

- 1 Be concise.** Please share your thoughts and answers, but be considerate so that others will have time to share their answers also. Be charitable and kind. Be willing to share with the group, but do not try to dominate the conversation. Use the time after the class to find help with any personal issues or problems you may be confronting in your life.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

(James 1:19–20)

- 2 Be thoughtful with your answer.** Consider your words. Do not simply regurgitate what you have always heard. We have the tendency to speak in “Christianese” — words that only people who grew up on the pews would understand. Think about how your words will be heard by others. Will they understand what you are saying? Is what you are about to say going to be useful for the building up of the faith of others? Or will your words be confusing, cause hurt, or worse, damage someone’s faith? Speak without harshness or anger, but with kindness and humility.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

(Ephesians 4:29)

- 3 Rely on the scriptures for truth.** It is easy to rely upon conventional, worldly wisdom as truth. Bible study is about seeking God’s answers for our lives, not dispensing the advice of the world. We must consider that our natural answers may be the wrong answers if they are not founded on God’s word.

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

(1 Corinthians 1:25)

This is a booklet to aid you in your personal study of this book. Read through the text first, discovering God's precious truths for yourself. Write down the main point of each section of text in the space provided. Use the margins on each side of the text and the backside of the page to make notations of the truths you discover and passages you do not understand. When you believe you have seen all there is in text, read and answer the questions in the booklet pertaining to that section of text. The questions are not an exhaustive list of things to look for in the text. The questions are to help you consider the points that the author was trying to convey to his audience. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

The account of Ruth contains a beautiful narrative that is highly instructive to the people of God. The book of Ruth contains many portraits that instructs us about God and gives us hope and encouragement through difficult times. The book of Ruth contains a beautiful love story picturing sacrificial love. The book paints a beautiful portrait of manhood and womanhood. The book deals with the problem of racism, as it speaks the issues concerning the relationships between Israelites and Moabites. Ruth reminds us that there is always a remnant of God's people who are loving the Lord and serving him. The book reveals what risk-taking love and devotion looks like. One of the grand pictures of this book is that expresses the sovereignty of God, answering an important question for us: Can I trust and love God who has given me pain in my life? Finally, the book glorifies God through Christ. With these grand concepts in mind, let us begin our study of the book of Ruth.

The Setting of Ruth (1:1)

The book of Ruth opens with these words: "In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons." This introduction is filled with ominous words.

First, we are told that it is the days of the judges. The days of the judges were a hopeless time when there was great wickedness and unfaithfulness. We read about some horrible events happening during the days of the judges, particularly what happened in Gibeah (Judges 19). The end of the book declares where the wickedness came from. "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25 ESV). It is a terrible, wicked time when the book of Ruth takes place.

Second, we are told that there is a famine in the land. Now this is not merely information about the economic situation and how difficult it was to live during that time. Famine is a declaration of God's wrath and judgment against his people. Look at the Lord's promises to Israel before they enter the land of Canaan as recorded in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. (Leviticus 26:3-4 ESV)

20 The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. 21 The Lord will make the pestilence stick to you until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. 22 The Lord will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish. 23 And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. 24 The Lord will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed. (Deuteronomy 28:20–24 ESV)

If the people obeyed, then God would give them the rains and the land would produce for them. However, if the people chose to forsake the Lord, they would experience famine. The famine is a picture of the disobedience that is occurring in the days of the judges.

This sets up for us some irony in the first verse. We are going to notice that the names of things in this book are very meaningful to the direction of the story. This is already true in the first verse. We are introduced to a man of Bethlehem in Judah. The name Bethlehem means “house of bread” and yet there is a famine in the land. There is no bread in the house of bread is what we are being told. This is another picture of God’s judgment against the people for their wickedness and corruption.

Third, this man from Bethlehem along with his wife and two sons move to Moab. We have seen in our study of Genesis that leaving the promised land is condemned by God. God’s people were to trust him, even through famines that would come. By turning their hearts back to the Lord and trusting in him God would provide for them all that they need. Further, they move to Moab. We do not know by the Hebrew word if they intend to live temporarily in Moab or permanently. But either way it is a mistake. The Moabites are enemies of the Israelites. In Judges 3:12-14 we read that the Israelites served under Eglon the king of Moab for 18 years. They are oppressed by Moab whenever God allowed Moab to be strong and afflict them. This first sentence sets up for the reader that disaster that we are about to learn in the book of Ruth.

Main point: _____

Make additional notes at left and below:

- 1 Were God's people supposed to leave the promised land?
- 2 Is Moab an ally or an enemy of Israel (cf. Judges 3:12-14)?
- 3 What happens to this family once they leave Israel (1:3-5)?
- 4 Who is Naomi left with?
- 5 In the meantime, what has God done for Israel (1:6)?
- 6 Why does Naomi tell her daughter-in-laws to leave (1:7-9)?
- 7 What is the response of the daughter-in-laws (1:10-15)?
- 8 What does Ruth show about her character (1:16-17)? What do we learn from this?
- 9 What does Naomi say God has done (1:19-21)? What do we learn from this?

