

WEEK TWO

A STUDY BOOK OF
RUTH



WRITTEN BY
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DESIGNED & PRODUCED BY
USA SOUTHERN TERRITORY WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT

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6-Week Ruth Bible Study

ESV translation used unless otherwise noted

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Gleaning

Ruth 1:7-2:4

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. 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. 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. And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 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? 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, 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." Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 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. 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." And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Naomi and Ruth Return

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?" She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 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?" 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 the barley harvest.

Ruth Meets Boaz

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you."

A NOTE FROM JENIFFER



We started this chapter with Naomi's departure from God as she and her husband choose the food over the creator of the food, which ultimately led to her husband's death and the death their sons. Now we join Naomi and two other widows as they journey home. They are not the same women they were at the beginning of the chapter; experience does that. This week we will journey from the fields of Moab to the fields of Judah, from the emptiness of running away from God to the provision of God's plenty.

Gleaning

DAY ONE

Ruth 1:7-10

PRAYER

Lord, as I open my heart and mind to the power of your word this week, help me glean the richness you have for me. Please remove distractions from my mind and my heart, that I may not neglect this small pocket of time with you.

SCRIPTURE

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. 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. The LORD grant that you may find irest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

Naomi heard from God in the fields of Moab, and she repented. Then she began the long journey home to Moab. I have heard it said that while you may have run 1,000 miles away from God, it only take you one step to return. There is such beauty in a God who runs after us, who does not leave us out of his sight. Naomi “set out for the place where she was” to begin the journey home. Did you catch that? From the place she was. Naomi didn’t spend time getting her house in Moab in order, she didn’t try to fix up the mess, or organize a support team. Nope, she simply set out from the place where she was.

God wants you exactly where you are, and how you are. You don’t have to get your life in order to be used by him. I believe this is a concept so many of us struggle to accept. We know it, and many of us can verbalize it, yet we don’t practice this in our day-to-day lives. We draw others in with a high level of tolerance for the fact that they are in the process of redemption, but we hold an intense amount of judgement for ourselves.

I envision these three widows making their way down the road sometimes in silence, sometimes making awkward questions about what it would be like when they arrive in Judah. For Ruth and Orpah, they were leaving everything they had ever known. According to Jewish tradition, their lives in Moab before they married Chilean and Mahlon were pretty great. They were princesses, part of the royal family.

I just wonder if, as they walked, Naomi wasn’t pondering how she could take these girls back to nothing when they still had so much in their mothers’ homes. I see them walking out of the fields of Moab and hitting a crossroad; one direction would take them on the long and dangerous journey to Judah, and the other would return to the city of Moab.

I envision Naomi a few steps ahead as the girls lag behind to talk out detail they don’t want to concern their mother-in-law with. Naomi stops abruptly, examines the fork in the road and speaks with great authority. “Go back home.” The girls look at her with shock, almost hurt, afraid they have offended her. After ten years together and deep loss, Naomi knows them and their hearts well. She is filled with compassion for them. Naomi gives them the only thing she has left, her blessing. She is giving these young widows the ability to leave her and to return to the riches of their mothers’ homes and start a family with a new husband. In her own way Naomi is saying thank you for all you have done; now you are free to go. The women have a moment at the crossroads; they weep together, and they decide to continue onward, at least for now.

How are you approaching the crossroads of life? Do you tend to change directions or stay the course?

I often hear people say: “well, I was at a crossroads, so it was time to change.” We tend to view crossroads as a warning, or a calling to change, when in fact they may be just the opposite. While crossroads offer us the freedom to change direction, they can also confirm the direction we are headed. The power of a crossroad is found in how we approach it. Do you know where you are headed? Who is directing your path? What are you clinging to? How will your choice help you get to your final destination?



Reflection:

Do I trust that God accepts all of me right where I am?

What do I need to leave behind as I journey towards greater intimacy with the Lord?

Like Ruth, help me to see the goodness that you have for me as greater than what I have built up for myself.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to press onward towards you. Help me to start from where I am and not feel a need to fix myself up for you, that I may seek you and your goodness above the temptations of the world's riches. Lord, draw me to you. Amen.

