

A Christmas Story
Part 1 - The Nights Before Christmas
November 29, 2020

Ruth 1:1-5

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a **famine** in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, **went to live** for a while in the country of **Moab**. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. **They were Ephrathites** from Bethlehem, Judah. And they **went to Moab and lived there**.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, **died**, and she was left with her two sons. they **married Moabite** women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion **also died**, and Naomi was **left without** her two sons and her husband.

Ruth 1:6-7

When Naomi **heard** in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law **prepared** to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she **left** the place where she had been living and **set out** on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Ruth 1:14-15

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is **going back** to her people and her gods. **Go back** with her."

Ruth 1:16-18

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." When Naomi realized that Ruth was **determined** to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Ruth 1:19-22

So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the **barley harvest** was beginning.

Questions:

1. Who do you want to be like? Ruth or Naomi, you have a choice.

Group Questions:

1. What gifts did you hope for as a child?
2. Talk about a hope or dream that came true for you.
3. How are you dealing with hopes and disappointments during COVID?
4. Naomi and Ruth experienced the same life circumstances. Why do they have different attitudes?
5. How can we encourage one another to walk in the direction of hope?
6. What will you do this week to pursue hope?