TRANSFORMATION:

How does this relationship change your relationship with God? What did you learn about him? What will you do differently in your life?

Main point: _____

Make additional notes at left and below:

- 1 What are we told about Boaz (2:1)?
- 2 What does Ruth want to do (2:2)? Read Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-21 to help understand what is happening.
- 3 What provisions of God do we see occurring in verses 3-4?
- 4 How does Boaz show kindness and generosity to Ruth (2:8-9)? What is Ruth's response (2:10)?
- 5 Why does Boaz show kindness and generosity to Ruth (2:11-12)? What is Ruth's response (2:13)? What do we learn from this?
- 6 What else does Boaz do for Ruth (2:14-17)?
- 7 What does Naomi think and do when Ruth returns (2:17-23)?
- 8 Who is Boaz (2:20)? What does this mean?

TRANSFORMATION:

How does this relationship change your relationship with God? What did you learn about him? What will you do differently in your life?

Main point: _____

Make additional notes at left and below:

1 What is Naomi's concern for Ruth (3:1)? What is Naomi's plan for Ruth (3:1-5)?

Historical note: Naomi tells Ruth to wash and anoint herself. This is likely more than just telling her to get pretty. Ruth would very likely have still been wearing her widow garments because she has been mourning the loss of her husband. This would give some explanation as to why Boaz has not attempted to inquire about Ruth regarding marriage. Further, remember that when the husbands of Ruth and Orpah die, that is when Naomi returns to Israel. This is all the more likely what this means when we see what else Ruth is supposed to do.

2 What does Ruth do in verse 7?

Historical note: Many writers have tried to sexualize this actions but there is nothing in these Hebrew words that requires such an understanding. There are other Hebrew words that could have been used to communicate this if a sexual act was intended. No, the picture is far more beautiful. Ruth is to uncover his feet and lie down next to his feet. It was most common to sleep with your cloak as your blanket at night. Remember that this is why God commanded that a person who took another's cloak as a payment for debt still had to return the cloak to that person at night to keep warm while sleeping. By removing Boaz's cloak from his feet, the cold night air would eventually wake him up. But there is much more because Ruth is to lay down next to his feet. A symbolic opportunity is being requested. We see God use this symbol in regards for his love for Israel.

When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine. (Ezekiel 16:8 ESV)

Now see what Ruth is doing by this action. She will uncover Boaz's feet. He will wake up to cover his feet again and Ruth will be laying there by his feet. He will have the choice to simply cover his own feet and send her away or he can cover his feet and her as well, symbolizing that he does love her and will enter into a marriage covenant with her to care for her and provide for her. So this is done at night to not embarrass Ruth or Boaz. Ruth will present herself as an available woman at a time when Boaz would be in good spirits from the harvest and from having a full meal, without the pressure of others watching. This is what is at stake at in this scene.

3 What does Boaz do (3:10-13)? What is Boaz's answer?

4 What does Boaz do (2:15)? What is Naomi's response (2:18)?

TRANSFORMATION:

How does this relationship change your relationship with God? What did you learn about him? What will you do differently in your life?

Main point: _____

Make additional notes at left and below:

- 1 What does Boaz do in the gates of the city (4:1-5)?

Historical note: Being the redeemer of the family inheritance did not mean you were required to marry the widow. But Boaz is evidently appealing to the spirit of the law, showing faithful, covenant love to God and to Naomi. Neither man is legally bound by Deuteronomy 25:5-10 to marry Ruth. It is voluntary. But this does not erase all moral responsibility. This appears to be what Boaz is appealing to this nearer family redeemer. He does not bring up the marriage component because that is not part of the redeemer requirement. His requirement is to purchase the property to keep it in the family. However, he does bear responsibility for Naomi and Ruth, and in that society, the way they would be provided for is through marriage.

- 2 What is the response of the redeemer to the opportunity Boaz presents (4:6-8)? What is the redeemer concerned about?
- 3 What does Boaz do (4:9-10)?
- 4 What blessings are pronounced on Ruth (4:11-12)? Explain why Ruth would be likened to Rachel and Leah and to Tamar.
- 5 What reversal of fortunes is described in 4:13?
- 6 What was Ruth called in 2:10? What was Ruth called in 2:13? What is Ruth called in 3:9? What is Ruth called now in 4:13?
- 7 What blessings are pronounced on Naomi (4:14-17)? Has her hope in God been vindicated?
- 8 What future hope is proclaimed in 4:18-22? How is God going to rescue?

TRANSFORMATION:

How does this relationship change your relationship with God? What did you learn about him? What will you do differently in your life?

RUTH



FAITH IN DIFFICULTY

SELF-STUDY WORKBOOK

by: Brent Kercheville