NOTES

Gleaning

DAY TWO

Ruth 1:11-14

PRAYER

Lord, as I open my heart and mind to the power of your word this week, help me glean the richness you have for me. Please remove distractions from my mind and my heart, that I may not neglect this small pocket of time with you.

SCRIPTURE

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

PSALMS 46, 47, 48

45 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.
46 The heathen raged; the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
47 The LORD of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.
48 Come, behold the works of the LORD; what desolations he hath made in the earth.
49 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.
50 Be still, and know that I am God.

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46:5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.
46:6 The heathen raged; the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
46:7 The LORD of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.
46:8 Come, behold the works of the LORD; what desolations he hath made in the earth.
46:9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.
46:10 Be still, and know that I am God.

of thy judgments:
12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof:
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.
14 For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.
15 Trust Not in Riches:
16 To the chief Musician,
49 A Psalm for the sons of Korah. Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together:
3 My mouth shall speak of

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PSALMS 48, 49, 50

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after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.
13 This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.
14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.
16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the plenty of his

Naomi knows what she wants: to be alone in her sorrow. She has lost everything she loved, is away from her homeland, and has heard the call of the Lord to return. Her response to God's call is the pairing of obedience and independence. It is as though she has said, "OK God, I'll do what you ask, but I'm doing it my way." Does that ring true for you? How many times have you heard the call of God on your life only to say, "Yes God, but I'm doing it my way?"

Can you recall a time you did it your way?
How did that work out for you?

As we read yesterday, Naomi does her best to leave her daughters-in-law in Moab and make the journey alone. But they are determined to stay with her. I would have loved to see Naomi's initial reaction to their "nope, we are coming with you" response. Unfortunately, facial reactions are not often recorded in scripture. After journeying a bit farther, Naomi formulates a plan to convince the girls to return home. In verses 11-13, Naomi speaks as if she was once a lawyer, presenting the very case for their departure. The women once again begin to weep together. The differing responses of the three women make me wonder what was the underlying emotion for their tears.

Could Orpah be crying over the joy of being sent back to her family? Could Ruth be shedding tears over the fear of the unknown? Is it possible that Naomi may have been feeling a sense of relief that she would be alone in her grief?

Allow yourself to think for a moment about a situation your soul is crying about. What is the motivation for those tears? What action are they pushing you towards? Maybe just maybe, the tears are to open your heart up and prepare you for the journey. All three ladies wept together, but it is Ruth who makes a choice that will impact eternity.

Orpah returns to her mother's house with Naomi's blessing. Upon initial reading, it is Orpah who is honoring her mother-in-law as she leaves per her request with a blessing.

In spite of the blessings to leave, Ruth chooses to cling to Naomi. This is the same word that would be used to describe an envelope being licked shut (remember those days), This is the type of cling that, if you tried to reopen the envelope, would cause the sides of the envelope to be shredded.

I believe Naomi honestly thought the girls' departure was what was best for all of them. But Ruth knew she needed to cling; she needed to embark on the rough journey ahead to come into the fullness of God. There will always be voices to bless your departure from the path God has you on, people who think they know what is best for you, or people who in their own grief are unable to see the need for you to stay the course.

Are you following the blessings of others, or are you clinging to the call God has put on your life?



Reflection:

Whose voices are you listening to?

Have you been tempted to take a blessing and walk away from what the Lord has to offer?

What truths of God can you cling to?

Make a list of the things God is asking you to cling to and those you are tempted to return to when the journey looks difficult.

Prayer:

Lord, please open my eyes to see what you have in store for me. Give me the strength to cling to you when I feel like turning back to the old comforts. Help me to hear your voice calling above the noise of those around me.

Amen.

NOTES

Gleaning

DAY THREE

Ruth 1:15-18

PRAYER

Lord, as I open my heart and mind to the power of your word this week, help me glean the richness you have for me. Please remove distractions from my mind and my heart, that I may not neglect this small pocket of time with you.

