

Intro

Have you ever seen the movie Vantage Point?
Some people hate it. Same thing over and over again.
I liked it, because it's the same thing, but every time we see someone else's viewpoint we understand a little more
Growing up my two older brothers would babysit my little sister and me
Apart from the horrendous torture, there was one thing that sticks out in my memory
If Holly and I were fighting, Dan or Ben would hold "court"
Each would give his/her side of the story while the other stayed quite
Then my brothers would issue the punishment.

My point is that different perspectives on same situation can create vastly different perceptions

Today we'll look at a classic example from the Bible

This is a story set AFTER Moses led the people out of Egypt, but BEFORE David and Goliath
Things get bad in Bethlehem, famine
Elimelech moves family to Moab, although this is a no-no
Wife and two sons. Both sons marry local girls. Even bigger no-no.
Elimelech dies
Sons die
Naomi decides to go back home (Military wife stationed in German)
Ruth and Orpah go with her
Naomi tells them to go home, find husbands, return to gods
Orpah takes off back home
Ruth refuses to leave
Naomi shows up in her hometown and the bloggers go nuts
She shuts them down.

Remember what I said about Vantage Points?

Understand this today: Your view of GOD is shaped by your vantage point.

Let's rewind and look at the same story from different Vantage Points of 4 people in this story, and see how it affected their view of God.

As we look at the characters we'll see how WE have a habit of viewing God

Elimelech - Impotent

Start at the beginning
Ruth 1:1 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.
Elimelech, leader of his family, just a couple generations removed from seeing God deliver them from Egypt
Doesn't think God can do much for him. There's a famine, and he needs to do something about it.
I know I'm not supposed to mingle with the locals, but this isn't about God, it's about feeding my family
Sounds commendable, but this shows us something about Elimelech
Elimelech saw God as IMPOTENT
Some of you are thinking about leaving Destin because the market is so bad
You might be thinking about getting out of your marriage because it's getting so bad
You might be stressing about work, and you're taking it out on those closest to you
We have an uncanny ability to compartmentalize our lives
This is church, God, blah, blah, blah
This, however, is real life, where you need real money to survive, not pipe-dreams, and fancy Bible anecdotes
Like Elimelech, we see God as not relevant to what's going on in our lives.
You might not even be sure God exists, let alone able to help you in your situation.
But remember: Your view of God is shaped by your vantage point

Tension

A lot of people miss the traditional way of doing church
Call & Response
The Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God!
The Lord be with you / And also with you!
He is risen / He is risen indeed!
God is good / All the time!

We'll do an original. Every time I read a woman's dialogue, you respond "That's What She Said"

Ruth 1:14-15 At this they wept again. 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."

Orpah's not even Jewish, what does she have to stick around for? She's going back to her home to restart her life.

Orpah - Indifferent
Having lived with a Jewish family, she's heard all the stories about God, but obviously God hasn't shown up or done anything.

Orpah didn't see God as impotent... just INDIFFERENT

You know what that feels like.

If you're so great and omnipotent, why didn't you do SOMETHING?
We look at God like some big CEO, to busy to bother with our menial issues.
If Bill Gates wanted to, he could pay off all our credit card debt, buy all the collective houses represented for sale in this room. But why would he?
We're not even a blip on God's radar.
He has more important stuff to worry about
Seems to Orpah like God just doesn't care
Maybe God has a quota to fill for helping people out, and they just weren't in the right tax bracket
Sure, God COULD do something if He wanted to... so what does that tell you about God?

Like Orpah, we feel like it's a big deal to me, but obviously it wasn't that big of a deal to God

But remember: Your view of God is shaped by your vantage point

The next character I don't like a whole lot, but I can certainly relate to her.

This is the part where she gets off the greyhound in her hometown, empty handed.

Ruth 1:19-21 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."

Poor Naomi, you have to feel for her. She followed her husband to a foreign country, then he up and dies, and leaves her to fend for herself.

Naomi - Malevolent
Naomi saw God as MALICIOUS

We can forgive her for being a little bitter, right?
But she's focused her anger on God
I should have never moved to Moab
I should have never let my boys marry the locals
We should have stayed here and trusted God
God's punishing me for my disobedience
She clearly didn't think God couldn't have helped them
She didn't think God hadn't noticed them
She thought God had it in for them
How often do we accept our lot in life as our just reward?
Maybe if I hadn't slept with so-and-so I wouldn't be dealing with this now.
It's my own fault for getting greedy when the market was booming.
I should have taken that job offer, or started my own business when I had the chance
We get sick, and we think it must be God punishing us for some unknown sin.
Like God is just waiting to get you
I've heard people say "Don't say you don't want to be a missionary in India, because God'll send you there!"
Or He gets a kick out of seeing you suffer
Would He REALLY want you to be a missionary, or whatever, if you know you'd hate it?

Like Naomi, we're tempted to see our situation as God's punishment for something or other.

But remember: Your view of God is shaped by your vantage point.

Lastly, let's look at Ruth, our main character.

She's a widow in her early 20's probably

Orpah just took off

Naomi is a self-professed "Bitter old hag"

Scripture

Ruth 1:16 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 go, I will go. BECAUSE your God is now my God. You're my connection to God, and I won't lose it.

That's What She Said... because that's what she believed

Application

There's two ways to see God's hand in our lives

Through Hindsight
We can all see what God has done this way
We look back, and say, "Boy I'm glad THAT never happened like I planned."
Even looking back, and seeing a situation that actually turned out for the best, we can still have hard feelings, because of how strongly we felt about it at the time

Through Faith
Ruth chose not to see God in hindsight, but in faith
Trusting that God would work the situation out in the end
Faith is a trust issue that is moot during good times, but only proven in tough times

Either way we HAVE A CHOICE to see what God HAS done, or WHAT God IS doing

Who are you in this story? When things are tough, whether minor or crisis, how do you see God?

He CAN'T help me. What does God have to do with this?
He COULD help me, He just doesn't care. I'm not important enough for the effort.
He WON'T help me
Maybe I'm getting what I deserve
Maybe God gets a kick out of seeing us suffer
Surely he could have done SOMETHING

Or like Ruth, Ruth saw God AT WORK

Stemmed from the incestual offspring of Lot
She was from Moab
One of the people groups the Jews subjugated in the promised land
Lived with "the Goldsteins" for 10 years
SOMEHOW got a picture of God

You have to change your vantage point.

Decided to see God as AT WORK in all things
Just because it's simple, doesn't make it easy
When you're tempted to respond like Elimelech, Orpah or Naomi, CHOOSE to see God differently.
Choose to change your vantage point, to get a better view

Inspiration

She traded her Heritage for a new Legacy

A young, no-name, foreign, flat-broke widow of questionable descent
Became the great-grandmother of King David, as in David and Goliath
Has a place in the family tree of Jesus Christ
Jeremiah was normally pretty doom & gloom
God says I'm going through it with you!
THIS isn't the final outcome

Jeremiah 29:11 (Amplified) For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.

You have a choice to see God's hand in hindsight, or in faith

Your view of God is shaped by your vantage point

Change your vantage point

Big Idea "Your view of God is shaped by your vantage point"

What do I want them to know? "God didn't orchestrate your situation. Just because He didn't orchestrate it doesn't mean He's not at work in it."

What do I want them to do? "Trust God, not blame God"

That's What She Said: Ruth