**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**

Ingredients:

* Half an hour, every day.
* Quiet, so you focus on yourself and on God;
* Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, as your response to God
* Word, so you can ponder His truth
* Life, people and events, so you are aware of Him in these situations

Method:

* Time – a fixed time when you are unlikely to be interrupted is best but more important is to actually start having such a time with God.
* Quiet – A simple method is to be quiet until you are aware you are in God’s presence before you start to respond to Him.
* Word – Read and be familiar with what is said. Meditate on the Word: “What does it say?” “What does it mean?” “How should I respond?” You may use the questions to help you or set them aside.
* Life – Use the time to also be aware of the things that are happening, inside you and around you. Bring these before God and speak to Him.

# Monday

**RUTH 1:1-22**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Moab is outside of Israel. Moabites are not Jews. Why did this family decide to move there from Israel?
3. Notice that the intention was to live in Moab “for a while”. What happened?
4. Why did Naomi decide to return to her home town Bethlehem?
5. Why do you think Ruth was so adamant to follow Naomi to Bethlehem? How would Naomi have fared if she went back alone?
6. Do you think Naomi was right to blame God for her misfortunes? How would you describe Naomi at this point?
7. Women in those days were rarely in control. Usually it is the men who make the decisions. It came about that the men in Naomi’s life passed away and she was alone except for her foreigner daughters-in-law. Now that she can make the decision, Naomi decided to go back home, and back to God. But it is a bitter Naomi who went back. Have you suffered for things outside your control? How do you feel about that? Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

**RUTH 1:1-22**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Wednesday

**RUTH 2:1-3:18**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. This is a long passage but easy to read and absorb. It is an account of Ruth’s encounters with Boaz. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. 2:10-16: Why did Boaz take special notice of Ruth?
3. *“May 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.”* How does Boaz feel towards Ruth? What has Ruth done that Boaz appreciated?
4. *The “guardian-redeemer” was a close, influential relative to whom members of the extended family could turn for help, usually when the family line or possessions were in danger of being lost. Among other things he was responsible for providing an heir for a dead brother and caring for relatives in difficult circumstances.* Since Boaz took no further action, Naomi asked Ruth to initiate a compromising situation with Boaz to see how he would respond. How did Boaz respond (3:9-13)?
5. Consider Ruth, from chapter 1 till now. What kind of person is she? What are her key strengths? Consider Boaz, how would you describe him? Do you think she is God’s blessing to Boaz or is Boaz God’s blessing to her?
6. God’s blessing can come in unexpected ways and forms. As we seek his blessing, what should we be doing in the course of our lives? Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

**RUTH 2:1-3:18**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Friday

**RUTH 4:1-22**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Though Ruth was virtually offering herself to him, and no relatives had stepped up to help Naomi, why did Boaz take so much trouble to go through the proper channels? What does this say about Boaz?
3. Remember Naomi’s bitterness when she first returned home. What do you think the child means to her? Would you consider Ruth’s stubborn determination to return with Naomi God’s blessing to Naomi?
4. The story of Ruth is one of the few books in the Bible where God’s direct intervention was never mentioned. The story was told totally from the view on the ground, much like much of our lives; except for the end when it was mentioned that Boaz was King David’s great grandfather. Ruth, Naomi and Boaz all made key decisions while not knowing God’s will. Yet the end showed that their decisions advanced God’s will. What did each one do right? What can you learn from their experiences?
5. Much like these 3 characters, we too live our lives not knowing how things will turn out for us. Yet along the way we have to make choices. How can we ensure that we make good choices, choices according to God’s will? What will happen to us if we make poor choices?

1. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

**RUTH 4:1-22**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Sunday

##### THE INDOMITABLE WILL OF GOD

The story of Ruth is a story of life on the ground; ordinary people making decisions in response to changing circumstances. How do they make those decisions? What do they base those decisions upon? Where does God stand in those decisions? The story does not tell us any answers but as it unfolds we are able to discern some of the main characters.

Ruth, in Boaz’s eyes, was a good woman. He saw Ruth’s decision to accompany her mother-in-law — despite the fact that she would likely have a better chance in life if she remained in her own homeland — as kindness towards her — she did so for Naomi’s sake — and he blessed her. This was a good woman, willing to look after Naomi, even to the extent of abandoning her own culture and gods for her sake, despite the odds.

Boaz himself could see beyond her foreign background and culture to recognise the good in Ruth. He was a godly man, careful to do what is right in God’s eyes and in the eyes of society. He was generous and kind.

Naomi, having nowhere to turn to, decided to return to her homeland and to her God, even though she had turned bitter; at least she was bitter in God’s presence.

Would God’s will be thwarted by our decisions? Did David’s lineage, and subsequently Jesus, depend on Elimelek leaving Israel, or his children succumbing to death 10 years after their marriages, or Ruth’s determination to look after her bitter mother-in-law? We don’t know. This is the only timeline we know. We know each was free to make their choices but at the end, God’s indomitable will marches on. And in its wake a bitter widow who returned to God was blessed with a grandson, a loyal daughter-in-law was blessed with a loving husband who truly loves and values her, a pious, kind and generous man found a good woman and down the road, after many generations, came David, king of Israel, and even further down, Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. Praise be to God!

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. What conclusion can you draw from the passages of Scripture you have been considering? Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Read the short sharing above. Do they add anything to your own conclusions?
4. Review the past week. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
5. Write down a prayer in response.