



GOD OF THE ORDINARY

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

ALISTAIR BEGG

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ALISTAIR BEGG

Alistair Begg has served in pastoral ministry for fifty years and is the Bible teacher on the daily radio and online program *Truth For Life*. The hallmark of Alistair's ministry is his expositional teaching through Scripture and his clear, relevant application of God's Word to everyday life. He is the author of several books, a guest speaker at church pulpits and conferences around the world, and has been married to his wife Susan since 1975.

BIBLE STUDY TIPS AND RESOURCES

TIPS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Follow the provided weekly study plan. This will help maximize comprehension of the material.
- Use a good study Bible for reference as you work through the content.
- Aim to memorize at least one key verse per weekly session.
- Watch the weekly video teaching in a small group or with at least one person. Then, discuss the questions in the corresponding section provided for Group Study together.
- Share what you learn with others. As you progress in your knowledge and personally apply the material, you will be able to encourage someone else.

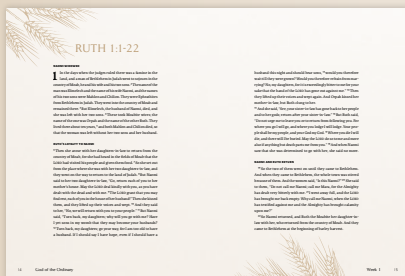
TIPS FOR GROUPS AND THEIR LEADERS

- Come to the meeting prepared. Your group discussion will be more impactful if you've read the Scripture, familiarized yourselves with the content, and completed the weekly Personal Study.
- Read the passage for each session out loud together as a group. If it helps, break the passage into smaller sections for several people to read.
- Spend most of your discussion time in the Group Study section. Work through the questions together and use the Personal Study content for reference. Take liberties to emphasize a particular question or two if it lends itself to greater discussion in the group.
- Utilize the Personal Response section from the Personal Study to share prayer requests with the group. As you do, commit to pray for one another throughout the week.
- Ask your pastor or another church leader for insight when needed. Difficult questions or themes will arise during the study. Determine to seek out answers.

- Establish good Bible-reading habits. Reinforce the basic pattern of “read, understand, and apply” with each biblical passage. These three elements should be present to some degree any time we engage with the Bible.
- Know your context. Consider the needs of your group and time constraints as you build out your weekly meeting plan.
- Determine your aim. Will you place a higher value on relationship-building and accountability or biblical study and education? While this study guide is designed to foster both, determining your focus from the outset will help with time allotment and group expectations.
- Maintain a degree of balance. For groups that emphasize relationship, be careful not to neglect study of the text. For those emphasizing study, be careful to incorporate heart-level response and prayer. We need both.
- Consider building a “Session Zero” into your meeting calendar. You can use this first meeting to read the book of Ruth in its entirety, look through the “Getting Started” content together, and get to know the group. Note that this would extend your study an additional week.
- Similarly, consider building a “Session 7” into your meeting calendar. This final meeting, for which there is no video content, will give you the opportunity to discuss the study in Session 6, “Restoration and Promise,” and spend time together in prayer. Use this week as a wrap-up for the study, inviting participants to share what they’ve learned, particularly how God is leading them to respond personally. Pray that each group member would continue to engage with God in the ways He has been leading them through the study of the book of Ruth.

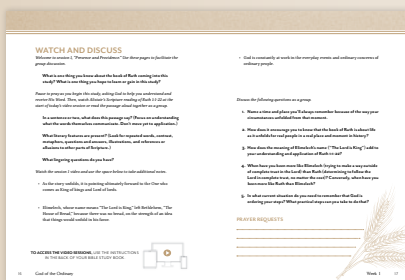
GETTING STARTED

Because discipleship happens best in community, consider doing this study with others at your church in a group setting—or ask a friend or two to go through it with you. Going through this study with other believers will give you the opportunity to discuss what you're learning, dig deeper into the text, pray together, and develop friendships that lead you closer to God.



READING RUTH

Prior to starting the study, consider reading the full book of Ruth in one sitting. Understanding Ruth's structure and themes will prepare you to study the text in depth.



