

The book of Ruth appears at a time in history when Judges ruled. Historically we know it as a season when, "Everyone did as he saw fit", where life spirals out of control, from bad to worse. In the midst of this tragedy, the book of Ruth radiates beauty and hope, giving a picture of God's redemptive work despite the ugliest of circumstances.

Ruth 1:1-6

An

Introduction

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Loss and despair are real things. While we will inevitably experience both in our lives at some point, they can also be relative to the experience of others. One person's circumstance of despair may seem much more dire than what we've gone through, and vice versa. The relativity of hard times can sometimes make it difficult for us to genuinely empathize, or even understand, other peoples' pain or hardship.

MY EXPERIENCE...

YOUR EXPERIENCE...

II. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

HOW have you sought to cope with a difficult life situation in an unhealthy way?

In Contrast, **HOW** have you sought to cope with a difficult life situation in a healthy, Biblical way?

DESCRIBE what was different between the two outcomes, if anything at all.

When it comes to walking by faith and trusting God, **WHAT** is most challenging for you?

Ruth 1:1-6

An

Introduction

Read Ruth 1:1-6

OBSERVATION

Describe the situation in Bethlehem as the book opens.

Where does Elimelech choose to sojourn and why, according to the opening verses?

What monumental events take place with Naomi and her family in vs. 3-5?

How long does Elimelech and his family live in this other land?

In verse 6, what decision does Naomi make and why?

INTERPRETATION

What insight does the final verse of Judges (21:25) reveal about the setting of Ruth?

What is the irony of the situation faced in Bethlehem? (Hint: what does *Bethlehem* mean?)

Why is the destination Elimelech chooses to take his family so concerning? Read Genesis 19:34-38 for perspective.

How do you think God viewed the marriage between Elimelech's sons and the women they chose as their wives? See Numbers 25:1-5 for insight.

Because of all that's taken place in these first few verses, how might we perceive that these single women, two of whom are from Moab, might be received upon Naomi's return to Bethlehem?

APPLICATION

Have you ever felt empty and afflicted by God as Naomi did? How did you respond? What did God do in your situation?

How does 2 Corinthians 5:7 relate to Naomi and Elimelech's situation, as well as ours (whatever it may be) today?