

Naomi and Ruth Bible Study – Participant’s Guide

“I Lift Up My Eyes to the Hills”

A Study of Psalm 121 and The Book of Ruth

Introduction: Psalm 121

Psalm 121 is an inspired Hebrew prayer and/ or musical poem. While the specific author and date for this psalm are unknown, it is described as a pilgrimage song to Jerusalem that might have been sung as a dialogue between individuals in a caravan. It stands as a pilgrimage song for believers today as we continue our pilgrimage through life until we reach our heavenly home. This Psalm consists of synonymous parallelism in which the second line reinforces the first line. Notice the repetition of key terms “The Lord” and “Watch Over.”

Let’s read this Psalm.

I lift up my eyes to the hills
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip -
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD watches over you -
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all harm -
he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.”

Psalm 121

Naomi’s Pilgrimage: The Book of Ruth

- A. **The Setting:** Naomi’s pilgrimage from Moab to the Hills of Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1-7)
- B. **The Characters:** Naomi, Orpah, Ruth, Boaz (Ruth 1:8-22; Ruth 2:1-4)
- C. **Naomi’s Story:**

1. Heartbreak: Ruth 1:8-22

Climb into Naomi's heart. What do you see there? List the losses that Naomi is experiencing. Think of all the ways you might describe Naomi based on these scriptural passages and your own experiences as a woman.

2. Hardship: Ruth 2:2-3; Ruth 2:17-23

Climb into Naomi's heart. What do you see there? What hardships did she and Ruth experience in Bethlehem? Think of all the ways you might describe Naomi based on these scriptural passages and your own experiences as a woman.

3. Humiliation: Ruth 3:1-5; Ruth 3:16-18

Climb into Naomi's heart. What do you see there? Think of the advice that she gives to Ruth. What humiliation might she feel as she suggests Ruth's visit to Boaz at the threshing floor?

4. Help: Ruth 1:16-17; Ruth 3:5

Climb into **Ruth's** heart. What do you see there? Naomi told her at least three times to abandon her and go back to Moab. Why did Ruth follow Naomi's lead and advice?

5. Hope: Ruth 4:13-17

Climb into Naomi's heart. What do you see there? Think of all the ways you might describe Naomi based on these scriptural passages and your own experiences as a woman.

NOTE: The conclusion of this story balances the introduction. In Hebrew both have the same number of words, and both focus on Naomi. The introduction emphasizes Naomi's emptiness, and the conclusion portrays her fullness.

D. Application:

The story of Naomi and Ruth describes in detail the mentoring relationship of an older woman and a younger woman. What women in your life served as Christian mentors for you – intentionally or unintentionally?

a. For older women: Are you intentionally or unintentionally mentoring a younger woman? What are the most important lessons that you have to share?

b. For younger woman: Have you intentionally or unintentionally sought an older woman to be a mentor for you? What are some questions that you might have for a wiser, more experienced woman?

E. Final Thoughts:

These verses and stories come from the Old Testament where the Israelites, God's chosen people, waited for the Messiah. As Naomi looked to the hills of Bethlehem, she had no idea that the Messiah eventually would come from Ruth's descendents. These are the same hills where Jesus, our Savior, was born.

Hills were important locations during Jesus' ministry. It was on a hill where Jesus resisted Satan's temptation. (Matt. 4: 8-10) It was on a hill where Jesus revealed Himself in the Transfiguration. (Mark 9: 2-13) It was from a hill where Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5-7) Most importantly, "there is a green hill far away" that holds great meaning for us as Christians. It is the hill of Calvary where Jesus was crucified for our sin.

This is not the end of the story. After Jesus' resurrection, He took His disciples to a hill in Galilee. There He gave His Great Commission, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

F. Closing: Again, read Psalm 121.

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