

# Journey: A Good Name



The birth of a baby is a joyous event! The parents to-be spend hours preparing the nursery, buying baby paraphernalia, baby-proofing the house and most importantly, choosing a good name. Today our Bible study focuses on the meaning and importance of names.

Please take a moment to pray and ask God to open prepare your heart to receive His word. Get your Bible, journal and pen!

## Please read Ruth 1:1-5 out loud.

*In the days when the judges judged, there was a famine in the land. A certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to live in the country of Moab with his wife and his two sons. <sup>2</sup> The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah. They came into the country of Moab and lived there. <sup>3</sup> Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup> They took for themselves wives of the women of Moab. The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth. They lived there about ten years. <sup>5</sup> Mahlon and Chilion both died, and the woman was bereaved of her two children and of her husband.*

## A good name

Like modern day parents, names were also very important to the ancient Hebrew people. However, the Hebrews believed that names not only identified a person, but also represented the *character* of the person.

*What is Naomi's husband's name?*

The name *Elimelech* is a combination of two Hebrew words that mean *my God is king*. Elimelech's name is a reminder that God is king and sovereign over every event, even famine. Like Elimelech, we need to remember the meaning of God's good name and shelter in place during times of trouble.

## **A few more good names**

Read verse 2 again.

*Who is Elimelech's wife?*

In Hebrew, *Naomi* translates as *pleasant, splendor, grace, beauty*. Naomi faces a great challenge to live up to her good name during a time of hardship and loss.

*What un-pleasant thing is Naomi trying to face with grace?*

*Like Naomi, what un-pleasant hardships are you trying to face with grace?*

## **A good name changed**

Please skip ahead and read read Ruth 1:20.

*She said to them, "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."*

*What did Naomi change her name to and why?*

*Do you think Naomi has reason to be bitter?*

*Do you think Naomi has reason to continue trusting God?*

*Why should we continue to trust God during hard times?*

## Good names?

As a teacher I sometimes wonder about the names parents choose for their children. Cinderella. Pumpkin. Steelie. Why? But Naomi and Elimelech win the *What were they thinking?* prize.

*Look back and remind yourself of the names of Naomi's sons.*

*Mahlon translates from the Hebrew as sick, weak, worn, afflicted. Chilion means pining, destruction, failing. I'd like to ask Naomi why she chose such strange names for her children. Can you imagine being married to Afflicted or Destruction? ( Well...I dated a few "Destructions" in my day.)*

No other information is given about Afflicted or Destruction in the rest of Scripture. It's likely sickness may have been a factor in the deaths of the brothers. They seem to have "lived-up" to the meaning of their names.

## One more good name

While every thing seems to be going wrong for Naomi, one thing was going right. Ruth. In Hebrew *Ruth* translates as *friendship, companion*. In the middle of loss and heartbreak, God provides Naomi with a friend.

*What encouragement do you draw from God's provision of Ruth to Naomi?*

*Give an example of a time when God provided you with a friend during a time of heartbreak.*

# One last name

We have one more name to consider, Orpah (not Oprah!). In the original Hebrew *Orpah* means *gazelle, or mane*. *Orpah* descends from other Hebrew words which mean *back of the neck, obstinate, to seize, to pull*.

*What insight is God giving you about Orpah and her name?*

A little bit later in our study we will see how Orpah's name may be a precursor of her future actions.

Thank you for joining me today for Bible study! As always please leave me a comment below in the comment section. I'd love to chat with you!

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To learn more about Ruth and the importance of names, please click on the links below!

Journey: shelter in place

Behind the Name