

Love is ...  
**Transformational**  
**The Power of Love to Change**  
**Ruth 1:1-22**

**Introduction:** The Bible tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8). The ultimate testimony of this reality is certainly Christ. Christ is as such the pinnacle of God's testimony of wh testimony! And listen, this is a good thing. We have the Bible to tell us all about Jesus but none of us have actually seen or heard Jesus, however, every time we see genuine real love in this sin sick cursed world, we at that moment get a glimpse of God and who HE has made US TO BE!

Therefore, it is to no surprise then, that the Bible is filled with testimony us and how that love, that He is, should be demonstrated in and through us. Ruth is just such a testimony. The Book of Ruth is an incredible real-life story of God's love in a certainly from Him to His people, but most prominently from Him through His people!

It is no doubt a story that demonstrates the story that takes us beyond the main characters and the heritage of love that led to King David, and more importantly to King Jesus. But it is also a story that gives us, the reader, a real-life picture of real love, being played out in the lives of real people, just like us! Each twist of each chapter testifies of this thing called love that God is, and as such, it will challenge us to see how much of it we are!

So, let's jump right into this little book in the first chapter.

**Proposition: There are 3 parts to the first chapter of Ruth that take us straight to a fundamental characteristic of what love is.**

The first part of chapter one is ...

**(1) A Story of Heartbreak** - Naomi's world gets **(1:1-5)** tally destr

- A. 1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. (1:1-4a)**

1. First, both the author of this story and when it was written is unknown. The Bible doesn't tell us, nor do any other can't confidently. However, we believe the best conclusion is that it was written in the days of King Solomon and potentially by the Prophet Nathan who confronted David. J. G. Baldwin noted,

**Note: It seems likely that the writer lived long enough after the events he recorded to see them in perspective, perhaps during the reign of Solomon. One tentative suggestion is that the prophet Nathan could have been the author. He left records of D fearlessly challenged the -k2), and yet person was willing later to support Bathsheba (1 Ki. 1:11-53)."<sup>1</sup>**

2. Likewise, we can't pinpoint the exact date of when the story occurred, but the text does give us a general idea. Verse one states,
  - a. **"1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land"** .
  - b. This could have been any time after Joshua and before Saul. In addition, many commentators note that famines of varying degrees and coverage were common in that era, therefore, its rather impossible to determine which specific famine the author is referring. The author obviously doesn't feel the need to be known in order to understand the point of the story or he would have given it to us. Nonetheless, the very last verse does narrow things down for us. At the very end of the story we find out that Ruth is the Great Grandmother of King David (4:21), therefore the story occurs within three generations of David'. We will talk more about the significance of that part of the story when we finish up the series.
3. However, the most important part of verse one is not the generalization of when the story took place, but more importantly what life was like when it did.
  - a. The time of the Judges was like the frontier history of the United States. If you want to read some crazy stuff, read the book of Judges! God had given the Israelites a very T h e p e l c a i v i "c but there was no way to universally enforce it. The last verse in the book of Judges tells us, " In those days there was no Everyone did what was right i n his o w was essentially like the wild, wild west!

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin, J. G. (1994). [Ruth](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 287). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

- b. Adding to the total chaos that most people lived in during the time of the judges was the reality of a famine, meaning food had become extremely scarce. This could have been caused by all kinds of things like of lack rain, or too much rain, or disease or insects; but no matter the cause, it significantly impacted their ability to harvest crops and raise livestock.

**B.** In addition, the first few verses introduce us to all but one of the main characters in the story. You'll get to ~~see for now, let me quickly explain~~ what the original readers would have been introduced to in the first few verses by nothing more than definitions and context of the names and places that the author begins with.

