

NAOMI - RUTH CONNECTION

LESSON TWO - RUTH 1:1

By Sandy Harber

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled...."

The book of Ruth tells us that the events recorded took place during the period of the Judges. This was about a 300 to 400 year time span between the death of Joshua and the anointing of Israel's first king, Saul. During this time period Israel experiences the repeated cycle of forgetting God and descending into sin and idolatry, which God responds to by removing His blessing and allowing Israel's enemies to prevail over them. This is followed by a period when the Israelis repent and cry out to God for help, to which God responds by raising up a judge to defeat Israel's enemies and lead the people back to serving God. All is well while the judge lives but when he dies the cycle begins again.

In contrast to this dark time in Israel's history when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), the beautiful story of Ruth plays out. While the book of Judges records how Israel forsakes God and turns to idols, the book of Ruth relates how a Gentile girl forsakes idols and turns to God.

God is good and wise and ensures that we receive exactly what we need for our situation. When Israel sinned and turned to idols God determined that they needed to be reminded that He was the only true God. Idols could not help them when their enemies attacked. When they recognized that He was their only Source of help God provided that help in the form of a judge, usually a warrior who would lead the people to victory over their oppressors.

So, where are you right now? Do you hold God responsible? Are you angry this happened to you? Or, just confused and wondering, "Why me?" Or, are you feeling down, directionless, or sad? God has the answer. God IS the answer. Start by asking for grace for the day. Overcoming grief is a process. Crying out to God for help is a good beginning. As we explore the experiences and feelings of Naomi and Ruth we may recognize that, like us, we have faced similar feelings. They may be very different, but the struggle feels very real.

We will be sharing more of our own journeys with you throughout this connection and we look forward to hearing your stories or prayer requests. We hope you find these teachings to be as helpful to you as they have been to us.

Our prayer is that you will find this connection to be a way of experiencing God's love, hope, and direction in our lives together. As we share our hearts and prayer requests, may be find friendship and encouragement.

*"The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.
The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."
Psalm 34:17-19*