

Ruth

CURRICULUM



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WEEK 1: MARCH 4, 2018
“RUTH’S LOYALTY TO NAOMI”
RUTH 1

OVERVIEW

Loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, integrity, protection, grace, and blessings; these are just a few words that can be used to describe the action of love. These actions and more are lived out through the life of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. The book of Ruth took place during the time of Judges. *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit”* (Judges 17:6). Naomi’s faith in God was contagious. This influenced Ruth to make a decision to stay loyal to Naomi in the most tragic time in her life. Clinging to our faith in God may be the example that leads to a turning point in someone else’s life. Let’s glean from Ruth who remained strong in character and true to God when the society around her was collapsing.

INVESTIGATE

Read Ruth 1 as a group. Overall, six people are identified by name in chapter 1. What series of events concentrates the story to only two people?

Likewise, this chapter introduces three women whose world seems to be falling apart. Describe each one’s reaction and attitude to these horrific circumstances.

Naomi

Orpah

Ruth

How would you describe the relationship between Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth?

Why did Naomi encourage Orpah and Ruth to stay in Moab? Was this request for the benefit of her daughters-in-law or herself? Explain.

HISTORY

Sons who could become your husbands: The Old Testament law states that if a man died, his brother had to marry the widow to protect her and carry on the family name. Naomi's comment of "...sons who could grow up to be your husbands" refer to levirate marriage, the obligation of a dead man's brother to care for the widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). This law kept the widow from poverty and provided a way for the family name of the dead husband to continue.

INVOLVED

Throughout the chapter, how is the Lord acknowledged as involved in these events? See Ruth 1:6, 8-9, 13, 16-17, and 20-21. Just as seen in Ruth, the Lord is involved in each of our lives. Share one current example where the Lord is involved in your life.

SUFFERING

Naomi said that God was against her. Why would she feel this way?

How does suffering affect a person's attitude in general? How does suffering affect a person's attitude toward God?

Scenario: How would you counsel someone who blames God for their situation or feels God has deserted them in their time of suffering?

All of us have at some time in our lives felt empty and alone. Think of a time in your life when this occurred. How did God make himself known to you during this period?

So often when things are going bad in our life we feel that God is against us. We see in this story that God is actually working on a much bigger plan. Have you seen God's "bigger plan" in your life? Maybe a difficult period of your life where you didn't understand why it was happening; and now you look back and see how God had a bigger plan. Share in your group.

DICTIONARY

Hesed: Ruth 1:8 brings the first of several appearances in this book of a profoundly beautiful Old Testament Hebrew word, *hesed*, often translated “steadfast love,” “loving kindness,” or simply “kindness.” *Hesed* can refer both to human kindness and to the loving kindness of God toward people. In Ruth 1:8 this word connects with the Lord’s own kindness – offered in blessing by one of Abraham’s descendants (Naomi) but referring to kindness passed on by those not in Abraham’s line (Naomi’s daughters-in-law).

LOYALTY

Why was Ruth so loyal to Naomi (vv. 16-17)? Why was this loyalty so important in Naomi’s life at this time? Have you ever experienced this kind of faithfulness in a friendship? How did this impact you? Share in your group.

In order to be loving and loyal in our relationships, we must become imitators of God’s faithfulness in our involvement with others. No matter how horrific or devastating our circumstances may be, our hope must be in God. Throughout the story of Ruth, we get to witness God’s faithfulness to His people.

REFLECT

As you consider the first chapter of Ruth, what thoughts do you have about your current relationship with God? If you are in a season of being distant from God, how can you move toward him? If you are in a season of closeness, what brought you here?

PRAY

Take time to thank God for saving us, forgiving us, rebuilding and blessing our lives that will last through eternity.

PRAYER REQUESTS

WEEK 2: MARCH 11, 2018
“RUTH MEETS BOAZ”
RUTH 2

OVERVIEW

There is nothing like the sweetness of God's economy and his providence. The divine timing of Ruth and Naomi's arrival in Bethlehem is awesome. Boaz is a heroic, godly man placed in the lives of these two women through God's amazing supernatural matrix. As we journey through chapter 2, take time to pause and appreciate God's fingerprint through all these interactions and events. Remember: It can be heroic to what must be done and do it right.

INVESTIGATE

Read Ruth 2 as a group. Trace the steps of how the lives of Ruth and Boaz become intertwined in this chapter.

When Ruth takes the initiative to go out and glean, her action leads her to Boaz's field. In your own life, when has a “step forward in faith” brought even better results than you anticipated?

DICTIONARY

Glean: Jewish law made provision for the poor, sojourners, widows, and orphans to gather (“glean”) grain that was standing in corners or borders of fields or that was dropped by reapers as they cut and tied the grain in sheaves (Lev. 19:9-10, 23:22; Deut. 24:19). Ruth qualifies for these gleanings in more than one category.