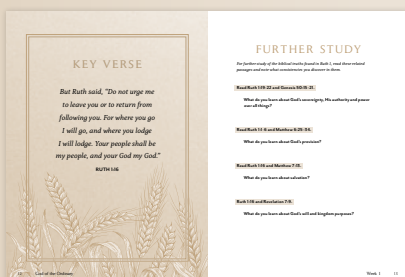
WATCH & DISCUSS

At the beginning of each week, you'll find pages that provide space for you to take notes during the videos and follow along with your small group discussion.



PERSONAL STUDY

Each week includes three days of personal study that walk you through Ruth verse by verse for greater understanding and application, as well as insightful commentary.



FURTHER STUDY

Included each week is a page of extra reading to help broaden your understanding of Ruth's story as it relates to the larger gospel story told throughout Scripture.

ABOUT RUTH

The book of Ruth must surely be one of the loveliest short stories ever written, telling an unforgettable tale of purity, faithfulness, innocence, loyalty, duty, and love. Yet it is set in dark times. The final verse of the book of Judges, which precedes Ruth in the Bible, says, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). It was a time marked by “violent invasions, apostate religion, unchecked lawlessness, and tribal civil war.”¹

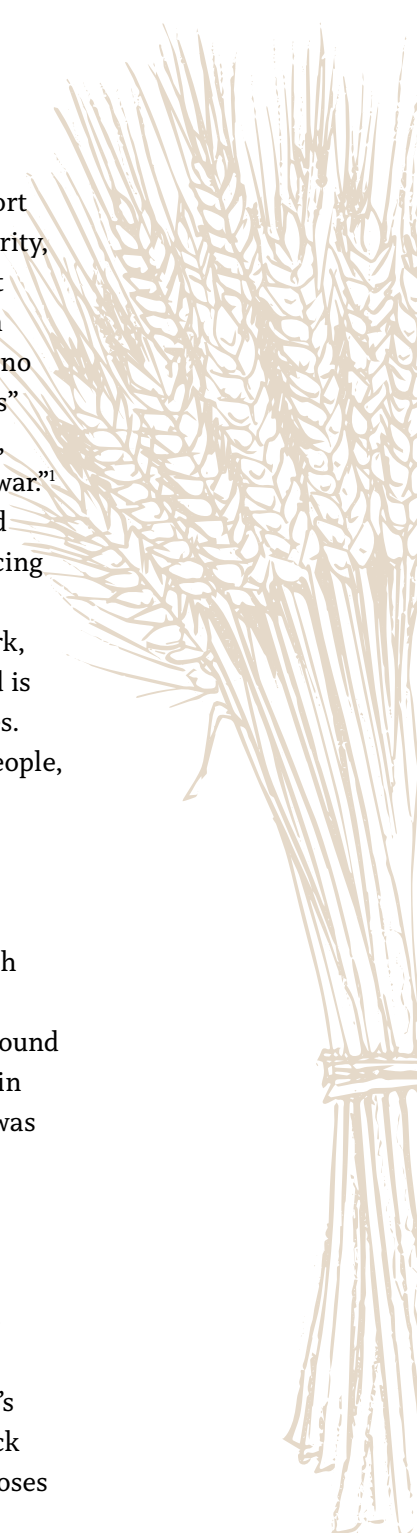
Ruth’s story unfolds against this backdrop of strife and chaos. Here is a story of ordinary people in Bethlehem facing a variety of events from loss and dislocation to marriage and family life. Through this story, we see that in both dark, difficult moments and simple, mundane life rhythms, God is faithful to protect His people and accomplish His purposes. Within the seemingly insignificant routines of ordinary people, we discover His loving hand at work.

AUTHOR AND DATE

Ruth’s text does not identify its author. According to Jewish tradition, however, the book was written by the prophet Samuel. The story of Ruth details events that took place around 1100 BC, near the time Samuel was born. The genealogy in chapter 4 shows us that it was written later, after David was anointed as the king of Israel (1050 BC).

