

Keys for a Successful Family Life - Part 7

by Don Courville

The sermon discusses the importance of surrendering to God and the impact of bitterness on our lives and families.

Duration: 56:24

Scripture: Lamentations 3:22

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Overcoming Bitterness"

Description

This sermon focuses on the story of Naomi and Ruth, highlighting the themes of bitterness, surrender, and God's faithfulness. Naomi expresses bitterness towards God for her hardships, but Ruth demonstrates unwavering loyalty and surrender to God. The sermon emphasizes the importance of letting go of bitterness, seeking God's will, and trusting in His faithfulness to turn our emptiness into blessings.

Transcript

Our Father, we thank you that we could be here and trust that we're here in the will of God and rejoicing in you and thanking you for the blessings. But the fact of the matter is, Father, there's a lot of hurting people in this world and there may be some here or listening someday on this DVD or CD. And so I pray that you would take your word, the principles that we will glean here and that they will not return into void, but they will be used to change lives.

I thank you for changing my life. Just almost 20 years old, 51 years ago this summer, but thank you because, Father, nobody cared about me, but you did. Nobody dared to ask me a question because they thought I had it all put together, but you knew my life was a shambles and you yourself reached in and saved my soul.

And now, Father, I pray that you would do that reaching into our hearts. There may be a bitter experience that we've gone through or the wisdom that we need to deal with somebody, maybe even this week. So we ask that you'd continue to anoint our ears to hear, our eyes to see, our minds and hearts to understand.

And again, if there's any without Christ, Father, that the Holy Spirit would lovingly draw them to see that Jesus has his arms open and say, Come unto me, all of ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And so we thank you that we can trust you by faith to speak to us in Jesus' name. Amen.

One of my favorite stories is about a pastor in China. And I was just reading that story, and you like stories, but I haven't gone over it for a long time. And I hate to leave out a good story, leave out details out of it, but he was, if I can remember correctly, and I got it here, he was put in prison and went through a hard time and some very hard times.

And I think his wife died and he lost contact where his son was, didn't know where he was. And it's an amazing story of what God did in his life. And I thought about sharing that with you because God can do that in your lives.

He was a little discouraged. And God can do miraculous things in your life. And I think God just gets bored sometimes with us because we don't give him any challenges.

And he said, If you're not going to give me any challenges, I'll give you some myself. Ask, ask. I've got something, I've got a Bible I used, started preaching, my sister gave me some money and I bought it.

And it's all wore out, it's leather. But in it, I've got, I think it's seven levels of life, seven colors of wisdom. And the last one is the life of adventure.

And that should be our life, walking in Christ, a life of adventure. Now, sometimes it might get a little too adventurous, we think. Maybe we're hanging off a cliff and grabbing one branch and, Lord, this is a little too exciting.

But don't be afraid to trust God. Don't be afraid to trust him. So I think about this story, I want to share it with you.

Maybe if I see you falling asleep, I'll grab it and read it to you. But it has an amazing ending. Okay, I'm going to pick up again.

I've been going over this thing of, of correction is the path to blessing and God's bringing, bringing them out. And I'm going to, going to, let's see, I lost my little marker and put another one in here. And I'm going to, I think I'm going to try to go through the whole chapter because chapter two switches totally.

We go into Boaz and about Christ. This is the hard part. And the rest, two, three, and four gets really exciting with God putting it together.

I just won't have time for that. But I might try today, maybe this evening, even to finish up if I can. We'll see how far we can go.

But the greatness, I wrote this down, the greatness of your, your life will be in the measure of your surrender. And again, the title of this message, I guess it would be part two, Christ in Ruth and Ruth in Christ. The greatness of your life will be in the measure of your surrender.

So the greater the surrender, the greater the greatness of Christ living his life in us. And Christ is always striving to give his very best to us, especially if we would let him make our choices for us. And we would just not run down the Moab all the time.

So correction is the path to blessing. Now I'm going to pick up again in Ruth and verse seven, try to view, rove, roam through a few more verses. Wherefore she went forth, Naomi's leaving Moab, out of the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her.

And they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. So they've gone south to Moab as the prodigal son went to the pig pen. And I don't think when he came home, he brought a little pig with him.

I think he was done with it. And sometimes after we go off on our little wild trips and things, then we might be done with our way and ready for us to let him have his way with us. So what's bringing her home? She heard, verse six, she heard that God, that the Lord had visited his people and given them bread.

So she had heard and God's drawing her home. We're going to learn some more things from her. She heard.

And so here, therefore, O Israel, observe to do it, Deuteronomy 6.3, all these things where God tells us to listen to him. So she heard that God had visited. So correction is the path to blessing.