GOD'S MERCIFUL PROVIDENCE

Ruth 2:3 states “As it turned out” or “she just happened to come” across the field belonging to Boaz. Is this a coincidence? If not, how would you counsel someone who felt life is a series of coincidences and that God is not active in people's lives?

How do the following passages relate to verse three?

Proverbs 16:9

Proverbs 16:33

Jeremiah 10:23

Isaiah 46:9-11

Has there been a recent coincidence in your life that after further thought, really wasn't? Explain.

CHARACTER

The author pauses the story to include verse four. What does this verse tell us about Boaz? In verses 4-16, what qualities do you see in Boaz?

In this story, Boaz embodies features of God's own character. What godly characteristic is seen in verses 8-9, 14-16? Describe evidences of how this godly characteristic has been evident in your life.

What about Ruth? What character traits did she exhibit in chapter 2?

REFUGE

Boaz's words in verses 11-12 capture the essence of their conversation and of this chapter. As Boaz blesses Ruth with his words, he builds up to the most important thing she has done. How does that phrase about God's "wings" explain everything Ruth has done? Look up the following verses about God's wings: Exodus 19:4; Psalm 36:7, 57:1.

Boaz took care of Ruth. The law of gleaning did not require the landowner to provide either food or water or protection from the men. Boaz was impressed by Ruth taking refuge under the wing of God. What person has God placed in your life to which He has blessed you in order for you to bless them?

DICTIONARY

Ephah: There is no precise metric equivalent of an ephah (v. 17), but the best information is that it was three-eighths to two-thirds of a bushel. An ephah of threshed barley would weigh about 35 pounds. Imagine Ruth carrying home a sack of that much barley!

IT'S COMPLICATED

Naomi is someone both bitter about her circumstances yet steadfast in her faith in God. Share your observations about Naomi for the following:

Naomi was bitter but her faith remained in God. What can we determine from Naomi in this chapter on how we deal with our difficulties?

Why does Boaz's relationship with Ruth impact Naomi so powerfully? What are other ways a simple act of service can impact those who observe that act? How have you been impacted or encouraged by the service of another?

Naomi explained to Ruth that Boaz was a close relative of their family – a kinsman redeemer. Study the roles of the kinsman redeemer in the law of Moses in these passages and write down your observations:

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Leviticus 25:25-28, 47-49

PRAY

Pastor and theologian John Piper says, "The Lord is kind. He is good to all who take refuge under his wings. So let us fall on our faces, bow before the Lord, confess our unworthiness, take refuge under the wings of god, and be astonished at his grace." As we go to a time of prayer, take a deep breath, be astonished at God's grace, thank him for his providence, and ask him to guide our steps.

PRAYER REQUESTS

WEEK 3: MARCH 18, 2018
“RUTH AND BOAZ AT THE THRESHING FLOOR”
RUTH 3

OVERVIEW

Chapter three is the turning point in this story where Naomi's hope awakens. She is encouraged that the Lord has led her to the fields of close relative Boaz who might serve as a kinsman redeemer. Naomi's plan is put in place to secure rest and a future for Ruth. The scene at the threshing floor provides a climatic turn of events as Ruth dutifully follows Naomi's instruction to visit Boaz secretly during the night. The chapter closes leaving Ruth and Naomi waiting once again, but with renewed hope.

INVESTIGATE

Read Ruth 3 as a group. The events of this chapter take place over only a few hours, from one day until early the next morning. What elements give this part of the story such intensity?

What was Naomi's plan to secure rest for Ruth?

THE PROPOSAL

What is the significance of Ruth asking Boaz to “spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman redeemer” (Ruth 3:9)? What was she asking him?

THE RISK

What was the risk Ruth was taking to go to the threshing floor and make her request? What could she lose? What about Naomi? What was her risk and what could she lose? How was God a part of this plan?

Have you experienced a time where you took a risk in order for God's will to be accomplished in your life? Share! Is there an area now that God might be asking you to be obedient and take the risk?

DICTIONARY

Kinsman-redeemer (go'el): A close relative who acted as a protector or guarantor of the family rights. Could be called upon to buy back property or provide an heir for a deceased brother by marrying a brother's wife.

Threshing floor: Located in a public place. Animals would trample the husks in order to separate the grain. The mixture would be tossed in the air so the wind would blow away the chaff. Once the work was done, the men stayed to eat, drink, and dance, but the women went home. The landowner stayed the whole night to guard the grain from theft.

Hah-yil: Moral strength, good quality, integrity and virtue. This word is used to describe both Boaz (Ruth 2:1) and Ruth (Ruth 3:11) as being people with moral strength.

REDEEMER NEARER

The suspense increases in our story when Boaz announces that there is a "relative closer than he" (Ruth 3:12). The closer relative would have the opportunity to carry out the responsibility of the kinsman redeemer first. In what ways does Boaz protect and honor Ruth and demonstrate that he wants to take responsibility for her?

