

# **Bitter or Better**

## **Ruth 1:19-2:1**

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### **I. Introduction**

1. Chapter 1 tells us there was a famine in Bethlehem and Naomi, her husband and two sons went to live in Moab, a foreign country. In a ten year period her husband dies. Then her two sons marry women of Moab. But then both of them die.

2. Naomi decides to return to her home of Bethlehem. Her daughter-in-law Ruth decides to leave her family, country and religion and return with her.

### **II. Choice of Attitude (vv 1:19-20)**

#### **A. *Designed to Choose***

1. We did not have a choice in our parents, date or place of birth, sex, race or height. Those things were determined by the counsel of God.
2. Often times we do not have a choice in the circumstances of life. Through no fault of our own we get sick, loose our jobs or get attacked by others.
3. But we do have a choice about our attitude toward those circumstances.
4. In our story, Naomi returns home to Bethlehem broke, busted and disgusted. Her name means “my delight” or sweet and pleasant. But now she calls herself *Mara* which means bitter.

**Illustration:** The same sun that hardens clay to brick also softens wax to be shaped and molded.

#### **B. *Attitudes are Displayed***

1. The return of Naomi after so many years with a Moabite daughter-in-law caused a great commotion in the town. Everyone was talking about it.
2. Since Naomi was bitter on the inside it just came when out when she was approached. Whatever your attitude it will come out.
3. I feel for Naomi because she is in public view. Years earlier she left with husband, sons and dreams and now she returns without any.

**Lesson:** Sometimes God allows us to go through public humiliation so that He can reward us with public exaltation.

### **III. Causes of a Bad Attitude (v 1:21-22)**

#### **A. Look at What was Lost**

1. Naomi said that God had brought her back home *empty*. No doubt she was thinking about the deaths of her husband and sons. But we must look at what we have left and not focus on what was lost.
  - She lost her husband but had her life
  - She lost her sons but had a daughter (Ruth)
  - She lost her house but returned home
2. She ignored the fact that Ruth was with her. Ruth had left her family, friends and religion to be with Naomi. Ruth provided –
3. *Companionship* – The journey was *distant* (50 miles) through tough hills and valleys. Ruth remained with Naomi and no doubt helped her since she was much younger and stronger.
4. *Conduit of Blessing* – The journey was *dangerous* especially for two women because it was a time when judges ruled. It was a period of lawlessness and yet Ruth remained with Naomi.

### **B. Blame God**

1. Naomi stated that God had afflicted her. In other words, it's all God's fault. She did not consider her own choices.
2. No where in scripture are we told that God instructed her family to leave Bethlehem. There was a famine in the land so leaving seemed like a good idea. But God's people must move from making good decisions to making Godly decisions.
3. Bethlehem means "*place of bread*" but Moab means "*wash pot*" or garbage can. So they left a place of bread and moved to a garbage can.
4. I am sure there are some decisions we have made that seemed good at the time but turned out all wrong because they were not Godly.

**Illustration:** The prodigal son leaving home seemed good but ended in disaster. Sometimes God uses bitter experiences to turn us back to Him.

### **C. Be Unaware of Your Season**

1. The text states they returned at the beginning of harvest. This represents a season of reaping God's blessings. Anytime before this was not Naomi's time or season to be blessed.
2. Not understanding your season causes frustration and bad attitudes. We all have different seasons of life – sow (plant), nurture (tend) and finally harvest.

**Illustration:** A farmer plants in the fall but the harvest is not until the spring. He cannot do anything to rush his harvest season.

## **IV. Change of Attitude (v 1:22)**

1. Why does verse 22 restate verse 19 (the return of Naomi). The word return means a change in direction. That is also the definition of repent. Remember what you lost.

2. Naomi repented from her bad attitude so it was literally the return of Naomi the sweet and pleasant person. Since Naomi changed her attitude we can also change ours from bitter to better.

## V. Conclusion (v 2:1)

1. Our text ends with the statement that Naomi had a close relative named Boaz that was very wealthy and he would become her kinsman redeemer. As a kinsman redeemer Boaz marries Ruth and Naomi becomes the grandmother and nurse maid to the child that was born.

2. So God used some bitter circumstances to make Naomi's life better. God has done the same in other lives:

- **Moses** spent 40 years keeping sheep on the backside of a mountain but it made him a better **deliverer**.
- **David** spent years being chased by Saul but it made him a better **king**.
- **Paul** was stoned, jailed and shipwrecked but it made him a better **evangelist**.

**Illustration:** God told this man to push against this great rock. Everyday he would push against this great rock but it never moved. Then days turned into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years. Finally, after several years of pushing against this rock the man told God that he give up because the rock never moved.

God said. "I never told you to move the rock but to push against it. Look at yourself, since you have been pushing against the work your shoulders are broader, arms are bigger and legs are stronger." In other words, the rock made him better.

Whatever you are going through it is not to make you bitter but better. You are a better-

**Husband/ Wife**

**Father/ Mother**

**Prayer warrior**

**Bible student**

**Praise dancer**

**Choir member**

**Worshipper**

**Faith walker**

**Divorce**

**Bankruptcy**

**Termination**

**Eviction notice**

**Sickness**

**Storm**

**Trial**

**Hell**