



# Ruth



Finding Hope  
Finding Home

Part of Bible Month 2020

## Ruth 1: Living in Loss

by Rev Dan Balsdon, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020 | read online at [www.revdanbalsdon.com](http://www.revdanbalsdon.com)

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We've been enjoying the start of the growing season the last couple weeks, radishes, cucumbers, strawberries, raspberries are just beginning to ripen too...

The story of Ruth starts very differently, Ruth 1 opens with a famine. A loss of fruitfulness of the land in Bethlehem. So to survive Elimelech takes his wife, Naomi and their sons Mahlon and Chilion to another country Moab.

While in Moab, Elimelech dies, and Mahlon and Chilion marry women from Moab – Orpah and Ruth. Mahlon and Chilion also died, which leads Naomi as a foreigner in Moab, with two daughters in law, and no men to look after them in their patriarchal society. The security of family and hope was no longer stable.

The land lost its productivity, women lose their husbands, their well-being, their independence.

Naomi must have been at a low, struggling for hope, residing in a foreign land, amidst the layers of loss she's experienced. Struggling to find hope.

**Reflect: I wonder if you can relate to Naomi's struggle?**

Living in a coronavirus world, we've experienced loss in new and intensified ways. Loss of life, physical contact with others, freedom to spend time with friends and family, perhaps lost the ability to work or go to school. We've lost independence and certainty. **It can be hard to hold onto hope.**

What does Naomi do? Well, she doesn't give up. She doesn't resign herself to be beaten. She doesn't settle for the idea that she has to simply live with loss without a hope for the future. **In struggle with loss, life can go on.**

Naomi hears there's food in Bethlehem, so she sets out for home. Ruth and Orpah are set to go with her, committed to their mother-in-law.

Naomi says to them, *'go back to your mother, may God look after you there'*. Initially they say no, we'll stay with you, but Naomi insists, and in the end Orpah with weeping and heartache says farewell and heads on her way.

But Ruth holds onto her Mother-in-law, *"do not make me leave you, where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay, your people will be my people, your God will be my God."* (Ruth 1:16) Seeing Ruth's determination, Naomi says no more.

We know little about the story of Ruth or Orpah up to this point, but just as Naomi experienced loss and was vulnerable, so were they.

Both lost their husbands, both would have had anxieties about their future security, stability and survival. Both make sacrifices on their journey for survival.

Orpah's sacrifice is to let go of her new family and go back to her past.

Ruth's sacrifice is to hold on, to not go back to her past family, to travel with Naomi and become a foreigner herself, just as Naomi had been.

I wonder if in Naomi, Ruth saw in Naomi's Israelite faith a glimmer of hope, hope that things could be different for her, by risking vulnerability to make that hope her own.

For all 3 widows, living in loss meant taking action, making choices and sacrifices, living in a way that helped them see possibilities of hope.

Today, we can have faith in God, who is stable and certain to be with us, love us and forgive us. The hope we have in God turns the uncertainties of our present into possibility for the future.

Opportunities for new, deeper, stronger relationships to bloom and grow.  
Opportunities to learn, be changed, challenged, transformed.

Despite our struggle in the chaos of uncertainty – the opening of this story shows us that in the midst of vulnerability and loss, hope always has the last word. God has the last word.

Despite our living in loss, life can go on, grow and flourish.

And as we unpack the story further we'll discover more about how hope is kindled, finding hope and home in the midst of vulnerability and loss.

***I pray you know the hope of God in your living today.***