

BIBLE STUDY

RUTH

Echoes of Christ, Our Kinsman Redeemer

Darlene Schacht

 Time-Warp Wife
MINISTRIES

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Ruth Bible Study: Echoes of Christ, Our Kinsman Redeemer

Publisher:

Time-Warp Wife Ministries
114 Wyndham Estate Drive
Steinbach, Manitoba
R5G 2K6

Copyright © 2024 by Darlene Schacht

Interior design by Darlene Schacht

Cover design by Darlene Schacht

ISBN 978-1-988984-24-7

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form—photocopying, electronic, audio recording, or otherwise—without written permission from the author.

BIBLE STUDY

RUTH

Echoes of Christ, Our Kinsman Redeemer

Darlene Schacht

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Where You Go, I Go	5
Chapter 2: I Have Found Grace in Thine Eyes.	23
Chapter 3: Thou Art My Kinsman Redeemer	43
Chapter 4: Thou Shalt Renew and Sustain Me.	59
Map	74
Answer Key	75

About the Author:



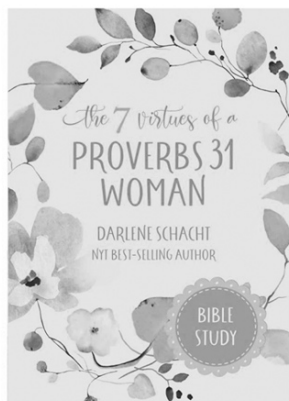
DARLENE SCHACHT is an award-winning and *NY Times* best-selling author. She is the founder of Time-Warp Wife Ministries, an online publication that encourages women to live Christ-centered lives. Her passion for scripture and hunger for truth is the driving force behind a unique ministry that offers Bible studies and daily marriage prayers.

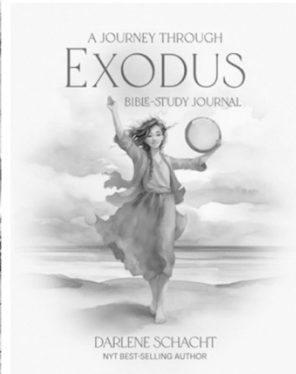
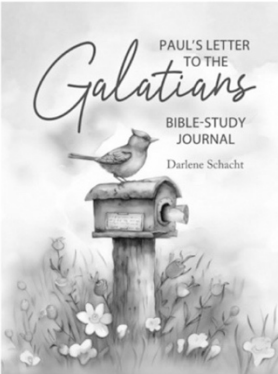
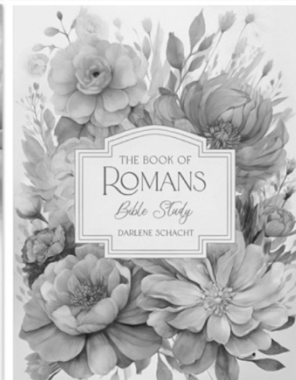
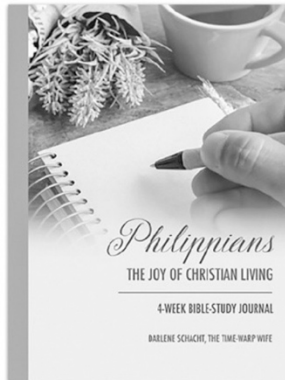
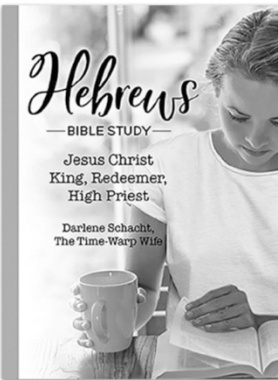
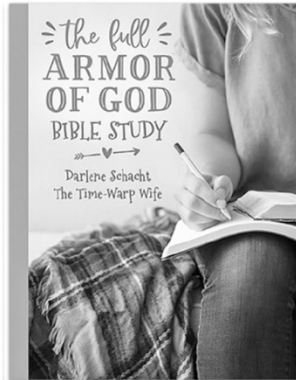
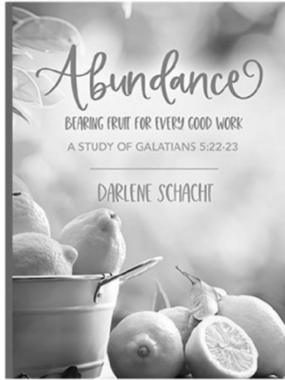
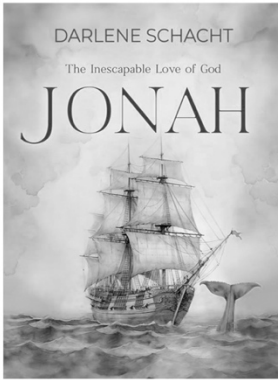
She began her publishing journey in 2011 working alongside actress/author Candace Cameron Bure to publish *Reshaping it All: Motivation for Spiritual and Physical Fitness*.

With a passion for Jesus, Darlene continues to write, sharing the gospel with countless women around the world.

Visit Darlene's blog at TimeWarpWife.com to find Bible studies, devotionals, and daily marriage prayers.