SETTING

The events in Ruth take place in the period of the judges. A famine in Judah forces Naomi and her husband to leave Israel and move to Moab, where their sons marry Moabite women (Orpah and Ruth). Within about ten years, Naomi’s husband and sons die in Moab, so she decides to move back to Bethlehem. Surprisingly, her daughter-in-law Ruth chooses to follow her.



KEY CHARACTERS

RUTH—Mahlon's widow, a Moabitess, and the woman through whom Obed, the grandfather of King David, was born

NAOMI—Elimelech's widow, mother-in-law to Ruth, and mother-figure to Obed, Ruth's son

BOAZ—A relative and kinsman-redeemer to Naomi's family; redeems Ruth by marrying her and fathering their son, through whom David would come

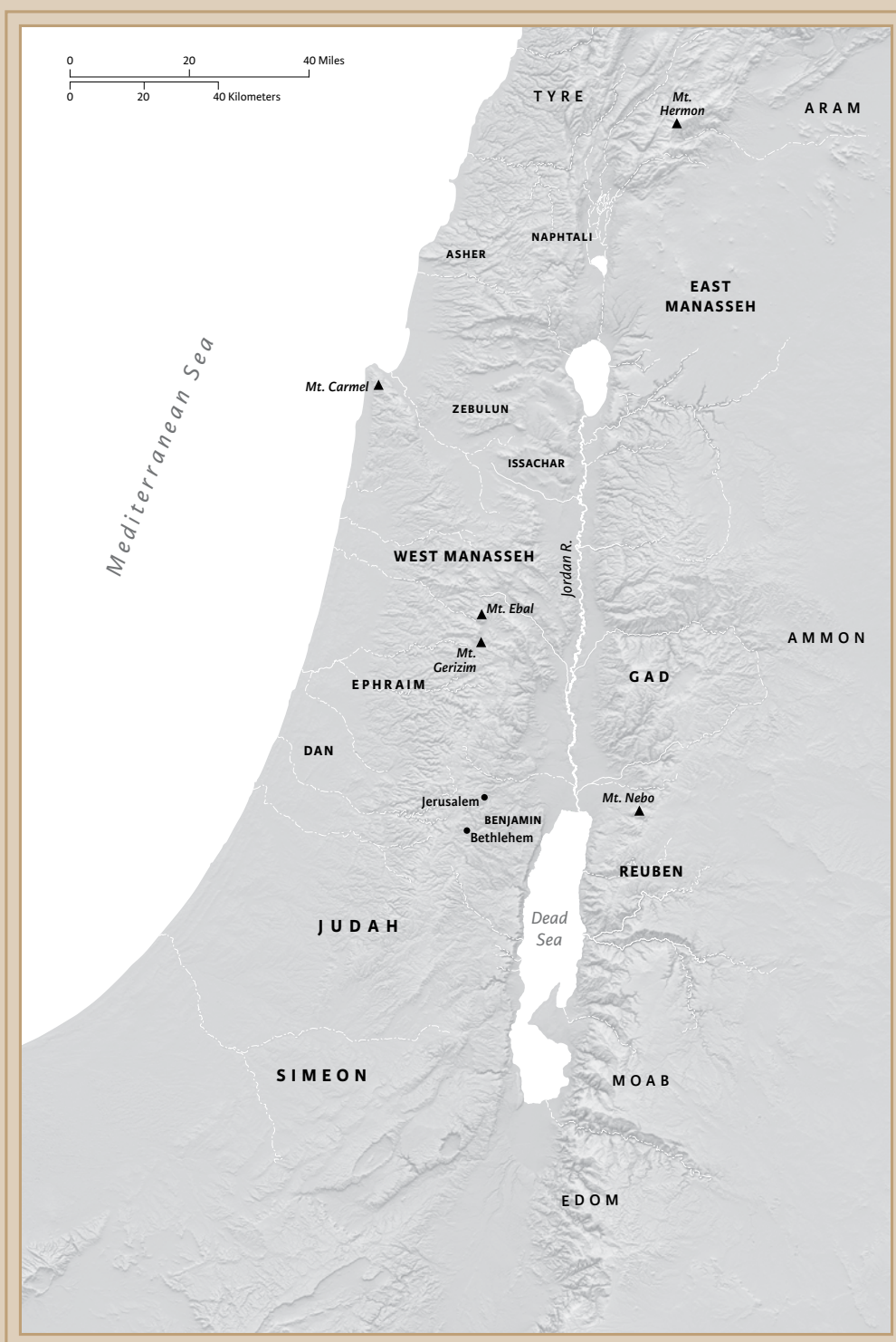
KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