And God's working. And her two daughters-in-law with her. And so they go into these little interesting dialogues back.

And now Naomi is thinking you go to verse eight. Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, go return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

So maybe she's thinking, you know, you girls need to go back. Israelites and Moabites don't mix too good back where I'm going. And maybe she's thinking, what's in it for you? You go back there.

You don't have any husbands. And these Hebrew boys, they're going to be forbidden. You know, it could be hard.

It could work out, but it could be hard for you, you know. So she's just trying to talk to them a little bit. Go back.

Don't come along with me. And so verse eight is the Lord deal kindly with you. She wants a blessing.

And this is the word for, you know, that Yahweh would bless you. Use his personal name to bless them. She wants them to be blessed.

And they went down there in that land. So deal kindly. That's a blessing.

We talked about giving blessings. Give blessings. Friday night, give blessings to people and receive blessings.

And so she says that the Lord bless you because God is faithful. He offers forgiveness. He's kind.

He's loving. He's got grace for our lives. And so she's doing that, even though she is bitter.

And she's going to give that testimony out that she is a bitter woman. And so verse eight, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. You know, they were good wives.

They were kind. And at this point, though, Naomi needs restoration. And maybe Orpah and Ruth need redemption, be in Moabitus.

But she's praying a blessing on them for them to be blessed by the Lord. And the Lord deal kindly with you. Go return each of you.

Deal kindly with you. I've talked about deals. I'm a sucker for deals and get into the bad deals and things.

But she's not talking about that. She's talking about God just blessing him. That's actually the word for accomplish and doing it.

That God would actually bless them. That's what she's doing. She's giving them a blessing.

Faithful is he who calls you who also do it. And so her testimony at the present is she's presenting God to them. And the choices, she's a consequence of the choices of her husband.

Maybe she went along with it, like Hannah and I since so far. We're in cahoots to try to impress everybody with their giving or whatever. But there are consequences.

And so she's suffering. She's bitter. And she also, as she goes in here, it's going to tell them it's going to be hard to follow her.

It's hard to follow Christ. We should be honest with people. Don't tell them, hey, you trust Christ.

He's going to pay all your bills, give you a new car, give you a house. You just got to really be blessed. You got to be honest.

Following Christ is take up your cross. But it's got its benefits that are out of this world. That's what we are looking forward to, times of Christ.

So being corrected is not easy. And correction, though, is the path to blessing. That's where we're going.

And so verse 9, the Lord grants you that you may find rest, each of you, in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voice and wept. Now, find rest in the house of their husbands may not be very likely being pagans down there and not really tuned in for God, but maybe it could be that there would be some blessing.

So probably without realizing it, Naomi at this point doesn't really have an idea, a clue of what God is doing and what God is going to do. And she's offering to them no hope to follow her. She'd go back to Moab because she is not living in faith.

And so if you're not living in faith, you're not going to look to Bethlehem. You're not going to point other people. So she's not putting them back to the place of blessing because she's not in the position to bless.

That's why it's so important that we walk in the Spirit and we walk with God. And so she's not offering them really any hope except to go back to their family. And that's not really promising, probably.

So let me slip over to 21. When she got back and she arrived there, they're calling her Naomi. And she said, don't call me Naomi in twenties.

They'd call me Mara. They'd call me bitter. For the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with me.

I went out full and the Lord had brought me home again empty. Why then call ye me Naomi? Seeing the Lord had testified against me and the Almighty had afflicted me. Do you really understand bitterness? I had a little paper somewhere.

I don't know if I brought it with me or not. There it is. It's a study on bitterness presented by an evangelist that I worked with years ago and we had revival.

Webster defines bitterness as having a sharp, generally disagreeable taste. Painful as a bitter experience. Severe as bitter, cold, cruel, stinging as bitter words.

It's a serious thing to have bitterness. And I've had to wrestle with that because of some of the things that happened to me in my life. Life not being fair, but God being God, he showed me that he was always there and he was orchestrating and watching over things.

But let me give you just a list of some of these things without going into the details of them, which would be an amazing study to do it. But the consequences of bitterness. Choices have consequences.

Broken fellowship with God. She's not in fellowship with God, really, so she is not in a position to give them any positive direction. Broken relationships.

And so she had broken relationships, basically through death here. But if she goes back until she is given some hope by the Lord, she's just a bitter woman. Best not to be around bitter people.

They don't have anything to give you but a bitter pill. Yeah, sure. And they'll talk about their bitterness and their different experiences.

And I've done that. So there's a broken spirit. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul and never eateth with pleasure.

