

COMPASS

GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER

March 1, 2009
The Book of Ruth - Lesson 1

God's Work in Our Suffering Ruth 1

Introduction

This week we begin a study of the book of Ruth with a focus on chapter 1.

Study Resource

"The Bible Knowledge Commentary" (ed. Walvoord and Zuck) Copies available in the Library and Resource Room (E301).

"Wiersbe's Expository Outlines" Warren Wiersbe

Memory Verse

"But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'"

Ruth 1:16

Introduction

The book of Ruth is named for a Moabitess who had married a Hebrew man living in Moab. After the death of her husband, Ruth returned with Naomi, her widowed mother-in-law, to Bethlehem in Israel. Naomi's husband Elimelech, had moved his family from Bethlehem to Moab years before because of a famine in Israel. In Bethlehem, God providentially provided for Ruth and led her to marry Boaz, a prosperous Hebrew farmer. Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David. She is listed in the genealogy of Christ Matthew 1:5.

Ruth and Esther are the only two books in the Bible named for women. Esther was a Hebrew woman who married a Gentile King. God used Esther at a strategic time in the history of Israel to preserve the nation from destruction. Ruth, on the other hand, was a Gentile woman who married a Hebrew man. God used Ruth to perpetuate the line of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The truth of the book for ages might be stated as follows: The Lord is faithful in His business of loving, superintending, and providentially caring for His people. God's people should also be about His business in the ordinary activities of daily living. Since God's people are recipients of His grace they, like Ruth and Boaz, should respond in faithful obedience to Him and in gracious acts toward other people.

During a period of great irresponsibility in Israel's history, the book of Ruth is a clear call to responsible living. Clearly this message is needed today as well.

Boaz, the kinsman redeemer in the story, is an illustration of the Greater One who came from his family, the Lord Jesus Christ. Boaz acted in grace to redeem Ruth; Christ acted in grace by giving Himself as the Redeemer to provide redemption for all mankind.

Step 1

LOOK CLOSELY - observe what you are reading

Ruth 1(NASB)

¹Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there. ³Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. ⁴They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. ⁵Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband. ⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food. ⁷So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹"May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?" ¹²"Return,

my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, ¹³would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me." ¹⁴And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where 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 I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." ¹⁸When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. ¹⁹So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" ²⁰She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹"I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" ²²So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

1. Why did Elimelech move his wife and two sons from Judah to Moab?
2. What losses did Naomi suffer in Moab?
3. Why did Naomi decide to return to Judah and what was her attitude when she returned?
4. What time of year was it?

Step **2** THINK CAREFULLY— interpret what you have read

OVERVIEW OF RUTH, CHAPTER 1

The first chapter of Ruth introduces us to two women, Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Both have suffered the loss of their husbands and in Naomi's case also the loss of her two sons, one of whom was married to Ruth. We see how they initially began to deal with their loss.

The story begins years before when Elimelech, a Hebrew from Bethlehem ("the house of bread") in Judah moves his family to Moab because there was a famine in Judah. Commentators have differing interpretations of the significance of that move. Walvoord and Zuck say that "the unfolding of events indicate that it was an unwise choice, and that Bethlehem, not Moab, was the place where God would bless him." Wiersbe says "Better to starve in the will of God than to eat the enemy's bread. Jews were not to mix with Moabites (Deut 23:3), so their wrong decision brought them the discipline of God." J Vernon McGee compares their journey to Moab with the trip that the prodigal son made to a foreign land.

Following the death of the husbands, Naomi learns that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, so she prepares to return to Bethlehem. One of the daughters-in-law Orpah, accepts Naomi's entreaties and decides to remain in Moab. Ruth will not part from her mother-in-law. In one of the most beautiful expressions of love and loyalty in the Bible she says, as the King James Version puts it "entreat me not to leave thee." Ruth

pledges her loyalty to her mother-in-law, to Naomi's people and most important to Naomi's God. Ruth had come to embrace the God of Israel. Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, so she stopped urging her to remain in Moab. Loyalty to loved ones is a prized Christian virtue.