RENEWED HOPE

Ruth prepared herself to meet with Boaz and carried out Naomi's instruction. Now she and Naomi must wait for Boaz's response. There were many reasons to have hope. What are some of the things that gave them hope?

What are some ways you have had to be patient and let God work in your circumstances? Has there ever been a time when it was hard to trust God and believe there was hope?

REDEMPTION

The theme of redemption increases in our story. It shows Ruth's blessedness and wonder at finding such a kind redeemer who is willing not only to pay a price for her but to marry her in love. This story shows a human redeemer and reflects how the Bible shows our redeeming God:

The one who saves us and protects us under His wings (Ruth 2:12, 3:9; Psalm 91:4)

The husband who loves and covenants with his wife (Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:16-23)

And the son willing to ransom us at his own cost (Matthew 20:28)

In your group discuss each of these examples and then discuss the "big story" of redemption by Christ.

SUMMING UP THE CHAPTER

The chapter opened with Naomi and the search for "rest" for "my daughter" (v. 1). It closes with Naomi and the same themes (v. 18), but now with the resolution in sight. The pace of the narrative quickens, with the space of only hours between this chapter and the next. Think of the worthy man and the worthy woman we've witnessed in this chapter. What qualities in them stand out, especially in contrast to the "heroes" and "heroines" of many love stories in the world today?

PRAY

Patience is a difficult thing especially when we are in the midst of trying times. Pray for patience as you trust God to work his perfect will in your life or in the life of others. Pray Philippians 4:6.

PRAYER REQUESTS

WEEK 4: MARCH 25, 2018
“BOAZ REDEEMS RUTH”
RUTH 4

OVERVIEW

In this final chapter we learn of the nearer kinsman's decision. Boaz secures the right to marry Ruth and we see the fulfillment of Naomi and Ruth's plan to secure rest. The movement of the book displays God's work in Naomi in the first chapter, transforming her from bitter to blessed in this last chapter. As chapter four concludes, we are reminded of God's provision through the birth of Ruth's son, Obed, and it beautifully illustrates God's work of salvation through the line of David.

INVESTIGATE

Read Ruth 4 as a group. Describe the setting of this passage. Where does it happen and who is involved in the action?

There are layers of blessings unfolding in this climatic chapter. What blessings do you see? What resolutions occur?

DICTIONARY

Town gate (Ruth 4:1): Towns of that time were built tightly with no open squares or forums. So, public business was done in the open space before the gate. The gate served as a combined town hall and courthouse. Elders witnessed transactions and decided cases.

Elders (Ruth 4:2): These were the local judges (Joshua 20:4; 1 Kings 21:8, 11).

Took off his sandal (Ruth 4:7): A symbol of an exchange, transferring the right to redemption.

CHOICES

Think about the choices Boaz and the unnamed relative each make in verses 2-10. What did you learn about each man's priorities?

THE BIG MEETING

Boaz does not immediately reveal the details of the proposed transaction, but does so gradually (vv. 4-5). Why is this a wise approach?

At first the nearest kinsman redeemer is willing to fulfill his responsibilities and redeem the land. Why does he change his mind?

Boaz acknowledges and announces that any child he has with Ruth will carry on Mahlon's name rather than his own (v. 10). This is in accordance with the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-6). The idea of jeopardizing his inheritance is why the other kinsman redeemer refused to marry Ruth (v. 6). Why would Boaz be willing to jeopardize his own inheritance in this way?

OUR REDEEMER

Throughout the book of Ruth the theme of redemption fills the pages. In Isaiah, Yahweh is "go'el" of Israel (Isaiah 41:14). How is Boaz a picture of Christ? How has Christ acted as a kinsman redeemer for you?

NOW OR LATER

Study any of these New Testament references of Jesus Christ as Redeemer (the list is not exhaustive):

Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 10:43-45

Romans 3:22-24; 8:22-23

1 Corinthians 1:30

Ephesians 1:7-8; 4:30

1 Timothy 2:5-6

Titus 2:11-14

Hebrews 9:11-12, 15

1 Peter 1:18-19

GENEALOGY

In the book of Ruth, we see a God who provides for his people according to his promises. Read Matthew 1:1-16. What is significant when you read this genealogy related to Ruth (see verses 5 and 16)?

In what ways was Ruth's son Obed a blessing (read Ruth 4:16-22)? To Naomi? To Bethlehem? Why is this important today?

YOUR FINAL THOUGHTS

What did the book of Ruth teach you about how God provides according to his promises?

What are some key lessons in your own life that you have learned from studying the story of Ruth?

PRAY

Ruth is the story of a God who provides for his people according to his promises. Go back and read Genesis 12:1-7 about the promises given to Abraham. Spend time in prayer acknowledging the greatness of God, his love for you, and his promises in your life.

PRAYER REQUESTS

