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RUTH

STUDY GUIDE



RUTH

SCRIPTURE READING

Ruth

THEME

The theme of Ruth is faithfulness, which is constantly revealed through her loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth's faithfulness is ultimately rewarded by redemption.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The author of the book of Ruth is unknown.
- B. The events of Ruth took place before Israel had a king. These events happened during the time when judges led Israel. (Ruth 1:1)
- C. The book of Ruth conveys a powerful message of faithfulness and the reward of faithfulness.
- D. Boaz can be seen as a type of Christ when he acts as the kinsman/redeemer for Naomi and Ruth.
- E. Boaz was the son of Rahab, the harlot, and Ruth was a Moabitess; however, God chose this lineage to produce His son, Jesus. (Matthew 1:1-6)
 - 1. According to Isaiah 55:8-9, God's thoughts are not the thoughts of men, nor are His ways the ways of men. (Romans 5:20)
 - 2. External circumstances often sway our judgment, but God looks on the heart and selects accordingly.
 - 3. The Moabites were descendants of Moab, who was born as a result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his older daughter. (Genesis 19:37)
 - 4. For the following reasons the Moabites were forbidden to enter into the congregation of the Lord through the tenth generation:

- a. When Israel made its exodus from Egypt, the Moabites refused to supply them with bread and water. (Deuteronomy 23:3; Nehemiah 13:1-2)
- b. They also hired Balaam to curse Israel. (Numbers 22:1-6)

II. CHAPTER ONE

- A. According to verse one, these events occur at the time judges were the predominant figures in Israel. The most specific time given is the reference to a famine in the land.
- B. Because of the famine, Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem in Judah and moved to Moab. (Ruth 1:2)
 1. Elimelech died in Moab. (Ruth 1:3)
 2. Naomi's two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, married Ruth and Orpah, who were Moabite women. (Ruth 1:4)
 3. After living ten years in Moab, both Mahlon and Chilion died. (Ruth 1:4-5)
- C. After the death of her husband and sons, Naomi decided to return to Judah. She heard that the famine in Israel had ended. (Ruth 1:6)
- D. When Naomi began the journey back to Judah, she was accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. (Ruth 1:7)
- E. Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their mothers. She kissed them and gave them her blessing, but they did not want to leave her. (Ruth 1:8-9)
- F. Naomi insisted that they return to their mothers. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye and returned home, but Ruth refused to leave. (Ruth 1:10-14)
 1. Both young women seemed equally committed at the onset of the journey. As the pressure to go back (by way of reason) increased, Orpah departed, but Ruth clung to Naomi.

- a. The Hebrew word translated as "clave" is *dabaq* (daw-bak'). It is a primitive root; properly, it means to impinge, for example to cling or adhere; figuratively, it means to catch by pursuit.
 - b. From the context, we can determine that cling is the definition that accurately describes Ruth's action toward Naomi.
2. Interestingly, there is no further mention of Orpah in the Scriptures; however, Ruth becomes part of the lineage of Jesus. (Matthew 1:5)
 3. Love does not insist on its own rights; motivated by compassion, it moves beyond reason.
 - a. Ruth was not seeking her own welfare; she was committed to Naomi.
 - b. She unselfishly set her course according to another's need.
 4. It seems that Orpah and Ruth were offered the same opportunity.
 - a. Our choices are very significant to our future.
 - b. Orpah chose to regard herself, but Ruth placed her attention upon another.
 - c. Both Orpah and Ruth were true to their names.
 - (1) Orpah means mane, which is a derivative of a word that means nape or back of the neck. Literally or figuratively, it means the back as opposed to the front.
 - (2) Ruth means friend, which is a derivative of a Hebrew word that means a female associate or an additional one.
 - (3) Ruth's dedication to Naomi points to Jesus' dedication to the Church. (John 15:13)
- G. When Naomi tried to convince Ruth to follow Orpah, Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi. (Ruth 1:15-17)

1. Ruth made this declaration to Naomi, "Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17)
 - a. This statement carries a connotation of covenant commitment as a result of love and devotion.
 - b. Love and devotion produce faithfulness and commitment. (I Samuel 18:1-4)
 - c. The proverb "there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" is epitomized through Ruth's commitment to Naomi. (Proverbs 18:24)
2. A loving heart commits unconditionally.
3. After seeing Ruth's determination to stay with her, Naomi allowed Ruth to continue the journey with her. (Ruth 1:18)
4. Naomi could not refuse such commitment.
- H. When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, the people were excited because of their return. (Ruth 1:19)
 - I. Because of the tragedies that had taken place in her life, Naomi requested that the people not call her Naomi (pleasant), but Mara (bitter). (Ruth 1:20)
 - J. Naomi declared that she had left full, but returned empty. (Ruth 1:21)
 - K. Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest. (Ruth 1:22)
 - L. Naomi had left in famine and experienced famine in her personal life. She returned during harvest and received a harvest in her personal life.

