

Ruth 1:8-22

Quick review of Ruth from Ch1 1-8

Timeframe of Judges in Israel – 1350-1000BC – considered very dark times, a period of about 300 years. There was no strong leadership; the judges were more military leaders ruling over Israel. The absence of a king meant tribes and individuals acted in their own desires and a time of moral decay and idol worship.

The events of the book of 1 Samuel took place during the time of the judges. As a nation, Israel was struggling. She was being hounded by the Philistines, plagued by the powerful armies of the Philistines surrounding her. But most importantly, this was a spiritual low point in the nation of Israel. The nation had been in a one-hundred-year period of spiritual decline. They had sunk to all-time lows.

There was still a form of religion going on, the tabernacle was in Shiloh. Some people would go to worship and sacrifice there with the priests. 1Sam 3:1b “The word of the Lord was rare in those days”

Family in Ephratha (fruitful, abundant), a suburb of Bethlehem (house of bread) was suffering from famine. Husband (Elimelech (my God is King), Naomi (pleasant, lovely) and their sons, Mahlon (sick) and Chilion (tired) departed for Moab, a foreign land, the land of God’s enemy. There was no consultation with God; Elimelech apparently decided, and the family followed. We discussed how decisions made by others can have an impact on our own lives, and maybe not for the good.

We know Elimelech died leaving Naomi with her 2 sons, Mahlon and Chilion, who would have been responsible for taking care of their mother. We know these boys took Moabite wives, Orpah (gazelle, fawn) and Ruth (friendship). Mahlon married Ruth (4:10) and Chilion married Orpah. The country of Moab was the result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter; we also know Moab and Israel were bitter enemies. God’s Law states in Deut 23:3-6 it’s forbidden for foreign women to marry Jewish men unless they’re proselytes - nothing mentions these women were converts to Judaism. And nothing mentions their mother tried to stop these unions.

Elimelech walked by sight, not by faith; Elimelech and his family fled Judah to escape death, yet the 3 men met death just the same. Naomi, was left as widow and Ruth and Orpah were widows and also childless – the lowest and most disadvantaged class of people in those ancient days. We read in V6 that rumor had it in Moab (and Naomi heard it) that the Lord had visited His people and given them bread. Naomi and the girls left for Bethlehem, in the land of Judah

On the road, we’ll start with this blessing, v8-9 that Naomi spoke over her DIL

We continue with the testimony of Naomi (v6-15)

⁸And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each to her mother’s house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

⁹The Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.”

- DAY 3 – 1. Why would Naomi change her mind and suggest the girls return to Moab rather than continue back to Bethlehem with Naomi?
 - a. stronger and more family ties than they did with Naomi
- Day3 – 1A – These women were faithful to Naomi and did the right thing by her Deal kindly – hesed – mercy, kindness, lovingkindness, goodness, kindly, merciful, favor, good, goodness, pity, reproach, wicked thing (x248)
- Finding rest here speaks to goodness of marriage and family
- Day 3 ❤️ Could Naomi have demanded these girls stay with her and look after her?

So, she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

- **DAY3 – 1B – Initially, how did the Moabite women respond?**
 - **1 – Was this a response to Naomi’s godly character?**
- This is true emotion between these women and evidence of a loving relationship between them

¹⁰ And they said to her, “Surely we will return with you to your people.”

¹¹ But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?”

- Ancient laws of Israel said if a young woman was widowed without having a son, then one of her deceased husband’s brothers would be a surrogate father and give her a son. Naomi states she has no other sons to give them.
- She’s imploring them to return to their families (which she sees as a good thing) – and prays a blessing over them that they might find new husbands and have rest after their sorrow

¹² Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,

- Orpah doesn’t seem as strong as Ruth; we see she started out with Naomi and Ruth, but turns back to Moab
 - Mark 12:34 - Thou art not far from the kingdom of God – Orpah was so close
 - Was it in her heart to return to Moab? Or was it just familiarity that influenced her decision?
- **DAY 2 - 2 Naomi passionately reasons with Ruth and Orpha – in your own words, explain her “sensible” plea**

¹³ would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me!”

