

ADVENT: WEEK ONE

day 4

*Battling Bitterness*

Ruth 1:19–22, 4:14–17



Ruth is one of the women named in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. Her story is not always one we associate with the Christmas season, but it is a story that highlights so much of what God wants to do for His children. In these brief excerpts, we see the truth that God longs to restore those who are bitter. Naomi is so disappointed with her lot in life that she changes her name to reflect the condition of her heart. Bitterness is rooted in the belief that someone has been wronged or taken advantage of. In Naomi's case, much of her bitterness is directed towards God Himself. She can't understand why He allowed His chosen people to face a famine, why her husband died, why both of her sons followed him in death, or why she has been left destitute as a widow. God's response to Naomi's disappointment is to send Ruth into her life. Even in Naomi's condition of turmoil and sadness, something about the God she follows catches Ruth's attention. She knows that Naomi is the only access she will have to the one true God. Ruth goes out of her way to serve Naomi, and God is able to pour out blessings on both women because of Ruth's humility and sacrificial love. Her story should remind us to never lose hope for the bitter people in our lives. Instead, we need to follow Ruth's example of serving them when they least deserve it. At the same time, we need to guard our own hearts from bitterness. Ruth refuses to become bitter, and it is her virtuous and industrious behavior that attracts Boaz. God rewards us for refusing to allow our hearts to become hardened to Him. And for those of us who are in seasons of life where we are feeling overwhelmed by our losses, we must remember that God gives Naomi a beautiful third act of her life. He is writing each of our stories, and none of them are over until He says so. In this season of Advent, keep praising God for the gift of His Son as you wait to see how He plans to move in the most painful places of your life. He sent His Son to redeem you, just as He sent Boaz to redeem Ruth and Naomi.

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