A prayer to prepare you for hearing and learning from God's word.

Almighty God and loving heavenly Father, guide us and teach us of yourself from your Word. Help us to see the wisdom and value of living life according to your word the Bible; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

An introduction to the book

The story of Ruth comes at a sad time in Israel's history. When everyone did what was right "in their own eyes" not God's (Judges 21:25). But during this sad time there were a few who did what was right. Despite much sadness God was still fulfilling his purpose. He brought about good for his faithful people despite their circumstances. It teaches us to trust God even when times feel like he has forgotten us or we know we have done what was wrong and need to repent and seek forgiveness. God sees those who do what is right and rewards. The book of Ruth bridges the period when Israel was led by Judges and the time when they were led by kings. It gives rise for the reason for David being rightfully a king over God's people, from whom the Messiah, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour would come. (Matt 1:5)

Today's Bible Reading
Ruth Chapter 1

1 1 In the days when the judges ruled,
there was a famine in the land. So a man
from Bethlehem in Judah, together with
his wife and two sons, went to live for a
while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's
name was Elimelek, his wife's name was
Naomi, and the names of his two sons
were Mahlon and Kilion. They were
Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And
they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died,
and she was left with her two sons. 4 They
married Moabite women, one named
Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had
lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon
and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left
without her two sons and her husband.

6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the
Lord had come to the aid of his people by
providing food for them, she and her
daughters-in-law prepared to return
home from there. 7 With her two
daughters-in-law she left the place where
she had been living and set out on the
road that would take them back to the
land of Judah.
8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-
in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your
mother's home. May the Lord show you
kindness, as you have shown kindness to
your dead husbands and to me. 9 May the
Lord grant that each of you will find rest
in the home of another husband."
Then she kissed them goodbye and they
wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go
back with you to your people."
11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my
daughters. Why would you come with me?
Am I going to have any more sons, who
could become your husbands? 12 Return
home, my daughters; I am too old to have
another husband. Even if I thought there
was still hope for me—even if I had a
husband tonight and then gave birth to
sons— 13 would you wait until they grew
up? Would you remain unmarried for
them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter
for me than for you, because the Lord's
hand has turned against me!"
14 At this they wept aloud again. Then
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye,
but Ruth clung to her.

15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is
going back to her people and her gods. Go
back with her."
16 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. 17 Where you die I will die,
and there I will be buried. May the Lord
deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even
death separates you and me." 18 When
Naomi realized that Ruth was determined
to go with her, she stopped urging her.19 So
the two women went on until they came to
Bethlehem.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole
town was stirred because of them, and the
women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"
20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them.
"Call me Mara, because the Almighty has
made my life very bitter. 21 I 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."
22 So Naomi returned from Moab
accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her
daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as
the barley harvest was beginning. (NIV)

A Bible Study

Read the introduction to Ruth and today's set Bible reading.

Questions:

1. The chapter begins introducing the family of Elimelek. Describe in your own words the worry and grief that fell upon the family and later the hope. (See verses 1 to 7)
2. According to Deut 28-30 famine was a promised consequence for rejecting living life God's way. God had also forbidden the Israelites to associate with the Moabites the descendants of Lot who had hired Balaam and his donkey to curse Israel (Deut 23:3-7). Reflect on this and rethink verses 1 to 7.
3. Choices are offered and made in verses 8 to 19a. Knowing that God had chosen Israel to be a nation that would bless the people of other nations (Gen 12:1-3) do you think it was right for Naomi to give Orpah and Ruth the option to return to Moab? What do we learn about Ruth from her choice?
4. The chapter ends focused on Naomi and her reaction to all that had happened to her. Do you think it was right for Naomi to blame God for her misfortune?
5. What can we learn from how Naomi and Ruth handled their hardships, and how can we use those lessons in our own lives?