



# SERMON CHEAT SHEET

INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER | Ruth 1

## GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN OUR DARK MOMENTS

### **Life Can Be Bitter: Acknowledging Our Pain**

We discover early in Naomi's story that life can indeed feel unbearably bitter, especially when we face loss and hardship. Naomi's journey back to Bethlehem, marked by the death of her husband and two sons, exemplifies the depths of despair that can engulf us. In this season, she grapples with abandoning all hope, declaring, '*Yahweh has afflicted me*' (Ruth 1:20). This raw honesty invites us to acknowledge our own struggles and remind us that it's okay to wrestle with God when life throws us a curveball. Just like Naomi, we all face moments where we question God's goodness amidst our pain.

### **Starting Over Doesn't Mean the Story is Over**

Naomi returns to Bethlehem feeling empty, but her story is far from over. She believes that her life, as she knew it, is finished; however, Ruth's loyalty and the timing of the barley harvest hint at renewal and restoration ahead. In life, we might face difficult transitions or think we've hit a dead end, yet God often has a greater plan unfolding behind the scenes. As we reflect on Naomi's journey, we should remind ourselves that every new beginning carries the potential for transformation and hope. Our current circumstances do not define the entirety of our narrative.

### **God's Faithfulness: A Quiet Assurance in Difficulty**

Throughout the chaos of Naomi's loss, God's reliability often feels obscured. Yet, even in her desolation, subtle signs of God's faithfulness begin to emerge, most notably, Ruth's unwavering commitment to accompany her. Ruth's declaration, '*Your people will be my people, and your God my God*' (Ruth 1:16) highlights the importance of steadfast relationships that can carry us through dark times. Just as Naomi missed the signs of God's provision, we too must be vigilant and attentive to the ways God supports us, especially when we're feeling abandoned. God is still working, even when we cannot see it.

### **Embracing Community During Trials**

Naomi's return to Bethlehem is not just a physical journey; it's also about re-establishing connections within her community. As she arrives, the townspeople recognize her, saying, '*Is this Naomi?*' (Ruth 1:19). This moment underscores the significance of community support during our toughest seasons. We are not meant to bear our burdens alone. As we walk through life, engaging with our church family can provide the strength and encouragement to endure hardships. Like Naomi, we might find that those around us play a crucial role in building us back up when we feel utterly broken.

### **The Power of Loyalty in Love**

Ruth's relationship with Naomi showcases the transformative power of loyalty and love. When she chooses to stay with Naomi, despite the logical choice being to return to her family and familiar gods, we witness the heart of what it means to love faithfully. Ruth's commitment serves as a reminder of how our relationships should reflect the unwavering love that God has for us. This kind of loyalty can provide hope and healing not just for ourselves, but for those around us, as we embody God's covenant love in our actions.

## LIVE IT OUT THIS WEEK

- Reach out to someone you know that is going through a hard season and let them know that you're there for them.
- Who is a family member or friend who has made a difference in your life? Send them an encouragement and thank them for being in your life.

## PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray for the strength to endure your current hardships and to feel God's presence during difficult times.
- Ask God to help you recognize the signs of His faithfulness in your life, even when times are tough.
- Pray for the courage to demonstrate loyalty and love, like Ruth, in your relationships.