



Managing GOD'S Money

Theme for the September: Life Lessons

Life is a journey that's not smooth, but lesson-filled. Our great challenge is to be open to learn as we go. Sadly, rarely do we learn from our experiences, especially if bad, because we don't accept them. We need to ask Jesus to lead us through these bad experiences as He promised, and show us how to grow from them.

Because we don't use these events He presents to develop us, we repeat mistakes and act daily like each outing is our first. We are "busy" with our priorities that spotlight urgent matters without everlasting significance, so we side-step God's messages He chooses specially for us.

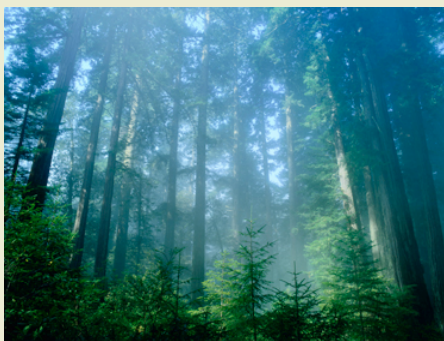
This month we look at some journeys with several life-lessons. We will highlight a few and look at how we might apply them daily as we stay alert to Jesus' teachings. Don't miss God's faithfulness that permeates these journeys:

- September 1-7: Egypt to Canaan
- September 8-14: Jerusalem to Moab Return
- September 15-21: The Cistern to the Mansion
- September 22-30: Shepherd to King

Topic for the Week: Jerusalem to Moab Return

September 8-14

The Word



Ruth 1:11, 22

¹In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

²²So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Nestled between the Old Testament Books Judges and Sam-

uel is Ruth, a Book with four chapters that abounds with life-lessons. As we look at two women on this week's journey, Naomi and Ruth, again we see God's faithfulness.

Naomi's husband, Elimelech, rather than trusting God to provide for his family's needs during the famine in Israel, chose to seek "greener pastures." He took his family from Bethlehem to Moab where, his sons married Moabites, a people against whom God warned Israel. In **1 Kings 11:1-2** we read:

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites,

"You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.

Again in **Ezra 10:10-11** we see God's discontent when Israel took foreign wives:

Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel's guilt.

After a while, the three men died, the famine in Israel subsided, and Naomi decided to return home to Israel.

She tries to persuade her two daughters-in-law to return to their homes that had better prospects

than Israel (**Ruth 1:8-15**). Orpah agrees and leaves, but Ruth decides to stay with her.

Here we see a **key lesson: No condition is too difficult for the Lord to use for His glory**--not even when negative, bitter, destructive attitudes prevail.

Naomi's attitude was negative and self-serving. Rather than accept and look to God to lead her *through* her circumstances, she blamed God as she allowed the circumstances to overwhelm her. She pity-partied because the "Lord's hand has gone out against" her. She didn't think her family's actions could have caused her misery! Did she forget her family didn't consult God before leaving Israel? Did they ask Him for directions while in Moab? Didn't her sons disobey God and married foreign wives?

How easily we resent God's discipline, become discouraged, and grieve the Spirit! When we accept our Messiah as Lord and Savior, the "sanctification" or "our *make-over* journey" starts. Its aim is to allow us to become holy like our Lord; it ends in heaven, so it needs time and patience. Meanwhile, we ought to understand that our choices might lead to God's discipline, only because He loves us. Paul's description in **Hebrews 12:6-7** says it well:

"...the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For

what son is not disciplined by his father?

Let's return to the journey from Moab to Israel. Do you believe Naomi's words as she returned home! Read, absorb, reflect on these piercing words in **Ruth 1:20-21**.

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

Like me, Naomi had spiritual-ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder)!

First, she forgot why she left Israel. She claims she left "full;" yet, she ran from the famine.

Second, she forgot why she was returning: Food was available in Israel.

Third, she complained God "afflicted" her, forgetting she and her husband decided their paths, not God!

Fourth, she claimed God "brought" her "misfortune." Like most of us, she used "deflection" speech, blaming God for her decisions that produced negative outcomes.

Naomi was the "perfect victim." She created ideal conditions for a *pity party* with Ruth and others. She forgot she chose her actions, and so she must bear the outcomes and learn from them.

When our walk with the Lord is superficial and shallow, we mistake God's work in our lives for the Devil's "schemes." To be sure, the Devil is active and prowling, ready to prance on us. But often we ignore the Spirit's warnings, reach out on our own, and then we "credit" the resulting discipline to the Devil.

We must follow the Lord always. Negative events do not mean the Devil is attacking us. God corrects us when we go off center, so we might grow. This is a needed part of our sanctification or *make-over* journey. Apostle Paul warns us in **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**:

¹⁹Do not put out the Spirit's fire; ²⁰do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹Test everything. Hold on to the good. ²²Avoid every kind of evil.

