



THE CHALLENGE OF LOSS

Ruth 1:1-22

In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him. **2** The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there. **3** Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. **4** The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband. **6** Then Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. **7** With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

8 But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes. And may the Lord reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. **9** May the Lord bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept. **10** "No," they said. "We want to go with you to your people." **11** But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? **12** No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? **13** Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord himself has raised his fist against me."

14 And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi. **15** "Look," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same." **16** But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. **17** Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.

May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!" **18** When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

19 So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the women asked. **20** "Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. **21** I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer^[b] and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?" **22** So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem in late spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

- ***What have been some of my dreams for my life?***
- **We start off life with lots of hopes and dreams, but often those hopes and dreams are circumvented by losses we experience in our lives.**
- **People lose friends, jobs, health, innocence, integrity, money, etc, and sometimes we lose family members or friends to death, divorce or a tragic life.**
- ***What kind of losses have I experienced, and how have those losses affected me?***
- **When we experience significant losses in our lives we need to remember life is not fair, and not everything that happens is God's will for our lives.**
- *"Sometimes something useless happens on earth. Bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people." (Ecclesiastes 8:14)*
- **Naomi and her daughters-in-laws had experienced much loss and grief, and their losses had changed their life circumstances in a negative way (Ruth 1:3-5).**
- **Losing loved ones to death or a tragic life can drive people to despair and even to destruction, or they can drive us to the Lord.**
- *"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble." (Psalm 46:1)*
- **The Lord wants to enable us to survive grief and loss and go on to live positive, productive and fulfilling lives.**
- ***What steps can we take to deal with the "losses" we have experienced or will experience in our lives?***

Surviving Grief And Loss Requires:

ACKNOWLEDGING LOSS IN OUR LIVES

- *"Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. . . . But about ten years later, both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband." (Ruth 1:3-5)*
- **Many people who have experienced great losses struggle with denial - not acknowledging in any way or to anyone that they've experienced great loss.**
- **When dealing with grief and loss we need to take time to *Express our Grief*.**
- *"When David and his men saw the ruins and realized what had happened to their families, they wept until they could weep no more." (1 Samuel 30:3-4)*
- **God doesn't want us to suppress our pain - He wants us to confess it to Him and express it to our friends because if we don't "let it out" we will "act it out."**

- When dealing with grief and loss we need to purpose to *Process through our Grief*.
- The Stages of Grief include: 1) Shock and Denial, 2) Pain and Guilt, 3) Anger and Bargaining, 4) Depression, Reflection and Loneliness, 5) The Upward Turn, 6) Reconstruction and Working Through, and 7) Acceptance and Hope.

Surviving Grief And Loss Requires:

STAYING CONNECTED TO GODLY PEOPLE

- *“On the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go back to your mothers’ homes. And may the Lord reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. May the Lord bless you with the security of another marriage.’ Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept. ‘No,’ they said. ‘We want to go with you to your people.’”* (Ruth 1:8-10)
- **We always need to have good and godly people surrounding us in our lives, but especially so during difficult times.**
- **God never intended for us to deal with our troubles and struggles on our own.**
- *“Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”* (Galatians 6:2)
- **The Church is to be our spiritual family and primary source of emotional support.**
- *“In Christ we who are many form one Body, and each member belongs to all the others...Be devoted to each other like a loving family...Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.”* (Romans 12:5, 10, 15)
- **We become members of the Celebration family by attending *First Steps*, and stay connected to our Church family by being involved in a *Life Group* (go to www.celebrationchurch.org/ministries to find a Life Group).**

Surviving Grief And Loss Requires:

UNDERSTANDING OUR LIVES STILL HAVE PURPOSE

- *“Ruth replied, ‘Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people . . .’* (Ruth 1:16)
- **We have the story of Ruth in our Bible because Ruth understood, in the midst of her own grief and loss, that she should care for Naomi.**
- *“God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- **God uses the pain that we’ve been through to enable us to better help others, and oftentimes our greatest ministries will come from our greatest difficulties.**
- *“Comfort each other and give each other strength.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **To be “comforters” of others we must: 1) Become aware of when people are hurting, 2) Reach out to them with love and care, 3) Refuse to minimize others pain, 4) Allow people the time to grieve what they’re going through, and 5) Continue being there for those who are hurting.**
- **Every day of our lives we need to be either seeking comfort or sharing comfort.**

Surviving Grief And Loss Requires:

FIGHTING OFF BITTERNESS IN OUR HEARTS

- *“When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was excited by their arrival. ‘Is it really Naomi?’ the women asked. ‘Don’t call me Naomi,’ she responded. ‘Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?’” (Ruth 1:19-21)*
- **Bitterness is a toxic emotion that devastates people and others around them.**
- *“Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you. It causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.” (Hebrews 12:15)*
- **We are prone to blame other people and God for the problems and losses we’ve experienced in our lives.**
- *“In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.” (James 1:22)*
- **When we’re struggling with bitterness we need to focus on the “good” we’ve experienced more so than the “bad.”**
- *“Job’s wife said to him, ‘Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die.’ But Job replied, ‘You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?’” (Job 2:9-10)*
- **When we’re struggling with bitterness we need to focus on who and what’s left rather than who and what’s lost.**
- *“There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold...” (1 Peter 1:6-7)*

Surviving Grief And Loss Requires:

DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD

- Ruth - *“Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.” (Ruth 1:16)*
- **While tragedies are a part of life, the Lord has promised that He will bring “good” out of even the most difficult circumstances we experience in our lives.**
- *“We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28)*
- **To really believe that the Lord can “turn around” our greatest tragedies and bring good out of them, we have to “strengthen ourselves in the Lord.”**
- *“But David found strength in the LORD his God.” (1 Samuel 30:6)*
- **During our times of grief and sorrow we have to remember who God is to us (2 Corinthians 1:3), what He’s done for us (Psalm 103:2-5) and what He’s promised to us (Psalm 119:50).**
- *“He (God) has sent Me to comfort all who mourn, to give to those who mourn in Zion joy and gladness instead of grief, and a song of praise instead of sorrow.” (Isaiah 61:2-3)*
- **When we experience grief and loss in our lives we can know that:**
 - **The Lord understands our grief (John 11:33-36)**

- *He (the Lord) was despised and rejected - a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.* (Isaiah 53:3)
 - **The Lord will be there to help us**
 - *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and He saves those whose spirits have been crushed.”* (Psalm 34:18)
 - **We have the hope of seeing our Christian loved ones in Heaven**
 - *“We don’t want you to be ignorant about believers who have died. We don’t want you to grieve like the people who have no hope.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
- Jesus - *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* (Matthew 5:4)
- ***What is the Lord communicating to me through this message?***

Dig Deeper Resources For Further Study:

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis - [Click here to purchase on Amazon](#)

Why Does God Allow Suffering with RZIM speaker Alysia Wood - [Click here to view on Right Now Media](#)

The Book of Ruth with Bianca Juarez Olthoff - [Click here to view on Right Now Media](#)

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