



# CROSS OF GRACE CHURCH

SPRING 2022 BIBLE READING PLAN - RUTH, PART 1

SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1

---

## Questioning the Kindness of God in Difficult Moments

### I. Context

**Discussion:** *What was Israel like when the judges ruled?*

It came about in the days when the judges governed – In Israel this was a lawless time. There was no central authority. They had no king and no government. A cycle of deliverance followed by disobedience and oppression repeated itself over and over. Generally speaking, the people had a short memory for following after God. Tribes were loosely connected. And most telling, Judges in several places repeats the phrase that “everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” The last few chapters of Judges depict several terrible examples of what happens when people make decisions based on their own morality and understanding rather than on God’s will. Clearly, the exalted nation of Israel, God’s chosen people, has lost its sense of direction. The book of Ruth shines like a beautiful diamond against this bleak and dark time of Israel’s history.

### II. Read Ruth 1:1-5

**1** *In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2* *The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3* *But Elimelech, the*

husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, **5** and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

### III. Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. During the time of Judges, people did what was right in their own eyes. How have things fared for you when you “did what was right in your own eyes”?
2. Do you think it was the right choice for them to move to Moab? Why or why not?
3. What kind of temptations might they face in this foreign country?
4. What did the Bible have to say about widows during this time?
  - a. Widows were grouped with other vulnerable members of society. (See Deuteronomy 14:29; Deuteronomy 16:11; Deuteronomy 24:20; Deuteronomy 26:12)
  - b. God recognized the widow’s plight and rose to her defense: *“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling”* (Psalm 68:5). A person who denied justice to a widow was cursed by God: *“Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow”* (Deuteronomy 27:19). Laws and special provisions were put in place to safeguard widows against neglect and abuse.
  - c. Since God honors widows and treats them with compassion, we should do the same: *“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow”* (Isaiah 1:17).

- d. There was almost nothing worse than being a widow in the ancient world. Widows were taken advantage of or ignored. They would equate to the homeless in American society. They were almost always poverty-stricken. God's law, therefore, provided that the nearest relative of the dead husband should care for the widow; but Naomi had no relatives in Moab, and she did not know if any of her relatives were alive in Israel.

#### **IV. Continue Reading Ruth 1:6-18**

**6** Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. **7** 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. **8** 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. **9** 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. **10** And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." **11** 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? **12** 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, **13** 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." **14** Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

**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, "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. 17 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.” 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.*

## **V. Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Are you surprised by Ruth's decision to stay with her mother-in-law? Why or why not?
  - a. **NOTE:** Moab was one of the nations that oppressed Israel during the period of the judges (**Judges 3:12**), so there was hostility between the two nations.
2. Naomi said that God was against her. Was she right to think and feel this way? Why or why not?
3. Have you been in a vulnerable situation where you asked the question, “where is God’s kindness?” Tell of when you were vulnerable and God or others cared for you, or a time when you were able to care for someone who was vulnerable.
4. Is there anyone in your life that is not experiencing the kindness of God that perhaps you are called to show the kindness of God to?

## **VI. Continue Reading Ruth 1:19-22**

*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 Naomi?” 20 She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; 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 Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"*

*22 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 barley harvest.*

## **VII. Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Think back to a time when you questioned the Lord's favor toward you. Are you able to see the Lord's kindness when you look back to those dark times? Perhaps you have felt like Naomi whose whole world seemed to have collapsed before her. Yet God gave her a committed, Moabite daughter-in-law to show His loving-kindness towards her.
2. How can we encourage others who are blinded by bitterness?

## **VIII. Application**

- A. **Whenever you face an important decision**, God should be first, middle, and last as you consider what to do.
  - a. The Bible – What does God's Word say?
  - b. Prayer – Have you prayed? Are you submitting yourself to God's plans or merely asking Him to bless your own?
  - c. Counsel – Have you asked other godly believers their opinion? It is easy to ask people you know who will support you. It is beneficial to

ask people you know will give you the truth, even when it is hard to accept.

**B. Commitment to God often comes through commitment to his people.**

Be the *hesed* (*kindness, mercy*) of God to others. Listen to people and gain an understanding of their circumstances. Pray for their bitterness and encourage them with how the Lord has been kind to them.

**C. See the picture of Christ portrayed in Ruth.** Ruth spoke encouragement to her mother-in-law out of the kindness of her heart. Jesus *lived* out her words: Ruth 1:16-17, *“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.”*

- a. Jesus came to dwell on earth with God’s creation.
- b. Our sin was leading us towards death apart from God. Yet Jesus took on our sin and died on the cross for us.
- c. Jesus clung to us despite our sin. He met us where sin had taken us.
- d. While our sin was leading us to be buried in death, Christ took on our sin and was buried in the tomb.
- e. Jesus lived among us, willingly took on our burdens, died on the cross for us, and departed death by being raised from the dead.
- f. For the believer, the Holy Spirit now resides with us and goes where we go.