

RUTH

Our next character study takes a detour from the Judges of Israel and is the name of the next book of the Bible... Ruth. <<Let's Pray >>

Key Passages: Book of Ruth, Mat 1:5;

The book of Ruth opens with a brief history of a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi. They had two sons Mahlon and Chilion.

Ruth 1:4 "Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years."

It is important to note the history of the Moabites. They are the descendants of Lot and his daughter who tricked him into an incestuous relation.

Gen 19:36-37 "Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. And the first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day."

What's interesting, is that while there was no prohibition of Israelites from marrying Moabites, Moabites couldn't worship with the rest of the congregation for 10 generations.

Deu 23:3, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever"

It turns out that Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion end up dying and leaving Naomi and her two daughter-in-laws as widows. Naomi tells them that there's no longer a reason for them to stay with her. That they should return to their people.

Ruth 1:13, "...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 was of the belief that God had it out for her and had taken her husband and sons as punishment. How often do we or people we know feel that God is punishing us

during times of trials? So Orpah goes back to her people. But Ruth is still there. And she says something extraordinary,

Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said: “Entreat 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.”

Ruth’s vow of loyalty and dedication really touches Naomi. She says, “And your God, my God”... she’s willing to submit herself to and worship the God that Naomi worships... the same God that Naomi claims is punishing her. Despite that, Ruth was willing to forsake her heritage and her history.

They are in bad financial shape, so they return to Jerusalem and stay near a field.

Ruth 2:2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.”

“Gleaning” is the act of picking up the stuff left behind by the harvesters/reapers. Mosaic Law prohibited reapers from going back and picking up the remains themselves.

Deut 24:21, When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

This was a form of charity while allowing the recipient to retain their dignity. Here’s an example of charity that isn’t a simply hand-out... it created a situation where the recipient could work for what they received.

So Ruth had gone to the fields to pick at the stuff left behind. These particular fields were owned by a man named Boaz. When he finds out who she is, he tells her to only glean from his fields, hang out with the women of his household, ordered his men not to touch her, and tells her that she is welcome to drink the water set aside for the workers. She asks why he is being so generous to her, especially since she is a foreigner.

Ruth 2:11-12, And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. [12] The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

Boaz then invites her to eat with them.

Ruth 2:14, Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar."

After the meal, Ruth prepares to go back to the fields to glean more from the fields..

Ruth 2:15:16, And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. [16] Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

Immediately we see even greater charity being given to Ruth. She's allowed to glean from the first pickings and that reapers are to deliberately drop stuff for her to pick up.

Ruth returns to Naomi and tells her the land belongs to Boaz...and as it turns out, he is one of Naomi's relatives,(actually, he was a relative of her late husband Elimelech).

Ruth 2:20, Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!"

It seems like Naomi changed her tune. She now has a feeling of hope. She has a plan to secure a future for Ruth and instructs her to get cleaned up and dressed up and go out to Boaz late at night after he has eaten and fallen asleep... and lay at his feet. She does this and he awakens.

Ruth 3:9-10, And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."

[10] Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich.

Boaz agrees to take care of her, but there is another relative who is more closely related to her, and by law he has priority over Boaz. As it turns out, Naomi had sold her husband's property and it was the right and obligation of a relative (a kinsman) to buy back the property. So Boaz meets with the other relative, and he was willing to redeem the property until he found out that he had to take Ruth as well... to carry on her dead husband's name.

Ruth 4:6, And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

It is commonly believed that this relative already had a wife and kids and that by taking in Ruth, he ran the risk of having his inheritance intermingled with that of Ruth's dead husband.

So Boaz, redeems the land and takes Ruth as his wife. And Ruth had a son by Boaz.

Ruth 4:17, ...And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The last mention of Ruth is in Matthew 1:5... the genealogy of Jesus.

Key Character Traits:

- **Loyal**

She remained with and took care of her mother-in-law.

- **Selfless, Caring**

She insisted on staying with Naomi, insisted on working in the fields to support them. In her interactions with Boaz, she was careful to make sure that there wasn't even the appearance of anything inappropriate.

MEANING OF HERS NAME

Her name was the Moabite word for, "friendship".

