



Strength for the Journey

“Trouble with Life”

Ruth 1:1-6



Notes:

3. The third question you need to ask yourself is this: Is God reducing my risk to Him? What does Joe mean by that question? How did the “thorn in the flesh” God sent to Paul illustrate this (see 2 Corinthians 12:1-10)?

4. The fourth question you need to ask is: Could this trouble possibly be a part of a much larger agenda? Do you think you have gone through seasons of suffering and pain that actually weren’t about you at all, but instead were situations—like Naomi’s—in which God was working to accomplish a far greater agenda?

5. The fifth question to ask is: Do you, like Naomi, have the freedom to be honest with God about your feelings? During times of trouble, are you able to express the cry of your wounded heart?

Dotted lines for taking notes.

Digging Deeper:

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

1. How did Jonah’s experience answer the question: Have I done something wrong? Is there sin in my life? How did Joseph’s life answer the question: Could this trouble possibly be part of a much larger agenda?

2. In addition to Naomi, how do other Bible characters (e.g., David, Elijah, and Jesus) express the cry of a wounded heart?

3. What do you know about God in the midst of your trouble? How do Naomi’s words in Ruth 1 demonstrate that, in spite of her suffering, she hadn’t lost her sense of what was true about God?

Strength through Reflection:

1. When your life is in the ditch, how great is your tendency to lose your God-focus and get lost in secondary causes (for example, Naomi could have blamed her husband and sons for causing her problems)?



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2. Can you recall a time when God had to “move the chess pieces of your life to put you in checkmate”? Did you allow your feelings to drive you, or did you let what you know to be true about God drive you?

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Thank God for the fact that He has your times of trial under His control.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

“Dear God, thank You for Your redemptive purposes for suffering: the opportunity to have sin in my life exposed or to deepen my character and become more like Your Son. Thank You that my troubles—like Naomi’s—may possibly be part of a much larger agenda. Thank You that I can be honest with my emotions and cry out to You. When I feel my life is in checkmate, help me to keep my focus on You.”

Closing Call to Action:

If you feel like your life is in checkmate, or if you know of someone else who is in checkmate, jot down three things you know to be true about God—three things that you can put your trust in. Write out those truths and then find a verse that verifies each truth. Memorize the verses; and every time your heart moves toward despair, find the light in the fact that while you feel you’re in checkmate, the game is not over. God indeed is still at work, and you can trust Him for that.

A vertical column of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.