III. CHAPTER TWO

- A. Naomi's husband Elimelech had a wealthy relative named Boaz. (Ruth 2:1)

- B. Ruth asked permission from her mother-in-law to go to the fields and glean. (Ruth 2:2)
- C. When Ruth went out to glean, she unknowingly went to Boaz's field and gained permission to reap. (Ruth 2:3)
- D. When Boaz returned from Bethlehem and greeted his reapers, he asked the servant in charge about the young woman who was gleaning. (Ruth 2:4-5)
- E. The servant told him that she was the young Moabite woman who had returned with Naomi and that she had asked permission to glean in the field. The servant commented on Ruth's diligence to work. (Ruth 2:6-7)
- F. Boaz went to Ruth and told her not to go to another field, but to stay close by his young women. He assured her that she would be safe in his field and any time she was thirsty she had permission to drink from the vessels his young men had drawn. (Ruth 2:8-9)
 - 1. Boaz immediately had a desire to protect and provide for Ruth.
 - 2. God honored Ruth's commitment by providing for both Naomi and her.
- G. Ruth responded to Boaz's generosity by bowing to the ground and asking why she, a foreigner, had found grace in his eyes. (Ruth 2:10)
- H. Boaz told Ruth that he had heard of her loyalty to her mother-in-law and he blessed her with this statement, "The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings you have come for refuge." (Ruth 2:11-12)
 - 1. Boaz did not just make a casual statement to Ruth; he was willing for the Lord to use him to repay her.
 - 2. The words spoken to Ruth by Boaz came to pass, and God used Boaz to fulfill them.
- I. Ruth expressed her gratefulness to Boaz for the kindness he had shown to her. (Ruth 2:13)

- J. Boaz invited Ruth her to eat lunch with him and his reapers, and she accepted his invitation. (Ruth 2:14)
- K. After lunch, Boaz instructed his reapers to let Ruth glean even among the sheaves and also to let some grain fall from the bundles that she might pick it up as well. (Ruth 2:15-16)
 - 1. Boaz's interest in Ruth was pure and motivated by admiration.
 - 2. Ruth's reputation preceded her.
 - 3. What we do and the attitude in which we do it makes a difference to others.
- L. Ruth gleaned until the evening, then she beat the grain and took it home to her mother-in-law. (Ruth 2:17-18)
 - 1. Although Boaz's generosity made it easier for Ruth, she never lost her focus.
 - 2. Ruth was an industrious woman who gained favor without pursuing it.
- M. Naomi asked Ruth where she had worked, and Ruth told her about Boaz. (Ruth 2:19)
- N. Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was one of their closest relatives. (Ruth 2:20)
- O. Ruth told Naomi that Boaz had invited her to continue to glean in his fields until the end of the harvest. (Ruth 2:21)
- P. Naomi encouraged Ruth to do as Boaz had requested. (Ruth 2:22)
 - 1. Naomi realized that something extraordinary was taking place. It was as though she caught a glimpse of God at work in her life.
 - 2. The counsel given to Ruth by Naomi cooperated with God's plan for their lives.

- Q. Ruth continued to glean in the fields of Boaz until the end of the barley and wheat harvests, and she stayed with Naomi. (Ruth 2:23)

IV. CHAPTER THREE

- A. Naomi instructed Ruth to go to Boaz and ask for redemption. (Ruth 3:1-4)
 - 1. Naomi reminded Ruth that Boaz was a close relative and that he would be winnowing barley.
 - 2. She instructed Ruth to take a bath and put on her best clothes and to go to the threshing floor where Boaz was winnowing the barley, but she must not let him know that she was there until after he had finished his meal.
 - 3. When Boaz went to bed, Ruth was to observe where he had laid down. Afterwards, she was to go where he was, uncover his feet, lie down at his feet, and wait for his instructions.
 - 4. Naomi's advice and Ruth's action illustrate initiation, not aggression.
- B. Ruth agreed to do all that Naomi had suggested. (Ruth 3:5)
- C. Ruth went down to the threshing floor and followed the instructions of her mother-in-law. (Ruth 3:6-7)
- D. At midnight Boaz was startled and when he awoke, he realized that a woman was lying at his feet. When asked to identify herself, Ruth told Boaz who she was and her reason for being there. (Ruth 3:8-9)
 - 1. When startled, Boaz responded rather than reacting.
 - 2. Ruth answered him honestly. Open, effective communication is a safeguard against deception, coercion, and manipulation.
 - 3. Submission is the proper way to get attention.
- E. Boaz complemented Ruth for her actions and stated that all the people of the town knew that she was a virtuous woman. (Ruth 3:10-11)

