

Note from Kathy

The book of Ruth is a beautiful and rare, true story of love and loyalty. When a jeweler wants to show the beauty of a diamond he lays it out on a black velvet cloth. Like all rare items they seem to shine brighter when placed against a dark backdrop. The time of the judges was just such a dark backdrop of unfaithfulness in Israel. But, Ruth possessed an inner beauty that was enjoyed by all who knew her. As we study this book let's look for ways to display our love and loyalty.

Joshua 1:7-9

"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your

Observation

Please take the time to read these four short chapters of Ruth in their entirety, at least once, so that you can see a complete picture of the characters and events. Pray, asking the Lord to help you understand all he wants you to know from this amazing true story.

1. Notice the time setting described in verse 1. According to Judges 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." What do you learn about this time in Israel's history?

2. As the story began, what catastrophic event was happening in Israel?

3. Ruth 1:1 introduced a man named Elimelech from Bethlehem in Judah. What did Elimelech decide to do in verse 1?

The name Bethlehem means "house of bread," and Judah means "praise." Consider the meanings of those names and the man's reason for leaving; this was a sad commentary on the state of the land God had intended for his people.

4. The people of Moab were the descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. Genesis 19 tells the story of an incestuous relationship between drunken Lot and his daughters after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Lot's eldest daughter gave birth to a son; this was the beginning of the Moabites. The Moabites worshipped the false deity of Chemosh. Do you see why God would want Israel's undivided devotion and separation from this nation?

5. Elimelech took his wife and two sons to live temporarily in Moab. God had clearly instructed his people that he would be their God and that they would be his people under what conditions? Read Joshua 1:7-9 and underline God's conditions for Israel's success.

mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened; do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

6. Elimelech's name means "My God is King." What was Elimelech's wife's name? _____ Her name means "my delight or pleasant." They had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion (or Kilion depending on your Bible translation). Mahlon's name meant "sick, unhealthy" and Chilion's name meant "pining." They were descendants of Ephraim, the son of Joseph. Locate Bethlehem and Moab on the map.



7. While they were in the land of Moab, what happened to Elimelech? Do you think he even considered something like that might happen while in Moab?

Deuteronomy 7:3-4

"You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly."

8. After a period of time Mahlon and Chilion married Moabite women? What instructions did they disregard in order to do this? Read Deuteronomy 7:3-4, it addresses the Israelites marrying anyone outside of their nation.
9. The names of these two brides were Orpah, which means "gazelle," and Ruth, which means "friendship." Scripture tells us they lived in this land approximately _____ years (Ruth 1:4). God's people are not exempt from sorrow. What was the next terrible and unexpected event that took place?
10. Naomi was a widow with no husband or sons to provide for her. During those difficult days of grief and loss she received news about her homeland. What was the news? What did she decide to do after hearing the news?
11. Imagine Naomi's thoughts as she began this long journey home. Along the way she pleaded three times with her daughters' in-law to return to their families. In her first plea, we get a bit of an insight as to the character of these two women. What did you learn about these women from Ruth 1:8?
12. In her second plea she reminded them they are young and perhaps could marry again and find happiness. This made sense to Orpah; she kissed Naomi and headed home. What did Ruth do?

13. Naomi made her third plea, "Look your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." Write out Ruth's beautiful reply of love and loyalty from verses 16 and 17.

Joshua 5:6

"For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey."

Joshua 24:14

"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:16,18,21,24

¹⁶"The people answered, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods. ¹⁸And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.' ²¹And the people said to Joshua, 'No, but we will serve the Lord.' ²⁴And the people said to Joshua, 'The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.'"

14. When Naomi realized Ruth was resolved not to leave her they continued on toward Bethlehem. When they arrived in the town everyone kept asking, "Can this be Naomi?" Why do you think they did not recognize her?
15. According to Ruth 1:21 how did Naomi view her situation? What did she ask them to call her?
16. What time of year did they arrive in Bethlehem? What was going on in the fields surrounding the city?

Application

1. Underline the description of the land of Israel given in Joshua 5:6. Do you believe there is connection between the difficulties they are experiencing and the character of God's people? Do you believe it has anything to do with their lack of obedience?