Other Bible Studies by Darlene Schacht:





We're delighted to offer supplemental videos for many of our Bible studies. To discover if this study is one of them, please visit YouTube and search for "Time-Warp Wife Bible Studies."





BEHIND THE NAMES

Naomi: Pleasant or gentle

Ruth: Friend or friendship

Boaz: Strength

Elimelek: My God is King

Mahlon: Sick or sickly

Chilion: Wasting away

Orpah: Stiffnecked

Mara: Bitter

Obed: Servant



Introduction



As we embark on this exploration of the Book of Ruth, we are not just reading a story from the past; we are uncovering timeless truths about God's providence and sovereignty and seeing His extraordinary work in the lives of ordinary people. This narrative is a testament to how God weaves His purposes into our lives, often in ways we least expect.

Our mission in this study is not merely to read and understand, but to listen deeply as God speaks through His Word. To let His truth guide us, lead us, and transform us. Even if you have studied Ruth's story before, there's always a new layer to uncover, a new insight to gain. That's the beauty of the Bible—it continuously unfolds new depths of wisdom and knowledge. Amen?

So, I invite you, dear friend, to approach this study with an open heart and mind. Open your ears as wide as you can, and open your hearts even wider. Prepare to listen, learn, and most importantly, be willing to follow where He leads.

Ruth's story is remarkable, not just because she is the only woman in the Bible specifically referred to as "virtuous," but also for the profound lessons her life offers. Her unwavering devotion to Naomi is not just a testament to her character, but a powerful example of sacrificial love and loyalty. As we dig into her story, we'll see why Ruth's character has captivated readers for centuries.

Let's consider Ruth's lineage and historical significance: she is the grandmother of Jesse and the great-grandmother of King David, and one of the five women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, alongside Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba and Mary. This story, set between 1500-1600

B.C., has been a subject of intrigue and study, especially regarding its authorship, which many scholars attribute to Samuel.

Ruth's decision to leave everything behind—her homeland, her people, her security—contrasts starkly with her sister-in-law Orpah's choice. Ruth's leap of faith into an unknown future mirrors the reaffirming commitment made at Mount Sinai. As we go through this study, we'll explore the subtleties of Ruth's choices and the profound faith they demonstrate.


Furthermore, we'll examine how the timing of Ruth's story aligns with other significant events and festivals appointed by God, foreshadowing the Messiah and His ultimate sacrifice.

The theme of God's providence becomes evident from the opening line, "In the days when the judges ruled..." This period, as described in the Book of Judges, was one of great turmoil and instability, characterized by a cycle of Israelites' disobedience to God, oppression by foreign powers, and deliverance by judges whom God raised up. The moral and social fabric of the time is encapsulated in verses such as Judges 17:6 and 21:25, which tell us, 'In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.'

In such a time, the theme of God's providence in the Book of Ruth is particularly striking. Despite the lawlessness and repeated turning away from God that marked the era of the judges, Ruth's story shows God's care and provision for individuals. The narrative demonstrates that in the midst of national chaos and personal tragedy, God is still working in the lives of those who choose to follow His ways.

Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz exemplify faith, integrity, and divine guidance. They show us that in times of uncertainty, God's presence and providence remain steadfast.

As we embark on this study, we will see God's hand in every detail of Ruth's life, a reminder that He is intimately involved in ours as well. The faith, kindness, and devotion of the main characters offer us models to emulate. My prayer is that through this journey, you will be inspired to mold your character to reflect God's virtues, and courageously pursue our ultimate Kinsman Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ.



*He has delivered us
from the dominion of darkness
and transferred us to the
kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption,
the forgiveness of sins.*

Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)



Chapter 1

• WHERE YOU GO, I GO •

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. – Matthew 16:24–25, NIV

Before we get into our study, it's important to understand the historical backdrop of the Moabites and their strained relationship with the Israelites. This tension is rooted in a complex history detailed in Genesis 19. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's daughters, in an effort to preserve their father's lineage, induced Lot into drunkenness and conceived children with him.

The Moabites, descended from this union, were known not just for their origins but also for their practices: they were idol worshippers who often stood in opposition to Israel.

In Deuteronomy 23:3-4, we find a clear directive from God concerning the Moabites and Ammonites: "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you." (NIV). This passage not only speaks to the cultural divide but also to specific historical events where the Moabites actively opposed Israel, such as hiring Balaam to curse them.

This backdrop highlights God's grace as a Moabite woman emerged from this background of strife and idolatry. Ruth's story is a testament to God's redemptive power. Her inclusion in the lineage of Jesus Christ

illustrates how God is able to transform a history of enmity and sin into a legacy of grace and salvation.