LEVIRATE MARRIAGE—From the Latin *levir*, a noun meaning “husband's brother.”² The levirate process regulated marriage when the man of the house died (Deuteronomy 25:5).

KINSMAN-REDEEMER—From the Hebrew *goel*, a verb meaning “to redeem.”³ This person was responsible for issues of property and possessions for those who were next of kin in the event of the death of a head of household (Leviticus 25:25-28,47-49).

FAVOR—An Old Testament expression for showing compassion or undeserved kindness, related to grace

MARA—A transliteration of the Hebrew word for “bitter.” Naomi takes this name upon the deaths of her husband and two sons.





WEEK 1

PRESENCE & PROVIDENCE

RUTH 1:1-22

The book of Ruth is a correction to the belief that our lives must be extraordinary to be useful. Whether our circumstances are difficult, seemingly mundane, or somewhere in between, God is always working His purposes out—often in places we may regard as unlikely and in such a quiet fashion that we may wonder whether God is doing anything at all.

Chapter 1 begins with famine and ends with mention of a harvest. Much of what happens in between points to God's providential care. We can trace the movement through four key events:

- Famine (1:1-2)
- Bereavement (1:3-5)
- Return (1:6-18)
- Arrival (1:19-22)

*From the first sentence to the last, the
events in Ruth reveal a profound truth:
The God who's in charge of the whole
universe is intimately involved
in His people's lives.*



RUTH 1:1-22

NAOMI WIDOWED

1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.² The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.³ But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.⁴ These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years,⁵ and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

RUTH'S LOYALTY TO NAOMI

⁶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food.⁷ So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.⁸ But 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 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.¹⁰ And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."¹¹ But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?"¹² Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a

husband this night and should bear sons,¹³ would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.”¹⁴ Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”¹⁶ But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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 will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”¹⁸ And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

NAOMI AND RUTH RETURN

¹⁹ So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?”²⁰ She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.”²¹ I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

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

WATCH AND DISCUSS

Welcome to session 1, “Presence and Providence.” Use these pages to facilitate the group discussion.

What is one thing you know about the book of Ruth coming into this study? What is one thing you hope to learn or gain in this study?

Pause to pray as you begin this study, asking God to help you understand and receive His Word. Then, watch Alistair’s Scripture reading of Ruth 1:1-22 at the start of today’s video session or read the passage aloud together as a group.

In a sentence or two, what does this passage say? (Focus on understanding what the words themselves communicate. Don’t move yet to application.)

What literary features are present? (Look for repeated words, contrast, metaphors, questions and answers, illustrations, and references or allusions to other parts of Scripture.)

What lingering questions do you have?

Watch the session 1 video and use the space below to take additional notes.

- As the story unfolds, it is pointing ultimately forward to the One who comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.
- Elimelech, whose name means “The Lord is King,” left Bethlehem, “The House of Bread,” because there was no bread—on the strength of an idea that things would unfold in his favor.

**TO ACCESS THE VIDEO SESSIONS, USE THE INSTRUCTIONS
IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.**



- God is constantly at work in the everyday events and ordinary concerns of ordinary people.

