

# Finer Grounds

## Judges and Ruth

### Lesson 12: A Leap of Faith (Ruth 1-2)

The progression of Ruth mirrors that of Judges. While Judges 1 began on a positive note and quickly went downhill, Ruth will start with a story of heartbreak and despair only to conclude with a beautiful account of love and redemption.

**Bible Marking: Don't forget that throughout this lesson you should be marking all places you see Bethlehem.**

#### Read Ruth 1:1-5

It is ironic that the word Bethlehem means "house of bread and praise," and yet our opening scene shows it devastated by famine. Because of the warnings and promises of God (Leviticus 26:18-20), we can assume that this famine was the result of disobedience on the part of the Israelites.

**Describe the events that occur in this passage.**

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The writer reveals a depressing tale of famine and death. Imagine the hopelessness Naomi felt after leaving her homeland behind and then losing her closest family. The despair would be unbearable.

#### Read Ruth 1:6-18

Upon hearing that the Lord had lifted the famine in Judah, Naomi determined that she would return. It would not be a solution to all of her problems though. A widow of her age would

not have many options. She most likely would have ended up homeless or sold into slavery. Because of this bleak future, Naomi was adamant that her daughter-in-laws stayed behind and return to their own parents. She assumed that they would be able to remarry and be provided for.

**What was the response of the Naomi's daughter-in-laws?**

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Orpah wasn't the bad daughter-in-law, she only made the most logical, safe choice. Ruth, however, was willing to sacrifice any hope for a normal life so that she could take care of Naomi. Her love for her mother-in-law superseded her personal desires.

**What is one way that you can show self-sacrificing love this week?**

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**What promises did Ruth make to Naomi?**

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**Describe the significance of each of these promises.**

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Ruth was willing to give up her life, her family, and her people. She was fully committing to Naomi and more importantly to Yahweh. By demonstrating this kind of love, not only did she protect Naomi, her life was blessed beyond anything she could have imagined; all it took was extreme love and a leap of faith.

**Have you ever taken a leap of faith that completely changed your life? What were the circumstances?**

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**What brave action could you take this week that would demonstrate your faith in God?**

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## Read Ruth 1:19-22

Upon Naomi's return to Israel, her friends hardly recognized her. Worn down by the trials of life, Naomi (meaning pleasant) requested to be called Mara (bitter).

**What is the significance of her change in names?**

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**According to Ruth 1:22, what event coincided with Naomi and Ruth's arrival?**

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The mention of the wheat and barley harvest is not coincidental; after a time of famine, this

harvest would have been a reminder of God's faithful provision for His people. This theme will continue throughout the rest of the book of Ruth

## Read Ruth 2:1-7

Because Ruth's purpose was to help Naomi, she insisted on going and collecting food to support her. They did not have their own field so Ruth availed herself of one of the only options available to the poor at the time.

**Read Leviticus 19:9-10. What obligation did field owners have to the poor?**

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The field Ruth chose to glean from belonged to Boaz, a relative of Naomi. The translation "man of great wealth" used in Ruth 1:1 doesn't really do justice to the original language. This is the same phrase used to describe Gideon and David's mighty men. It is often rendered "mighty man of valor" Boaz was not merely a rich man; he was valiant and respected by his community. We will see his godly character shine throughout the rest of this account.

**According to the servant's description in Ruth 2:7, how would you describe Ruth?**

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Not only is Ruth loving, faithful and willing to take chances, she shows herself to be hardworking and diligent. She was careful to be at the field all day to make sure she had the opportunity to glean. This wasn't easy or exciting work, imagine having to bend and pick up scraps of grain all day long in the hot sun. I get tired

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after weeding my garden for ten minutes! Her loyalty and perseverance will prove worthwhile in the end.

**Read Ruth 2:8-16**

**Describe the interaction between Ruth and Boaz found in this passage.**

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**According to Ruth 2:11, why was Boaz treating Ruth with such love and respect?**

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It is a common theme throughout scripture that service done to others blesses our lives. God expects our lives on this earth to be lives of service. This isn't always easy, but it is required.

**Read Matthew 25:31-46 and describe the scene laid out in this passage.**

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**Based on this passage, how does God feel about service to others?**

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Ruth's selfless attitude and willingness to work made her desirable to Boaz. He favored her so much that he actually had her eat with his reapers. Boaz was not at all arrogant or caught up in titles, he wanted to show love to this woman who had given up everything for a member of his family.

**What command did Boaz give to his servants Ruth 2:15-16?**

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**Read Ruth 2:17-23**

When Ruth returned home from the day's work with an enormous amount of wheat, Naomi was surprised. She was thankful for whoever had taken notice of Ruth. When she found out it was Boaz, Naomi was elated. Boaz was not some distant relation; he was, in fact, one of their closest relatives, a "kinsman redeemer." The closest kinsman redeemer had the right to redeem the property (including the wife) of his relative upon his death. Naomi understood this and immediately saw hope for an end to their poverty.

**What advice did Naomi give Ruth in Ruth 2:22?**

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Naomi recognized the magnitude of this opportunity and wasn't about to let it slip away. She wanted Ruth to stay as close as possible to the one who could redeem her; the man who could lift them both up out of the dreadful condition in which they found themselves.

Next week we will examine how the book of Ruth and the concept of the kinsman redeemer is actually a shadow of Christ. For now though, I will leave you with this thought. Will you follow closely to your redeemer? Do you keep Him in your sights every day while you are working in His field? How can you make following Christ your primary goal?