1. The focus in chapter 1 is on the family of Elimelech ( " Myan God is Ephrathite " from Bethlehem) ~~and Naomi~~ (Judith 16: 1-3) one of two leading characters in the book. Her sons Mahlon ( " Sickness " and Chilion ( " ~~may have been given~~ their names because of the sad plight of the nation during the dark days of the Judges.<sup>2</sup>
2. " The **Ephrathites** was a designation for the inhabitants of Ephrath (also spelled Ephratah and Ephratha), another name for Bethlehem (cf. 4:11; Gen. 35: 19; 48: 7; Micah 5: 2) . "
3. Bethlehem means , " ~~which is ironic given the first thing~~ we hear about Bethlehem is that they are out of bread!
4. This irony gets extended when the place Elimelech hears that everything is going great is Moab. Now ~~what's that let me explain~~ in that
  - a. To start with, the Moabites were essentially cousins with the Jews, but it wasn't one of those proud family tree tell somebody your distant cousin is a famous war hero or societal leader. Most Jews would likely hate admitting they were cousins! But, nonetheless, they couldn't ~~hides~~ put the entire cause embarrassing story in the Bible!
  - b. In the book of Genesis, we read what happened to Lot when God sent two angels to get them out of Sodom and Gomorrah before He destroyed them. Lot, nor anybody else in his family, wanted to leave, but his wife seemingly was the most attached. The Bible tells us she refused to heed the warning of the angels and looked back on the cities and, as such,

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (pp. 213–214). Joplin, MO: College Press.

<sup>3</sup> Reed, J. W. (1985). *Ruth*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 419). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

became a pillar of salt. This left Lot a homeless, totally broke, widower with two daughters who just lost their fiancés because they refused to leave Sodom with Lot and his family. Lot actually tried to get them to go with them! But as dark and brutal as the entire story of Sodom and Gomorrah is, nothing gets more awkward and difficult to read than what happens next.

c. **30 Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. 31 And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." 33 So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 34 The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." 35 So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. 37 The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. 38 The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day. (Genesis 19:30-38)**

d. As disgusting as the family origin of the Moabites is, it still was the element that led the Jews to be standoffish with them. The most offensive element to the Jews was that the Moabites worshiped many gods, chief of which was the god named "Chemosh." For all practical purposes Chemosh was essentially their name for the god also known as "Moloch" but most commonly known as "Baal." Baal worship was also popular in association with fertility both of people and of crops, and as such, the need for rain. The ironic tension this creates in the story can't be missed. God, the only God, who has declared the Jews to be His people, has struck Bethlehem with a famine, while at the same time bringing prosperity to the Moabites who would falsely credit it to Chemosh and the other gods that do not exist! Furthermore, there was the "small" matter of the worship of Baal sacrificially.

e. See below for more on the Moabites:

1) **Moabite**—the designation of a tribe descended from Moab, the son of Lot (Gen. 19:37). From Zoar, the cradle of this tribe, on the south-eastern border of the Dead Sea, they gradually spread over the

region on the east of Jordan. Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the Oppression, enumerates Moab (Muab) among his conquests. Shortly before the Exodus, the warlike Amorites crossed the Jordan under Sihon their king and drove the Moabites (Num. 21:26–30) out of the region between the Arnon and the Jabbok, and occupied it, making Heshbon their capital. They were then confined to the territory to the south of the Arnon. On their journey the Israelites did not pass through Moab, but through the “wilderness” (Judg. 11:18), at length reaching the country to the north of the Arnon. Here they remained for some time till they had conquered Bashan (see SIHON; OG). The Moabites were alarmed, and their king, Balak, sought aid from the Midianites (Num. 22:2–4). It was while they were here that the visit of Balaam (q.v.) to Balak took place. (See MOSES.). After the Conquest, the Moabites maintained hostile relations with the Israelites, and frequently harassed them in war (Judg. 3:12–30; 1 Sam. 14). The story of Ruth, however, shows the existence of friendly relations between Moab and Bethlehem. By his descent from Ruth, David may be said to have had Moabite blood in his veins. Yet there was war between David and the Moabites (2 Sam. 8:2; 23:20; 1 Chr. 18:2), from whom he took great spoil (2 Sam. 8:2, 11, 12; 1 Chr. 11:22; 18:11). During the one hundred and fifty years which followed the defeat of the Moabites, after the death of Ahab (see MESHHA), they regained, apparently, much of their former prosperity. At this time Isaiah (15:1–9) predicting the coming of judgment on that land (comp. 2 Kings 17:3; 18:9; 1 Chr. 5:25, 26). Between the time of Isaiah and the commencement of the Babylonian captivity we have very seldom any reference to Moab (Jer. 25:21; 27:3; 40:11; Zeph. 2:8–10). After the Return, it was Sanballat, a Moabite, who took chief part in seeking to prevent the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:19; 4:1; 6:1).<sup>5</sup>