In this light, we approach the book of Ruth not just as a narrative of individual faithfulness but as a divine illustration of reconciliation and grace amidst longstanding enmity.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. —Ephesians 2:13-14, NIV

❓ What was the origin of the Moabites? (See Genesis 19:30-38)

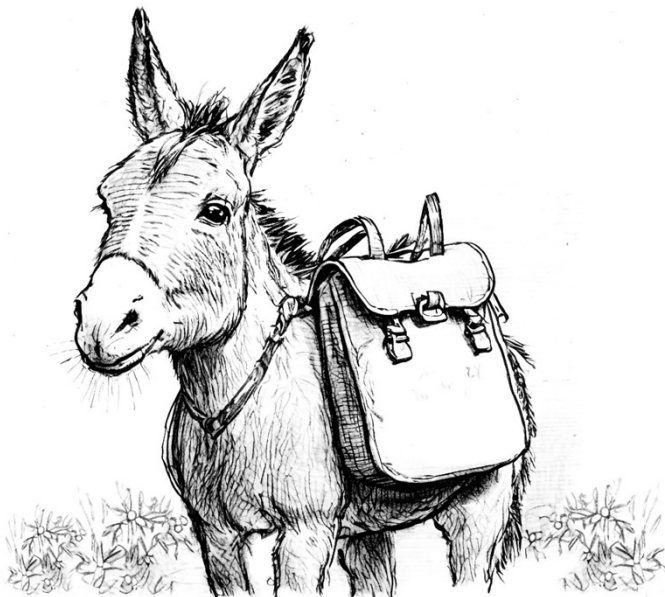
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



❓ Why did the king of Moab want Balaam to curse Israel? (See Numbers 22)

.....
.....
.....

❓ What insight do the actions of the Moabite women, as described in Numbers 25:1-3, give us into the religious practices and influences of the Moabites on the Israelites?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

RUTH 1:1-5 FAMINE AND LOSS

Our story begins by leading us into a moment of crisis. To escape a severe famine, Elimelek and his wife Naomi, along with their two sons, left Bethlehem of Judah—a place later known as the birthplace of Jesus. The word Bethlehem means house of bread, which adds a layer of significance to the scriptures as Jesus is called the 'Bread of Life.' It's specifically noted that this Bethlehem is the one in Judah, distinguishing it from Bethlehem of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15).

As you're reading this chapter, note that verse one tells us that they went to live "for a while" in the country of Moab, or in some versions it says that they went to "sojourn" in the country. In other words, this wasn't a permanent move for Elimelek's family. They weren't abandoning God to adopt a pagan way of life, as some might suggest, they were leaving their homeland out of necessity with full intentions of returning.

Should they have patiently trusted in God, and remained where they were? Some scholars say yes; others aren't so quick to agree, as famines have been used by God at times as a means to direct His people. God has used them to lead His people to new lands, and other times He's called them to remain steadfast right where they are. Consider these three examples:

1. **Abraham's Sojourn to Egypt:** Facing a severe famine in Canaan, Abraham traveled to Egypt, where God protected and prospered him, setting the stage for His future promises (Genesis 12:10).
2. **Isaac's Stay in Gerar:** In obedience to God during a famine, Isaac remained in Gerar. This act of faith resulted in God reaffirming the covenant He made with Abraham, blessing Isaac with abundance in a time of scarcity (Genesis 26:1-2).
3. **Jacob's Family's Relocation to Egypt:** The famine during Joseph's time not only led to Joseph's rise to power in Egypt but also the eventual migration of the house of Israel to Egypt, preserving the lineage through which God would fulfill His promise (Genesis 42).

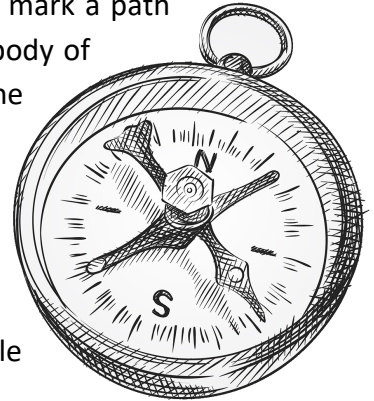
Only God knows the details behind the decision they made to leave Bethlehem. Right or wrong, their choices became part of God's unfolding plan. A plan that would later reveal itself through unexpected blessings.

The passing of Elimelek marked a turning point in their journey. Naomi, now a widow, found herself reliant on her sons, who took Moabite wives and settled in the land for a decade. Tragedy would strike again, leaving Orpah and Ruth to grapple with the loss of their husbands, and as such, an uncertain future. In the wake of such loss, the bonds of family and faith would be tested, setting the stage for a crucial decision.

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails. –Proverbs 19:21, NIV



Use the biblical map at the back of this book to mark a path from Bethlehem to Moab. Label the significant body of water that lies between these two regions and the major river that would have been crossed during the journey.



Beyond the four famines mentioned, can you identify another instance where God used a significant event to direct the course of His people or to deliver a message?

.....

.....

.....



What does the term "Bread of Life" imply about God's provision, and how does it contrast with the physical famine in Bethlehem? (See John 6:35)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



How can Psalm 146:9, which speaks of God's enduring care for the oppressed and the bereaved, provide comfort to those experiencing loss and uncertainty, as Naomi and Ruth did?

.....

.....

.....

RUTH 1:6-18 SEEDS OF COMMITMENT

As Naomi resolved to return to Bethlehem, Orpah and Ruth had to decide whether to remain in the land of Moab or embark on a journey to an unknown future. This decision, while personal, captures the essence of the spiritual crossroads at which many stand—the point at which we choose either to cling to the past or to bravely embrace God's call into a life marked by transformation and renewal.

