

Naomi - A Study of Hope

Widows of the Old Testament

Student Study Guide

Sylvia De Jong

Review of Tamar

In the study of Tamar we learned of Tamar's loss of two husbands, the broken promise of marriage to Judah's third son, her plight of childlessness and her deceptive execution of a plan to conceive. Her actions almost cost her even her life itself. God in His mercy and forgiveness enabled Judah to relent from having her killed and to confess his own wrongdoing. Tamar and Judah, along with their twin sons Perez and Zerah are mentioned in the genealogy of King David and of Jesus Christ. God triumphed in Judah's and Tamar's lives by bringing hope when they confessed the truth. During this review, please share how God is working in your life.

- a. In what way did Tamar's experience touch your life?
- b. What did you learn from the study of Tamar?
- c. Are you asking God to give you guidance and help, rather than resolving problems your own way?
- d. How have you seen God work in a special way to provide something you and your family need?

Prayer

Naomi – A Study of Hope

There are fifteen Hebrew words in the Old Testament for the word hope. The one most frequently used has a literal meaning of a cord or attachment. Its figurative meaning is expectation of something longed for. The second most frequently used word has a primary root – to wait. It implies to be patient, to stay, to tarry. We will see how these apply as the study of Naomi progresses.

1. How do we know the book of Ruth was written after David was born?
-

2. Who wrote the book of Ruth?
-

Read Ruth 1:1-22

3. According to Ruth 1:1 Naomi lived sometime when the Judges ruled Israel – 1373-1020 BC. What determined most people’s behavior at that time (Judges 21:25)?

Historical and Cultural Background: A brief study of Bible history is needful to understand the background and setting of Naomi’s story. Naomi and her husband Elimelech were descendants of Judah, living in Bethlehem of Ephrathah.

4. Most of the people living in Bethlehem have descended from Judah’s three sons (Numbers 26:20): _____, _____, and _____.

5. Judah’s brother Joseph’s story (Genesis 37.39-50) was passed down from generation to generation. He did not abandon his faith when he was owned as a slave, wrongly accused and imprisoned. What does Acts 7:9-10 tell us about Joseph’s relationship with God?

Discuss: God helped Joseph to forgive his brothers and invite them, with his father and all their families, to live in Egypt and escape the famine. How did Joseph’s forgiveness affect Judah and his descendants for generations to come?

What difference does forgiveness make in the lives of families today?

6. In 400 years the Hebrews, also known as Israelites, grew to be over 600,000 men with families. Who led them out of Egypt (the Exodus) to the promised land of Canaan (Acts 7:30-36)? _____

7. Who wrote the first five books of the Bible? _____

8. Near the end of forty years of wilderness wanderings, they traveled an ancient highway through Moab, east of the Dead Sea, called _____ (pg. 33). The King of Moab feared the many Israelites and hired _____ to curse them. In what way was Balaam’s donkey unusual (pg. 34)? _____. Balaam could not curse Israel, instead, he blessed them. How did the King of Moab bring great harm to Israel (Numbers 25:1-9)? _____

9. Moses died on Mt. Nebo before they crossed the Jordan River. Who actually led the Israelites into Canaan (Joshua 1:1-9)? _____ When he led the march against Jericho, who was the Canaanite prostitute that, with her family, was kept alive when the walls fell down (Joshua 6:20-23)? _____.

10. How was Naomi related to Rahab (pg. 31)? _____

Discuss: God delivered Rahab and changed her heart and life. Is there anything God cannot change or forgive if a person trusts Him and turns to Him?

11. In Canaan the allotted land was distributed to the tribe of Judah. Their area was approximately forty miles wide and fifty miles long. How did Naomi say they measured distance (pg. 30)? _____

12. In Genesis 49:8-12, Jacob prophesied that Judah's tribe would be the greatest of all the tribes and that a ruler from Judah would be the greatest ruler of all nations. What ruler was Jacob speaking of (pg. 31)? _____

13. Naomi and Elimelech were from the village of _____. See 1 Samuel 16:1, 13 and Luke 2:4-7. _____ and _____ were also born there.