- Naomi’s decision to return to Bethlehem was right, but her motive was wrong. She was still interested in food, not in fellowship with God. She hasn’t confessed her sins or asked for His forgiveness. She was returning to her land, not her Lord
- Is Naomi blaming her loss of her husband and sons on God in this verse?
- **DAY 2 – 2A What conclusion had Naomi reached in regard to her present situation?**
 - **Have Box Matthew Henry read**
- Hand of the Lord gone out against me – Is she angry with the Lord? Is she fearful here that her family was disobedient by letting the boys marry Moabite girls and leaving Ephrathah
- **Day 2 – 2B – Naomi didn’t want her DILS to suffer hardship because of her Read Heb 12:15**
 - **[Heb 12:15 NKJV] 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;**
- **Practical example of how my poor decision directly affected the life of another close to me**
- Was it Naomi who pushed the family to Moab and pushed the boys to marry Moabites?
- We see Naomi returning to God, hopefully in repentance; the lesson is when we are disobedient, out of favor, we need to move closer to God, not further away – Naomi’s return to Bethlehem is a good thing spiritually
 - Had she remained bitter and angry with God, she may have moved further into Moab, further from God, not nearer to Him
- This is God working in Naomi (and Ruth) building fruitfulness in their lives; Naomi is trusting God’s sovereignty by returning to Him despite her personal calamities
 - [Pro 28:13 NKJV] 13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes [them] will have mercy
 - [Psa 51:17 NKJV] 17 The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart--These, O God, You will not despise.
- If Naomi has been walking with God, could she have won Orpah to the faith and brought back 2 DIL to Bethlehem with her?

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

- **DAY 2 – 3 Even after Naomi’s heart-wrenching plea, how did Orpah and Ruth respond?**
- Again, a show of anguish as the girls lifted their voices and wept again
- Orpah knew she would never see Ruth and Naomi again; she’d made the wrong decision to return to her godless, pagan idols
- Orpah changed her mind; sometimes we see people make a commitment to Christ in an emotional moment, say a prayer or raise their hand to be saved. But once they return home to their people and their old ways, that acceptance of Christ is too high a cost – they were never truly committed
 - **DAY 2 – 3A – Beautiful picture “Ruth clung to her” -**
- But Ruth clung (clave) (dabaq) - to cling, stick, stay close, cleave, keep close, stick to, stick with, follow closely, join to, overtake, catch – she glued herself to Naomi
 - **Who should we cling to as believers?**
 - **Deuteronomy 13:4 ["You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.**
- This is a 50 mile journey! Could part of Ruth’s insistence to stay with Naomi be God’s provision for Naomi?

Random fact: Oprah Winfrey's birth name is Orpah Gail Winfrey, named after a character in the Bible's Book of Ruth. However, due to mispronunciation, she became known as Oprah

Write out Proverbs 3:25-26 -Do not be afraid of sudden fear, or the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; Fo the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught

DAY 4 Testimony of Ruth (Ruth1: 15-18)

15 And she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

- **Day 4 – 1 Ruth and Orpah have found themselves at an extremely difficult crossroad in their lives. Were they to continue with Naomi or return home? What did Orpah choose to return to? (She made a bad choice and returned to her gods, her people, her lifestyle)**
- **Joshua 24:15 – Who do you choose to serve?**
 - **Have you chosen to serve the Lord? Can you confidently say “As for me and my house I will serve the Lord?**
 - I have found small victories as I get older – each day – as I leave a bad choice and do something in the image of God
- And one last time, Naomi tries to encourage Ruth to go back to Moab, to her family, to her gods just like Orpah did. We now have confirmation of the pagan worship to pagan gods that took place less than 50 miles from Bethlehem!
- Jewish tradition says this interaction took place 4 miles outside of Moab
- God is working through Naomi to draw Ruth to Himself; she’d come to faith in the God of Israel, the true, living God
 - **2 Pet 3:9 not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
 - **Ruth 2:12 – Ruth had come to trust in the God of Israel**

16 But Ruth said:

“Entreat^[a] me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;

Your people *shall be* my people,

And your God, my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die,

And there will I be buried.