In verse twelve, Naomi expresses concern for their future saying, "Even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them?" Here, Naomi is alluding to the Levirate Marriage Law, which was crucial for the protection and provision of widows in ancient Israel. This law, which we'll explore further in this study, called upon the brother of the deceased to marry the widow, ensuring her support and the continuation of the deceased's lineage and property rights. Naomi's unique situation, however, rendered the law's application impractical, casting light on the grave circumstances she and her daughters-in-law endured and the profound decisions they faced in the wake of their loss.

Understanding the depth of their commitment brought them to a pivotal moment reminiscent of Luke Chapter 14 where Jesus illustrated the importance of counting the cost. His message, much like Naomi's served to prepare would-be disciples for the challenges they may face and to encourage them to consider their willingness to fully embrace the path ahead.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to

finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish."

—Luke 14:26–30, NIV

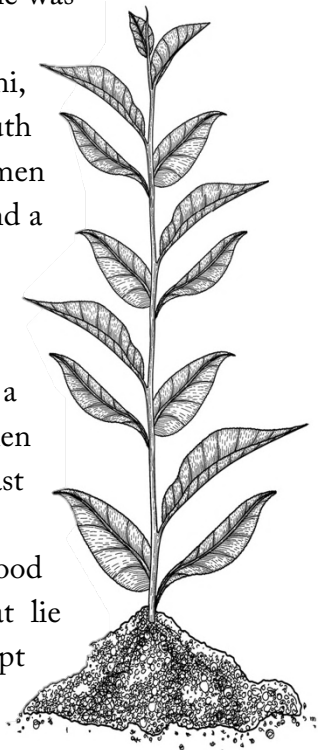
Of course, Jesus isn't advocating for actual hate here. The extreme language is used to emphasize the degree of commitment required of us. He's not contradicting His command to love others, but rather He is illustrating that following Him may require difficult choices and priorities that supersede even our closest relationships. He's challenging us to consider what it means to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27), and to understand that this might sometimes place us at odds with cultural or familial expectations.

This concept of deliberate commitment is starkly illustrated in the choices made by Orpah and Ruth. Orpah, upon realizing the full extent of the journey ahead, reassesses her willingness to make such a sacrifice. The cost of this decision, which involved a complete life change and embracing a future filled with unknowns, was ultimately more than she was prepared to take on.

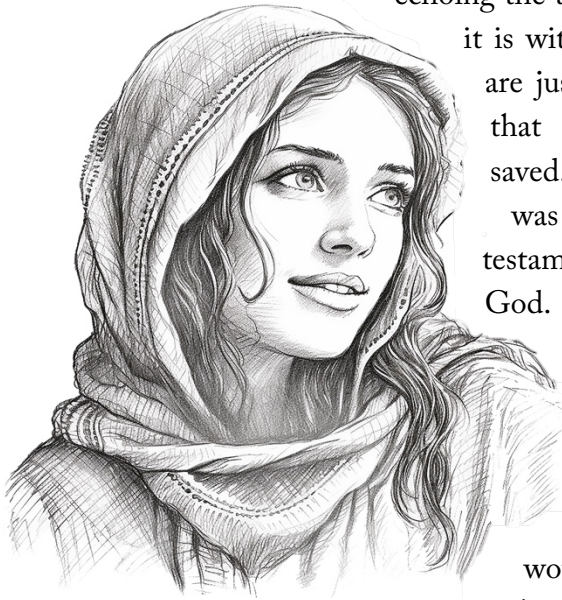
After insisting that she travel to Bethlehem with Naomi, Orpah ultimately chose to return to Moab. Meanwhile Ruth remained with Naomi. The contrast between the two women illustrates the difference between hearing the call of God and a wholehearted response to it.

Orpah's return to Moab is reminiscent of the seed in Jesus' parable in Matthew 13:3–23, that falls on rocky soil, sprouting quickly but withering under the sun's heat due to a lack of roots. Her initial commitment to Naomi dissolves when confronted with the cost of the journey and leaving her past behind.

Ruth, on the other hand, is like the seed that falls on good soil, her resolve deepening despite the uncertainties that lie ahead. Her unwavering decision to stay with Naomi, to adopt her people and her God as her own, mirrors the true



follower of God, as described by Jesus—one who not only hears the word but also clings to it. In their journey towards Bethlehem, both women faced a choice; yet it was Ruth who embraced the path of steadfast faith and devotion, a testament to those who follow through on their vow to God.



Ruth's decision went beyond mere words; it stemmed from the heart, echoing the truth found in Romans 10:10, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." (NIV) Her journey to Bethlehem was not only a physical trek but also a testament to her sincere belief in Naomi's God.

This choice placed Ruth in a precarious position as a widow in a foreign land, relinquishing the security of her kin and facing an uncertain future. In Israel, she would depend on the compassion of others, a stark contrast to the life she left behind.

