

Finding Hope in a God Who Provides The Challenge of Hope

3 principles to avoid making difficult situations worse:

I. It is Hard to Have Hope When Life Feels Empty

A. Examples in Naomi's life

v. 1 - *there was a famine in the land.*

v. 3 - *Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died...*

v. 5 - *Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.*

B. The significance of "the days when the judges governed"

Judges 21:25 - *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

Deuteronomy 32:4-5 - *The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He. They have acted corruptly toward Him, they are not His children, because of their defect; but are a perverse and crooked generation...*

Deuteronomy 32:24 - *They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague...*

II. Relying on Human Solutions and Resources Alone Just Increases the Pain

A. She recognized God's hand in providing food for His people

Ruth 1:6 - *Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.*

B. She showed sacrificial concern for her daughters-in-law

Ruth 1:8 - *And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me."*

Ruth 1:9 - *May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.*

C. Beware of shallow substitutes because of incomplete faith

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 - *Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods...*

Genesis 12:2-3 - *And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*

Genesis 12:4 - *So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to Him...*

Genesis 12:10-13 - *Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."*

Genesis 15:1 - *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great."*

Genesis 15:2 - *Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless..."*

Genesis 15:5 - *And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."*

Genesis 16:2 - *So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.*

D. Just because obeying God looks hopeless doesn't mean it is hopeless

Ruth 1:10 - *And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."*

Ephesians 4:22 - *that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit*

III. Your Approach to Emptiness Reveals Much about Your View of God

A. For Naomi

Ruth 1:15 - *Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."*

Ruth 1:13 - *"...the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."*

B. For you and me

1. A descendant of Ruth has been born

Matthew 1:1-6 - *The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king...*

Matthew 1:15-16 - *Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.*

a. Jesus exemplified following His Father's strategies instead of devising His own

Philippians 2:7-8 - *...but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

b. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection make it possible for you and me to do the same

2 Corinthians 5:15 - *and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.*

2. Therefore we can wait on God's timing

Psalm 62:5 - *My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him.*

3. We can trust in God's ways

Proverbs 3:5-6 - *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

4. We can rejoice in God's provision

Habakkuk 3:17-19 - *Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places.*