The Lord do so to me, and more also,

If *anything but* death parts you and me.”

- Again, Ruth had come to trust in the God of Israel (2:12) – she refused to listen to Naomi’s pleas to turn back to Moab
- Technically, with Elimelech and Mahlon both deceased, Ruth was under the guardianship of Naomi and she should have obeyed her MIL’s counsel to return to Moab
- But God intervened and graciously saved Ruth in spite of all these obstacles
 - Mic 7:18 - He delights *in* mercy
- ten years these women had known one another – Did Ruth hear Naomi speak about her God and her people in Bethlehem? 50 miles is a long journey, and they weren’t silent during that journey
- This was noble commitment on the part of Ruth – she was gaining far more than a deeper relationship with her MIL –
- She was giving up the Moabite pagan gods and deciding to follow the God of Israel – she must have admired something she saw in Naomi – and Ruth wanted to draw closer to Naomi’s God of Israel
- This is one of the most magnificent confessions found in the Scriptures
 - She confesses her love for Naomi and her desire to stay with her, even to death
 - She then confesses her faith in the true and living God; she will worship Him and Him alone
 - She forsakes her blood family (mother and father) to cling to Naomi and the God of her people
 - She was determined to go with Naomi and live in Bethlehem with God’s covenant people
- **Ruth and Naomi were different ages, races, and religions. How would this world be different if women broke down barriers and loved other women different than themselves?**
- Ruth tells Naomi “I will be there for you”, I won’t give you my opinions, I won’t tell you how to do things, I won’t cause contention – simply, I will be there for you. We’re in this together; I’m clinging to you, Naomi, and your God and your people. I am here for you.
- Can people look at our lives and say, “I want your God to be my God”? Often when others see us in tough times turning to Him for comfort and support, it draws them to Him.
- We need to know it’s OK when we’ve lost our way, gotten off the walk of sanctification, lost our commitment – we can always turn back to Him, repent and follow Him. It’s OK. Learn to turn back quickly – don’t let time lag.

¹⁸ When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

- **DAY 2 – V16, 17 – FILL IN THE VERSES – these verses are such a sweet declaration of love and loyalty that these words are often quoted in marriage ceremonies. Let’s carefully consider Ruth’s tender commitment to Naomi by filling in the blanks:**
- **DAY 2 A – What does Ruth say in closing this heartfelt statement that reveals just how sincere she really is?**
- It was a moot point for Naomi to continue to try and convince Ruth to return to Moab and her own people; so she quit talking about it to her
- What traits do we see in Ruth that we also see in Christ?
 - Jesus’ love is selfless and sacrificial – He humbled himself; he was a servant (Phil 2:5-8)
 - Jesus showed kindness – He was moved with compassion (Mar 6:34)
 - Jesus was determined – he emphasized His need to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things (Matt 16:21)
 - Jesus is loyal and committed to those who are His – He will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13:5)

- Do you see any other traits in Ruth that we should note?
- Write out Proverbs 3:25-26 -Do not be afraid of sudden fear, or the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; For the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught

¹⁹ Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

- DAY 5 – 1 What effect did Naomi’s return have upon the city of Bethlehem?
 - DAY 5 – A – What were the women of the city unsure of? – *was this the same Naomi?*
 - 1. Why do you think they were questioning this?
- Population of Bethlehem at this time was like that of a large village and everyone knew everyone’s business – word had likely gotten around that Naomi, the one who left 10 years ago with her husband and sons, had returned
- Why do you think they are unsure if it is her?
- Naomi has been gone 10 hard and tragedy filled years – likely her appearance reflected that – “Is this Naomi?”
- Those who knew her before she left Bethlehem – may have had questions about who this Moabite was

