



THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE

Ruth 1:1-7

In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there. 3 Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. 4 The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband. 6 Then Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had blessed His people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

- *"In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land."* (Ruth 1:1)
- **The time of the Judges was characterized by: 1) incredible victories (Judges 3-8, 11-12), 2) spiritual apostasy (Judges 1-2, 17-21), 3) political anarchy (Judges 9), 4) spiritual idolatry (Judges 10), 5) personal apathy (Judges 13-16) and 6) rejection of authority (Judges 21:25).**
- *"Another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things He had done for Israel."* (Judges 2:10)
- *"In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* (Judges 21:25)
- **Spiritual apostasy, political anarchy, spiritual idolatry, personal apathy and a rejection of godly authority always brings "famine times" into our lives and world.**
- **We are living in a "famine time" in our nation characterized by broken hearts, broken lives, broken homes and a broken world.**
- Jesus - *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

- **How should we respond when we experience “famine times” in our lives?**

When We Go Through “Famine Times” We Need To:

REFRAIN FROM RUNNING FROM OUR TROUBLES

- *“A man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him.” (Ruth 1:1)*
- **Elimelech was a blessed man with a good wife and two sons, but he probably made a wrong decision by leaving Bethlehem and moving to Moab.**
- **Sometimes when dealing with difficulties we make hasty decisions before receiving direction from the Lord.**
- *“The Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for His help.” (Isaiah 30:18)*
- **We can run from our “troubles,” but oftentimes our troubles follow us because we haven’t changed the principles, priorities and practices of our lives.**
- **When we run from our “famine” circumstances and relationships we oftentimes find ourselves in worse situations in our lives (Genesis 12:10-20).**
- **When we run from our troubles we miss out on what God is trying to teach us and do in and through our lives.**
- *“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.” (Romans 5:3-4)*
- *“We think you ought to know . . . about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. . . . But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God . . . And He did rescue us from mortal danger, and He will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in Him.” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)*
- **When times get tough our focus needs to be on turning to the Lord and trusting in Him.**
- *“Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.” (Psalm 37:3)*
- **What lessons do I need to learn from the troubles I’ve been going through?**

When We Go Through “Famine Times” We Need To:

RESIST SETTLING FOR LESS THAN GOD’S BEST

- *“The man’s name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there.” (Ruth 1:2)*
- **“Bethlehem” meant “house of bread” while Moab was the “washpot” or “garbage can” of the region (Psalm 108:9).**
- **People often settle for less than God’s best when it comes to their friendships, committed relationships, vocations, family values, etc.**
- **Settling for less than God’s best affects us and those around us (“Mahlon” meant “puny” and “Chilion” meant “pining”).**

- Elimelech's name meant “My God is King,” but he wasn’t living as though God was his King, Shepherd and Provider.
- Jesus - “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else . . .” (Matthew 6:33)
- We can assess our prioritization of God in our lives by looking at our: 1) Finances, 2) Interests, 3) Relationships, 4) Schedule and 5) Troubles.
- Jesus - “. . . and live righteously . . .” (Matthew 6:33)
- When the Lord is first in our lives our focus will be on “sanctification” rather than survival.
- Jesus - “. . . and He will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33)
- When the Lord is our “King” and we are living righteously, He has promised to provide for us everything and everyone that we need.
- Reflecting on the names and health of Elimelech’s sons reminds us when we settle for less than God’s best we end up being disappointed and discouraged.
- *In what areas of life have I been settling for “less than God’s best”?*

When We Go Through “Famine Times” We Need To:

REFOCUS ON MAKING THE BEST DECISIONS

- *“Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband. Then Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland . . .” (Ruth 1:3-6)*
- **Other people’s bad decisions and our bad decisions can lead to tragic consequences in our lives.**
- *“You reap what you sow.” (Galatians 6:7)*
- **In times of trouble and distress we have to make better decisions so we can make our way to “where” and “what” God is blessing.**
- *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)*
- **Making the best decisions requires hearing from the Lord and learning about “where” and “what” God is blessing.**
- *“With her two daughters-in-law Naomi set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.” (Ruth 1:7)*
- **What decisions do you need to make in your life that will lead you to “where” or “what” God is blessing?**
- **No matter what bad decisions we or others have made in the past and how they have affected us, we can always come back to where God wants us to be in our relationship with Him and our service to Him.**
- *“A man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab.” (Ruth 1:1)*

- **“Judah” meant “praise”, and was indicative of someone’s willingness to praise God even when things didn’t turn out like they wanted them to (Genesis 29:31-35).**
- *“I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak His praises. I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness; let us exalt his name together. I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to Him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces. In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened; He saved me from all my troubles.” (Psalm 34:1-6)*
- *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.” (Psalm 34:18-19)*

Dig Deeper Resources For Further Study:

Ruth: One Woman’s Journey from Loss to Legacy - [Click here to view on YouVersion](#)

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The Book of Ruth with Bianca Juarez Olthoff -

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