Underline the instructions given to the people of Israel in Joshua 24:14. Then underline their response in Joshua 24:16,18, 21 and 24.

2. Famine in the Bible is almost always a sign of God's discipline. Discipline is God's way of correcting. It is unloving to allow someone to continue on a path of harm. God's plans for Israel have always been that they would be a blessing to the other nations. Why do you believe God might be disciplining Israel?

Will knowing that God disciplines out of love, and for a purpose, help you the next time you experience the discipline and correction of your heavenly Father?

3. Was Elimelech living up to his name by taking his family to Moab? It was an understandable idea; after all he was not planning to stay forever. Had he known how little time he had left to live do you think he would have moved them to a place like Moab?

Have there ever been circumstances in your life that put pressure on you to make a life-changing decision?

What questions would be important to ask yourself before making a big, life-changing decision?

What was your last life-changing decision?

4. Sadly, their sons met, fell in love, and married Moabite women. Many of the decisions we make carry a huge potential for change to our future and our posterity. Their father's decision left them vulnerable at a critical time in their life. It is the responsibility of the parents to think ahead and consider carefully and prayerfully the possibility of exposing their children to those who could lure them away from the Lord. Are you parenting prayerfully and carefully?

Are there any areas that you might be leaving your children exposed to the world?

5. God's people were accustomed to strong godly leaders like Moses and Joshua. Now the Israelites are doing "what seemed right in their own eyes." Do you find it easier to make good choices when your leaders are pointing to God's law and focused on following him?

Who are you leading? Would they say you are leading well?

6. Have you ever used Mapquest or a similar app to map the route of a trip? The app does not tell you every twist and turn. No, it simply tells you the next turn, exit, or street you are to take. God's will is a bit like this. He shines a light for your path so that you may take another step of faith. How can we avoid the pitfall of running ahead of God?

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

What can we do now to avoid the mistake of trying to work things out by our own cunning and strength? Read Proverbs 3:5-6 to help answer this question. Write these two verses in your own words.

Isaiah 46:9-11

"Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' ¹¹ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do."

7. Does knowing God is sovereign change your decision making process? Read Isaiah 46:9-11; note what it says about God and His will. In the column below write in your own words what these verses teach.

I am God, and there is no other.	
I am God, and there is none like me.	
My counsel shall stand.	
I will accomplish all my purpose.	
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass.	
I will do it.	

8. Even though we make bad choices from time to time God's plan will not be thwarted. Would you say you are in the center of God's perfect will for your life? If not what adjustments do you need to make? When is the best time for us to make these adjustments and changes? Is there something keeping you from immediate obedience?
9. What do we stand to lose when we go against God's will? When we buck his moral standard? When we ignore his righteous decrees and promises? What should we do?

10. Fill in the chart below.

Name	Meaning	What might be expected of a person with this name?
Elimelech		
Naomi		
Mahlon		
Kilion		
Ruth		
Orpah		
Mara		

11. Through the ages many have been inspired by the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi. But Ruth was not merely following Naomi, she had given her heart in allegiance to God. Can we trust God with our future? What do you know about God's character that frees you to completely trust him? Do you know someone who stands out in your mind as an example of loyalty and commitment?
12. Are there areas of your life where you are choosing your will over his?
13. Ruth knew some things about healing. She had experienced the tragic loss of her husband, and yet, she finds comfort in caring for Naomi. Have you experienced healing from a loss or wound simply by helping someone else who is suffering?

Ruth 1:21

"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."

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Romans 5:8

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Ephesians 1:7

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace..."

14. After reading this chapter do you believe Naomi is returning to her God, her land, or both? Without sounding harsh toward Naomi, whom does she credit for the way things have turned out? Read Ruth 1:21 again. Because we are not closely related to this situation, we can have a bit more clarity as to how it got off target. What was the truth about Naomi's situation? What is the truth about your difficult situation? (If you're not in one look back at your last one.) Where did you get off track?
15. Naomi named herself Mara. She said it was because the Lord had dealt bitterly with her. Is this name the truth about her? What about you? Are you calling yourself something that is very different from how God views you? Read 1 John 1:9, Romans 5:8, and Ephesians 1:7. According to these three verses what are some of the names God has given you?

16. Write out what you have learned from your time in Ruth 1?