²⁰ But she said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

- DAY 5 – 2 – In V 20, Naomi says to them, “Do not call me _____, call me _____; For the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me
- Naomi means what? Pleasant or gentle
- Mara means what? Bitter
 - Day 5 – 2 B – Even in her bitterness, Naomi refers to the LORD as the almighty or El Shaddai. What does this tell us about her? *She still believes in her God*
 - Day 5 2 B 1- who was first introduced to the LORD by this name? *Abram*
- Naomi is sharing with her friends and family that her time away from Bethlehem had not been a fruitful or wonderful experience – it was bitter and filled with loss
- She didn’t return home and pretend all is well; she was honest – I’m back and it was horrible!
- Bitterness = the wrong perspective. Hebrews 12:15, Ephesians 4:31
- We can become bitter or better
- Your response is your responsibility
- she seems to blame her circumstances on God?

²¹ I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

- DAY 5 – 3 Naomi felt she had left Bethlehem “Full” only to return “empty”. Had she really lost everyone?
 - Naomi still had Ruth. It would later be said of her that she “is better to you than seven sons”. Naomi also had the LORD, even though presently deemed herself “afflicted” by Him. Are you or have you ever been in a place where you feel empty?
- She seems to not remember correctly. She didn’t leave full. She left during a famine, although she had her husband and sons.
- Naomi still had Ruth and God. The Lord was with her all along.
- Naomi knew the tragedy she’d experienced in Moab was not fate or chance, but rather she felt they were an example of God’s affliction because she could not see the end of His plan
- What we see here is Naomi is bitter against God rather than her own personal failure
- She returns to Bethlehem to make things right with God, to draw closer to Him
 - Bitterness: chafed, angry, discontented, heavy

- Can someone be bitter and truly worship God? How do we overcome bitterness?
- Can someone be bitter and grateful? How do we overcome bitterness?
 - [Eph 4:31 NKJV] 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.
 - [Heb 12:15 NKJV] 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.
- Bitter root, bitter fruit
 - Ruth had every reason to be bitter; even her background was against her
 - Everything in her background was against her; In Moab they worshipped Chemosh (Molech, Baal) (Num21:29, 1King 11:7,33) who accepted human sacrifices and encouraged immorality (Num25)
 - All these things could have turned her and made her bitter against the God of Israel
 - She'd lost her father-in-law, her husband, her brother-in-law – she had no support system
 - It seemed even Naomi was against her encouraging her to return to Moab
- God intervened and saved Ruth in spite of all these obstacles
 - [Tit 3:5a NKJV] 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us
- She knows the Lord has testified against her and the Almighty has afflicted her

²² So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

- And we see both women now returning from Moab to begin a new life in Bethlehem and it was the beginning of the barley harvest
- This new life is familiar to Naomi, but not in her current circumstance as a widow
- This new life is unfamiliar and brand new to Ruth – 2:12 Ruth is already trusting in the God of Israel
- **DAY 5 – 4 Something to keep in mind as we close this chapter: God is getting everything ready for Ruth (and Naomi). He is orchestrating a beautiful scenario, and His timing is impeccable. According to V22B – what time of the year is it in Bethlehem?**
 - Barley harvest is one of the first crops to be harvested in early March or April
 - It's the barley, when the heads are plump and ready for harvest, that constituted the "firstfruits" offered on the day after Shabbat during the feast of Unleavened Bread, which is in spring
 - Barley crops are important both agriculturally and for religious tradition in Israel
 - Note also the juxtaposition of when Naomi left – in famine and when she returned – in full and bountiful harvest

Mat 9:36-37 NKJV] 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly [is] plentiful, but the laborers [are] few.

Ask the ladies what they learned from the workbook these 2 weeks. Do they know the memory verse? Please read ahead into Chapter 2 in Ruth and the workbook!

What did you learn about God?

- **What did you learn to apply to your life? [**