Their arrival caused a stir in Bethlehem. The women in the town remembered her. But Naomi said: don't call me Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter) because the Lord has afflicted me and brought misfortune on me.

So as we come to end of this first chapter let us look at the two suffering women and see what we can learn. We must keep in mind that the story is just beginning and the Lord has much more in store for both of them. Naomi - what can we learn from her? If going to Moab was a mistake, she did the right thing by returning to Bethlehem ("the house of bread") and the place where the Lord would bless her and Ruth. But she was, by her own words, bitter. Certainly the Lord had afflicted her in the death of her husband and both of her sons. She doesn't know it yet, but in due time, the Lord would bless her by allowing her to hold her "son", Ruth's child, in her lap. We must remember that in our moment of bitterness that the Lord may have a blessing for us just around the corner. Put your hope in the Lord!



KEY TERMS

v6 <i>visited</i>	<i>paqad</i> signifies an action of the part of God that produces a beneficial result for His people.
v 1:8, 2:20, 3:10 <i>deal kindly</i>	<i>hesed</i> to be merciful, faithful, love, kindness, mercy. One of the most important words in the OT, and a major theme in this book, it essentially denotes an act of kindness, love or mercy. It is central to God's character. It is closely tied to His covenant with His chosen people. God's <i>hesed</i> is everlasting.
v16 <i>urge</i> <i>leave</i>	<i>paga</i> urge that a desired request be granted azab forsake, abandon, leave behind
v20 <i>Almighty</i>	<i>sadday</i> the Mighty One, God, <i>sadday</i> and <i>yhwh</i> are used synonymously in vs 20,21
v21 <i>has afflicted</i>	ra'a to do evil, harm

(from Key word Study Bible)

Step **2** THINK CAREFULLY— interpret what you have read

KEY INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

1. Based on what you have read in chapter one, do you think that Elimelech was right or wrong to move his family from Bethlehem to Moab? Why or why not?
2. How did Ruth's embracing the God of Israel influence her decision to remain loyal to Naomi?
3. At this point in the story, how were Naomi and Ruth dealing with their suffering? Which was dealing with her suffering in a better way?
4. According to James 1:2-4, what can our perspective on suffering be because of Christ?

Step **2** THINK CAREFULLY— interpret what you have read

COMPARATIVE PASSAGES ON KINDNESS AND FRIENDSHIP (NASB)

1 Samuel 20:17

And Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life.

Psalms 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy word.

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all time, and a brother is made for adversity.

John 13:1

Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant.

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Colossians 3:12

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience.

1 Peter 1:5-7

⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; ⁶and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love.

Step **3** RESPOND WISELY - apply what you have learned

PERSONAL RESPONSE

1. When faced with dire circumstances as Elimelech was, how can we avoid the mistake that he made?
2. Showing kindness, based upon God's grace to us, is a major theme in this book. Is there someone to whom you should be showing kindness? Can you think of some specific thing that you can do for them?
3. Like Naomi and Ruth, we all experience suffering in our lives - when this takes place in your life, how do you deal with it?
4. What trials have you gone through that you now consider blessings?
5. How did God use these trials in your life to increase your faith in Him and in the power of the Gospel?


Step 4 SMALL GROUP AND FAMILY FOCUS

SMALL GROUPS

1. Choose one or more questions from the Personal Response section, page 6, to discuss as a group.
2. How have you experienced God's blessing in or through suffering?
3. How would you encourage someone who is experiencing suffering to be aware of God's blessing in the suffering? Is that always the best thing to do? Why or why not?
4. Has your concept of God's blessing changed at all as a result of this study? How?


FAMILY FOCUS—Helping your kids understand and apply

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE BOOK OF RUTH?