- 2) **Moabite**, member of a West-Semitic people who lived in the highlands east of the [Dead Sea](#) (now in west-central Jordan) and flourished in the 9th century BC. They are known principally through information given in the [Old Testament](#) and from the inscription on the [Moabite Stone](#).<sup>5</sup> By one of the scholars from about the late 14th century BC to 582 BC, when, according to the Jewish historian Josephus (1st century AD), they were conquered by the Babylonians. In Old Testament accounts (*e.g.*, Genesis 19:30–38), the Moabites belonged to the same ethnic stock as the [Israelites](#). Their ancestral founder was Moab, a son of Lot, who was a nephew of the Israelite patriarch Abraham. The god-protector of their nation was [Chemosh](#), just as Yahweh was the

<sup>5</sup> Easton, M. G. (1893). In [Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature](#) (pp. 471–472). New York: Harper & Brothers.

national God of the Israelites. The Moabites were in conflict with the Israelites from the 13th century. They are noted several times in the Old [Testament](#). King [Saul](#) of Israel in the 11th century fought against the Moabites (1 Samuel 14:47), who later granted asylum to the family of the young rebel and future king [David](#) (1 Samuel 22:3–4). David in turn fought against the Moabites and forced them to pay heavy tribute (2 [Samuel](#) 8:1–18). [Ruth](#), was a Moabite (Ruth 4:17–22), and his son [Solomon](#), as a sign of his authority, obtained Moabite princesses for his harem (1 Kings 11:1–8) and erected near Jerusalem a shrine dedicated to Chemosh. King [Omri](#) of Israel (reigned c. 884–c. 872 BC), who is mentioned in 1 Kings 16:23–28, reconquered Moabite lands that had been lost since Solomon BC, when Israel split into two kingdoms. Omri's record [Moabite Stone](#), a stela that the Moabite king [Mesha](#) erected about 40 years later in the city of Dibon (modern Dhiban, Jordan). This black basalt stone, 1.1 m (44 inches) high, was discovered at Dhiban in 1868 and is now in the [Louvre Museum](#) in Paris. It consists of 34 lines of text written in a Canaanite alphabet similar to [contemporary Hebrew](#), is the only written document of any length that survives from Moab and the only royal stela known from Moab. The inscription, Mesha (fl. c. 870 BC) tells of King Omri's Moab and ascribes the renewed Israelite domination over Moab to the anger of Chemosh. Mesha then describes his own successful rebellion against Israel, which probably occurred during the reign of Omri's son [Ahab](#). Moab had become a tributary of Assyria by the late 8th century BC and was conquered by the Babylonians in 582 BC, upon which the Moabites disappeared from history. Their territory was resettled by the Nabataeans in the 4th–3rd century BC. The Moabite language differed only dialectally from Hebrew ... <sup>6</sup>

- f. So, it's not that you had to have to leave your home and move in with your Satan worshipping, child sacrificing, crazy cousins; but, then Elimelech, the head of the family, ends up dead! Who died? But the text suggests it was Elimelech, likely died as a result of old age. There is no way Naomi and her sons had any concept Elimelech would end up dead while they were in Moab! But this wasn't the end of the turmoil. Listen to what happens next,

