



Ruth & Esther

Women of Faith

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

1: Simple Choices, Serious Consequences

Read—Introduction, Ruth 1:1-5; other references as given.

Ruth has been called the most beautiful short story ever written. It is a love story—not just about a man and a woman (Ruth and Boaz) and a daughter-in-law's love (Ruth) and her devotion to her mother-in-law (Naomi), but about God's unfailing love for those who trust Him during life's greatest challenges.

In Ruth chapter one, Naomi decided to return to Israel after the loss of her husband and her two sons. Her daughter-in-law Ruth, also a widow, left her home in Moab (an area southeast of the Dead Sea) to care for Naomi. Ruth was seeking more than the sweet satisfaction that comes from an unselfish love for someone in need. She was being drawn by God who alone could satisfy the famine of her soul.

In the first lesson you'll learn how one man's decision led to serious consequences for his family. As you examine his decision and the consequences that ensued, you'll naturally reevaluate your own approach to decision-making. More important, in this lesson you'll learn God's plan for decision-making.

Now ask God to bless your diligent study of His precious Word and to transform you into the image of His Son.

1. What were the moral and spiritual conditions like in Israel the time when **the days when the judges ruled**?

Judges 2:11–23: _____

Judges 17:6; 21:25: _____

2. The theme verse of Judges is likely Judges 21:25, see also 17:6; 18:1; 19:1). Judges records seven cycles of sin, each one followed by God's judgment. The Bible says the Israelites did **what was right in their own eyes** (Judges 21:25) because there was no king (authority) in Israel. List four truths about man's nature and his inability to govern himself that the Israelites had forgotten during this time.

a. Proverbs 14:12: _____

b. Isaiah 55:8–9: _____

c. Jeremiah 10:23: _____

d. Jeremiah 17:5: _____

3. **In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes** (Judges 21:25). If there is a statement that captures the essence of moral relativism, this is it. It's been said that Judges is the book of "no king," 1 Samuel the book of "man's king" (Saul), and the Gospels are the books of "God's king" (Jesus).

a. What did the Jews say in answer to Pontius Pilate when he said, "**Behold your King**" (John 19:14–15)?

b. If you are a Christian, do you acknowledge Jesus Christ's lordship over every area of your life?

YES NO I never thought of doing that.

If you answered "no" or "I have never thought of doing that," would you be willing to bow in prayer right now and surrender yourself to Jesus Christ in every area of your life? If you are not sure you are a Christian, turn to the back of this study guide and read the Final Exam. It will explain how you can become a Christian according to the Bible.

4. In Ruth 1:1 the Bible says Elimelech ("My God is King") moved his family approximately fifty miles east from Bethlehem to the land of Moab. List four things that happened to him and his family during their time in Moab (Ruth 1:2–5).

1. _____ (v. _____).

2. _____ (v. _____).

3. _____ (v. _____).

4. _____ (v. _____).

5. If you evaluate Elimelech's decision entirely on the consequences that followed, it's easy to say his decision was unwise. But when you consider his original need (providing for his family), his decision is understandable and even commendable. All things considered, *do you think* Elimelech's decision to move his family to Moab was wise or unwise?

Wise Unwise We can't know for sure

Why?

6. Elimelech's decision, apparently motivated by economic need (famine), removed his family from the fellowship and support of the Israelite community and the formal instruction of God's Word (Law of Moses) to a country that worshipped the pagan god Chemosh. Perhaps Elimelech believed his family's move to Moab would be only temporary (note: the Hebrew word for **dwelt**, "*guwr*," means to dwell or to reside as a stranger). Or perhaps the opportunity to move required him to act quickly.

a. Describe an important decision you made—one that you didn't pray about—that had negative consequences (job change, major purchase [car, home, etc.]) for you and others.

b. If you were given the same opportunity again, what would you do differently?

7. If a Christian focuses exclusively on financial advantage in the decision-making process, he or she can easily become blinded to the spiritual dangers that lie ahead. Give at least three negative consequences that often happen to those who lust after riches (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

1. _____ (v. _____).

2. _____ (v. _____).

3. _____ (v. _____).

