Light at the End of Bitter January 7, 2018

*Ruth 1:1-22 Series: Lessons from a Love Story*

“What she taught me is that the deliverance God offers you from pain is not no pain – it’s that the pain is actually a gift.” – Stephen Colbert

1. Don’t let your pain distort your sight.
2. The pain of upheaval can distort your sight.

v. 1 *there was a famine in the land*

v. 1 *went to sojourn in the country of Moab*

1. The pain of loss can distort your sight.

v. 3 *Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died*

v. 5 *both Mahlon and Chilion died*

1. The pain of disappointment can distort your faith.

v. 13 *the hand of the LORD has gone out against me*

v. 20 *the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me*

v. 21 *I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty*

v. 21 *the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me*

* Naomi’s life was made painful by upheaval, loss and disappointment with God. What are some of the trials that have impacted you?
* How did Naomi’s pain end up distorting her faith? How did living in Moab negatively influence how Naomi saw God?
* How can we keep pain from distorting how we see our lives?

1. Don’t let your pain confuse your identity.
2. Don’t let your marital status define your identity.

v. 1 *his wife*

1. Don’t let your circumstances define your identity.

v. 2 *the name of his wife Naomi*

1. Don’t let your losses define your identity.

v. 5 *the woman was left without her two sons and her husband*

1. Don’t let your bitterness define your identity.

v. 20 *Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.*

1. Root yourself in your identity in Christ.

Through faith in Jesus say, I’m a child of God (1 John 3:1), a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), a saint (1 Cor 6:11), God’s possession (1 Pet 2:9), His masterpiece (Eph 2:10); I’m wonderfully made (Psa 139:14); God delights in me (Zep 3:17); I’m forgiven (1 Pet 2:24); I’m washed clean (Isa 1:18); I’m never alone (Deut 31:8); and I have a secure future (Jer 29:11).

See Freedom in Christ Ministries: “Who I am in Christ.”

* Naomi was defined by her marital status, her pleasant circumstances, her losses and her bitterness. What are some other things that can define us?
* What are some ways that you can let your circumstances define your identity? How can you avoid this?
* How can you tell that bitterness has come to define you?
* How can you make your identity in Christ more meaningful in counteracting the negative identities we’re tempted to adopt?

1. See your pain through the eyes of faith.
2. By faith, consider your context.

v. 1 *In the days when the judges ruled*

1. By faith, understand God’s will.

v. 1 *there was a famine in the land*

* + 2 Samuel 21:1 *Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD.*

v. 4 *These took Moabite wives*

1. By faith, rejoice in God’s mercy.

v. 6 *she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food*

v. 10 *And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.”*

v. 14 *Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.*

v. 16 *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.*

* When David sought the Lord during the famine what do you think he actually prayed for (based on God’s response)?
* How is this different than just praying, ‘God, take it away!’ or ‘Make me happy again!’
* How can you see and rejoice in God’s mercy and goodness in your life when circumstances tempt you to discouragement?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll look at Ruth 2:1-23.

Notes