



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Ruth 1:6-18 New International Version August 11, 2019

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 11, 2019**, is from **Ruth 1:6-18**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Ruth 1:6) When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.

Because of a famine, Naomi, her husband, Elimelech, and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, migrated to Moab. Moab, a country created by the descendants of the eldest son of Lot, was idolatrous and a traditional enemy of Israel. They left Bethlehem, which means "House of Bread," in the land of Judah. Bethlehem would later be called the "City of David," where Samuel anointed David as a future king. Her sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, but her sons died in Moab before they had fathered any children. Ruth would become the great grandmother of King David, and an ancestor of Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem. Ruth is mentioned only once in the New Testament. In Matthew 1:5,6, we read from the genealogy of Jesus, "And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King

David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah”

(Ruth 1:7) So she 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.

Naomi lived about 10 years in Moab. After her husband and sons died, the three widows left for the land of Judah, where they had heard that the famine had ended and there was food. In the beginning, both of her daughters-in-law resolved to accompany Naomi back to her homeland.

(Ruth 1:8) 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.

As they went, Naomi became more determined to return to her home in Bethlehem. But she as they travelled, she also became more concerned for the future of her daughters-in-law and wanted to do what was best for their financial wellbeing. She told Orpah and Ruth to go back to their homes, because they might find new husbands there, and she blessed them praying that the LORD would deal kindly with them in Moab. These women had loved and cared for one another. Naomi appreciated all her daughters-in-law had done for her; so, she wanted what she thought was best for them.

(Ruth 1:9) The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.” Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud.

Having lost all the men in their family, security became a primary concern to poverty-stricken Naomi. She hoped to find security among her old neighbors and relatives, where the Law of God made provision for widows. She wanted her beloved daughters-in-law to find security too. She prayed that the LORD would grant them security through husbands. Naomi had lost her husband and two sons in death, and her faith in God was badly shaken. Despite this, for the sake of her daughters-in-law, she was willing to part from them for what she thought would be for their benefit.

(Ruth 1:10) They said to her, “No, we will return with you to your

people.”

Because they loved one another and her daughters-in-law cared for her, they resolved to return with her and live with her people. It was for her sake that they would leave their homeland. From time to time, the Israelites and Moabites had been bitter enemies. As part of God’s judgment, the Moabites had oppressed the Israelites (see Judges 3:12-30). Therefore, Orpah and Ruth could be made to feel very uncomfortable and unwanted in Judah.

(Ruth 1:11) 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 husbands?”

True love for Orpah and Ruth moved Naomi to think of what was best for her “daughters,” not just her “daughters-in-law.” True love for her motivated them to think of what was best for her. They wanted one another to be happy and secure. In that culture, much of a woman’s or elderly widow’s security depended on having a husband or children to care for them. Otherwise, they would need to depend on their Israelite neighbors obeying the Law of God to care for them as widows and orphans. Naomi knew that no more sons would be born to her. No sons would come of age for her daughters-in-law to marry; so she thought it best that they return to their homeland to find new husbands among the Moabites.

(Ruth 1:12) 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,

Naomi had experienced so much hardship and sorrow that even though she had taught her daughters-in-law much about the LORD, His people, and His Law, she herself had lost a great deal of her faith in God’s ability or willingness to provide for her and them anywhere. She continued to think that security for women rested in having husbands or children, rather than in the LORD. She felt she was under the judgment of God; and when she returned to Bethlehem, she said to her friends, “Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20).

(Ruth 1:13) would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me."

Naomi continued to argue with Orpah and Ruth based on her inability to provide either security or husbands for them. She had not only lost her ability to trust in the LORD, but she had also lost the ability to inspire others to trust in the LORD. She felt hopeless, thinking that the LORD had turned His back on her. She did not want Orpah and Ruth to suffer along with her. With the sudden and unexpected deaths of her husband and sons, she may have felt that for some reason God was punishing her family, perhaps for their fleeing to Moab to escape God's discipline of His people. But, as Jonah discovered, no one cannot flee and escape God's discipline.

(Ruth 1:14) Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Once again, they mourned their losses, and then the loss of parting from each other. Orpah was persuaded by her mother-in-law's reasoning (based on her lack of faith in the LORD), so she returned to the possible security of her Moabite home and idols. On the other hand, Ruth loved Naomi and had come to faith in the true God, probably from what she had learned about the LORD from Naomi and her husband before such terrible losses came upon them. No doubt the Holy Spirit and divine providence moved Ruth to love her mother-in-law so much that she did not want her to lose all visible means of support. Her commitment to the LORD and Naomi gave Naomi the sense of security she had lost and now so desperately needed, which would increase Naomi's faith in the LORD. Ruth has become an example for us. She obeyed the Law of God by caring for a mother, even a mother-in-law. In Exodus 20:12, we read, "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." Ruth lived long in the land and the LORD blessed her faithful obedience.

(Ruth 1:15) So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

Still trying to convince Ruth to leave her, Naomi used another argument saying Ruth should follow Orpah's example, for Orpha had returned home to her Moabite idols. From her lack of faith in the true God, Naomi thought returning to Moab and to worshiping idols was reasonable. Naomi's faith and trust in the LORD had become so weak that she seemed to commend Orpah for returning to idol worship for security. Only Ruth's faithfulness to the LORD and Naomi would eventually restore her faith in God.

(Ruth 1:16) 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.

Unlike Orpah, Ruth acted on her faith and total commitment to the LORD God. Her faith in the true God moved her to commit herself to caring for Naomi wherever she lodged—trusting that the LORD would care for them both. She trusted that the LORD God would be their security and give them the security they both sought. She believed in the true God and became as Naomi's people and worshiped the LORD as the true God. God would be their ultimate security, and she resolved to serve the LORD and Naomi according to the Law of God. Whatever future religious rites might be performed, Ruth converted to the Jewish faith when she believed and declared, “your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” Spiritually speaking, she did not enter Judah as a foreigner, but as one committed to practicing the Jewish faith and life. She had no intention of living as a Moabite in Judah; rather, Ruth become a God-fearing woman. Because she was devoted to the LORD and to Naomi, Naomi's relatives and the whole town of Bethlehem eventually accepted her as one of themselves.

(Ruth 1:17) 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!”

Naomi learned from Ruth that Ruth could be counted on even until death; Ruth became the security that God provided for Naomi. Ruth trusted that the LORD would give her life, health, and strength to care for Naomi for as long as Naomi lived. Ruth expressed the kind of faith in the LORD that she

had learned from Naomi before Naomi felt that the LORD had forsaken her. When Naomi became weak in her faith, Ruth loved her and practiced the Law of God; thereby helping Naomi return to a strong and vital faith.

(Ruth 1:18) When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Eventually, Naomi realized that she needed to submit to Ruth's pleas and honor Ruth's commitment to go with her and help her. She accepted Ruth's declaration of faith in the true God as a sincere trust in the LORD. She did not try to discourage her from going by listing more of her troubles or by describing in detail her feelings of abandonment by God. The LORD honored Ruth's faithfulness to Him and to Naomi, and blessed them both.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Where did Naomi and her family seek security? After their husbands died, what did she advise Orpah and Ruth to do in order to find security? What did Naomi intend to do to find security?
2. Where and how do many people seek security today? What can happen to someone if they misplace their security?
3. Reread Ruth 1:15. In what ways are Naomi's recommendations to Ruth the very opposite of what she should have recommended and what she needed to do?
4. Why do you think Ruth knew what to do?
5. What part of Ruth's reply to Naomi means the most to you? Why?

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International Bible Lesson.

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