1. The Hebrew definition of "virtuous" is a force such as an army, wealth, virtue, valor, or strength.
 2. Ruth's virtue (moral excellence) is her force.
 3. Her faithfulness to her commitment got the attention of those who observed.
- F. Boaz told Ruth that it was true that he was a close relative, but that there was a closer relative and he would speak to him on her behalf. If that man refused to redeem her, then he, Boaz, would. (Ruth 3:12-13)
1. Boaz demonstrated his integrity by following proper protocol.
 2. Boaz made no attempt to usurp the redeeming rights of a closer relative.
 3. Boaz responded to Ruth because of who she was, not what he could gain.
 4. The giving hearts of Boaz and Ruth were rewarded with fruit that remains.
- G. Boaz instructed Ruth to lie there until morning, at which time he sent her away before the others arose. (Ruth 3:13-14)
- H. When Boaz sent Ruth away, he filled her shawl with six ephahs of barley, which she took to her mother-in-law. (Ruth 3:15)
1. Once again, Boaz's giving heart was revealed.
 2. True to her commitment, Ruth shared her gift with her mother-in-law.
- I. Ruth returned to Naomi and gave an account of all that happened that night. (Ruth 3:16-17)
- J. Naomi instructed Ruth to stay home until Boaz had fulfilled his promise. She assured Ruth that Boaz would not rest until he had taken care of the matter. (Ruth 3:18)
1. Integrity manifests itself in right actions.

2. Ruth could rest in the integrity of Boaz, knowing that she and Naomi would be cared for properly.

V. CHAPTER FOUR

- A. Boaz went to the gate of the city and waited for the relative who was eligible to redeem Naomi and Ruth. When he saw him, he invited him to come and sit by him. (Ruth 4:1)
 1. True to his character, Boaz wasted no time in taking care of the matter at hand.
 2. When talking with the closer relative, Boaz had no hidden agenda; he stated the facts.
- B. Boaz also got ten elders of the city to sit with him and his relative. (Ruth 4:2)
- C. Boaz told the relative of the piece of land that Naomi had sold, which belonged to their relative Elimelech. He asked if he was willing to redeem it, and the relative said yes. (Ruth 4:3-4)
- D. Boaz informed the relative that when he redeemed the land, he must also take Ruth to be his wife to raise up a seed for the deceased. (Ruth 4:5)
- E. Upon hearing about Ruth, the relative relinquished his right of redemption. (Ruth 4:6)
 1. Redemption involved three aspects: being a kinsman; having the means; and being willing.
 2. Although the nearest kinsman had the means to redeem Naomi and Ruth, he was unwilling.
- F. As was the custom, he took off his right sandal and gave it to Boaz, thereby declaring that he had relinquished his right of redemption. (Ruth 4:7-8)
- G. Boaz declared to the ten elders that they were witnesses that he was redeeming Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion's possessions and that he would raise up seed for Mahlon by taking Ruth to be his wife. (Ruth 4:9-10)

1. Through his actions, Boaz became an ancestor of Jesus.
 2. The relative who did not want to mar his inheritance remains nameless.
- H. The elders responded by saying, "We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman." (Ruth 4:11-12)
1. Whether aware or unaware, these elders spoke a prophetic blessing over the house of Boaz and Ruth.
 2. The words these elders spoke were fulfilled through the birth of Jesus.
- I. Boaz took Ruth as his wife, and she conceived and bore him a son. (Ruth 4:13)
- J. The women responded to this birth by speaking a blessing to Naomi: "Blessed be the Lord, Who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." (Ruth 4:14-15)
- K. Naomi became the nurse for Boaz and Ruth's child. (Ruth 4:16)
- L. The neighboring women declared that a son was born to Naomi, and they gave the child the name "Obed." (Ruth 4:17)
- M. Obed is the father of Jesse, who is the father of David. (Ruth 4:17)
- N. Verses eighteen through 22 list the genealogy, beginning with Perez and ending with David.

VI. SUMMARY

- A. Because of the famine, Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem in Judah and moved to Moab where all but Naomi died.
- B. After the death of her husband and sons, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem in Judah.
- C. Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their mothers. She kissed them and gave them her blessing, but they did not want to leave her.
- D. Naomi insisted that they return to their mothers. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye and returned home, but Ruth refused to leave.
- E. Ruth's commitment to Naomi can be viewed as the friend that sticks closer than a brother.
- F. After their return to Bethlehem, Ruth immediately looked for a way to provide for both Naomi and herself.
- G. While Ruth attempts to work and provide for another, God intervenes in her life and provides for her.
- H. Boaz's integrity and compassion result in a marriage that produces fruit in the lineage of Jesus.
- I. Neither Boaz nor Ruth was seeking personal gratification, yet because of their willingness to give and inconvenience themselves, both were rewarded.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. The book of Ruth conveys a powerful message of faithfulness and the reward of faithfulness.
- B. Love and devotion provide the necessary discipline to obtain the desire.
- C. Boaz can be seen as a type of Christ when he acts as the kinsman/redeemer for Naomi and Ruth.

- D. Boaz and Ruth symbolize Christ and the Church. Christ grants protection and provision; the Church acts through love and submission.
- E. Just as God honored Ruth's change of allegiance to follow the One true God, He will honor those who truly commit themselves to Him.
- F. Ruth's dedication to Naomi portrays the faithfulness and loyalty that must be demonstrated by the Church of Jesus Christ.
- G. Just as Ruth brought immediate provision to Naomi, the Church must bring provision to those who cannot help themselves.
- H. Commitment and submission will overcome barrenness and make one fruitful for God.
- I. We must not die barren; we must produce fruit that remains!