

- among friends and loved ones.
- 2) The LORD had brought her home again (v.21). He had not forsaken her.
 - 3) She seemed to be in good health.
 - 4) She had a dear friend in Ruth. When she said that she came home empty, she carelessly overlooked the dearest human friend she had. Ruth had just surrendered all to be with her. She needlessly felt sorry for herself.
 - 5) She arrived at the beginning of barley harvest. For a widow, harvest time was a blessing. Widows could glean grain in the grain fields.

b. She should have focused on these blessings

- 1) Up to this point, Naomi had focussed on her burdens and ignored her blessings.
- 2) The devil had blinded her eyes to the many blessings that God had sent her way.

✧ *One of the best things an anxious person can do is to stop focusing on burdens and begin counting blessings. Each time your mind drifts to your burdens, force your thoughts back on God's goodness and His blessings. Memorise the comforting verses we have read and others besides. Quote them often. Write them on a card and carry them with you. Pray over them. Refuse to dwell on the negative. Sing songs of God's goodness like "Great is Thy Faithfulness."*

Conclusion: Anxiety may make you feel like there is no hope, but that is a lie of the devil. (Psalms 147:11) "*The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*" Address the root of your anxiety and do not blame the Lord. Seek the Lord's help, as He is the Almighty. (Jeremiah 32:17) "*Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.*" Focus on your blessings not your burdens. Fill your thoughts with prayer, positive thoughts, God's words and godly hymns. You CAN conquer anxiety with God's help.

Song: Great is Thy Faithfulness 40

Conquering Anxiety

22 November 2020 PM – Ruth 1:19-22 – Ru20 – Scott Childs

Introduction: According to one web report, "One in six Australians is currently experiencing depression or anxiety or both." If you have faced stressful situations in life, you have likely experienced anxiety to some degree. While some anxiety has a physical link, often it is the result of not handling stressful situations biblically.

Naomi, in the book of Ruth, had an anxiety problem that she was not handling properly.

Transition: In our text this evening, I find three things that Naomi should have done to help conquer her anxiety.

1. She should have addressed the root of her anxiety.

a. Her family had strayed from God.

- 1) She and her husband had failed to trust God during the famine in Bethlehem. They sold up and moved out of the country to the pagan land of Moab. They became a prodigal family running from God.
 - ✧ *Certainly, not all anxiety stems from backsliding, but that possibility must not be overlooked. The anxiety of the prodigal son found its roots in straying spiritually.*
 - ✧ *You can never run from God and be happy!*
- 2) God chastened her family with loss and death. It appears that she has nothing left materially after her husbands and sons died. She believed that their deaths were the result of God's chastening hand (v.21).
 - ✧ *Often, loss of possessions or loved ones can lead to anxiety. If one's life is so wrapped up in possessions or loved ones, their sudden departure leaves that person empty. Our reason for living must be to glorify God. We must gain our joy from Him. Paul was able to say, (Philippians 1:21) "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

b. She was bitter at God.

- 1) She was grieving which is normal and good. She had lost her husband and two sons. That is a great loss. That added to her anxiety, but did not justify her bitterness.

- ✧ *Many years ago, I met a mother who rejected God because her baby died. She had experienced a tragic loss, but becoming bitter at God kept her from receiving God's salvation and comfort.*
- ✧ *When we lose a dear loved one, it is good to grieve for a time; however, remaining in that state of grief is devastating. We must move on.*

- 2) Naomi blamed God for her losses. I find nothing in her words that indicate that she thought she deserved God's chastening.
 - a) She asked to be called Mara [bitter] instead of Naomi [pleasant] (v.20).
 - b) She blamed the Almighty (v.20).
 - c) She complained that she went out full and the **LORD** had brought her home again empty (v.21).

📖 *In Naomi's case, much of her anxiety was a consequence of her sin and her family's sin. This increased with the death of her loved ones. I do not think that personal sin is at the root of all anxiety, but we should investigate that possibility. Other triggers may include stress, relationship conflicts, traumatic events and abuse. Identifying and addressing the cause can help you find God's solution.*

2. She should have sought God's help.

a. She knew God

- 1) Naomi was not an unbeliever. It is true that she lived in the time of the Judges when *every man did that which was right in his own eyes*, but she truly believed in God.
- 2) She knew God was **Jehovah** the *self-existent, eternal one deserving her fear* (v.21).
 - a) She accused the LORD for bringing her home empty. Thus, she knew of God's ability.
 - b) She claimed that the LORD had testified or spoken out against her. She knew the God knew her intimately.
- 3) She knew God was **the Almighty**, El Shaddai, *the most powerful of all beings*.
 - a) She said that He had dealt very bitterly with her.

- b) She claimed that He had afflicted her.

b. She should have sought God.

- 1) She saw God's sovereign sternness, but she could not see His forgiving restoration.
- 2) The powerful God that she blamed for her woes was the very one who longed to give her aid, but it appears that she never asked.
 - ✧ *Prayer is one of the most important things a person can do to conquer anxiety. God cares about you. Peter wrote, (1 Peter 5:7) "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." He does not want you to be anxious. (Philippians 4:6-7) "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Confess your failures and weaknesses and ask the Almighty sincerely to comfort your heart and relieve your anxiety.*
 - ✧ *Meditate continually on the attributes of God. He is loving, kind, tender, forgiving, almighty, all-knowing, omnipresent, etc.*
 - ✧ *Claim the many promises of the Lord's care for you. (Proverbs 3:5-6) "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Psalms 56:3) "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." (Isaiah 40:29) "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." (Isaiah 40:31) "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (John 14:1) "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (2 Timothy 1:7) "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."*

3. She should have counted her blessings.

a. God had blessed her!

- 1) She was now home in Bethlehem (v.19). She was now