So self-destruction, mental suicide, we get ourselves into bondage and frustration. So we have a broken spirit. We have broken health because actually bitterness is something that slowly destroys our body.

It's just like if you've got your adrenaline running all the time, it's not going to help you out too much. Might be okay for an emergency shot that you need or whatever, but your broken health. But here's the bad thing.

It gives place to Satan, the fruits of bitterness. Neither give place to the devil. It means give him a place of jurisdiction.

You actually give him a place of authority in your life to work and to operate. And he'll love it. Ah, you're so bitter.

I can really use you because your bitterness, I'll use you to contaminate your children, contaminate your friends, and people just want to stay away from you. And so it gives place to Satan. Neither give place to the devil.

Mental imprisonment. Mental imprisonment. You're in your thoughts.

You're just continually remembering the bad things that happened to you. You're locked into a prison and she's there. And some of the indications that we've given place to the devil through bitterness is loss of family and friends, mental torment, oppression, lustful thoughts, immorality, gossip, slander, character assassination.

You know, we've done it to us. We'll do it back to them. Murderous thoughts, suicide tendencies, all kinds of things.

Um, some traits of bitterness just go on in, into the spiritual life and they contaminate a church. You can't have it around. And this is why sometimes you gotta have, it just destroys church because you have maliciousness, which is the desire to injure another brother because he's injured you.

We have envy, which is a bitterness arising in one's heart towards another. They got a promotion. They got something you didn't get.

You thought you deserved it. You don't deserve nothing. I don't need it.

But we come back to ourself. That's why when we raise our kids, we really need to work with them. We got our work cut out for us.

That because, you know, they're fun and they're happy. We got some little boys around here and they stay out of their way. They're going to tear the place up.

They're just full of life. And we got to have all that energy directed towards God because they're going to be busy and little girls are going to be busy. But you gotta, we gotta teach them, hey, there's going to be something bad.

Yeah, Susie, your sister took your little doll and she threw it out the window while you're driving down the road. Mom and dad didn't know that. Whatever.

You gotta get over it. Gotta get over it. Maybe God will give you another doll and all these things.

So we use all of these things to teach our children and grandchildren as we go along. Whispering. These are the evidences of the bitter heart.

Whispering. You ever heard a message on the whisper? Gossip, slandering, backbiting. And it goes on.

It's not a nice list. Unmerciful. Will be, won't be able to forgive others because we are there.

And it goes into, one of Satan's title is a slanderer. And he said, bitter people can become like Satan and not like Christ. Prolonged bitterness in the heart turns a person into a devil-like person.

And he goes into illustration. So it's really, really quite, so she's, she's bitter. Don't call me, don't call me Naomi anymore.

Call me bitter. I am stuck. She's saying.

All right, I'll put this away. All right, let's get back. Not to the ranch, but meanwhile, back to the passage of scripture.

And I think we're about at verse nine. The Lord grants you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. And she kissed them and they lifted up their voice and wept.

And ten, and they said unto her, surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, turn again, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb? That they may be your husbands.

And she goes into this again. And 12, she says, turn again. And 13 said, why would you, Terry? You know, I'm not going to have any more sons for you.

The last part of 13, she says, it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. Not reading God right. God didn't do it.

They did it. Have you ever blamed God for your own problems? We like to blame somebody, don't we? We hate to say, well, I did it. I just really did it.

I'm the one to blame. That's one of the first things that come out. And so in 21, she said, don't call me.

Naomi, call me bitter. If you return empty, God is going to make it here. She may return empty, but he's coming after Naomi because she's not going to remain empty.

God loves you too much to let you go. And so here we got the choices. The choices we're given to follow Christ will never be easy.

And she's not making it easy for these gals to go along with it. To leave Moab, basically, she doesn't know what she's saying, but you leave Moab, you're going to leave the world. But I'm not in spiritual shape to tell you how wonderful it is at Bethlehem at the time.

You know, but to leave the world, it's going to cost you. But you'll get Christ. You come back and Ruth comes back into the blessing and gets into the line of the Messiah, an amazing thing.

And actually, because she's not living by faith at this moment, she saw no future for them in Judah to come back. But God did. And if they would come back, if you get into the realm of blessing, you're going to be blessed.

That's why this place, your church, wherever you're at, should be a place of blessing. Every Sunday should be a place where you secure the blessing of God. Every time you come together, it should be a place where you are blessed.

Under the blessings about his mission. So all these things about it. So she kissed him.

It's a sign of release. Go on. I don't have anything for you.

You don't have any obligation to me. You've been very kind to me. Just go on.

In verse 9, they wept. The narrow way, the narrow way. Don't come the narrow way.