**C. They lived there about ten years, 5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. (1:4b-5)**

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Moabite>

1. We don't know if Mahlon and Chilion die point is they both died. As such, Naomi now has nothing!
2. Elimelech moved her away from her homeland and family to this culturally horrible place, he died, then her two sons died, and they did so before they could ever provide an heir that could inherit Bethlehem and continue their family business (more on all that later). The results, Naomi's conclusion is to say the least. This leads us to the inevitable second part of the story, but before we go there I want to stop and make sure we understand something.

**D.** Some well-respected commentators, that I personally enjoy, suggest that all this calamity happened because Elimelech failed to trust and obey God when he moved his wife and two sons to Moab. They also suggest his two sons sinned when they married the two Moabite women. I understand why people would want to make those conclusions, here's why:

1. The Old Testament law has no prohibition on Jewish men marrying Moabite women. Moabite men were banned from being a part of the assembly (Deuteronomy 23:3) because they didn't help the Israel out of Egypt, and because they hired Balaam to try and get rid of Israel. However, the Old Testament has no restrictions on Jewish men marrying Moabite women.
2. Moab was only 50 some miles away from Bethlehem. It was just on the other side of the Dead Sea and on a clear day you could actually see the hills of Moab from Bethlehem. More importantly however is the fact that Moab was on land God had committed to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:17-19). Elimelech moved his family to land included in the promise land, albeit land the Jewish people had yet to conquer and inhabit, it was nonetheless land God have given them to occupy, and therefore we can't accuse Elimelech of being unfaithful; if anything, he was being more faithful than those who refused to go claim it!
3. Furthermore, if there was no food, then you could order up a food delivery! You can get a loaf a bread in a couple days, therefore, once a famine has become so severe that you are out of means to produce or acquire food, and your food storage has run out, but you don't have to go somewhere that is not suffering from famine! There's no lack of moving somewhere the famine is not, especially if that somewhere is land God has already said He gave you.
4. However, the biggest rebuttal to the idea that all the calamity brought on Naomi is God's judgement on someone's actions is that the text never addresses it. The Bible is filled with very

clear and obvious statements of God issuing consequences to his people for their sin, but there is no statement of that anywhere in Ruth, or anywhere else in the Bible about Ruth. Instead, what we are left with in Ruth very closely resembles the situation in the book of Job. God brought massive calamity into Job's life, and we know that because God rebuked those who suggested it was sin! God had a plan for Job, and here in the book of Ruth, God has a plan for Naomi as well. The providence is unmistakable in this book.

5. J. E. Smith argued that Elimelech decided to move his family to the land of Moab east of the Dead Sea to wait out the famine. Because of this decision Elimelech is vilified in rabbinical exegesis as an arrogant and evil man. His death in Moab is viewed by the rabbis as just punishment for having left the Promised Land. Naomi "was (lit., she remained) with her two sons in the land of Moab (1:1-3). Again rabbinical exegesis sees Naomi here as defying the divine warning of the death of her husband by choosing to remain on foreign soil. Nothing in the text, however, suggests that Elimelech sinned by moving his family to Moab. Nothing suggests that his death was anything more than coincidental with his abiding in that foreign land. The passage does suggest, however, that godly people do experience unexpected tragedies, and sometimes in rapid succession. After the death of Elimelech, the two sons took Moabite wives. They thus, in the eyes of Jewish commentators, sinned more grievously than their father. If this passage is intended to be a protest against religious intermarriage it certainly is a mild one ... Technically, the marriage to Moabites only forbade Moabite *males* from joining the assembly of the Lord (cf. Deut 23:3)."<sup>7</sup>

## The second part of chapter one is ...

### (2) A Moment of Truth – Naomi, Ruth and Orpah have to face the brutal facts. (1:6-13)

A. **6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. (1:6-7)**

1. After a decade of famine in Bethlehem, God had relieved it and blessed the land again.
2. "1:6 **Yahweh had come to the aid of his people** God is viewed as the one who provides for His people (Deut 10:18; 28:8; Pss 104:14; 136:25; Ezek

<sup>7</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). [The Books of History](#) (p. 214). Joplin, MO: College Press.



