



Walking with God:

A Study on the Book of

Ruth

Day Five

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Following God: A Study on the Book of Ruth

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Welcome to Day Five of Walking With God! Today we will wrap up our time in the first chapter of Ruth by summarizing what we have learned and making a few in-depth applications. Please turn on your computer, go to the BLB website, and get your study supplies.

Please take a moment to pray and ask God to forgive you of any sin and guide you during your study time. Let's begin!

Please read Chapter One of Ruth in a version that is new to you on BLB. Write your initials on the line when you finished your reading. _____

1. **According to Ruth 1:1, what attitude characterizes the time of the Judges?**
2. **What is happening in Israel/Bethlehem during this time?**

Famines do not happen by accident; they are sent by God to judge, warn, correct or redirect His people. In short, a famine is a strategy used by God to get the attention of His people.

Ironically, Bethlehem, the House of Bread is experiencing a famine of bread. There is another famine, however, that is worse than a famine of bread.

3. **Please look up Amos 8:11 and record what you learn about *famine* in your journal.**

I believe that the famine of Ruth 1:1 is the perfect object lesson—it is an *outward sign* of an *inward condition*. God's people aren't starving just for bread, they are also starving for the *Bread of Life*. Modern-day Christians can suffer from the same condition. Please consider some of the signs of spiritual famine:

- a. **Fruitless:** Living only for self, no outlet of ministry or service. Gifts and talents are used only for self-gratification.
- b. **Lawless:** Doing what is right in your own eyes when you know God's Word commands otherwise. Lawlessness often involves wrong relationships.
- c. **Wordless:** No time in God's Word, poor church attendance, watching or reading material that is contrary to God's Word
- d. **Hopeless:** Feeling that nothing will ever change in your life. You are stuck and living without vision or purpose.

Antidote to ending the famine? Eat heavily of the Living Bread.

- e. **Are there any signs in your life that you are experiencing a famine?**

If you find that you are in the middle of a famine, please be assured that God is patiently waiting for you to return to Him. Like Naomi, you have not wandered so far that He cannot bring you home. Ask Him for His forgiveness and accept His grace. God is waiting to bless you—do not wait another day. To return or not to return, the choice is yours. Please turn back now.

Next, we will take a look at what happened to two women—one who turned back and one who didn't.

- 4. Please read Ruth 1:12-18.**
- a. According to verse 14, what did Orpah do? What did Ruth do?**
- b. The NKJV states that Ruth *clung* to Naomi. Please look up the word *clung* on BLB and record your findings in your journal.**

When Ruth *clung* to her mother-in-law, she showed by her outward actions what had already occurred in her heart. Because Ruth uses the covenant name for God, I believe she was not only dedicates her life to Naomi but she also dedicates her life to the God of Israel.

Let's contrast the outcomes of the decisions of Ruth and Orpah:

Orpah weeps and leaves, but Ruth clings and commits.
Orpah chooses Moab, but Ruth chooses the Promised Land,
Orpah chooses her mother's home, but Ruth chooses her Father's house.
Orpah turns back to her gods, but Ruth turns to the One True God.
Orpah lives to serve herself, but Ruth chooses a life of service to others.

Orpah's way is the easiest, looks the safest, and is the most logical but she completely misses God. Orpah follows her own heart and does what is right in her own eyes and as a result she disappears from the pages of Scripture. It is only when we live for Christ that we influence our world.

- 5. What do you need to do right now in order to follow God?**
- 6. Above, if you listed some things that you need to give up in order to follow God, please list what you will gain in choosing to follow Him.**

Now let's focus on Naomi's walk with the Lord.

- 7. Please read Ruth 1:19-21**
- a. How does Naomi describe herself in verse 20?**
- b. Why is she bitter?**

Usually in Scripture when someone experiences a name change, God initiates the change and it marks a positive event. Saul to Paul, Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah. A name change signifies a deeper relationship, calling and blessing from God. In this case, however, Naomi instigates the name modification for a negative reason—bitterness.

8. Please look up the word *bitter* on BLB and follow the *Root Word (Etymology)* link back to the primitive root. Reflect on the definitions and how they may apply to the life of a Christian. Record your findings in your journal.

When you followed the links back to the primitive root did you notice that one of the definitions of *bitter* is *to embitter oneself*? Chilling.

While writing this segment of *Following God*, I was on vacation in Michigan's beautiful Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park. One night God spoke to my heart about bitterness. I believe He showed me the following things about bitterness from the life of Naomi:

- Bitterness makes you stuck. Bitterness attaches you to the past and hinders forward progress.
 - Bitterness is a choice. I can choose to forgive myself and others or I can choose to destroy my life with bitterness.
 - Bitterness affects every area of one's life. Decisions, relationships, worldviews can all be defiled by bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 says, "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."
 - Bitterness is the result of choosing our own way (sin) over God's way. Sin always results in the bitterness of death.
9. In your journal please comment on how bitterness affects/has affected your life and what you need to do about it.

One last reflection on Chapter One of Ruth...

The first chapter of Ruth is full of *opposite concepts*. Scan Ruth 1:1-22 and list as many opposites as you can find. You will find my opposite concepts and closing on the next page.

famine: harvest
emptiness: fullness
death: life
gods: God
Moab: Israel
Mara: Naomi
Orpah: Ruth
leaving: returning

In closing, remember: It may not make sense. Others may not understand. Some may try to talk you out of it. It will cost you everything, but like Ruth, choose to follow God.

May God bless you as you continue to follow Him.

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