EXPERIENCE

- **She was a Moabite.**
Ruth 1:4
- **She was the daughter-in-law of Naomi**
Ruth 1:13, etc.
- **She gleaned the fields**
Ruth 2:2
- **She married Boaz and had a son**
Ruth 4:10, 4:17

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Ruth was a Moabite but she became a believer and follower of Jehovah, the One True God. She had forsaken the land, people, and gods of her ancestry to serve the God of Israel.

SHORTCOMINGS

None of Ruth's shortcomings were recorded.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Virtually none of Ruth's accomplishments are documented. All that we know for certain, is that she worked in the fields for a short time.

GLORY TO GOD

Through the life of Ruth, God's faithfulness was illustrated in how He provided for Ruth and Naomi. Although their circumstances started out very poorly, Ruth chose to worship God. After she proved through her selfless actions that her conversion was genuine, God brought them together with their kinsman-redeemer, Boaz.

The story of Ruth is a "Type" (an example, or foreshadowing) of Salvation by Grace. It proves that God wants all to come to Him. By including Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus (Mat 1:5), it demonstrates the "grafting in" of Gentiles into the family of God.

ESSENTIAL TRUTH

Law leads us to Grace. Throughout the book of Ruth there were direct and secondary references to Mosaic Law. From the origins of Moab, prohibitions against Moabites, requirements for reaping and gleaning, and laws regarding inheritance all led Ruth to an exhibition of God's grace through the actions of Boaz.

It doesn't matter what our background is, the Lord wants to use us. There are 14 references to Ruth's Moabite heritage. By Mosaic Law Moabites were prohibited from worshipping with Israelites for 10 generations. Not only did God bless Ruth for her conversion, but He included her, in the bloodline of Jesus! .

We can't predict the ripple-effects of our witness. Naomi must have been a great witness for the Lord. Even though they were faced with hardships, and at one point Naomi blamed their predicament on God's punishment, Ruth still decided to forsake the god of her ancestors and worship the God of Israel. The eventual result was Ruth giving birth to one of the ancestors in Jesus' genealogy.

[reminds me of... Calf with one short leg.](#)

LIFE APPLICATION

Live life in freedom of God's Grace. The purpose of Old Testament Law was to show us that humanity is incapable of working out its own salvation. No one can keep all of God's law... all the time. We need a savior. Mosaic Law was fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus gave believers 2 commandments as recorded in Mark 12:29-31. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love others as yourself. So go out and DO IT!

[Since we aren't under the burden of Old Testament Law, we should live our lives to serve God and love others. Without having to worry about dietary limitations and countless rituals, we are free to focus on the Lord and others.](#)

[Easter : Catholic legalism](#)

Our past is no excuse not to serve the Lord. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are washed clean... our sins are forgiven, paid in full by the blood sacrifice of Jesus. We are first freed from the shackles of legalism, and then freed from the bondage of sin. We shouldn't use our past as a reason why we can't serve the Lord.

[The enemy likes to make us think that we are not worthy of serving. And that's true! But serving is never about ourselves... it is about the Lord. And HE will equip us with what we need. And it is HIS sovereign right as our Lord to command us according to HIS will.](#)

Maintain a solid Christian walk and be a good witness!!! As Christians we're under a microscope. Skeptics and enemies of Christianity are just looking for us to stumble so they can point out our failings. But being a Christian isn't about being

“perfect”... it’s about being forgiven of our sins because of Jesus’ sacrifice. How we deal with our failings can be just as powerful a witness as “perfection”...maybe even moreso.

When skeptics see that the Lord still loves us, He corrects us, and blesses us when we repent, they’ll see that the God we love and serve is NOT an angry God just waiting for us to trip up so He can zap us... but a God that loves us so much that He gave His only Begotten Son.

LEADING LESSON - *What do you think is the leading lesson of this man's life?*

IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE - *How does the leading lesson impact your life? What specific changes do you need to make to become a person of like character?*

FUTURE PLANS - *What specific action do you plan to take to grow in the proper character traits?*

EXPRESS OBEDIENCE - *Pray to God your desire to be obedient in this area of your life*