16:19). The Hebrew verb *paqad*, a term with a remarkable range of meanings including visit, supervise, inspect, appoint, enroll, remember, pay attention to, and care for. The context in which the word is used does not always clarify what particular sense was intended, but its usage here suggests the meaning that God was attentive to His people and cared for their needs (compare Exod 3:15–17)."<sup>8</sup>

3. This "care" from God is a clear as we glimpse work through the Book. It's usual that God's constant characteristic even when we ca
4. Hearing this news also gave Naomi the first glimpse of hope she had in a while! She possibly had relatives in Bethlehem that might help support her, she ca that at this point, especially after a severe famine; but there was clearly nothing going for her in Moab! However, the reverse was true for her two Moabite daughters-in-law. They needed to face the brutal facts that there was no foreseeable future for them at all in Bethlehem. Listen to what Naomi tells them,

**B. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" (1:8-9a)**

1. Whenever Ruth is present is obviously going to be a love major theme, however, it can't be miss daughters-in-law. She affirms how good they had been to her and her sons, and that she sincerely longed for each of them to be able to get in a stable situation in a marriage with husbands that truly loved them and cared for them.

Note: "The term "rest" (*menuphah*) carries the meaning of both peace and happiness."<sup>9</sup>

2. In short, Naomi did what she said to get rid of them, but rather out of a sincere and desperate desire for their well-being! Naomi genuinely loved and respected these gals and as such wanted them to have the best shot possible at being loved and provided for!
3. Furthermore, it's important to note another word in the story that gives us a glimpse at where we are headed in Ruth. J.W. Reed noted,

<sup>8</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., [Rathjiz](#) ema, E. [Study Bible](#) (Ru 1:6). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, J. E. (1995). [The Books of History](#) (p. 215). Joplin, MO: College Press.

4. "The word kindness *hesed*. It is an important word in the Book of Ruth (cf. 2:20; 3:10) and throughout the Old Testament. It speaks of God's covenant loyalty to that it was extended even when it was not deserved. Here divine will and human action went hand in hand. Both God and humans were doers of *hesed*. The basis of Naomi's blessing of Ruth and Orpah to their husbands and to Naomi. Both young women were worthy in the eyes of their mother-in-law, so she wanted God to be good to them."

5. We are going to do more with that in the move on to what happened next.

C. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? **No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.**" (1:9b-13)

1. Naomi's kiss is the kiss people who come to greet one another or say goodbye (i.e., what the early church greeted one another with). Those who try and insinuate that this was something else clearly have a perverted agenda and I'm not going to just rebutting their ridiculous assertions.

2. Furthermore, when we get to chapter 4, I'm going to explain more about the "levirate" law that Naomi is had to do with a brother taking his brother's place so that he could provide his deceased brother with an heir. A brother supposed to lay claim to his dead brother's inheritance, but instead provide an heir through his brother's widowed wife. Naomi is speaking of this law when she argues that they should go on to be old to remarry and have children who could be those kind of brothers for Mahlon and Chilion; and even if she did, would these women who are now likely in their mid to late 20s be willing children of Naomi, to grow up enough to be their husbands?