In choosing to accompany Naomi, Ruth stepped into a future that would expose her to numerous hardships and challenges, among them:

- **Cultural Transition:** Adapting to life in Bethlehem, with its distinct traditions and religious practices
- **Economic Uncertainty:** The looming threat of poverty, a stark reality for widows without a means of support
- **Social Isolation:** The possibility of being marginalized for her Moabite heritage in a community that may not accept her
- **Personal Risk:** The immediate dangers of travel and the vulnerability she would face in her new life

There may come a time when you're faced with a critical decision, a moment where standing firm in your faith is the only option that aligns with your beliefs, despite the surrounding sea of differing opinions. In these moments,

remember the strength found in Joshua Chapter 1. Let this promise strengthen and guide you as you navigate the crossroads of life:

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. – Joshua 1:9, NIV

❓ If Naomi knew that following God was more important than the comforts of Earth, why do you think she urged Orpah and Ruth to return to their people and their gods?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

❓ In The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23), what do each of these represent?

The Sower:

The Seed:

The Soil:

The Root:

❓ What are some of the concerns that Ruth may have had in leaving Moab behind?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

❓ What five things did Ruth promise Naomi in her plea to follow?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

RUTH 1:19-22 A JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

Earlier in this chapter, I asked you to map out the path from Bethlehem to Moab. We also identified the two bodies of water. The large body of water was the Dead Sea, and the major river running into it was the Jordan. Let's talk about them now.

Situated at the lowest point on Earth, the Dead Sea, with its waters flowing in but not out, creates an environment that can't support most life due to its high mineral content. This can be seen as a metaphor for one's spiritual life. God's love and blessings are meant to flow through us, not just to us. If we don't let them flow outward through acts of kindness, charity, and faith in action, our faith becomes stagnant, like the waters of the Dead Sea.

This reflects the biblical teaching found in James 2:26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (NIV) It's a call

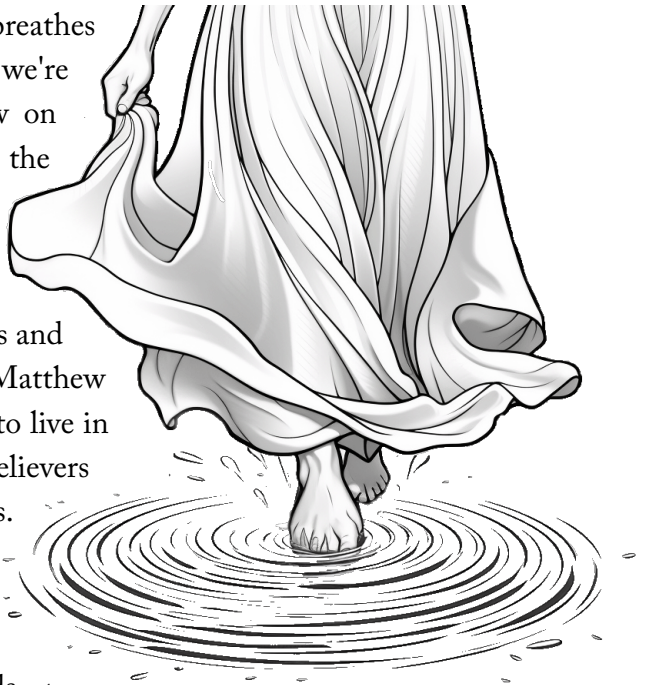
to active faith that lives and breathes through works of love. If all we're doing is warming a church pew on Sunday mornings, we're missing the point. The Bible tells us, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Active faith calls us to live in such a way that our actions as believers align with our professed beliefs.

It's our duty as believers to embody the teachings of Christ, allowing His light to shine through us, not just in words

but also through deeds of kindness and compassion. This expression of faith ensures we are not merely passive recipients of God's love, but active conduits of His grace to the world.

Ruth's journey to Bethlehem is a testament to the living nature of faith. Her loyalty and kindness flow through her actions like a vibrant stream, refreshing and life-giving.

The second body of water we marked on the map was the Jordan River. Crossing the Jordan on their journey to Bethlehem symbolically aligns with the Israelites' entry into the Promised Land, signifying a transformative journey from death to life. This symbolic act is a parallel to Christian baptism. The Jordan is also where Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13), marking the beginning of His redemptive ministry. Thus, Ruth's journey not only signifies her personal transformation from a spiritual death to new life in God, but it also foreshadows the baptism of Christ, linking her story to the broader narrative of redemption and renewal that baptism represents in the Christian faith.



Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. –Colossians 2:12, NIV



Some might interpret Naomi's words in verses 20–21 as negative or indicating a lack of faith, and yet they resonate with many who have experienced loss. Her choice to be called "Mara," is a raw, honest admission of her suffering—a vulnerability that many of us can relate to when life's burdens weigh us down.

When she said, "The Lord has made my life bitter," she's not saying that she is bitter or lacking in faith. Instead, she is expressing the painful

and unpleasant reality of her situation. The act of naming her suffering openly can also be seen as an important step in her journey through grief.

Notice the irony in verse 21, when Naomi said, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty." She left her home during a famine—a period marked by scarcity and want. Looking back on it now, she sees how 'full' her life was, not in terms of physical abundance but in the immeasurable value of her husband and sons. What she had perceived as lack was, in reality, a season rich with the very essence of life—companionship and love.

