

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

Day 1: Ruth 1:7

So Naomi set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah.

Read first the entire story of Ruth (unless you are familiar with it already) then go on to look at each day's reading so you might know the story. The Hebrew term translated "daughter-in-law" is used most often to mean "bride." This shows that both women had very good chances of remarriage and children. Naomi had to return to her hometown in hopes of finding some mere possibility of life. She had resigned herself to the rest of her days being sad and hopeless.

Question: Look at chapter 1 of Ruth and see why Naomi went back to Bethlehem. What does the word Bethlehem mean in Hebrew?

Challenge: What would it take for you to become hopeless?

Scripture: Ruth 1:1-22

Day 2: Ruth 1:8-9

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.'

Naomi appreciated how well she was received by the town in which she and her family lived (Naomi was a foreigner in the village she lived in). The term translated "kindly" in Hebrew is *hesed*. *Hesed* is considered an essential quality of God. It is used to describe unmerited acts of God's grace and mercy. For a person to show *hesed* is to demonstrate loving kindness that far exceeds the law. Naomi implies that the two women were loyal to their husbands beyond the call of duty. Because of their devotion to their husbands, the Lord will grant them "security" in the form of new husbands.

Question: Why not go to their father's house?

Challenge: Can you think of a phrase that means *hesed* in English?

Scripture: Ruth 2:1-23

Day 3: Ruth 1:10-11

They said to her, 'No, we will return with you to your people.' But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husband's?'

Naomi believes that God has abandoned her and she does not want any of her trouble to hurt Orpah and Ruth's future possibilities. Naomi makes a persuasive argument and reason would say that Ruth and Orpah should not come with her.

Question: Do you think bad luck is catching?

Challenge: What happened to Naomi for her to think she was somehow cursed?

Scripture: Ruth 3:1-18

Day 4: Ruth 1:12-15

Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? So she said, 'See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.'

Orpah is convinced by Naomi and goes back to her home. There is no criticism of Orpah for going back. She has done the reasonable thing and in fact God has not called her to follow Naomi. Naomi is so low that she cannot see any hope and she does not offer up any hope for Ruth and Orpah.

Question: Would Naomi's reasoning make sense to you? Why?

Challenge: When a tragedy hits is it better to move from the area and rebuild or go back and rebuild?

Scripture: Ruth 4:1-22

Day 5: Ruth 1:16-17

But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!'

Ruth's statement implies that she has already given herself over to Naomi's God and will follow wherever God leads her. Ruth is affirming that it is her God and her people and because of this she must go and be with Naomi in life and death. Ruth has hope not in a new husband and children but in the God of Israel and just like Abraham and Sarah believes God's promise even when it looks foolish and unattainable.

Question: Why do you think Ruth wants to follow Naomi?

Challenge: What in Ruth's statement implies she already believes in Naomi's God?

Scripture: Genesis 18:9-15, 21:1-7

Day 6: Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

The term "honor" means to give weight to or to take seriously. We are instructed to take seriously the life of our parents. We do this by receiving and using what they pass on to us. They must tell us (and we must listen) about God and creation and redemption. They must tell us how to survive practically in they would. We need to hear their advice for us so that as we grow older we might not be afraid of the future.

Question: How do you take seriously your Mother?

Challenge: Name three pieces of practical advice on living you received from your parents and (if you are a woman) what have you passed on to the next generation?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:6-21