And so the weeping, you know, the Bible says weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. We talked about joy yesterday, and Naomi has no idea how much God can bless her. So correction is the path to blessing, and she's on her way.

Unto thy people. You know, you come our way. We've got some laws.

You know, it's not the easiest life under the law that we've got some customs that are different to yours. But they said, no, we'll go with you. They're going to put it up.

We'll go with you. And their decisions are like that. You know, choices have consequences, just like, I think, what was it, October 8, 1871, was it, when Moody told the crowd to come back the next night? And

they had the great Chicago fire.

It was probably the greatest, biggest mistake of his life, because so many people died. And he recognized that he should have went ahead and go ahead and told them what he was going to tell them that night. Decisions have consequences.

That was a terrible, terrible one. All those wooden buildings firing. So they're making their choice.

And 10, they said to her, we will return. They're not counting the cost at this point. Maybe Ruth is.

Surely we will return. Return is back to the place of departure. Correction is the path back to blessing.

God's correcting and God's working. And so in verse 11, in Nehemiah said, return, return again. How many times? I think eight times, was it? So a bunch of times.

One, two, three, four, just go back, go back. She's not making it easy. And so verse 12, we'll move on down.

Turn again, my daughters. I'm too old to have another son for you and these different things. Again, she's saying, turn back, turn back.

Go your way. All right. Agrees me much.

Now you get into her bitter heart. Agrees me much. Really, bitterness is directed against God and we receive the consequences in our body.

God showed me that one time when I was bitter. He said, that bitterness is directed towards me. You're not happy with the way I have let things happen in your life.

You want to be God? Get off my throne. Move away. And so agree with me much.

In the Hebrew, she said, I have much bitterness. Why? Because things didn't go the way I planned. You ever had your plans messed up? All the time.

I've learned years ago, I need to write my plans in sand. Inks hard to erase in case God wants to straighten it out. Let me give you four things when she says about the hand of the Lord.

Four facts about the hand of the Lord in our life. Number one, things do not happen by chance. And we're going to see if you get over there, her hap was to do that.

It just happened. Oh no, it didn't just happen. God had Boaz.

It's just a wonderful romantic story. But number two, God will bring to pass his will. Let him have his way with you.

You might as well relax. Sure, you wanted to ride first class and God got you back down in the baggage department. Just be glad you're on the plane.

I hope you got a warm coat. But he's going to bring his will. The third thing, first, things do not happen by chance.

Second, he will bring to pass his will. And third thing, if you belong to him and you're a child of him, he is responsible for you. You've given your soul to him.

And if you've given your soul, you've given your life to him. You've given him the opportunity and the right to do whatever he wants with you. So God is responsible for you.

And like them, they got into trouble down there, but God's just, he's going to be like us with our little children. They may do disobey us and get into something, but we're still responsible for them. And there may be consequences and all that.

But the fourth thing here, Naomi is bitter about what God is doing in her life. And so this is a deadly thing to be bitterness. We need to be careful.

Oh, I just, I just think of all these different wands and things and like a, you know, a girl that's married this guy and he told her all these sweet things and whatever, and he wasn't checked out. Be like Reagan. When he's dealing with the Russians, you know what he said? Trust, trust them, but verify, verify.

And so just be careful in areas of relationships. And so she's being corrected by God and telling him, you go back, go back. Had a little point there, but I'm going to slip on.

Okay, 14, 13, she said, it grieves me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. And they lifted up their voices and wept, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth cleaved, cleaved unto her. So it's decision time.

No going back. Ruth said, I'm going to go all the way. I mean, we got some kind of a wonderful passage in here somewhere down here where it's used at weddings and different things, but Orpah is going to go back and it's decision time.

Count the cost. And so Orpah was obedient and took the natural thing. She went back.

Why did she go back? Because her heart was not in the direction towards Bethlehem. She had no desire for Bethlehem, really, just kindness and whatever. But her heart is still in Moab.

But Ruth has been impacted by these believers in God. She's been influenced. And so Ruth's heart was not in going back.

Her heart was in going on ahead. And so they get the final kiss, and Orpah gives the final kiss. And so one wanted to be a wife again, and one was willing to be a daughter of the Lord forever.

She had no promise of getting married, going back there. All right, cleaved. The super glue of life is the love of Christ.

She's going to stick with her. It's surrender to the end. A friend loveth at all times.

And remember, this is Ruth. She's a friend. She's going to stick closer.

Somebody said, he who loves once never loved at all. That's maybe something to think about with the way sometimes some of the marriage is going. So correction is the path to blessing, and they're on their way.

And by the way, talking about the super glue of life, without Christ, things just don't stick together. They don't work. Build your life on him.