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1. Name a time and place you'll always remember because of the way your circumstances unfolded from that moment.
2. How does it encourage you to know that the book of Ruth is about life as it unfolds for real people in a real place and moment in history?
3. How does the meaning of Elimelech's name ("The Lord is King") add to your understanding and application of Ruth 1:1-22?
4. When have you been more like Elimelech (trying to make a way outside of complete trust in the Lord) than Ruth (determining to follow the Lord in complete trust, no matter the cost)? Conversely, when have you been more like Ruth than Elimelech?
5. In what current situation do you need to remember that God is ordering your steps? What practical steps can you take to do that?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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IN FAMINE
AND GRIEF

MEMORY VERSE

*But Ruth said,
“Do not urge me
to leave you or
to return 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

Looking at Ruth 1:1 in your Bible, flip backward one page to read the final verse in Judges. Then, flip forward past Ruth to the first chapter in 1 Samuel. What is the specific context in which the short story of Ruth takes place?

In the four short chapters of Ruth, we have literary art and theological insight at its very finest. And what makes the book sparkle so much is the background against which it is set, like the way a diamond shines at the jeweler’s when they display it against a dark velvet cloth to bring out its intricacies. The book of Ruth shines against the background of Judges, because it was a time of instability and upheaval. If there were news reports in those days, they would have been filled with stories of civil unrest, moral decay, religious deterioration, and unchecked corruption.

Yet in Ruth, we find there is another side to the story. Away from all the clamor in the corridors of power, we find that God is at work in a very quiet way, in a sequence of events involving a farmer from Bethlehem, a foreigner from Moab, and a lady who had faced a triple bereavement.

Read Ruth 1:1-5.

Write five words or phrases to describe the scene (e.g., hunger, crisis management, loneliness).

What reasons, good or bad, would Elimelech have had for uprooting his family to leave Bethlehem and go to Moab?

What meaningful facets of life can you perceive that Elimelech and his family were leaving behind in Bethlehem?

Elimelech's name means, "The Lord is King." Yet it seems he didn't consider the Lord to be King over the circumstances of the famine. With his family, he left Bethlehem—the "House of Bread," ironically—and headed for Moab.

This was an astonishing decision for two reasons. First, for the Jew to leave Bethlehem would be to leave the presence of God. This was the land where God promised He would be with His people. They had symbols of His abiding presence and systems He had instituted among them to remind them of His providence. They were with Him together—preserving family values, maintaining ancestral religion, seeking to do things as He instructed them to, and nurturing one another in Him. It's also striking that Elimelech and his family chose Moab as their destination. God had commanded Israel not to involve themselves with the Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:3-4).

What in the text indicates Naomi and her family's temporary solution had become permanent?

What reasons might explain why Naomi and her sons stayed in Moab after Elimelech died?

This Jewish family planned to stay in Moab only for a while. They started out as sojourners looking for a temporary solution to a physical need, but at some point, it became more permanent. They "remained" in Moab (v. 2)—even after

Elimelech's death (v. 3)—settling in a foreign land, far from God's presence, for about a decade (v. 4). Pragmatism won out over obedient faith.

When have you experienced a circumstance where human logic, practicality, or personal discomfort tempted you to work around God's commands? What happened?

What signs might indicate we've settled in a place of distance from God?

Naomi's story, going from awful to absolutely horrific, is told in just five short verses. But we shouldn't miss the fact that a good bit of time passed between these verses. Elimelech died, but Naomi's two sons got married in Moab—joyful occasions that likely soothed, to some extent, the tremendous grief they surely felt. The weddings expanded Naomi's family unit and brought the prospect of even greater family connections through the hope of grandchildren.

But she could not have imagined the tragedy that would unfold. Not only did Naomi have no grandchildren—none were born to these two couples in a period of ten years—but she actually found herself without her own children, as “both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband” (v. 5).

Based solely on these first five verses, what kind of future would you imagine Naomi would have? What about her daughters-in-law?

Naomi was a lonely widow living in a foreign country without the protection and provision of either her husband or sons in a male-dominated society. This is a story with a hopeless setup. And as the story unfolds, we naturally wonder what's going to happen. Is it possible that God will bring triumph from this tragedy?