SCRIPTURE

And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 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. 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." And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Ruth and Naomi stand at another crossroads and watch Orpah walk away. Then Naomi gives it one last effort. *“See your sister-in-law has gone back; you should go after her.”* But this is to no avail. Ruth stands firm in her conviction to cling to Naomi and embark on the journey to Judah. She has been called by God, and nothing will convince her otherwise; this crossroads confirms her decision to follow God.

This section of verses contains, perhaps the most well-known portion of the book, Ruth’s bold commitment to Naomi. I have even heard these verses used in weddings! Yes, on the surface her words represent a commitment of one person to another. But on a deeper level, Ruth is declaring her commitment to the call God has put on her life, a call into the unknown.

When was the last time you felt the call of God that strongly? When did you stand before God and man and make a covenantal promise? Are you upholding your end of the deal, to cling to the journey God has laid before you despite the difficulties along the way? Can you see the ways Satan has tried to turn you back?

“And When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.”

The best way to silence the voices that speak against the call of God on our life and against the things we have committed to doing is allowing them to see that we are determined to do it.

When I got married a dear friend of mine gave me the best marriage advice; *“You are the marketer of your marriage; market it well.”* I would say this translates to everything in our lives: You are the marketer of your . . . job, family, church, children, friendships, your faith.

I’m not saying you should go around lying about how you feel, but scripture is clear. The way you speak is as important as the message you are speaking.

Colossians 3:8- *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.*

Ephesians 4:29 - *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

Proverbs 4:23 - *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*

Matthew 15:11- *It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.”*

Luke 6:45- *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

Psalm 51:10 is a simple daily prayer to help us align ourselves: *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”*

You can speak about the frustrations you are experiencing without slandering your husband. You can be angry about a situation at work and still give grace to those involved. What comes out of our mouths has a direct impact on how we perceive our circumstances, God’s goodness, and the call he has for us.

How are you speaking? How are you marketing your job when you are with your co-workers? How are you marketing your marriage when you are with your family and friends? If I were to sit at your lunch table, what would I be convinced you were determined to do?

Reflection:

What commitments have you spoken out loud?

How are you holding to those commitments?

Is there something the Lord is asking you to do?

What words of commitment can you speak to encourage you to stay the course?

Do others see your determination?

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help my words reflect the Goodness of your hand. Help me to see the areas I need to be a better marketer, that the testimony of my commitment to you and your will for my life will silence the voices of those who try to discourage me.

NOTES

Gleaning

DAY FOUR

Ruth 1:19-21

PRAYER

Lord, as I open my heart and mind to the power of your word this week, help me glean the richness you have for me. Please remove distractions from my mind and my heart, that I may not neglect this small pocket of time with you.

SCRIPTURE

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 woman said, "Is this Naomi?" She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 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?"



While scholars differ in their thoughts of exactly how long the 30+ mile journey from Moab to Bethlehem would have taken Naomi and Ruth, everyone agrees it was a long and treacherous journey, especially for two women. They would have been vulnerable to thieves and violent attacks as they crossed the Jordan River and climbed the steeply sloped hillsides. They had ten or more days of steady hiking and restless nights sleeping under the stars. But these women were determined to make it back to Judah. They were being called into the presence of God; Naomi was returning home, and Ruth was headed into the uncertainty of a foreign land.

When they arrive in Bethlehem, Naomi is greeted by her childhood friends. It is important to note that parents name their children based on distinguishing characteristics present during their birth or the first few days of life. Naomi means pleasant one. Imagine spending the first 48-72 hours with your newborn child and having the most noticeable trait be that she is pleasant. The women Naomi meets were quick to notice the change in her countenance.

It is such a stark difference that they ask, “Is this our Naomi?”

Naomi boldly responds by changing her own name from pleasant to Mara, meaning bitter. She then continues to gripe about how God has brought her back to Judah empty as if the Lord himself has brought the calamity against her. Never mind the fact that she, unlike her friends and relatives, ran away from God during the famine.

Naomi teaches us an important lesson: When you run and hide from God, you will not return to the same person.

