



# Near and Now

*When My Calling Requires Difficult Choices - Ruth and Orpah*

*By Kelly Rayner*

## **Warm-up Question**

*When have you bore witness to God's forgiveness?*



Photo by Eye for Ebony on [Unsplash](#)

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

## **Your sister-in-law has gone back... Do not press me to leave you**

Read [Ruth 1:6-18](#)

### **Bible Story Reflection**

It is hard to see the light in the darkness surrounding Naomi. Having recently lost her husband and her two sons, she now finds herself in a strange land with her daughter-in-laws with a famine happening around them. As far as she can see, God has turned away from her, dooming her and her family. When she hears that there is salvation, she encourages her daughters to go on ahead, leaving her to bear her own suffering while they get the chance to live full lives. Although desperate, Naomi selflessly sought to give what she had left to her daughters, and in turn, Ruth's faithfulness brought the grace of God full center to this story. Similar to Ruth's dedication to walk beside her Mother-in-law through this difficult time, so are we called to walk beside each other.

It is not always easy to know what the right path is for us to take. For Naomi and her family, they moved away from Israel to seek a better life for their family, moving to Moab, a land known to be outside of God's command. After the death of her husband, Naomi was left to care for her sons, who eventually grew and married Moabite women. When her sons died, Naomi and her daughters were left widowed and childless, without family to care for them. What started as a plan to seek better, led to great tragedy. Where Naomi could have become embittered to God, she instead planned to seek forgiveness and return to her homeland and to God. When Orpah hears this, she cries deeply but does as Naomi suggests, returning to her home. But Ruth had seen the relationship Naomi had with God and was so moved by her faith that she promised to stand beside her, bearing witness both to the hardships Naomi had and will face, but also to the love of God.

It would not have been wrong for Ruth to also turn back to Moab like Orpah did. Moab was the home that she knew, the culture and faith and the people she had been raised in. There is safety in those things, but Ruth had come to know the grace of God through Naomi and had witnessed both difficulties that Naomi had experienced, but also the love the God still held for her. By promising to stay with Naomi, she also promised to continue to bear witness to the holy power of God's forgiveness and dedication to us. While we can bear much the same witness, we also are reminded that God works through unexpected people, showing us grace and forgiveness not only through Naomi, but through Ruth.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How would the story differ from Ruth's view? What about Orpah's?
2. Talk about a time where it was hard to feel God's grace.
3. How does it feel to be surrounded by God's forgiveness?
4. Talk about a time you bore witness to someone's struggles, or someone bore witness to your own?
5. How might we better walk together when we are struggling to hear God's calling?
6. How do we respond when someone seems to go away from God's path?
7. Discuss a time when you have felt desperate for God's love.
8. How might we better embody God's grace and forgiveness for each other?

### **Activity Suggestions**

Write a letter or a prayer to someone who has walked beside you when you have struggled and reminded you of God's love for us.

Find a mirror or your phone. Take some time to reflect and remind yourself that God forgives and loves us completely.

In a large group, start with one individual and take turns either sharing a prayer or a reminder that they are a beloved child of God and that like Naomi and Ruth, God will always walk with us.

### **Prayer Concerns**

Those who struggle to know your path, those who bear witness, those who seek forgiveness

### **Closing Prayer**

Guide me to live into your call for my life and trust that I do not always have to do what others do. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

