

Please be sure you know this week's verse and have finished the devotions. Please pray for the services this weekend. Pray that as we continue the story of Ruth, God will encourage and grow our church. Pray that Pastor Mark will preach with courage and boldness. Also pray for our worship leader, Trent Smith, that he will connect quickly with us and that God will use him to teach us more about worship. Pray too that God will use the Pie-O-Rama to provide fun and fellowship for our church body.

## Prayer Updates

### Joy & Blessings

David and Grace Ramsey welcome into their hearts and home baby **Grace Ramsey**, born July 21.

Stephanie Kelly and Javier Pina celebrate twin sons, **Christian and Javier Pina**, born July 28.

### Home with the Lord

Heartfelt prayer is extended to Debbie Holmes and sons, Michael and Jeremy, in the loss of their husband and father, **Tracy Holmes**. A memorial is planned Sunday, 2pm, August 17 in Monschke Hall.

Please keep Laurie Schlaepfer and family in prayer regarding the sudden loss of her father, **Paul Ettinger**. Pray particularly for Laurie's mother, June (she and Laurie's dad had been married for 54 years). Paul was a great man of faith who loved the Lord deeply and Laurie is feeling comforted by the thought that she will see her Dad again.

Gail and Elizabeth Black request prayer for Elizabeth's mother, Lucille Robb, in the recent loss of Elizabeth's father, specifically that the family would experience the courage of Joshua 1:9.

### Hospitalized & surgeries this past week...

Bob Gubser – RCU

Dusti Zuniga – third back surgery, 7/28

Lorraine Kenyon – RCU, back surgery

Nicholas Rendon – bladder cancer surgery, 7/28 at Stanford

**Recent hospitalizations/surgeries:** Bonita Montoya, Tiffany Shaffer

### We want to provide pastoral support...

Please call 465-3395 when someone is hospitalized, scheduled for surgery, becomes a shut-in, or in special need. Prayer support is available through our pastors and numerous prayer groups — call 689-9400. Please pick up a Prayer Update at the Information Desk or Welcome Center. **Subscribe to the Prayer Update:** [www.tlc.org/profiles](http://www.tlc.org/profiles)

# When Life Feels Hopeless

Mark Spurlock • August 2 & 3, 2008



“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through **endurance** and the **encouragement** of the Scriptures we might have hope.” *Romans 15:4* (NIV)

## What We Must All Endure

### 1. The \_\_\_\_\_

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. *Ruth 1:1-5*

### 2. The \_\_\_\_\_

When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.” Then she kissed them and they wept aloud and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me — even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons — would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!” At this they wept again. *Ruth 1:6-14a*

## What Encourages Hope In Us

### 1. \_\_\_\_\_

Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” *Ruth 1:14b-15*

### The Purpose Behind Orpah's Choice:

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But Ruth replied,  
 “Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.  
 Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay.  
 Your people will be my people and your God my God.  
 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.  
 May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely,  
 if anything but death separates you and me.” *Ruth 1:16-17*

## The Purposes Behind Ruth's Choice:

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### 2. \_\_\_\_\_

When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." *Ruth 1:18-21*

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_

So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning. *Ruth 1:22*

## Daily Meditations

### Monday

Please read Ruth 1:1-5. Write down two things that stood out to you in last weekend's sermon.

What type of loss had Naomi and her daughters-in-law experienced?

In what way have you recently encountered loss? How has that impacted you?

Write down at least one question you have about the loss you've experienced.

*Thank God today that He never leaves you — even when you're walking through the valley of loss. Talk to God about the pain that loss has brought to your life. Ask Him for comfort and peace. Talk to God about the question(s) you wrote down. Pray that you'll have the patience and desire to grapple with your loss and questions. Ask God to use Ruth's story to encourage and teach you.*

### Tuesday

Please read Ruth 1:6-14a. What problems do you think Naomi and her daughters-in-law encountered after the death of their husbands?

As you think about the losses you have experienced, what types of problems followed in the wake of that loss? How did that affect you?

What has the story of Naomi and her family shown you to this point? How has it encouraged you? How has it challenged you?

*Thank God today for His mercy and love. Thank Him for the Bible and Ruth's story. Pray that you will learn endurance and be encouraged by studying her life. Lay the problems you're encountering at God's feet. Ask Him for the strength to surrender them to Him daily and the wisdom to know how to go forward.*

### Wednesday

Please read Ruth 1:14b-17. Ruth and Orpah both had difficult choices to make in the midst of their pain. In what way can you relate to Orpah's choice to seek relief from her pain and problems? What has been the result of that choice in your life.

Reread Ruth's response to Naomi in verses 16-17. What does Ruth's response tell you about her sense of purpose?

How do you see loyalty, fidelity and tenacity in your life right now? How do you think those character qualities could help you rediscover your purpose in the midst of loss?

*Thank God today for the fact that He has a purpose for you. Pray that you would be open to God building loyalty, fidelity and tenacity into your character. Pray that God will help you to see your life's purpose.*

### Thursday

Please read Ruth 1:16-21. Contrast Ruth and Naomi's attitudes in verses 16-21. Which of these two attitudes is more typical of you?

Imagine yourself in Ruth's place. What do you think she was able to thank God for?

Why do you think it's important to recognize the blessings you still have even in the midst of loss?

Take some time today to write down ten things you are grateful for.

*As you spend time in prayer today, begin by thanking God for the things you wrote down. Ask God to give you the eyes to see the many blessings He has given you. Pray that gratitude will be a source of comfort and hope for you in your loss.*

### Friday

Please read Ruth 1:22 and Isaiah 43:19. This chapter opens with a famine and ends with a harvest — two very different seasons of life. What types of "seasons" have you experienced in over the last two years?

What connection do you see between seasons of nature and seasons of life?

How does it encourage you to know that life is seasonal?

*Thank God today that no matter how the seasons of your life change, He remains the same. Pray that you'll have the courage to live with purpose through each season of your life. Talk to God about any way that you feel "stuck" in your current season. Pray that you'll see your life through God's eyes.*



"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." *Romans 15:4*