The interesting thing about Naomi renaming herself Mara is that in the original Hebrew the name Mara implies strength. While Naomi saw her experiences as something that made her bitter and empty, the Lord saw them as an opportunity to fill her with his blessings and build strength.

What are you going through right now? Are you seeing this as an opportunity to be bitter or to grow in strength?



Reflection:

Are you choosing to see the emptiness or the fullness of God?

Take time to create a full list that includes the people God has sent into your life to encourage you, the moments that seem to have happened at just the right time, and the ways he has provided for your needs.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to stand in bold confidence to the call you have put on my life, even when I feel unseen, under-appreciated, and unheard. Help me to remember the commitment I have made to you, to cling to you no matter the difficulty of the journey. When I am surrounded by bitterness and emptiness, help me to remember your faithfulness and goodness. Show me the ways you have provided for me, even in the darkest of my moments. Amen.



NOTES

Gleaning

DAY FIVE

Ruth 1:22- 2:3

PRAYER

Lord, as I open my heart and mind to the power of your word this week, help me glean the richness you have for me. Please remove distractions from my mind and my heart, that I may not neglect this small pocket of time with you.

SCRIPTURE

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 the barley harvest.

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.



Do you ever feel as though God is late, or not going to show up at all? As a kid, my grandmother used to tell me to wait on the Lord. "He is never late, but he is also never early." His timing is not only perfect but is important because he sees the ripple effect of arriving at just the right moment. For Ruth, God's timing will not only provide food but the time needed to set up a love story that will bring about a plan of redemption for all mankind.

Before we enter into Chapter 2, I want to revisit Naomi's entrance into the city with Ruth. Amid all her whining about returning empty and renaming herself Mara, somehow Naomi missed the very presence of Ruth. Ruth would have been standing next to her when the women approached; she had nowhere else to go and didn't know a single person in this city. Yet Naomi not only fails to introduce her to her friends, she fails to see Ruth at all. She claims the Lord has brought her back empty. I don't know about you, but if I were someone's soul companion on a treacherous journey and they failed to even recognize me, I would be so hurt and angry.

Have you worked so hard alongside someone, or for someone else's good, and felt unseen, unappreciated, and under-valued as if nothing you have done to this point matters? Is there this creeping frustration rising in you because you know how hard you have worked and they never would have made it without you?

You are not alone. Ruth was standing at that moment.

Ruth's name means compassionate friend. Somehow while being forgotten and overlooked Ruth pushes forward; she stays the course. While she could have seen Naomi's lack of gratitude as a crossroads for her departure, Ruth remains; she clings, not only to Naomi but to the promise she made to God in Moab.

Ruth in all her humility and gentleness asks her mother-in-law for permission to go to the fields and glean. Naomi, in the first recorded conversation between the women since they left Moab, simply tells her to go. So Ruth 1) set out 2) went and 3) gleaned.

Ruth happened to come to a part of the field that belonged to Boaz, a relative. God's hand is at work, and if Ruth had allowed her feelings to stop her from serving Naomi or going to the field with a positive attitude, she may have missed the opportunity that is about to show up.

Colossians 3:23-24 reminds us *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

Ruth knew who she was serving. Do you know who you work for? So often Satan uses our frustration with a broken system, with fallen broken people, to discourage us from staying the course. Ruth could have walked away from Naomi; she had many opportunities, but she knew she was called to serve this broken woman in a system that was not meant for her to prosper. Ruth stayed the course with joy, and the result was something greater than she could have ever asked or imagined.



Reflection:

Do you trust God's timing?

Make a list of moments that seemed to happen at just the right time.

Are you more like Naomi, who sees her circumstances as empty, or

Ruth who can serve despite being overlooked?

How are you spending your days amid the hardship you face?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to trust your timing. Help me to see that you are working on a plan to provide for my good and your glory. Help motivate me to do the right thing when I am feeling lost and hungry, alone, unseen by others, and underappreciated. Draw me close to you so that my eyes may be opened to the work of your hands. Amen.

NOTES