Isn't it interesting how our lives mirror this narrative at times? We think we're poor, while we overlook the richness of the blessings we have. We perceive a void where there is, in truth, abundance. It's human nature to chase after what we believe will complete us, forgetting to cherish what we already have. If we could pause for a moment in the midst of the stress and worry to take a breath of gratitude, perhaps we'd see the treasure we're holding before it slips away.

❓ How does the metaphor of the Dead Sea enhance your understanding of the biblical principle "faith without deeds is dead"?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



How does the concept of baptism as a symbol of death and resurrection provide a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and its call to transformation?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Can you find other instances in the Bible where crossing water symbolized a transition or transformation? Discuss the context and the outcome of these events.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

THE BARLEY HARVEST

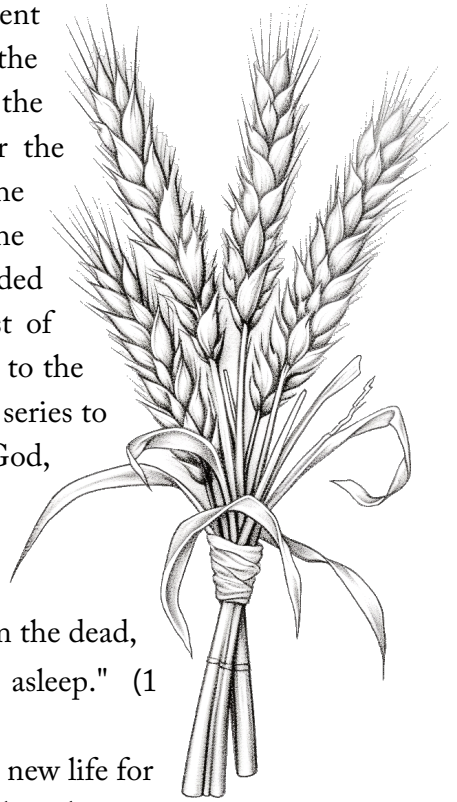
The last sentence in this chapter could be easily missed, but pay close attention to it, because it's a significant part of the story. Verse 22 tells us that they arrived in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

In ancient Israel, the barley harvest was more than just an agricultural event; it was deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual life of the people. As the first crop to be harvested each year, it was a sign of hope and a testament to God's provision. Leviticus Chapter 23 directs the Israelites to observe the Feast of Firstfruits, a celebration involving the first sheaf of the barley harvest, on the day after the Sabbath following Passover. This timing designates it as falling on the first day of the week, which is Sunday.

In a profound parallel, the New Testament reveals that Jesus' resurrection took place on the first day of the week, mirroring the timing of the Feast of Firstfruits, which occurs right after the Passover period. This alignment highlights the significance of Christ as the 'firstfruits' of the resurrection, fulfilling the symbolism embedded within the ancient feast. It's called the Feast of Firstfruits because they offered their first crop to the Lord. The word "first" signifies that there is a series to follow. It's like giving your first paycheck to God, trusting that He will provide for your needs.

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that we will rise too, and so, Paul writes, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20, NIV)

This entrance into Bethlehem represents a new life for Ruth, who not only made a profession of faith but also put that faith into action by crossing the Jordan River to Bethlehem. Ruth's journey in this chapter points to the plan of salvation and foreshadows the inclusion of Gentiles into that plan, symbolizing that the blessings of God are available to all. Her story is a glimpse of the great spiritual harvest to come, a harvest that Christ's resurrection ensures and extends to all nations.



We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

—Romans 6:4-5, NIV

❓ What is the significance of Ruth and Naomi arriving in Bethlehem at the start of the barley harvest, and how does this timing enrich the narrative?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

❓ How did the Feast of Firstfruits serve as a symbol of trust in God's provision for the Israelites?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

❓ Naomi's statement, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty," redefines our understanding of wealth. Reflecting on this, what are the 'hidden riches' in your life that you can count as blessings today?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

GLEANNING FROM RUTH CHAPTER 1

As we close this chapter, we recognize the profound impact of steadfast love and loyalty. Ruth, in leaving her homeland to support Naomi, embodies strength and faith amidst uncertainty. Her vow, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, NIV), stands as a powerful testament to unwavering commitment.

Through Ruth's choices, we observe how God can turn our sorrows and uncertainties into opportunities for redemption and growth. Her story prompts us to meet change with trust in God's providential care, reminding us that He is working behind the scenes, planning our days with purpose.