14. The name Elimelech means _____ (pg. 31).

15. Elimelech and Naomi had two sons. They were _____ and _____.

16. When Elimelech and Naomi moved from Bethlehem in Judah to Moab during the famine, Naomi was aware of Moab's history. a) What type of worship did the Moabites have (pg. 32)? _____ b) What god did they worship? _____

17. Whose descendants were the Moabites? _____ and _____.
What nation came from the younger daughter? _____

Discuss: a) Do you think the problem, of Lot's daughters wanting children, could have been resolved in a different way?

b) What decisions have you made that brought undesirable circumstances later?

c) What did you learn from that?

18. What is the meaning of El Shaddai, a name of God (pg. 34)?

Discuss: If you were faced with a similar circumstance as Elimelech's and Naomi's hunger, what do you think you would do? Why?

19. Name four reasons for the heaviness and darkness in Naomi's life.

a) _____ b) _____

c) _____ d) _____

Discuss: a) What disappointments have caused heaviness and darkness in your life?

b) What gave you hope?

20. What drew Naomi back to Bethlehem and what was the pivotal event that released her to go?

21. Why did Naomi encourage her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?

22. Where did Naomi direct her bitterness (Ruth 1:13)? _____

Discuss: a) Have you ever felt God's hand was against you? b) What did you do?

23. a) How did Ruth show her commitment to Naomi? _____

b) How strong was Orpah's commitment to Naomi? _____

24. Why did Naomi ask her friends to call her Mara and what does it mean?

Discuss: When you experience bitter disappointments and pain, what is your response? Do you pour out your feelings to your Heavenly Father? . . . To a close friend? . . . To a family member?

Read Ruth 2:1-23

25. God brought Naomi back to Bethlehem at barley harvest time. a) What Hebrew Festival is celebrated then (at sunset, day fourteen of Nisan/April) which commemorates the Hebrew's last night in Egypt when they were delivered from slavery (pg. 37)?

b) Why were the Hebrews in Goshen to kill a lamb and put blood on the doorposts?

c) Why do you think God told the Hebrews to celebrate Passover once a year?

Discuss: What do we observe to remember and to teach our descendants about the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God and the shedding of His blood to save us from eternal death and from the bondage of sin? See 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

26. How did the Jewish law of gleaning bring hope to Naomi and Ruth?

Discuss: Share a time when you had financial difficulties and God gave you hope.

27. What did God provide for Naomi and Ruth when Ruth gleaned?

Discuss: a) Should you let a need be known?

b) What can you do to help others who are in need?

See James 1:27; Matthew 25:37-40.

Read Ruth 3:1-18

28. What were the responsibilities of a kinsman-redeemer (pg. 40)?

29. Where did Naomi send Ruth and what was the result? _____

The proposal and acceptance will be discussed in the Ruth study.

Read Ruth 4:1-22

30. When did Boaz settle the matter with the closer relative and what was the outcome?

31. How did this marriage affect Naomi? _____

Personal Application

32. What insights have you gained from this study?

33. Can you identify with Naomi in grief and/or bitterness? Do you identify with her as she resolves the problem with God's help? Or are you somewhere in between?

34. Grief is good. It helps bring healing to the soul. God provides grace to endure and to move through the grief with a trusting heart. When a person misses the grace of God, bitterness takes root. It becomes sharp; painful to oneself and to others (Hebrews 12:15). If you are grieving, where are you in the process? _____

35. Think back to the discussion of the Passover. Those who were inside the door, where the blood was applied, were safe and secure. Jesus said, I am the gate (door), whoever enters through me will be saved (John 10:9a). Have you entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by placing your faith and trust in Him? _____

If not, you are invited to accept Him now as your Savior. Pray: *Lord, I believe I have done wrong and fallen short of what You want from me. I confess my wrongdoing to You and ask You to wash me clean, through Jesus. I accept His death on the cross for me, and ask You to give me eternal life. Help me live a life that pleases You. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Exercise: Think about decisions you have made that pulled you away from God. Naomi went into Moab, a place of emptiness and darkness for her soul. She returned to Bethlehem, a house of bread and fullness for her soul. Determine to confess your wrongdoings to God (1 John 1:7, 9) and come to the place of His favor and peace. You will experience richness for your soul that only God can give.

Prayer