

# *Ruth and Esther*

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## *A note of introduction...*

What does the “providence of God” mean in your life? Do you recognize the ways God manifests himself every day? Do you know what purpose(s) he has for you? How do you overcome the fears and temptations Satan throws in your path to thwart your usefulness?

Enter Ruth and Esther. Both were women of another time and place who had the same God, the same questions, the same fears, and the same desires we have as women in the twenty-first century. Walking in their shoes is a journey with obedient and faithful women who allowed God to utilize them as part of a higher plan. God used these women to teach me some valuable lessons. Ruth taught me about loyalty to family members and to God. She showed me what it means to sacrifice dreams and desires to fulfill responsibilities. Esther taught me to take risks and to be wise about the opportunities God gives to serve and influence others. Both of them encouraged me to be more aware of what God is doing in my life and how God wants to use me. You may learn something different from these two women but my prayer is God will use this study to open the eyes of your heart to a deeper love and appreciation for his ways resulting in a more effective life of service for his glory.

These lessons have been written from the New International Version of the Bible, but of course, you are not limited to that version. The questions were designed to be answered using only your Bible as a resource. Occasionally a concordance or dictionary may be helpful in finding additional scriptures or clarifying meanings of words not commonly used today. May I suggest that you always pray at the beginning of your study so your precious time will be guided by the Holy Spirit? “May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.” (Ruth 2:12 NIV)

*Paula Rhodes*

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*Lesson 1 — Ruth 1:1-22*

Reflections: What part of the story of Ruth are you looking forward to studying the most?

**Section I. Read Ruth 1:1-2.**

1. Who was ruling and what was the moral climate at the time of this story?  
(See Judges 21:25.)
2. What other well-known events happened in Bethlehem? (See your concordance if you need help.)
3. Why and where did Elimelech decide to move his family?
4. What history did the Moabites have with the Israelites that would make Elimelech's choice surprising and questionable? (See Genesis 19:30-38; Numbers 25:1-3; Deuteronomy 23:2-4.)

**Sections II and III. Read Ruth 1:3-13.**

5. Who brought an end to the famine in Bethlehem? Do you think he caused it? Share your thoughts after considering Leviticus 26:18-20 and Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24.
6. What compliment did Naomi give her daughters-in-law?

7. Explain the Israelite custom Naomi referred to in Ruth 1:11. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)
8. a. Why did Naomi ask her daughters-in-law to return to their own homes?
- b. What kind of husband would they most likely have married back home?
- c. What advice would you give to a single lady who reasons that it is better to marry a non-Christian than no man at all? (Give scripture if possible.)
9. Why would the author James, of the New Testament, have considered Ruth's concern for Naomi a profoundly religious act? (James 1:27)

**Section IV. Read Ruth 1:14-18.**

10. List at least four promises Ruth made in verses 16 and 17.

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11. How did Ruth seal her vow to her mother-in-law?

12. What sacrifices do you imagine Ruth had to make to keep her promise?

13. Have you ever made such a vow of loyalty? What sacrifices were involved?

14. How is loyalty manifested in the character of a Christian?

a. With friends. (Proverbs 17:17) \_\_\_\_\_

b. With God. (Psalm 37:5-6; Matthew 6:24) \_\_\_\_\_

c. In our commitments. (Ruth 2:11; II Corinthians 9:7, 13) \_\_\_\_\_

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15. a. How did God demonstrate his loyalty and commitment to us? (Romans 5:8)

b. How will you show your love and commitment to God this week?

## **Section V. Read Ruth 1:19-22.**

16. Judging by the reception Naomi received upon entering Bethlehem, what can you assume about her reputation?

17. Which qualities of Ruth's relationship with Naomi would you like to emulate in your own family?

18. Review this chapter and list all the phrases that show Naomi's faith in the sovereignty of God.