Build your church on him. All right, let's see if there's anything else in here. Go on to, Orpah's gone back, and now verse 15.

Let's see what happens. And she said, behold, thy sister-in-law has gone back unto her people and unto her gods. Return thou after thy sister-in-law.

Look, again and again and again. It's going to be hard. Going to the cross is hard.

You have to pay the price. You have to count the cost. And so Orpah's gone back, and she said she would go with me, but she made her final decision.

And you've got to understand, Ruth, when you go to where you're going to go with me, you can't worship your gods there. You've got to leave them. You can't worship your gods back in Judah.

And so here we go. They return. Fourth time, I think it is, if you count in verse 8, 11, 12, and 15 to go back.

Very hard. But at the same time, when Jesus comes and he knocks on your life and he wants you to walk with him, that's an opportunity. Ruth is being given an opportunity, but also she's been told you need to really understand.

But the amazing thing, when Ruth gets there, it just wasn't hard at all. The devil's a liar. He said, if you take up your cross and you follow Jesus, you're going to lose your job, you're going to lose your family.

He's a liar. He's a deceiver, because taking up your cross is always facing in the direction of blessing. It may be some suffering and hardship, but it will be worth it all.

I think there's a song about that in there. Somebody ought to write that song. Okay.

Opportunity was at the door. But the thing about opportunity, and you need to listen to this, it usually only knocks once. That's why we need to teach our children to obey on the first command.

Because if we've got to give another command, we're training them, okay. Mom didn't really mean that, come. I've got two more chances.

When she says the third time, I got to move. Or the fourth or the fifth, until they give your full name, like with me, whatever. You know.

So opportunity, this is the thing about sometimes it just knocks once. Did you hear that knock? When Jesus told the young recruiter to follow him and he dealt with these things, they had to make a choice in how they turn out. Some of these we don't know.

So if opportunity arises to go with Jesus, if opportunity arises to serve Jesus, do it. Back when I was in Bible college, there was a, Vernon Dirksen, I think was his name, 39 years old, fireball for the Lord. And he said this one time in one of his messages.

If opportunity arises to serve Jesus, do it. Do it. I've got into some great adventures because of not taking advice from those that, oh, don't do that, don't do this, or whatever.

And said, I'll do that. I'm willing to do that. When I was in the Air Force in Turkey, one time the captain walked in and he said, I need a volunteer.

Everybody, get their mouth shut, because you're taught, don't volunteer for nothing. I said, I'll do it, sir. What do you need? He said, pack your bags.

He told me what I'm doing. I'm going off on a secret NATO exercise. And I had two weeks of just adventure.

Went out into eastern Turkey, way out in there. An old abandoned, and we built a city. And one of my qualifications is I could handle trucks.

So they bring these planes in. I love this stuff. We built a tent city.

And I got to go up on the Black Sea up in the north to a radar site. Stuff where we get a shower and a fresh meal. Just all kinds of things.

Got invited by a general there, a Turkish general. Brought us all in and fed us this meal we ate for three hours. It was just great.

I'm not back at the base doing the old stuff. And when it's done, and I actually went back to my base, because I thought I lost the feeling of the tooth. Come back, picked up some secret orders in Ankara and had my own private chauffeur with one of those Land Rover, whatever things.

And I had to sign these papers for five years of my life. And everywhere I went, I had to carry these secret papers. Just all kinds of adventure, because I volunteered.

God can do that in your life. And when it was all finished, they said, OK, guys, you get back however you can to your base. So I hopped on a plane and flew down to, way down the south on the Mediterranean Ocean.

I got stuck there for days and had to sit on the beach and drink pop. And just really, it was hard work. Waiting for a plane to get me back to my base.

And don't volunteer for anything. You can always trust your captain. When he says, I need a volunteer, jump to it, because there's a blessing in it.

God is really exciting to work with. He may drive us crazy. We may not understand what he's doing, but he won't disappoint you.

Your blessing may be later on in heaven. You may not see it here, but that's because God says the just shall live by faith. Never give up on the Lord.

You know, he picked up, I was one stubborn Cajun boy. Man. Anyway, let's see if there's anything else here.

So that's opportunity. Are there any other lessons here on decisions? And the idea with Ruth is, in verse 16, and Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge.

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. You know, someday somebody ought to put that in a wedding deal. Huh? And what she's saying, I am going to forsake all.

Turning my back. It's like a man on the cross. He's only facing one direction.

He's not turning back, and he has no further plans of his own. His whole life is in the hand of God. And she's placing her hand, her life, just like that, into the hands of Naomi.

Naomi can't really spiritually help her out at this point. But where was Ruth and Moab? She had no future there, really. Ephesians 2.12, I had these things written out.

