



Over the next five weeks we are looking at the Book of Ruth, and we will discover that obedience in everyday life pleases God.

When we reflect His character through our interactions with others, we bring glory to Him. **Ruth's sacrifice** and hard work to provide for Naomi reflected God's love.

Boaz's loyalty to his kinsman, Naomi's husband, reflected God's faithfulness.

Naomi's plan for Ruth's future reflected selfless sacrifice.

I think you will really enjoy and grow in your faithfulness as we look at the Book of Ruth together.

STUDY 1

Ruth 1:1-22

Introduction to the book of Ruth

No one knows for certain who wrote the book of Ruth. It was probably written during the time of King David. The book of Ruth tells the story of how a Moabite (non-Jew) became a faithful follower of Yahweh, Israel's God. It also reveals some historical background to the family line of King David (and hence Jesus). The book also shows us how God is involved in the small details of people's lives, and how they can become a part of His larger plan of salvation.

As chapter 1 opens, Bethlehem is facing famine. But things are not good for them in terms of their faith either. This is a time before a human Kings rule over Israel. God had appointed judges over them. But instead of doing what was right by God, people did whatever they thought was right in their own eyes. (Judges 21:25). Perhaps this famine was a judgement from God.

READ Ruth 1:1-5

1. What is the situation for Naomi by the end of verse 5?

READ Ruth 1:6-18

2. Why does Naomi want her daughters-in-law to return to Moab?

3. Naomi says the Lord's hand had turned against her. Has she lost faith?

4. Why did Ruth stay with Naomi? What is her plan for life? Why do you think she would she have chosen this path?

READ Ruth 1:19-22

5. What do you think the people of Judah would have been thinking when they say Naomi return?

6. The barley harvest was beginning. Do you think this could be a narrative "hint" that things are about to change?

7. What sacrifice do you see from Ruth and from Naomi in this chapter?

Personal

8. How do you respond to God when things in life get difficult... really difficult?

STUDY 2

Ruth 2:1-23

As Naomi and Ruth arrive in Judah, they are women on their own, unable to earn much of a living. They are, culturally, at the mercy of their society for survival. The only chance they have is to find a relative.

Yet God also remains sovereign.

READ Ruth 2:1-3

Gleaning the leftovers from a barely field provided enough to survive. It might help you survive for a few days, but it was still very hard work.

1. What is Ruth's plan for survival as she arrives in Judah? Do you think she has a longer-term plan?

READ Ruth 2:4-17

2. What things does Boaz do for Ruth when he arrives to find her gleaning in his field? How does his kindness increase as the chapter continues?

3. It seems Boaz is somewhat attracted to Ruth at this stage. How do you think Ruth sees Boaz at this stage?

4. In verse 12, Boaz speaks of God as a place of refuge. In what way is Boaz himself a refuge for Ruth?

READ Ruth 2:18-23

Boaz was a "kinsman-redeemer" (a better translation perhaps than "guardian-redeemer"). Any woman left widowed or childless was taken as a wife by her closest relative, her kinsman-redeemer. However, children born would be heirs of her previous husband, continuing his family line. If Ruth were to marry Boaz, Naomi's son's family line would continue.

5. Again we are told how dangerous the harvest field can be for women, as they were quite vulnerable in this environment. How does Naomi respond to Boaz's protection of Ruth?

Personal

6. People could say all that is happening for Ruth and Naomi is just co- incidence, or good luck. How can a Christian respond to this sort of claim?

STUDY 3

Ruth 3:1-18

We are leading up to Ruth and Boaz's marriage. This is also unveiling for us the line of (King) David and hence the lineage of Jesus. In this chapter, the greatest risk comes in the middle of the night.

1. Have you ever seen God plan something in your life only to realise later it was part of something much bigger?

READ Ruth 3:1-5

2. What is Naomi's plan for Ruth? What are the dangers involved in this?

READ Ruth 3:6-18

3. How does Boaz first respond to Ruth lying at his feet in the middle of the night? How could he have responded?

4. When Ruth calls him a "guardian-redeemer", what do you think she is implying as to the way he should respond?

5. How does Boaz **then** respond to Ruth?

6. In verse 12, Boaz identifies another man who is more qualified as "guardian-redeemer". What is Boaz's plan? Does he want to marry Ruth or is he trying to pass her off to another?!

7. A guardian-redeemer is under obligation to maintain the line of the widow's deceased husband. He must also buy the land belonging to Elimelech's sons. This is to provide for the widow and provide her son with an inheritance. What would go through the mind of a potential guardian-redeemer when a situation like this comes up?

8. How does Boaz protect Ruth's name as well as make his intention/desire clear as she leaves?

Personal

9. Boaz is showing himself to be a true man of God – a man of character. He not only cares for the refugee, but also remains obedient to God's laws. In what ways can we stand out as true men and women of God in today's world?

STUDY 4

Ruth 4:1-12

God's plan becomes clear in this final chapter of Ruth. Not only for Naomi and Ruth, but for the line of David. Yet there is uncertainty for Ruth and Naomi as they are not yet clear of the other guardian-redeemer's intentions.

1. As God's plans unfold in our lives, it can be encouraging. Yet those plans can also often take turns that we do not want or anticipate. What do you do when God's plans for your life take a strange or unexpected turn? Do you trust him, or question him?

READ Ruth 4:1-5

2. What is happening in this scene? What surprises you? What do we learn about the law of Israel? What do we learn about Boaz?

3. Is this devaluing of women in Israelite society, or is it a cultural way of caring? Do families do similar things to this in our society today?

READ Ruth 4:6-12

In these times, the city gate was where justice was administered. If you had a case to be resolved, you would go to the city gate and call the elders of the city together.

4. Why do you think the author goes into detail explaining the laws and practices of sandal removing? Surely the Israelites reading this would understand what is happening? Why explain it?

5. Why do you think we are not told the name of the other "first in line" guardian-redeemer"?

6. Who are Rachel and Leah? Why are they brought up here? (see Genesis 29:14-30)

7. Who are Tamar and Perez? Why are they mentioned? (1 Chronicles 2:4 and Ruth 4:18!)

8. How does a passage like this give us insight into the institution of marriage in the time of Ruth?

Personal

9. What value do you place on family? How does a Christian family value marriage and how do we care for widows?

10. Put yourself in Ruth's or Boaz's circumstances. What would you be thinking at this stage?

STUDY 5

Ruth 4:13-22

Redemption History

Boaz and Ruth marry and have a son. And now we learn how this seemingly insignificant woman, Ruth, a Moabite-ess, is one of the most significant figures in God's plans for salvation.

1. What is the most difficult thing about trusting God for his purposes and plans? Can you think of an example?

READ Ruth 4:13-16

2. What is the significance in this narrative of Ruth and Boaz having a son?

3. In verse 15, they call Ruth "better to you (Naomi) than ten sons!" What do they mean by this?

3. What reputation do you think Ruth and Naomi have among the people of Israel by this time?

READ Ruth 4:17-22

4. What is the significance of this genealogy?

Reflecting on the book of Ruth as a whole

5. What character stands out for you personally the most throughout the book of Ruth? Why?

6. What cultural practices stand out for you the most?

7. What does the book of Ruth reveal to us about the character of God?

8. How does the book of Ruth encourage you to see God at work in your life?