**What might have helped Naomi see God at work in her circumstance?
What might have clouded her view of God in her circumstance?**

**What about you? Do circumstances tend to draw you toward seeing
God's provision or cloud your view of Him? Explain.**

In Ruth 1:1-5, we see one of Israel's family units teetering on the brink of extinction. If there was one thing that would have been a cause for shame in the nation of Israel, it was your family line coming to an end. And that was exactly what Naomi was facing. Her husband was gone, her boys were dead, and she was too old to get married again. If there were to be any prospect of offspring in these dire circumstances, it would have to be a work of God!



Gospel Connection

Throughout Scripture, God warns His people about the consequences of sin (Genesis 2:17; Leviticus 26:14-39; Romans 5:12). The famine in Ruth may have come as a result of the rebellion of the people of God. But we'll see this is not the end of Ruth's story, nor is it the end of ours. In loving-kindness, God has held out to His people the promise of forgiveness and grace if they return to Him in repentance and faith (Ruth 1:22; 4:13-14; Romans 6:23).

INDECISION
AND RETURN

MEMORY VERSE

*But Ruth said,
“Do not urge me
to leave you or
to return 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

Having settled in a place far from God’s presence, Naomi’s family was now gone, and she was stuck. But nothing in life is outside of God’s sovereignty and providence. Even in famine, brokenness, and grief, God is at work.

Even when we respond to things in a spirit that isn’t right; even when we take ourselves up and out of the land of God’s promise, as it were; even when we determine to use our rationale and leave the life of faith behind, God is still working out His purposes. And indeed, the ultimate joy in this family, as well as their place in history, emerges from a context that wasn’t free of foolish conduct. Yet God’s providence covers even our mistakes.

*Our foolishness cannot set
aside God’s providence.*

Read Ruth 1:6-15.

What signs of God’s presence and provision do you find in these verses?

Based on her words and actions, what did Naomi believe about the Lord? Check all that apply.

- ☐ God was providing for His people.
- ☐ God might provide for her physical needs.
- ☐ God could provide the families Ruth and Orpah needed and wanted in Moab.

- ___ God would provide for Ruth and Orpah if they stayed with her.
- ___ In returning to Bethlehem, God was blessing her.
- ___ God's hand had gone out against her and made her bitter.

Somehow or another, news from home reached Moab, and it was a little ray of sunshine in the darkness: God was intervening and providing His people with food. And Naomi, a miserable decade older and less certain of God's love for her than ever before, made a decision to return.

In this context, it would have been customary for Naomi's daughters-in-law to make the journey out of town with her, even if they were not planning on going all the way to Bethlehem. It was simply the nature of parting and good-byes in their culture. Naomi was going down the road, so they were also going down the road. Yet the two daughters-in-law seemed intent on continuing with Naomi for the entire journey to Bethlehem. So Naomi made it clear she was ready to part ways—for good.

Naomi had both a practical reason and a philosophical reason for urging Ruth and Orpah to return to Moab. Name each of those reasons.

Naomi believed there was no prospect of marriage for the two young widows down the road she was traveling, so she freed them from that burden. In doing so, she invited the Lord to show His grace, mercy, and kindness to them as they had shown grace, mercy, and kindness to her—because Naomi herself *couldn't*. She was past the age for remarriage and having more children. The way she saw it, the Lord's hand was against her, and she was bitter about it.

Knowing the harsh reality of the situation, what reasons could Ruth and Orpah have had to say, “We will return with you to your people” (v. 10)?

These three women loved one another. Their lives were completely interwoven. They had truly become family. They had lived through great loss together. They had wept together and mourned the men they loved. They had talked

about the false gods of Moab and the one true God of Israel. They had trusted in Him together. And now, Naomi was saying, “I’m going back to Bethlehem, and girls, please, *please* go back to Moab.”

**In verses 14-15, what decisions did Naomi and Orpah make?
With what attitude or emotions did they make them?**

Naomi—

Orpah—

Read Ruth 1:16-18.