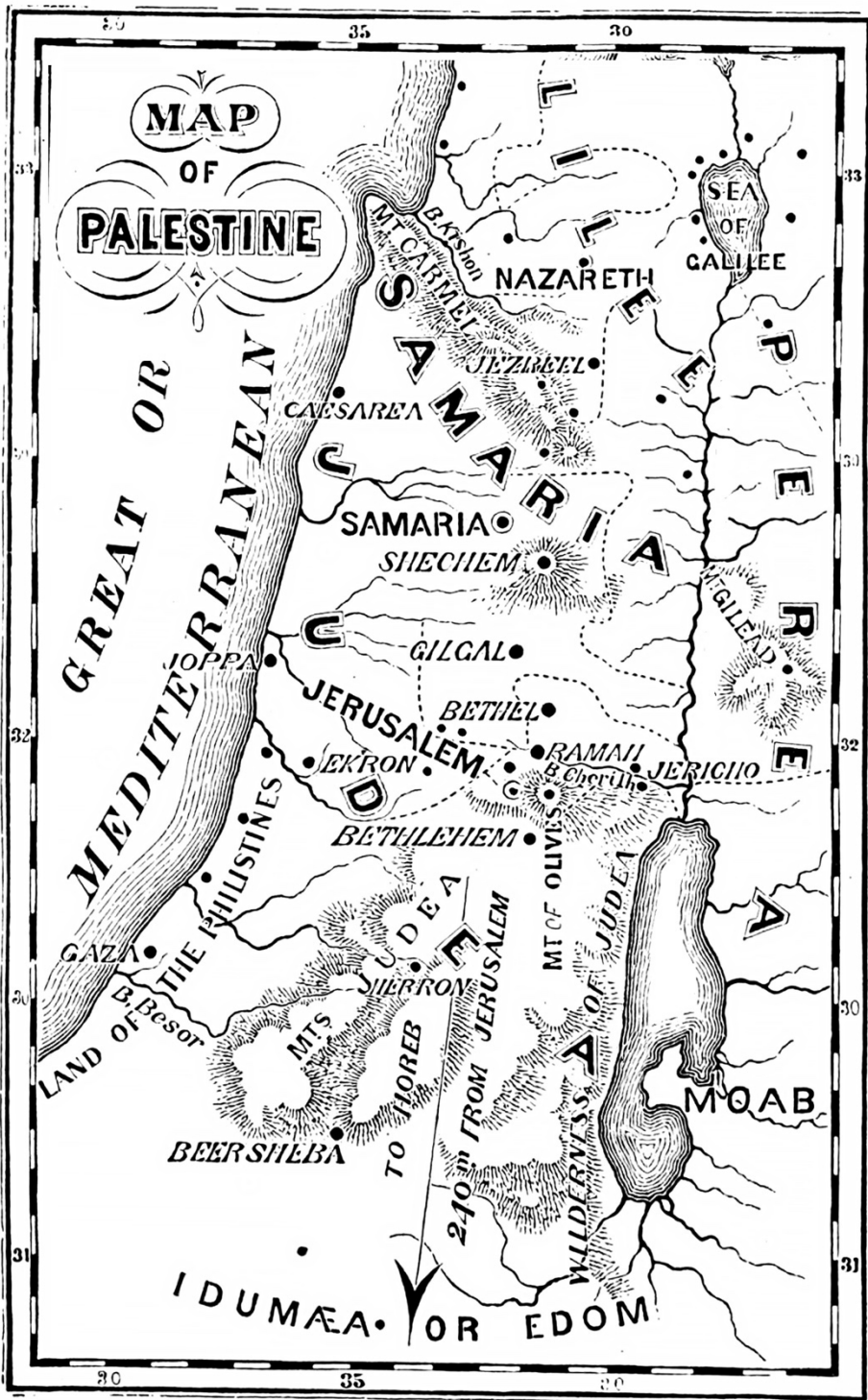
Let this chapter encourage you to be loyal and brave. Let it remind you to trust in His timing. By embodying these virtues, we invite God to work in remarkable ways, fulfilling His purposes in our daily lives.



SEEDS OF RENEWAL

What are some steps you can take to cultivate active faith in your daily walk, and in what ways might God be guiding you to do so?

How does acknowledging the fullness of God's blessings, even in times of scarcity foster a sense of thankfulness for the unseen wealth in your life?



Answer Key

Ruth Chapter 1

What was the origin of the Moabites? (See Genesis 19:30-38)

The Moabites originated from an incestuous relationship between Lot and his eldest daughter following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, leading to the birth of Moab, the patriarch of the Moabites.

Why did the King of Moab want Balaam to curse Israel? (See Numbers 22)

The King of Moab, Balak, sought Balaam to curse Israel because he was intimidated by the Israelites' success and increasing numbers, fearing they would overwhelm his kingdom.

What insight do the actions of the Moabite women, as described in Numbers 25:1-3, give us into the religious practices and influences of the Moabites on the Israelites?

The Moabite women seduced the Israelite men into participating in their idolatrous worship and sacrifices, illustrating how the cultural and religious practices of the Moabites were persuasive and led the Israelites into sinning against God.

Use the biblical map at the back of this book to mark a path from Bethlehem to Moab. Label the significant body of water that lies between these two regions and the major river that would have been crossed during the journey.

The large body of water is the Dead Sea, and the major river they cross would be the Jordan River.

Beyond the four famines mentioned, can you identify another instance where God used a significant event to direct the course of His people or to deliver a message?

Note: The following answers are two examples of many possible instances in the Bible where God used significant events to guide His people. Your reflection may bring to mind a different event that equally demonstrates God's providential actions.

Plagues in Egypt: In Exodus 7-12, God sent ten plagues upon Egypt to compel Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery.

A Drought in Israel: In 1 Kings 17, God used a prolonged drought during the time of Elijah to draw the Israelites back to Him and away from the worship of Baal.

