

RUTH

STARTING OVER

RUTH 1

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Starting over is not below God's radar.

Background: Events take place during the time of the Judges: general anarchy and chaos in Israel. Plus, a constant cycle of rebellion against God, foreign invaders oppress Israel, Israel cries out to God, God delivers them, Israel rebels again, etc. The book of Ruth weaves together God's beautiful tapestry of redemption.

Characters

Naomi: Ruth's mother-in-law who lost her husband and two sons.

Ruth: King David's great-grandmother and mentioned in Matthew's genealogy.

Boaz: King David's great-grandfather.

Scenes of starting over

- Relocation because of famine: Bethlehem to Moab – 1:1 *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.*
 - Immigration to a hostile foreign culture – 1:2 *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.*
 - Compounded heartache – 1:3-5 *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. 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.*

- *Return to Bethlehem – 1:6, 11-15 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...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.”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.”*
 - *Ruth breaks a family tradition and turns to God – 1:16-18 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.*
 - *Naomi renames herself “Bitter” – 1:19-21 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?”*

Application

- God is setting the stage for great things in chaotic times.
- God tenderizes us through tragedy.
- Follow God, even if you're the first in your family.