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**Day 1**

**Study:** Read Ruth 1.1-7. Is Naomi repenting of not relying on God or just going back home because there is food there again? Look at 1.13: is her attitude about God healthy? Does that influence what you think about her decision? Read Ruth 1.8-11. In this culture, Ruth and Orpah are now part of Naomi's family by marriage. So why does Naomi try to send them back to their old families? [Hint: remember the two tensions of the narrative]. In 1.11, Naomi refers to a provision in God's law called the Leverite Marriage. Read Deuteronomy 25.5-10, about that point of God's Law. Naomi knows the Law, but does she find it useful in this situation? Read Ruth 1.12-15. Naomi wants to help Ruth and Orpah. She does not see the Leverite Marriage principle in the Law as helpful, but does she seek another solution from God's covenant revelation? or does she try to solve the tension with practical human wisdom? If you still have the "top line / bottom line" handout from last week [or find the link on the "OT Wisdom" page of [www.groben.com](http://www.groben.com)], it will come in handy each day this week.

Read Genesis 12.1-3. These verses are the beginning of the Abrahamic Covenant, the agreement between Abraham and God about the future of the Hebrew people and the nation Israel. Notice the last line of v.3: how do you think all the families of the earth would be blessed [a promise repeated in Genesis 26.4; 27.29; 28.14; hint: the answer is in the New Testament]? Do you think Naomi's suggestion to the girls that they go back to their own families and gods was a good one from God's viewpoint? Did Naomi represent or witness for God well? Read Deuteronomy 13.1-11. What does it suggest about God's attitude toward people being led astray?

**Reflect:** We often think the end justifies the means. This is not so with God. For God, it is all about the means, because only he really controls the end. So what he asks us to do is walk right by trusting in him and obeying him, and then he will bless us as he sees fit. If we "bend the rules" to get the result we think is best, we have not only sinned in our walk, but sinned by not relying on God and not deferring to God. Repent and seek to walk the top-line, even when it hurts.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you be a good witness to the world in all that you say and do. Ask God to help you trust him enough with the results that you can trust him to guide you in the means.

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**Day 2**

**Study:** Read Ruth 1.16-18. Orpah saw wisdom in Naomi's advice, knowing she needed a husband. Ruth, however, responded quite adamantly that she would stay with Naomi. Read Deuteronomy 10.17-18. What could Ruth count on from God if she honored her covenant marriage into this family and continued to depend on the Lord? Read the last sentence of Ruth 1.16. Such a relatively long passage for one sequence of dialogue [1.8-18] indicates how important the author considered this conversation. Essentially, it spells out the theologies of the three women. Consider the irony of this scene: the Israelite, Naomi – who obviously knows the Covenant, since she is quoting parts of it – urges the younger women to abandon her and go back to the families they had before their marriages into her family, and to abandon the true God and go back to the gods of their people; in contrast, the Moabite, Ruth, adamantly resists abandoning her adopted family and declares she will become both a follower of God and an Israelite. Do you see any significance in that irony? Irony is a literary technique, so we must be sensitive to it when we read. In the gospels, sometimes Jesus uses irony! Another literary feature to consider is characterization: what is the basis for judging a character as good or bad in the Bible? who is the protagonist and the antagonist of this narrative? God is always the very top protagonist in the Old Testament, but here Ruth is held out as someone who walks the "top line" with God, depending on God and obeying God, seeking answers to life's problems in God's revelation. Naomi is the "bottom line" character, walking in human wisdom instead, proving disobedient and weak in faith, not seeking answers in God's revelation, and not representing God well.

**Reflect:** Are you as adamant about trusting and obeying God as Ruth was? Is this a passion for you or just an obligation [or less, maybe not something important to you at all]? Are you a protagonist in God's narrative, or the subject of his irony? How can you improve the evaluation of your character?

**Pray:** Ask God to help you walk in his light, to understand and adopt his Word, to be Spirit-led and Spirit-filled.

### Day 3

**Study:** Read Ruth 1.19-21. Notice in 1.20, Naomi says, “Call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” “Mara” means “bitter,” whereas “Naomi” means “pleasant.” What does that suggest to you about Naomi’s recognition that her family’s struggles were the consequences of their own actions? What about her perspective on God and his righteousness? Read Ruth 1.22-2.2. We are back to the food tension. Who comes up with the solution? Read Deuteronomy 10.18; 24.19; Leviticus 19.9-10. Is Ruth’s solution based on God’s covenant revelation or human wisdom?

**Reflect:** Naomi calls herself “bitter” at what has happened to her, while Ruth endeavors to find a covenant solution to their practical needs: two different reactions to the situation in which both women found themselves: widowed, childless, and hungry. Are there circumstances in your life or events in your past for which you harbor anger at God? or are there any about which you are casting blame on others without acknowledging your own contributions to the problem? Dig deep here, and ask God to reveal anything you need to confess and then fight your bitterness with truth.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you be grateful, even in times of suffering; and to find answers to life’s problems in the Bible.

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### Day 4

**Study:** Read Ruth 2.3-17. Boaz asked to whom Ruth belonged because in this culture she ideally would be under the protection of her father or her husband. By the overseer’s description, Boaz would realize that Ruth had married into his family and now was a widow. Ruth had been gathering up food as was her legal right since the early morning, and then she found some shelter in the field hut. An ephah is about a peck [half a bushel], about thirty pounds of grain! Here we have a long discourse to show us Boaz’ character, so obviously this is an important point for the narrator. Based on the Deuteronomy and Leviticus passages you read yesterday, does Boaz meet, exceed, or fall short of his obligations to Ruth? What does that say about Boaz’ heart for God? Boaz notes Ruth’s choice to depend on God [put herself under God’s wings]: Both Boaz and Ruth are top-line people.

**Reflect:** Boaz reflected the character of God by being an over-blesser. Are you an over-blesser in Christ’s name? How could you be more generous and less selfish with the blessings you have received from God?

**Pray:** Ask God to help you become more generous and more sacrificial; ask God to help you rely on him for blessing and to reflect his character by blessing others.

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### Day 5

**Study:** Read Ruth 2.18-20. In v.20, Naomi literally calls Boaz a “גֹּאֵל” [guh-ALL] or “kinsman redeemer.” This is the same terminology Boaz uses to refer to himself later in 3.12. Read Leviticus 25.25, which uses the same terminology. What is the role of a kinsman redeemer? This will be an important concept later in the narrative. Read Ruth 2.21-23. The barley harvest was in April and May, and the wheat harvest was in May and June. These were the two main grains in Israel, where the diet was heavy on bread. So the food tension seems resolved for now. Next week, we will see the narrative move back to the tension about lack of children.

**Reflect:** The kinsman redeemer literally would redeem the land; he was a redeemer, like Jesus redeems the lost. Redeeming is part of God’s character, and he wrote it into the Law. How can you help the cause of Christ, the gospel mission? Think of several things you could do to make Christ and his message more attractive to people.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you reflect his character and share his gospel truth in love. Express your thanks to Jesus for redeeming you, by paying with his blood to free you from captivity to sin, death, evil, and the Law.