomi's Play On Words:

"Don't call me Naomi (which means "PLEASANT") anymore; instead, call me Mara (which means "BITTER"), because the Almighty has made my life very bitter."
Ruth 1:20

- Naomi blamed God for her DEPRIVATION.

Naomi's Before and After Picture:

"I went away FULL, but the Lord has brought me back EMPTY. I left here with everything; now I'm left with absolutely nothing."
Ruth 1:21

Naomi's Theology: Right or Wrong?

For Naomi, her circumstances indicated that God is GREAT but not GOOD.

She recognized and at the same time resented God's providence in her life. The problem is that she forgot God's good purposes are at work in the worst of times.

When You Feel God Has Abandoned You:

Acknowledge your disappointment by TURNING TO GOD for hope because in His greatness He is gracious and good!

*I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.
~David, Psalm 27:13-14*

Questions for Reflection:

- Do you view the circumstances in your life—both the good and the bad—as part of God's plan?
- What is your view of God when your desires are not met? Like Naomi, do you view God as great but not good? The book of Ruth challenges you to believe that God is working in your life even when it hurts.
- Do you need to repent and ask God's forgiveness for bitterness toward Him? If yes, He will forgive you as a gracious God.