With this attitude, we will be more aware and better able to hear and respond to the Spirit's prompting.

Ruth's attitude was opposite to Naomi's. Despite her poor conditions, she was positive and focused on God. She rejected Naomi's perfect *pity party*, labeled, "for victims only." Rather, she chose to commit to Naomi; more important, to Naomi's God. In **Ruth 1:16-18** we read:

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my

people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.” ¹⁸When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

In human terms, Ruth’s potential in Israel wasn’t good; she was a widow and a foreigner, low on the social scale. Even so, she decided to stay with Naomi. She accepted her conditions, didn’t speculate on likely negative, destructive outcomes, but decided to trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to see her through.

Ruth’s attitude showed another important life lesson: when events are not going according to your plans do not depend on human advice, but on God. Trust in the Lord always!

Like Ruth, we have all been there. Everything is going wrong around us. Logic suggests we return to Moab and not enter foreign territory where folks might reject us. Family, friends, acquaintances tell us to return to Moab. And we “feel” we should. But the Spirit says “No!” And we are uncomfortable.

We wait for God’s peace to decide, but remain agitated. We assume the lack of peace means God has not approved the path away from Moab. We don’t trust God to do the unseen. Apostle Paul puts it this way in **Hebrews 11:1-2**:

¹Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

Paul also reminded the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 2:4-5** that faith does not rest on human wisdom:

⁴My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

At first, the easiest, most comfortable, peaceful, human plan is to flee Moab! But that never works. We must learn to be like Ruth, remain faithful and steadfast to our Lord, especially in the storm. Often, it’s after we decide to step out in faith we get the peace we need so desperately. The cue for action isn’t peace but God’s voice!

The Lord led Ruth to Boaz’ field to collect leftover crops. Boaz heard about her, reached out to her, and God rewarded her faithfulness to Naomi and to Him:

¹¹Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹²May the LORD repay you for what

you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

- **Ruth 2:11-12**

And the Lord did “repay!” God rewarded Ruth’s unswerving faithfulness throughout the journey. Not even Naomi’s bitterness could thwart God’s plan!

We read in Ruth Chapter 4, Boaz married Ruth “and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son,” Obed, King David’s grandfather. Yes, Ruth, a Gentile, is in the human family line of Messiah Jesus (**Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:1-16**).

Application



IS JESUS YOUR LORD?

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Are you facing a tough personal or business decision that’s causing you concern? Family, friends, ac-

quaintance tell you to move in the “obvious” direction. But you know God wants you to do the opposite. Still, you are uncomfortable as you await His “peace” to decide! Ask Him if you should act; His peace will come after you decide.

Invest time with the Lord regularly to hear His voice. He will guide you, but until you decide, you might be fearful and lack the peace you seek. Once the Spirit confirms, go ahead, “step in the Jordan.” He will give you peace as He parts the waters.

This week, ask the Lord to help you in these matters:

- ★ **Show you** where you are on the sanctification or *make over* journey. Are you still a “babe” drinking “milk?” Or have you advanced to “solid food” by investing time with Him and His Word regularly? – **Hebrews 5:12-14**.
- ★ The more time you invest with Him and His Word, the further along you go.
- ★ **Let Him** work in you to give you strength for this journey.
- ★ Thank Him for the next trial and stay close with Him as you go through it. Don’t rise above it; stay with it and learn from it – **James 1:2-3**.
- ★ **Show you** areas where you are bitter like Naomi, and show you how to handle them.

Your Journey

- ❖ Are you listening to people about what you should be doing?
- ❖ Only God knows what you should be doing; He will tell you.
- ❖ Beware of TV evangelists and others who promise to “do things for you” in return for your “gifts”--your “seed” money.
- ❖ Do you need more commitment from Jesus to you? He died for you--I don’t need more.

Considering this month’s theme, *Life Lessons*, this period’s topic, *Jerusalem to Moab*, each day reflect on the specific verses in the *Personal Reflection* section below.

These questions might help your reflection:

- Who is talking to whom, about what, and in what context?
- How do these verses apply to me today?
- What lessons from these verses can I start to do today?



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- ★ **Help you** replace any bitterness you sense, with Ruth’s attitude of gratitude, humility, loyalty, perseverance. – **Ephesians 4:29-32**.

God is faithful. He will not allow anyone to snatch you from His arms. In **John 10:27-30**, Jesus tells us His sheep hears His voice. Will you let Him be your Shepherd?

Notes

Memory Verse

Job 12:13

To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.

Personal Reflections

September 8th: Ruth 1; Job 12:13

September 9th: 1 Kings 11:1-8; Ezra 10:10-11

September 10th: Hebrews 12:4-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

September 11th: Hebrews 11:1-2; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

September 12th: Ruth 2:11-12; James 1:2-4

September 13th: – Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:1-16

September 14th: Hebrews 5:12-14; Ephesians 4:29-32