Without Christ, we were aliens, we were strangers, no hope without God. That describes the life in Moab. But in Christ, you go to Ephesians 2.13, we're made rich in Christ, and we're holy, and we have no blame, and he'll present us without blemish, and all these things in scripture.

Ephesians 2.4 and 5. I heard a preacher one time, he was candidating at my wife's church there in the cattle country of western Nebraska, and he preached this message, But God, but God. And he used this nice message, good message. So here we are, verse 16, Where thou goest, a new path and a new direction, and where thou lodgest, her life's dwelling, a new place.

It's just going to be just like this. Listen, if you don't have Christ as your Savior, I feel sorry for you. Because this life is not worth going to hell for.

The pleasures of the world are not worth going to hell for. Nothing is worth. Your soul is the, how valuable is your soul, is worth God's son.

Don't miss Jesus. Whatever you do in life, don't miss Christ, because he's knocking all the time. The thing with God, he will keep knocking.

Where he said in Revelation 3.20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, you got to open the door. And he says, I'll come in and sup with you. I'll come in and fellowship with you.

It's a lonely life in hell. You won't be having a party with your buddies. It's the eternal abundance.

You want to die and you're already dead. Look at, look at the rich man in Lazarus. All he wanted Lazarus to do is stick his finger in some water and put one drop on his tongue.

Then he tried bargaining getting his way out of there. Ah, go with God, go his way. Thy people shall be my people.

So she's going to have a new duty in life. And she's being, she's willing, she's a friend. She's going to be a friend with Naomi and stick with her no matter what.

Thy God, my God. Her life's desire is changing. She's going to change into a new person.

God's going to have an amazing thing to put her in the genealogy of the Messiah. And where thou diest, I will die. Her life said, I'm dying.

I'm going to go with you. My life will be there with you. I'll be buried, she said.

I'll be buried. Where you're buried, I'll be buried. And so this is her duty.

This is her desire. This is her life's direction. This is her life's declaration.

No turning back. Sing this song at camp. So I have decided to follow Jesus.

Probably doesn't do too much unless it really is a decision to follow Christ. Old Jacob, he said, Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt. But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place, in the cave of my fathers.

Back in 1968 when I did go to Israel, I was able to go down to Hebron and walk into that cave. And I looked at the tombs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You couldn't do that now.

You'd probably get killed if you tried to. Because the Jews had given it away back to the Muslims. They got it there.

But it's amazing. You stand there. And also Leah's buried there, where Jacob was.

Jacob and Rachel. Another whole story. Okay, where you were buried in those days was very important though.

There was a testimony. Powerful testimony. I had a quote here.

The decisions made on our Moabite road are for eternity. Death and the grave are but entrances to the fullness of what we begin in our earthly life. You're beginning your heavenly life here.

This is not final designation. You're beginning your eternity in hell here. But this is not the final designation.

But once we stop breathing and our heart stops, our eternity goes on and on. Do you know how long eternity is? Somebody shared this a long time ago. Maybe 40 years ago.

I heard him say it. Eternity would be like if there was a big rock. It's a hundred miles across and it's a hundred miles deep.

It's a hundred miles by a hundred miles. A hundred miles. It's a big hundred mile rock.

That's a big rock. There's not any rocks this big in Wisconsin. But imagine every hundred years this little bird flies and lands on this rock.

He takes his little beak and he goes and sharpens his beak and flies off. And then he comes back in another hundred years. He lands on the rock and he sharpens his beak again.

And then he flies off. When that rock is wore out, not even one day would have passed in eternity. Where do you want to spend eternity when it's that long? And then when that rock's wore out, there's another rock.

There are billions of rocks. There's just no end in eternity. That's why it's so important you do not die and go to hell.

And when's the time to get saved? The Bible says today. Jesus is knocking. Years ago, an adventurous friend of mine, my teacher, the one who put me in the corner to try to get my slurring, my enunciation straight.

We were in the town of the first church where I pastored at in Wyoming. And there was a man. We were talking to him.

I don't remember how he got there, whatever, a natural contact or something there. And we were trying to present Christ to him. And we were actually begging him to give his soul to Christ because he was going to die.

And he was weeping. He went to Presbyterian church, I think it was. And he's weeping.

He kept saying, I can't. I can't. Isn't there a song that says there's a line that you crossed? There is.

There was in the old hymns down in the south that we sang. Anyway, he's weeping. And we're begging with him and pleading him to give his life to Christ.

He can't. I can't. I can't.

I just can't. And he died two weeks later. And the pastor, miserable pastor, we had a talk about that one day.