8. There is no mention that Elimelech and his family sought the Lord regarding their decision to move to Moab. Many years earlier Joshua and the other Israelite leaders were deceived by the inhabitants of Gibeon (Gentiles) who trapped them into a covenant that God prohibited (Joshua 9:1–13; Exodus 23:32–33; 34:12). Why did Joshua and the Israelite leaders, who should have known better, make such an unwise decision (Joshua 9:3–15)?

9. Christians should follow the biblical teaching on wise decision-making. Many Christians, however, rely on impressions and feelings to guide them while others rely on unwise and ungodly counsel to help them make decisions. List four spiritual principles every Christian should incorporate in his or her decision-making process.

1. Proverbs 3:5– 6: _____

2. Proverbs 1:5, 8: _____

3. Proverbs 15:22: _____

4. John 8:32: _____

10. Do you follow God's principles for wise-decision making? YES NO Not as often as I should.

Why?

1: Simple Choices, Serious Consequences

1. Judges 2:11–23: The Israelites forsook the Lord and worshipped the pagan idols of the nations around them (Judges 2:12). The Israelites repented on several occasions, but each time they went back to their evil ways. The Lord sent (territorial) judges to rule over them, but they returned to their sinful ways when the judges died (Judges 2:19). God allowed hostile neighboring nations to oppress them so they would turn back to Him (Judges 2:20–23). Judges 17:6; 21:25: The Israelites rejected God and His moral authority, and everyone did what he thought was right.
2.
 - a. Proverbs 14:12: There is a way (a path in life) that seems right to man, but man’s ways end in destruction. When man moves away from God’s truth, he makes decisions that seem right to him at the time, but they end in death.
 - b. Isaiah 55:8–9: God’s ways are high (better, wiser) than man’s ways.
 - c. Jeremiah 10:23: Man doesn’t possess the innate ability to direct the course of his own life in a way that is best.
 - d. Jeremiah 17:5: God opposes (**curses**) the man who trusts in himself (**makes flesh his strength**).
3.
 - a. We have no king except Caesar.
 - b. Answers will vary.
4.
 1. Elimelech died (Ruth 1:3).
 2. Mahlon and Chilion, Elimelech’s two sons, married Moabite women (Ruth 1:4).
 3. Mahlon and Chilion died (Ruth 1:5).
 4. Naomi was left abandoned in a foreign land.
5. Answers will vary, but his decision appears to have been unwise. Nothing in the immediate passage denounces Elimelech’s move to Moab, and the death of Elimelech and his sons should not be construed as an act of divine judgment. Elimelech’s move to the pagan nation of Moab, however, resulted in a negative impact on his family and placed his grown sons in a pagan environment which led to their marriage to Gentile women. God gave the sons of Israel the Promised Land and told them that He would provide for their needs within the land if they obeyed Him. Elimelech’s move to Moab removed his family from the instruction of the Law of Moses and the support of others who continued to be faithful to God throughout the period of the judges. While God’s people are often tempted to “take matters into their own hands” during a time of testing, their first responsibility should be to examine their own relationship to God and make sure that their intended plans don’t violate His commands. They should also consider whether their plans may have negative long-term spiritual consequences on themselves and others.
6.
 - a. Answers will vary.
 - b. Answers will vary
7.
 1. They fall into temptation easily (1 Timothy 6:9).
 2. They are often ensnared or trapped in debt due to overspending and an inability to control their financial desires (1 Timothy 6:9).
 3. If they do not realize their sin and repent, this love of money could entrap them and bring ruination (1 Timothy 6:9). This ruination could refer to the destruction of their families and their lives, both emotionally and physically. Other answers could apply.
8. Joshua and the other Israelite leaders did not ask the Lord’s counsel (Joshua 9:14).
9.
 1. Proverbs 3:5–6: A Christian must trust God and His Word rather than his own human reason, regardless of how right he believes his own way seems to him. A believer should acknowledge God’s authority over all matters of life, including his thoughts. If he does this, he can trust God to direct his steps.
 2. Proverbs 1:5, 8: A Christian should listen to wise counsel.
 3. Proverbs 15:22: A Christian should seek the counsel of several godly people, especially those who have knowledge and experience in the area he or she is seeking guidance.
 4. John 8:32: A Christian should seek to know God’s Word, which will reveal His will.
10. Answers will vary.