**What decisions did Naomi and Ruth make in these verses?
With what attitude or emotions did they make them?**

Naomi—

Ruth—

*Ruth chose to abandon the known and
the familiar for the unknown.*

**Reread verse 15. What about these words in particular might have
influenced Ruth’s decision?**

How do Ruth's words in verse 16 point to the call of the gospel to every person today?

Ruth understood this decision wasn't about geography or emotion—this was ultimately about faith, belief, trust, and eternity. To go back up that road into the Moabite community, given all she had learned from Naomi and Elimelech about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would be, in her view, to turn her back on everything she had discovered as truth. She would not only be going back to her people, she would be going back to her gods.

Instead, Ruth drew a line in the sand, saying, “Don't try to change my mind. I'm going wherever you go—your people will be my people, and death is literally the only thing that will ever separate us. Naomi, I have come to know your God, and now He is my God, too.” And Ruth's commitment was so clear that Naomi wouldn't argue again with even a single word.

Ruth's bold commitment gives us clarity, too. Jesus invites us to follow Him daily as we stand at the valley of decision. In what direction will we go? Will we be His disciples and follow the way of truth, or will we return to our people and our gods?



Gospel Connection

Ruth 1:16 helps us see how clear God's call is for us to respond to His loving-kindness and grace and to urge upon people the necessity of their coming to trust in Him. Ruth believed. Do you? Have you turned your back on the substitute gods of the world? Have you been embraced by the loving-kindness of God as it has been manifest to you in so many different ways (John 3:16; Hebrews 2:1-4)?

IN PLEASANT &
BITTER ARRIVAL

MEMORY VERSE

*But Ruth said,
“Do not urge me
to leave you or
to return 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

Have you ever returned to a place you'd been away from for a while? A strange mix of emotions tends to accompany us in such occasions. When you show up to your ten-year reunion with the graduating class of your high school, for instance, you likely feel both excitement and apprehension. After all, you've experienced some life and now know much you didn't know back then. So has everyone else—and in some ways, you're all different than you were before.

As Naomi and Ruth journeyed to Bethlehem, what emotions was Naomi likely feeling with each step closer to the people and place she'd previously known?

Read Ruth 1:19-22.

Who was excited about Naomi's return?

What did Naomi want them to know?

Any hope that Naomi may have had of slipping back into town quietly was immediately scorched. Her arrival in Bethlehem caused “the whole town” to be “stirred.” They were excited to see their friend. The thing is, Naomi's very name being spoken aloud in her hometown reminded her what she'd lost in leaving.

The name “Naomi” means “pleasant,” and that had been true of her ten years earlier. But it certainly wasn’t how she felt as she set foot back in Bethlehem. The town was full of familiar places and faces—the spot where Naomi and Elimelech had made their vows, the tree their boys had loved to climb, the friends who’d been there and seen joy in it all—and it was a painful reminder.

How did Naomi explain the reason for the bitter emptiness she believed now defined her?

How does Naomi’s blunt honesty strike you: refreshing or uncomfortable? Why?

The whole town stirred in excitement over Naomi’s return, but she couldn’t join their excitement—that would have been inauthentic. So she stopped their gushing and explained, “God has made me bitter. I left here full, but now I’m empty. So don’t call me Naomi. I’m not that person anymore. I’m Bitter.”

That’s a level of honesty we don’t often encounter. We saw it back in verse 13 when she tried to dissuade her daughters-in-law from coming with her, and we see it again here in her arrival home. Naomi didn’t hide her feelings or the reality of her situation. She didn’t fix her face to pretend she wasn’t angry, because she was angry. She didn’t say, “Everything is fine,” because everything wasn’t fine at all. She made no attempt to sweep the experiences of life aside and play the part of the stoic with a stiff upper lip.

Do you? When the circumstances of life are difficult and painful, are you more likely to acknowledge that reality in the community of faith or pretend you’re doing fine? How does that choice serve you?

Why is honesty before God and His people necessary for experiencing the fullness of His presence and provision?

Naomi's experience reminds us that some pains feel unbearable, some circumstances seem unjust, and some questions remain unanswered through all of our lives. And the freedom to honestly share those feelings and questions with God and His people is part of His loving provision.