I said, how can you be qualified to be a pastor? You don't meet the first qualification. And she said, well, Paul had his opinion and I've got mine. That's the treachery of wrong theology.

Anyway, she got up there and said, he's in heaven loving Jesus and with God and everything. I'm about to sick. Oh, man, he's earning it.

And so Ruth is saying to Naomi, verse 17, where thou dies will I die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also if all the death put part thee in me. And she said, I'm going to go with you all the way, all the way, all the way.

And so nothing will separate us. And what should separate us from the love of Christ? So all these things in Romans 8, 35 through 38, what should separate us? None of these things are going to separate us from Christ. And so here she is in verse 18.

When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left speaking unto her. Okay, it's a done deal. You can go.

I just want you to know, I haven't held out any hope for you because she's a baptist. Steadfastly minded, unshakable firmness, determination, definite to go. What would it stop you from following Jesus? A bitter person is not in very good shape to follow Jesus.

But here we say God is correcting and bringing her back. Christ in Ruth and Ruth in Christ. Chapter 1, 19 through 21.

Let's see if there's any more here. We've got a little time left. So they went until they came to Bethlehem.

And it came to pass when they were come to Bethlehem that all the city was moved about them. And they said, is this Naomi coming home? Coming home. If you come home to Christ, I guarantee you, you won't stay empty.

You may be empty on your route and empty where you went. But when you come to Christ, he's going to fill you. He's going to minister to you.

I have something I wrote out, another lesson. No man will ever truly seek God with all his heart until he is emptied of the opportunities of working out his life in the flesh. Are you tired of it? Paul said, there's no

good thing in the flesh.

You know, you look at these great men of God that he used, you know, Abraham. Boy, you walk with God. What do you got to say for yourself? I'm the dust and ashes.

David, with all your walking with God and being a shepherd and all your failures and whatever. David, what do you got to say about yourself? I'm a flea. Isaiah, they're in the presence of God and you told them you would go.

Here am I, I will go. What do you say about yourself? I'm a man of unclean lips. Paul, great apostle Paul.

What do you say about yourself? You walk with God. You turned Asia Minor upside down. You were in more prisons and get stripes and shipwrecks and all these things.

You're a great apostle. What do you say about yourself? Though I be nothing. Your qualification to be used by God is all these things, to be nothing.

God's looking just for availability. Like I said, I couldn't speak in a crowd of two. I was so shy and whatever.

And when God said he wanted to use me, Lord, you got the wrong boy. And fully qualified because I had nothing. And so God may be emptying of you some things.

Let me say that lesson again. No man will ever truly seek God with all his heart until he's emptied of the opportunities of working out his life in the flesh. It's just like our life, just like getting stuck in sand.

My wife was raised in the sand hills. Let me tell you, when it says sand and hills, the sand is literal. When I first got there, they didn't have any four-wheel drives back in those days.

We got married in 1972. And when you went around through the hills, you had to be a good driver or you might have a three or four mile walk back to the house. And so you learned how to drive in that sand because when you got stuck, you might as well forget it.

Are you stuck? Jesus has come this day to get you unstuck. And as I said before, you're stuck, you're in a fix. And you need some help.

And so God's fixing to fix you with the fix that you're in. If you try to fix the fix that you're in, he'll find another fix to fix you with. Let him do it.

Let him have his way with thee. So the decision is to go back. Her decision, Ruth, she's going to go with Naomi.

She's determined to go all the way. And so if you come back to God empty, that's just what he wants. Because he's going to fill you.

He's going to fill your life with blessing. He's going to fill you up. It doesn't mean that there's not going to be any problems.

From verse 19, so they too went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Bethlehem that all the city was moved about them. And they said, is this Naomi coming home? So they too went together.

You need a friend like the Lord Jesus. Ruth's name meant friend. So we're, here they come.

All the cities moved. And they said, and they said, here comes Naomi. All the gospellers out there.

Hey, get the newspapers in here. Here comes the prodigal. Whoa, he's not here.

Where's the two boys? Oh, they're not here. Who's this strange girl? What happened? You won't believe it. But God just turned our life upside down.

God is not, he hadn't blessed me. He cursed us. No, God didn't curse you.

You brought all that upon yourself by going down there. And so here comes the prodigal Naomi. After 10 years at least, Lamentation says, Lamentation 4.1. How has the gold become dim? How is the most fine gold changed? Now, I don't know how the reception was.

But usually people that are not right with God would not rejoice over a repentant sinner. You got the other brother, the prodigal son. He was not happy that his brother came.

He got the spirit of family and everything. But hypocrites don't rejoice over the return of the lost sheep. But Jesus is always there.

And I believe there was a great crowd to welcome her back. But she's got a testimony. Let me give you my testimony.

