



## Ruth 1

It is our privilege this semester to study two of the most beloved books in the Bible—the Old Testament books of Ruth and Esther. These books are literary masterpieces—full of drama and suspense, twists and turns, heroes and villains, humor and irony. As we read these books, we might wonder why they are included in the Bible—the book of Ruth has no obvious miracles, no explicit direction from God, and no sighting of angels or dramatic supernatural signs. The book of Esther has no mention of priests or prayer or worship; in fact, the book of Esther doesn't mention God at all.

Even so, we find in both of these books compelling accounts that affirm that God's hand is always at work guiding the events of history. God may seem hidden, but He is always at work.

### 1. Read all of Ruth chapter 1 *Sometimes the unthinkable happens*

Give a short description of the characters you meet in chapter 1.

- Elimelech:

- Naomi:

- Ruth:

- Orpah:





- b. Naomi showed her sincere love for her daughters-in-law by urging them to return to their families in Moab rather than go with her to Bethlehem. This was a sensible course of action for them. What were the possibilities for their future if they stayed in Moab? (Ruth 1:8-9)
- c. As you consider Naomi's interactions with her daughters-in-law, what evidence do you see that Naomi still follows the LORD? (Ruth 1:8-9)

4. Read Ruth 1:14-18 *God's unexpected provision for the road home*

Orpah expressed fond affection for Naomi by kissing her, but Ruth "clung" to Naomi. This word signifies intentional commitment; it is used in Genesis 2:24 to represent the union of a husband and wife. Ruth's words that follow are to be understood as a solemn vow.

*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 die I will die,  
and there I will be buried.  
May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely,  
if anything but death  
separates you and me.  
Ruth 1:16-17*

- a. What does Ruth's vow reveal about her commitment to God?

- b. What does Ruth sacrifice in her decision to pledge herself to Naomi?



- c. ***For further reflection:*** Ruth was willing to give up every possibility of a traditional life of relative comfort in Moab. Her devotion to Naomi was so strong that she was determined to stay with her despite the immense personal sacrifice. Furthermore, she was eager to be a part of the people of God. The text does not reveal how Ruth came to understand the character and goodness of the God of Israel, yet we can speculate. How may the family of Elimelech have influenced Ruth the Moabite to commit her life to the God of Israel?
- d. ***For personal reflection:*** Just as the kindness and integrity of this Israelite family may have served to reveal to Ruth to the goodness of God; even so, the integrity of our lives is a continuing witness in our community. Our conduct reflects on God's reputation. Pray that God will enable you to be a pleasing fragrance of godly character in your sphere of influence.
5. Read Ruth 1:19-22 *God's best gift is unrecognized and unappreciated*
- a. What was Naomi's perspective on her life and her losses? What was her attitude as she returned to her neighbors in Bethlehem?

b. The women of Bethlehem were surprised and pleased to see Naomi's return; it was a newsworthy event. What was their response to Ruth?

c. Naomi complains in Ruth 1:21: *"I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty."* How are both of these assertions incorrect?

It was natural for people of Bethlehem to be guarded, and even suspicious of Naomi's Moabite companion. There was a long history of conflict between Israel and Moab; they were ancestral enemies. Ruth was a stranger to them, an outsider, and a member of a despised race.

6. ***Taking a second look: Notice the providence of God***

The book of Ruth is a rich testimony of God's providence—His faithful provision for the needs of His people. God is always at work in ways we can't imagine.

- a. Naomi's life in Moab seemed hopeless. How did God ***provide*** for Naomi's future?
- b. Ruth was born into a pagan culture that scorned the God of Israel. How did God ***provide*** for Ruth's eternal destiny?
- c. ***For personal reflection:*** Has God ever brought unexpected ***provision*** into your life? Share with your group if you feel comfortable doing so.

My prayer:

*Father, help me to trust in Your providence  
as You work in my life  
to accomplish Your good purposes for me.*