

Ruth: Trusting God in the Unknown

Ruth 1: Love's Commitment

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

How do you handle life's unknowns and difficulties? How do you tend to respond when you're unsure about the future? The Book of Ruth begins in a time when Israel is under the period of the Judges, a time marked by chaos, moral decay, and a lack of godly leadership. This was a time where 'Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.' Yet even in the darkest of times, God is still present and working. Do you believe this? Do you trust Him in the dark moments, knowing that He can bring beauty from ashes?

Ruth, a Moabite woman, becomes part of God's redemptive plan through her loyalty, love, and faithfulness. One choice of hers changes the whole world! This story shows how God works through the day-to-day hardships and joys of our lives, even though God is hardly mentioned in this book. The characters talk about God, but the writer never mentions God doing anything directly. But God's providence is still at work in the lives and circumstances of these people, and He uses their faithful obedience to bring about His redemptive purpose. This can be true for us just the same. So let's see what God is up to as the story begins with a family fleeing their home in Bethlehem due to a famine.

Read: Ruth 1 (NIV)

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

1. *Let's set the scene! (v. 1 & 2)* When does this story take place? Who is involved? Where are they from, where are they going & why are they leaving?
2. What events take place during the family's time in Moab (v. 3-5)?
3. At this point, what does Naomi hear and what is her response (v. 6-7)?
4. What does she tell her daughter-in-laws to do and how do they respond (v. 8-10)?
5. After their response, what plea does Naomi make with them (v. 11-13)?
6. After much urging on Naomi's part, what do the daughters-in-law do (v. 14)?
 - How would you summarize Ruth's response (v. 16-17)?
7. What happens after these two women return to Bethlehem (v. 19)?
 - How would you summarize Naomi's response to them (v. 20-21)?
8. What important event was just beginning when Naomi and Ruth arrived (v. 22)?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

1. Why does Naomi urge Orpah and Ruth to return home (v. 8-13)? Was Orpah wrong for returning home?
2. What is the significance of Ruth's decision to stay with Naomi? What is she willing to give up in order to be with Naomi?
 - So why would Ruth choose to follow Naomi despite the unknown (v. 16-18)? What does this reveal about Ruth's character? How does this challenge your understanding of 'love'?
3. Based on Naomi's words (v. 13, 20-21), what emotional state is she in at the end of this chapter? How can bitterness affect one's view of God and the world?
4. What role does God seem to play in Naomi's situation?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

1. How does Ruth's loyalty inspire you? Her love for Naomi led her to stay despite this going against her own personal gain. Are there areas in your life where God is calling you to love others even when it is difficult or takes personal sacrifice? What opportunities do you have to exemplify this same type of love as Ruth did to Naomi?
2. Naomi believed that God was against her. Maybe you too have wondered "how could the God of love allow me to go through these things..." Have you felt this way? What tends to be your response when life doesn't go the way you expected?
 - *From our reading we don't yet know how the story ends. (But it ends with good news that leads to Jesus!).* How can you begin to see God's faithfulness in those difficult moments in your life even when you don't know how the story ends?