Don't call me Naomi. Call me bitter. I've had a bad experience in life.

And so she's at a point to where she can't give God glory. She's stuck on herself. And it's not doing too good.

You know, I have a pastor friend. I haven't seen him for years and years. We've got past his house there in the Sandhills when we go back and forth.

But he was being used in this community. And his family is pretty well known. They had a pretty good size ranch.

I don't know how big it was. And he was really being used by God. Might be in this little community.

I mean, not many people. But a community out in that country affects everybody around. For miles and miles around.

Maybe even 50, 75 miles. Maybe even farther. But he decided to go somewhere else.

And he did. And he left. And he went to another, I think he went to Montana.

And things didn't work out like he thought. And so he decided to come back. And because he had left, when he came back, it wasn't the same.

Now, after years later, I think things have come back. But it's taken, it's taken like 30 something years. 35 years.

Maybe 40 years. But when he came back, it was hard. The blessing was gone.

He had departed the flock and left. And I remember it was hard. And not only on top of that, several years later, his wife died.

And it was hard. So sometimes when we fail God, we just don't have the glory that we had before. But we can come back.

All right. Call me Mary, verse 20. And she said unto them, call me not Naomi, call me Mary.

For the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. Did God do that? The name of God, the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. Wow.

That's her testimony. I'm bitter. His hand is against me.

13, she said, his hand's against me. 21, he brought me home empty. He brought you home.

He's going to fill you. But you had to come back. And she said, he's afflicted me.

He had testified against me. Look at 21 again. I went out full, and the Lord had brought me home again empty.

Why then call you me Naomi? The Lord had testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me. She's completely mixed up. Nine observations.

I got six here. Let's see if I got more over here. There they are.

Way back over there. I've been going a long time here. I'll give you these real quick.

Nine observations about Naomi. We only harm ourself when we go out in the will of God. She's testifying the bitterness and its fruit in her life.

All this bitterness and everything doesn't change anything. So all of that bitterness, it wasn't changing anything. And also, bitterness is living in the past.

You live in the past. And it's always against God, as I said. And it's always a poison.

And six, it changes your countenance. You can see that in the countenance. Matthew Henry said, so many calamities have been lost upon if you have not yet learned how to suffer.

Said, so many calamities have come into our lives because we haven't learned to suffer. So call me not Naomi. If you want to put your life together, you rid of bitterness.

Submit yourself to God and let him work on your behalf. Declare your faith in the all-powerful God, and he will take care of you. Let me get back to those other three.

Here they are. Seven, focus on the negative. Eight, you misjudge God.

If you're bitter, then you're misjudging God. And nine, you can look at my notes if you want to copy these down later. It doesn't put a distinction.

It doesn't put the situation in the right perspective. When you're bitter, you've lost discernment. You know, Jonah was like this.

He was a bitter prophet. Doest thou well? Nope, I don't like ninny bites. God knows what to do with us.

And so she's right in acknowledging the Lord. Was he against her? No, that was a false accusation against God. Did he deal bitterly? No.

He dealt in grace and kindness. Did he bring her home empty? That's the way. No, she's full of bitterness.

But he's trying to get it. Did he testify against her? No. Did he afflict her? No.

These things we bring upon herself. He filled me with bitterness, he said. And then closing up these three observations, then we'll close up here on our affliction.

Sorry, no more stories here right at this point. But did Naomi not deserve her lot? She probably thought it was a good idea to go down there. And so two, if God gives a thorn, our duty is to look to the Lord to grow a rosebush out of it.

If there's a thorn, then you look for God to grow a rosebush out of that. And three, who did Naomi need to forgive? God. Because she's bitter at God.

So if I'm bitter, then there's usually somebody I need to forgive. And that's God. As I had said earlier, years ago, we went through a very, very hard deal.

And I think I'd shared this with you. And I was struggling with it and talked about it. And everything was terrible, terrible, terrible thing.

We went through and I was out with my family. We were fishing at a trout place. And a guy come across the bridge.

And I looked at the back of his car. And he had a bumper sticker that said, get over it. God's got a sense of humor.

Oh, wow. Good timing. Get over it.

Let's pray. Our Father, help us to get over these bumps in life and these hard things that we have. Help us not to get stuck.

That will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee. Help us to stay stuck on Jesus. Help us to assimilate some of these things now into our hearts and our minds.

And just to rejoice in the Lord always. And help us to remember that that little song they got that is a lie. That row, row your boat gently down the steep.

Merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream. Life is not. We got nightmares sometimes that happen to us.

But we thank you that your word says that God is faithful. In Jesus' name, amen.

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