Notice Naomi's honesty was more than matched by her theology. In fact, her honesty actually flowed from her theology. She didn't attribute these dreadful events to chance. Instead, she acknowledged that God controls everything by His sovereign power. He creates and, by His providence, He sustains.

By what two names did Naomi refer to God in verses 20-21?

"The Almighty" is a title for God, which the Hebrews knew as "El Shaddai," signifying strength and stability, provision and protection. "The LORD" is God's covenant name, "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). This was the framework within which Naomi dealt with her pain. Understanding God's sovereignty, provision, protection, and covenant promises meant Naomi could leave the explanation and the responsibility for her bitterness with Him.

Had Naomi hidden her true feelings, she would have betrayed the theology which underpinned her expression of faith in the midst of the dark side of providence.

Name one truth about God that sustains you in your darkest moments.

Reread Ruth 1:22. What ordinary detail at the end of the chapter signifies a coming transition?

**What ordinary detail of your life has you wondering if God is at work?
How does Ruth 1 encourage you in that situation?**

When God is at work, even something that seems hopeless may be the doorway to fresh starts and new opportunities. God is always at work. Day after day, we look for something spectacular and miss the fact that God is speaking in the ordinariness of everything—in a bowl of apples on a table, a meal well prepared, a bird on a feeder in a garden, a conversation with a friend in the backyard.

As surely as God took Naomi off and brought her back, He is looking after you, too. Don't miss Him in the moon as it shines through the clouds. In these simple gestures, God is sustaining and guiding His children until at last He will dispel all darkness forever. Until then, look for God in the ordinary—and trust Him there.



Gospel Connection

The book of Ruth comes back to Naomi again and again. It's almost as if God is preoccupied with this particular individual: a lonely lady living in a foreign land in her declining years—with no children to care for her and no grandchildren to cheer her spirits. And we learn that He is both present and providential in her circumstance. God defends the cause of the widow and cares about their suffering, as He does for all who are vulnerable and oppressed (Exodus 22:22-24; Luke 4:18-19; 7:11-15).

PERSONAL RESPONSE

We see God's presence and providence in both the ordinary and the tragic events of Ruth 1. Through His activity in Ruth's story, God reveals His character and intention in every person's story. Your situation is different than Naomi and Ruth's, but your story is the same: God is at work in the details of your life, and He is calling you to trust Him. Answer the following questions as a way of inviting God to reveal His loving presence and providential care to you.

What details in Ruth 1 point to God's providential care and involvement in His people's lives?

What aspects of God's character are highlighted in the chapter?

How does Naomi's suffering help you make sense of your own?

Ruth was loyal to Naomi (vv. 16-17). How could you show loyalty to Christ today?



PRAYER & PRAISE

Use Psalm 6:1-10 for praise and meditation.

O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger,
nor discipline me in your wrath.
Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
My soul also is greatly troubled.
But you, O LORD—how long?

Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;
save me for the sake of your steadfast love.
For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who will give you praise?

I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
My eye wastes away because of grief;
it grows weak because of all my foes.

Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.
The LORD has heard my plea;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled;
they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

PSALM 6:1-10

Use the truth of Scripture to form a personal prayer:

- Thank God for the care He shows to you.
- Ask the Lord for humility to joyfully submit to whatever He ordains for you.
- Pray for a Ruth-like resolve to remain faithful to Christ in trial.

KEY VERSE

*But Ruth said, “Do not urge me
to leave you or to return 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

FURTHER STUDY

For further study of the biblical truths found in Ruth 1, read these related passages and note what consistencies you discover in them.

Read Ruth 1:19-22 and Genesis 50:15-21.

What do you learn about God's sovereignty—His authority and power over all things?

Read Ruth 1:1-6 and Matthew 6:25-34.

What do you learn about God's provision?

Read Ruth 1:16 and Matthew 7:13.

What do you learn about salvation?

Ruth 1:16 and Revelation 7:9.

What do you learn about God's will and kingdom purposes?