

Sunday School Lesson

Ruth 1 & 2: Naomi's, Ruth's & Orpah's Decisions (August 23, 2026)

Setting the Scene

Why is this small book of a short vignette included in the Old Testament? TBD.

- Takes place “in the time of the Judges” – about 1200 – 1020BC
- Probably written by Samuel ~1000 BC
- A common Jewish attitude of superiority
- Ezra & Nehemiah prohibited foreign marriages

Read **Ruth 1:1-5**

When did this take place? _____

What was the problem? _____

Chief Characters:

Husband	Elimelech	(means “my God is King”); died
Wife	Naomi	(means “Pleasant”)
Son	Maholn	married Moabite Orpha; later died
Son	Chilion	married Moabite Ruth; later died

What was Elimelech’s decision: _____

The family was from _____ and they went to _____

What was significant about “the time of the Judges?” **Read Judges 21:25.**

What To Do?

Naomi has lived outside of Israel for 10 years. She is a widow with two widowed daughters-in-law. What do you think is the problem here?

What is Naomi’s decision? Read **Ruth 1:6-9.** _____

The three of them argued about this. The conclusion is in Ruth 1:12-14.

What was Orpah’s decision? _____

Ruth stated her case to her mother-in-law.

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, "Entreat me not 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 even death parts me from you." ¹⁸ And when Na'omi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

And, Ruth's decision?

Ruth is leaving the Moabite gods and adopting Naomi's faith in the Israelite God. So, they returned to Bethlehem, where Naomi was recognized and derided.

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 Na'omi?" ²⁰ She said to them, "Do not call me Na'omi, 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 Na'omi, when the Lord has afflicted me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

This was at the beginning of the 3-month barley season.

Naomi

With no directly related men to care for her, Naomi determines that her best chances may be with a wealthy relative of her late husband's family.

Gleaning

After harvesting grain there will always be some stalks that did not get cut, and some heads of grain that get dropped on the ground. Leviticus directed farmers to leave this.

"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God."
– Leviticus 23:22

Boaz & Ruth

Read **Ruth 2:1-3**

Boaz arrives at his field and sees Ruth out in his field.

Ruth has caught Boaz' eye. His field hands told him she was a foreigner, a Moabite. But, Boaz is compassionate and calls her "my daughter," sweeping away any division between them and making her as close as family. (Is this not an

example of Christ's compassion and his inclusion of even foreigners in his "family"?)

Ruth asks, "Why me?", and the answer is in God's gracious plan to include an alien widow in Christ's lineage from David.

¹¹ But Bo'az answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹² The Lord recompense you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" - Ruth 2:11-12

Where have we seen "wings"? Exodus 19:4 *"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."*

And Psalms 17:8 *"Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings"*

Boaz can't help but be impressed with Ruth's devotion to Naomi and her humility towards himself ("your maidservant"). He instructs his men to be generous with their harvest "leavings" and to allow Ruth unhindered latitude.

Read **Ruth 2:13-17**.

Though she is a foreigner, and not one of Boaz' maidservants, she is humble and respectful to him and appreciative of his generosity towards her.

Even though Ruth was working for herself and Naomi, Boaz invited her to eat at his table with his field hands. He even gave her some of his parched grain, which she ate and had left-overs. At Christ's Table there is always a generous supply – when He fed the five thousand, were there not baskets of left-overs? This reiterates the New Testament point that there is always more grace. Boaz's instructions to his workers allowed Ruth privileges far beyond the legal requirements to provide for the poor. Their relationship is developing.

After threshing the barley from the husks, she had an ephah (a dry measure ~20 quarts). Ruth took all this home to Naomi and recounted the day's adventure (Ruth 2:18-23).

Naomi is now reassured that Boaz' grace and generosity will see them through, not only the 3 months of the barley harvest, but through the coming year. Yahweh is at work in this situation.

Summary:

What happens to you is usually not your choice; how you respond is. Will it be in faith?

As John Wesley wrote:

“Let me do all the good I can, to all the people I can, by all the means I can, as often as I can, for I shall not pass this way again.”

Romans 8:28 *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.*

It is easy to think that grace should go to the worthy. But, God’s grace has nothing to do with deserving; it is simply His gift because He loves us.

One of the most powerful statements of loyalty is in Ruth 1:16b-17a – “*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.*”

References:

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