Ruth was from the land of Moab. She married a man from Israel who was living in Moab, but her husband died. Although she could have stayed in Moab, she returned to Bethlehem with Naomi, her mother-in-law. Here's what she told Naomi:

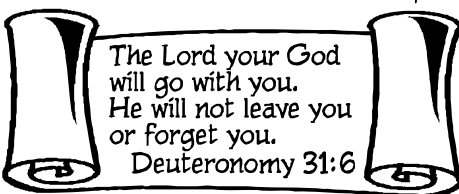
DON'T GET ME TO LEAVE YOU OR TO STOP FOLLOWING YOU. WHERE YOU GO, I WILL GO. WHERE YOU LIVE, I WILL LIVE. YOUR PEOPLE WILL BE MY PEOPLE, AND YOUR GOD WILL BE MY GOD. AND WHERE YOU DIE, I WILL DIE, AND THERE I WILL BE BURIED.



READ RUTH CHAPTER ONE

NAOMI was the mother of Ruth's husband. Both of their husbands had died. When they returned to Bethlehem, Naomi was very sad. She could only think about the bad things that had happened to her. She became very bitter and thought God was against her. She was wrong. God loved her and he was still in control. She forgot that God was still there and he would take care of her.

Bad things happen to all of us. Sometimes they make us sad, too. But we must never forget that God will always be with us. Just like Ruth promised to stay with Naomi, God has promised to always be with us. Long before Naomi was born, God made a promise to his people. God keeps his promises. In Hebrews 13:5 we read that this promise is for us, too...



The Lord your God will go with you. He will not leave you or forget you. Deuteronomy 31:6

WHAT BAD THINGS ARE YOU FACING NOW?

REMEMBER...GOD IS STILL THERE!



CHERRYDALE'S BASIC BELIEFS AND VISION

Basic Beliefs

- There is one God, existing in three eternal persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - each possessing all the attributes of Deity.
- Jesus Christ, God's Son, lived a sinless life on earth, paid for our sins by dying on the cross as our substitute, and rose bodily from the dead.
- The Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus, convicts us of sin, helps us grow in Christ, and equips us for service.
- The Bible is the inspired Word of God, without error and the supreme standard by which we should live.
- We were created to have fellowship with God, but we destroyed that relationship when we rebelled against Him by going our own way. Faith in Jesus Christ is the sole means of reconciliation with God.
- The local church is a gathering of believers whose mission is to witness faithfully to all people about Christ and to make disciples of all nations.

Vision

Imagine being part of a church that loves God so much that they are eager to journey with you in . . .

- Discovering the joy of knowing God,
- Growing in experiencing lasting life-change and
- Going to make a significant difference in the world.

Because Jesus Christ proved His love on the cross and keeps on loving us with His life, our *vision is . . . to spread a passion to love God and people above all else.* According to Jesus, if this is not our purpose, we might as well close our doors. (*Matthew 22:37-40; 28:18-20*)

Therefore, we deliberately commit to . . .



God intimately (John 17:3)

- *Acknowledging* that we are broken and in need of God's grace
- *Worshiping* the Triune God made known through the gospel
- *Praying* will permeate who we are and all we do



together in Christ-like character (Acts 2:42)

- *Applying* all aspects of *the gospel* to all aspects of our lives
- *Encouraging* one another in core biblical beliefs, practices and virtues
- *Developing* disciples by shepherding and equipping



in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

- *Sharing* the gospel through relationships with those around us
- *Cultivating* a kingdom mindset as we serve people in the name of Christ
- *Sending and supporting* laborers to fulfill the Great Commission among all peoples
- *Reproducing* through planting churches locally and globally

The COMPASS is prepared by a team including Wally Birdseye, Dana Carlson, Bob Glahn, Ed Grudier, Earl Karl, Bob Kelso, Steve Lewis, Herb Owen, Brooke Roberts and Daniel Robinson, and is based on the Scripture of the Sunday morning message. It is available one week in advance and is intended as a tool for personal growth in Christ, Sunday Class studies, Small Group discussions and family devotions. The COMPASS is offered in print on Sundays and on the website. A coaching conference call is available for facilitators of Sunday Classes and Small Group Shepherds. If you have any questions about the COMPASS, please contact the church office.

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