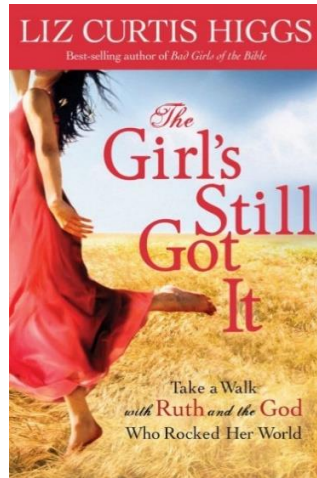


*Word by Word with Liz Curtis Higgs on the Faith Radio Network*

**Bible Study Guide for April 14-15, 2018 | Naomi**

from *The Girl's Still Got It* by Liz Curtis Higgs



1. When we read Ruth 1:1-22, it's clear Naomi and her family endured one heartache after another in Moab. The tragedies they faced – hunger, loss, infertility – are still very much with us today. What's the most traumatic event you've weathered during the last six months, and what made that experience especially difficult for you? Where did you turn for support, compassion, and a listening ear? What good have you seen come from this recent difficulty in your life? If you've yet to see any positive outcome, what hope do the following verses offer: Job 36:15; Psalm 22:24; Psalm 33:18–19; Psalm 119:50?
2. As Proverbs 25:25 tells us, "Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land." No question, Naomi's soul was parched, and the report of God's provision in faraway Judah was definitely welcome. Read the much-loved parable recorded in Luke 15:11–20, then find three or four ways in which the prodigal son's story parallels Naomi's experience of moving to a distant country. Perhaps you need to leave a Moab of your own making right now. Could it be an unhealthy relationship? A shameful activity? A bad habit? What steps might you need to take to leave your Moab? Pastor Ian Duguid wrote, "God's grace transcends our rebellion." How would you define God's grace? What further insights on grace do the following verses offer: John 1:16–17; Romans 3:22–24; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 2:8–9?
3. The Hebrew verb *shubb* – return – appears twelve times in the first chapter of Ruth. Clearly the Lord wanted to be sure we don't miss the message! Write down the various ways this Hebrew word is translated in Ruth 1:6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15 (twice), 16, 21, and 22 (twice). What is God saying to you with this repeated call to "return"? Might you find your answer in Joshua 24:14–15?

4. Naomi sent stiff-necked Orpah back to her people and to her gods, never to be heard from again. Since the scholars have yet to pinpoint the meaning of her name, why do you think Orpah is traditionally known as “the Stiff-Necked One”? What does Deuteronomy 10:16 tell us about being stiff-necked? Now take a moment to read the surrounding verses, Deuteronomy 10:12–22, to get the bigger picture. What does God require of his people so they aren’t like Orpah, returning to worship false gods? Not a word in God’s Word is wasted, even when characters come and go in a few verses. What have you discovered from Orpah’s small but significant role in this narrative?
5. Naomi arrived in Bethlehem with sharp words to share. How do the words of Job in Job 10:1 and of Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:5 capture the essence of our bitter Naomi’s experience? Is it better to tell people what you’re really thinking and feeling or tell them what they want to hear? Why do we often please and appease others? What approach would most honor God, do you think? How do you respond to friends when they whine or complain? Is there a verse or passage you might share with them, hoping to improve their attitude? Or is it best simply to listen, and if so, why?
6. What’s the most important lesson you learned from the story of Naomi, a woman whose bitterness could only be sweetened by turning back to God?