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<sup>10</sup> Reed, J. W. (1985). [Ruth](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 420). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. Again, Naomi is not trying to run them rather because she does! Naomi sees no pathway forward for these women. She is facing the cold hard facts of their reality, but, doing so from a position of love for them.
4. Throughout most of human history, a woman had to be married to have any real chance of survival; adding to that motive was the fact that the ultimate purpose of a woman in that society, and therefore the pathway to success and value as a woman, was to be a wife and a mother. Now, lest you think this was overly sexist, understand that the ultimate purpose of men was to find a wife and have children. The prosperous continuation of the family has been the pinnacle of purpose within almost every society in human history; and I would argue that in most places in the world it still is, that is, the places that haven't replaced the value success and money.
5. Now let me be clear, not everybody can have children and not everybody is meant to have children, so be encouraged, the Gospel makes it clear that no matter if you have children or not, your purpose and your worth are established by Christ and your adoption into His family! Our ultimate eternal purpose is not the continuation of our family name but His name! As a child of God, we have a heritage bigger than our ancestors because we have a heritage as big and as glorious as the God who is our heritage!
6. But, when Naomi is saying this stuff, the Gospel was still a mystery being very slowly unfolded. Therefore, we can't hold the character an expectation they are innocently ignorant of; but rather, we need to understand life and a relationship with God as it was when they were living it. In this instance, we find these women living in a culture where a woman truly found her ultimate sense of identify and purpose through being a wife and a mother; and as such, Naomi was expressing nothing but genuine love for her two daughters by telling them to go back to Moab!
7. She proves this level of love when she says, "**No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.**" (1:13b)
8. Naomi hates the effect all this is having on them! In talking with my father-in-law, Dr. Keith Zachary, he pointed out the word translated as bitter here gives us a picture of what happens when you are expecting good things and end up getting bad things! I'm bringing t just like with Job, Naomi knows her husband and sons are dead because God willed it, and she in no way envisioned that would be the outcome of her life. Much more on this in a minute, because way you think!

The third part of chapter one is ...

(3) An Act of Repentance – Ruth abandons the worship of idols and surrenders her life to God! (1:14-22)

A. 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

B. Ok, now listen, there have been millions of sermons preached about the testimony of Ruth's love for Naomi, and that's very appropriate. However, we are going to look at a snap shot of her love next week, so I'm going to leave you guys hanging on that so we can address something that is all too often overlooked. But to do this, we have to fully understand the situation.

C. Naomi's love for God is NOT fake. She's bitter, but like Job, she is clearly not forsaking God! And listen, when she said she was bitter, she meant it!! Listen to how chapter 1 ends.

D. 19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" 22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

E. Think about verses twenty and twenty-one with me for just a minute. Naomi sees famine hit Bethlehem so hard that her husband could no longer provide for their family. Famine would be totally understood as something God caused. We aren't told if this famine was some kind of sin in the region, or if it was simply God testing the people with the reality of life in a cursed world; but whatever the reason, it was something God caused and something God could end. Nonetheless, Naomi left Bethlehem, her homeland, in the midst of a famine that threatened their lives and likely devastated them financially, as one who considered herself to be set off in total faithfulness to her husband and as such, total

confidence in the Lord that He was going to provide for them in Moab. Even though they were leaving her home land, "they" were leaving and as such, her purpose as a woman was still being fulfilled! She likely left with nothing but dreams of how God was going to provide for them, mature her sons, and then bring them back to Bethlehem to continue their family agriculture business.