What does the term "Bread of Life" imply about God's provision, and how does it contrast with the physical famine in Bethlehem? (See John 6:35)

"Bread of Life" signifies God's provision of spiritual sustenance that is eternal and satisfying. It contrasted with the famine in Bethlehem that pointed to the transient nature of earthly hunger and the temporary sustenance that physical bread provides.

How can Psalm 146:9, which speaks of God's enduring care for the oppressed and the bereaved, provide comfort to those experiencing loss and uncertainty, as Naomi and Ruth did?

Psalm 146:9 offers the assurance that God watches over the vulnerable and brings justice to the oppressed. For Naomi and Ruth, who faced sorrow and loss, this Psalm affirms that despite their circumstances, they are under

God's watchful care. It provides comfort, affirming that God sees their plight and is actively involved in their lives, offering hope and a future.

If Naomi knew that following God was more important than the comforts of Earth, why do you think she urged Orpah and Ruth to return to their people and their gods?

Leaving behind one's culture and religion, is a significant and life-altering decision, especially in the ancient world, and while it might seem as if Naomi was urging them to return to their pagan Gods, she was advising them to count the cost. Naomi was ensuring they understood the full implications, of committing to life with her and her God. She wanted them to make a fully informed choice, free from any obligation to her, knowing that the path of a widow and a foreigner in Israel would be fraught with hardship.

In The Parable of the Sower, what do each of these represent?

The Sower: The Sower symbolizes God or Jesus Christ, who is sharing the word of God.

The Seed: The seed represents the word of God or the gospel message.

The Soil: The soil depicts the hearts of individuals and their response to God's word. Different types of soil in the parable reflect various attitudes and levels of openness to the gospel.

The Root: In the context of Matthew 13:6, the root signifies the depth and stability of one's faith. In the parable, plants with no root symbolize those who initially receive the word of God with joy, but their faith is shallow. When challenges or persecution arise (symbolized by the sun), their faith quickly withers away due to the lack of a deep, sustaining root in God's word and enduring faith.

What are some of the concerns that Ruth may have had in leaving Moab behind?

One major concern would have been leaving her homeland, culture, and family to go to a land with different customs and beliefs. She would have been moving to Israel, a place where Moabites were not typically welcomed, so she might have worried about how she would be received by the people there. Additionally, as a widow, Ruth would have had concerns about her economic security and future prospects. Without a husband or sons in a patriarchal society, her position would have been very vulnerable. Despite these potential fears, Ruth's loyalty and love for Naomi propelled her forward, demonstrating a profound strength of character and faith.

What five things did Ruth promise Naomi in her plea to follow?

1. To go wherever Naomi goes.
2. To live wherever Naomi lives.
3. To make Naomi's people her people.
4. To worship Naomi's God as her own.
5. To remain with Naomi until death.

How does the metaphor of the Dead Sea enhance your understanding of the biblical principle "faith without deeds is dead"?

The Dead Sea metaphor enhances the understanding of "faith without deeds is dead" by illustrating that, like the stagnant waters that support no life, faith that doesn't result in action is lifeless. Just as the Dead Sea receives but does not give, faith that doesn't express itself through deeds lacks the life-giving quality that defines active faith.

How does the concept of baptism as a symbol of death and resurrection provide a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and its call to transformation?

Baptism symbolizes the believer's death to sin and resurrection into a new life with Christ. It signifies a transformation from the old self into a new

creation, mirroring the death and resurrection of Jesus. This ritual reflects the deep call of the Christian faith to undergo a spiritual rebirth and live a transformed life.

Can you find other instances in the Bible where crossing water symbolized a transition or transformation? Discuss the context and the outcome of these events.

Here are a couple that I could find:

The parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14):

The Israelites cross from slavery in Egypt to freedom towards the Promised Land. The waters parting represent the transition from bondage to liberation and the transformation of a group of slaves into a free nation under God.

Crossing of the Jordan River by Joshua and the Israelites (Joshua 3-4):

This event symbolizes the transition from wandering in the wilderness to entering the Promised Land. The Jordan River, at flood stage, ceases to flow when the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant step into its waters, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry ground. This crossing marks a transformation from a nomadic life to taking possession of Canaan, reflecting God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to Abraham's descendants. It signifies a new chapter of nationhood under Joshua's leadership and the tangible realization of a long-awaited homecoming.

What is the significance of Ruth and Naomi arriving in Bethlehem at the start of the barley harvest, and how does this timing enrich the narrative?

The timing of their arrival at the barley harvest echoes the resurrection of Christ, which the Feast of Firstfruits symbolically anticipates. As the harvest marks a fresh start, so too does Christ's rising signify new life for all believers, enriching the narrative with layers of spiritual significance.

How did the Feast of Firstfruits serve as a symbol of trust in God's provision for the Israelites?

The Feast of Firstfruits served as a symbol of trust in God's provision by having the Israelites offer the first sheaf of their harvest to God, acknowledging that He is the source of their sustenance. It was an act of faith, giving the first and best to God, trusting that He would bless the rest of the crop.

Naomi's statement, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty," redefines our understanding of wealth. Reflecting on this, what are the 'hidden riches' in your life that you can count as blessings today?

This answer will be different for everyone.