- F.** However, that is the exact opposite of what ends up happening. So, understand this, when the people of Bethlehem came out to greet her, they were coming out with hearts of celebration that God had ended the famine in Bethlehem, and He was bringing everybody back together again! They were not coming to condemn Naomi, but rather to celebrate her return. The tone of the text is upbeat and positive. The town is excited to see them, but Naomi quickly tosses cold water on their excitement with the cold hard facts about how she feels about all that God has done to her! She tells them to not even call her by her name because it means "pleasant;" and from her perspective, there was nothing pleasant about her life at this point. She wasn't provided for her and her family, but rather how God had taken her family! Naomi wasn't walking into a town celebrating the grace of God that had restored their livelihood, but as one who was totally defeated, humiliated, desperate, and ultimately BITTER (and thus the name Mara which means bitter!). In addition, she allowed no room for confusion on who she said caused this bitterness – God!
- G.** Now listen to what I ' about to ask you and be honest with yourself. How many of you committed to follow Jesus because all you knew about Jesus was communicated to you by somebody who was bitter about life and God? How many looked at a person who had lost everything, who was totally despondent, callous, angry, and even frustrated with God and life; but in looking at them you were motivated to love, follow and serve the God they said unjustly brought all that turmoil into their life? Probably nobody can raise their hand and say, yeah, t h a t ' s m e, R u t h ~~Only testimony of God~~ is NAOMI, and Naomi is talking about how God has made her bitter! The God Naomi claims to love and serve has taken her husband, both her sons, and at this point any chance for Naomi to fulfill her ultimate life purpose of raising a family and continuing the name and prosperity of her and her husband ! ~~gone~~, and Naomi has said very clearly why i t ~~gone~~ – GOD! Yet, Ruth commits to love and serve N a o m i ' s God? How in the world did Ruth decide loving and following God made any sense at all after seeing and hearing what God had done to Naomi. Why would she want anything to do with a God that left Naomi so understandably bitter? Well, the answer is right there in front of us!
- H.** Just as things went w i t h J o b , N a o m i ' s l o v e f o r G o d , c o n t i n u e d hard on Naomi, never caused Naomi to stop seeking to know, love, serve and obey the Lord! She was bitter and angry about it, but her love for God rose above it. The reason we know this is not only because she went back to Bethlehem instead of forsaking God and worshiping the false gods of Moab; but

she also never let the horrible hardships she was going through deter her from sincerely loving others. There was no doubt in Naomi loved them which is why they wept for Naomi!

- I. My point is this. Ruth clearly saw that Naomi was bitter at God, yet she was still clearly faithful to God. That real struggle of faith was presented to Ruth not with animosity or disgust, but with the clear testimony of love for Ruth framing it all up! Naomi had every reason to demand that everybody revolve around her, to make her pain and drama every priority, but instead, she clearly made Ruth and Orpah her priority. She was more concerned for them than she was for herself, and that love turned Ruth's heart more not just to the God of Naomi! Ruth saw real, genuine, tested faith, and concluded it could only come from a real and genuine God worth abandoning all her idols and surrendering her life to! Ruth said, "I have said, 'My God, will BE MY GOD,' " which implicitly means my only GOD!
- J. This is what love is. It is transformational information vacuum; it transforms us for the world around us to see and for the world around us to experience.
- K. John said the transformational is so significant that if you aren't transformed into somebody that His love for others, then it's because you actually have never met God! John wrote,
- L. **7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (I John 4:7-8)**
- M. Jesus spoke of the transformational effect of love in all kinds of ways, but perhaps the most applicable to Ruth chapter 1 is this one,
- N. **35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)**
- O. His love so impactful that it is going to transform you to love others as He loves you, and as such, clearly and accurately preach to the world that you are His! When they see your love, they will see a glimpse of Him!

So, here's I think this presents us with a question

**Challenge: How is your love impacting others? evidence of the transformational love of God flowing through your life?**

The laws of physics tell us that every action causes an equal and opposite reaction. Do you think you are loving others? Do you think you are shining the light of Jesus? Well, who around you is turning to Christ? When followers of Christ love others the way God loves us,

it turns heads toward them, all will follow Jesus; Orpah went back to Moab! However, when we love others with the love of God, it brings people face to face with the reality that the Gospel is not a random religious concept, but rather the truth about who Jesus is, what He is doing, will do and is going to do! They may repent and believe, or they may turn and run, but the love of God through you will cause them to make a choice!

So, what do you do if there is no evidence of this transformational power being lived out through you? Well, it's going to happen because you get more religious! You can only have something come out of you that you first have within you! Repent and run to Jesus so you can be transformed by His love, then you won't be out of you and transforming those around you!