Bible study: Ruth, a story of love, devotion & redemption

Lesson 1 (Ruth 1:1-22)

Background

Why study the book of Ruth? Here we find ...

- A story of how God, who loves all nations, showed his grace to a young widow from Moab and brought her into the family from which the Savior came.
- A spiritual journey by an old widow from bitterness and discouragement to joy in the Lord.
- Lessons for today about the meaning of love and commitment.

Read Ruth 1:1-2

We are told that the story of Ruth took place “in the days when the judges ruled”. This was about 1100 BC, during the later part of the Period of the Judges.

1. What was Naomi’s hometown?

2. Why did Naomi’s family move to Moab?

3. How were relations between Israel and Moab?
Read Ruth 1:3-5

1. What tragic loss did Naomi suffer first? What was life like for a widow in those days?

2. Whom did her sons marry?

3. What second tragedy did Naomi suffer?

Read Ruth 1:6-15

1. To whom does the author credit the end of the famine?

2. What did Naomi plan to do? What did she have to look forward if she returned to Bethlehem?

3. Why did Naomi urge Orpah and Ruth to stay in their native Moab?

4. What were Ruth and Orpah's prospects for remarriage and a better life if they returned with Naomi to Bethlehem?
5. How did Naomi feel at this point? (see verses 5 & 13) What has she lost in her life? Describe her relationship with God.

6. Note verse 15: "her people and her gods." What was the religion of Moab?

**Read Ruth 1:16-18**

1. What would it mean for Ruth if she went to Bethlehem with Naomi? What could she expect in life as a Moabite widow in Judean territory?

2. What was in this for Ruth?

3. How complete is Ruth's commitment to Naomi? How can you explain that commitment? Describe her love for Naomi.

4. In whose name does Ruth swear her commitment to Naomi?

5. What is Ruth's religion now? Considering the circumstances, why is this remarkable?
6. What type of love does God have for us? (See John 3:16; 1 John 4:16-19, Psalm 25:6-7; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8,13;)

7. What kind of love are we to have for each other? How did Christ model this love? (See Mark 10:45; John 10:11; 1 John 4:9)

8. How is Ruth an excellent example to Christian women (and men) today?

Read Ruth 1:19-22

1. How does Naomi describe herself upon returning to Bethlehem?

2. See Lamentations 3:19-33. In what does Jeremiah find comfort despite experiencing great affliction?

3. In times of great loss or difficulty, what comfort can we draw from the following passages? Matthew 28:20; Romans 8:18,28-39; 1 Peter 1:3-9

4. What was going on as the two women arrived in Bethlehem? What is the significance of this?
Lesson 2 (Ruth 1:22-3:18)

Read Ruth 1:22-2:9

The grain harvest in Bible times took place during April and May: barley first, then the wheat.

Steps in the harvest:

- Cutting the ripened grain with hand sickles (by men)
- Binding the grain into sheaves (by women)
- Gleaning, gathering stalks left over (by women)
- Transporting the grain to the threshing floor
- Threshing, loosening the grain from the straw
- Winnowing, separating the chaff from grain
- Sifting the grain to remove foreign matter
- Bagging the grain for transportation and storage

1. Who is Boaz?

2. This section speaks of the practice of gleaning (permitting the poor and alien to glean the leftover grain after the harvesters went through a field). How did this custom begin? What was its purpose? See Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19.

3. Compare the Old Testament practice of gleaning to our modern welfare system.

4. What danger might there be for a young woman gleaning alone in the field (verse 9)?
5. At this point Ruth did not know many people, including Boaz. How do you explain the fact that Ruth happened to go to glean in a field that belonged to Boaz?

6. What impression of Boaz do you get from verses 4-9?

Read Ruth 2:10-16

1. What had Boaz heard about Ruth? What impression did he have of her?

2. What did Boaz ask of God for Ruth?

3. Explain the meaning of the phrase "Under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (verse 12). See Psalm 91:4; Matthew 23:37.

4. What attitude does Ruth demonstrate (verse 13)?

5. What other kindness does Boaz show to Ruth (verse 14-16)?
Read Ruth 2:17-23

1. In that one day, Ruth gathered an "ephah" of barley, about 3/5 of a bushel (a lot for one day of gleaning). What was Naomi's reaction (verse 19)?

2. Why is Naomi excited when she hears that the Lord has led Ruth to glean in a field belonging to Boaz? How is her attitude toward God changing?

3. What is a kinsman-redeemer? What were the duties of a kinsman-redeemer? (See Deuteronomy 25:5-10, Leviticus 25:25-28,47-49 & Numbers 35:19-21.)

4. How does this help us to understand the meaning of the Bible term "redeem"?

Read Ruth 3:1-6

1. What does Naomi intend to do for Ruth? What instructions did she give to Ruth?

2. Although the barley harvest was a festive time, women were ordinarily not present at the evening revelries of the threshers. Though Naomi’s instructions to Ruth seem forward, her moral integrity is not in doubt. What was Naomi hoping to do by these instructions?
Read Ruth 3:7-15

1. When Ruth says to Boaz, "Spread the corner of your garment over me" (verse 9), of what obligation is she reminding him?

2. Compare her descriptive language to Boaz' words in Ruth 2:12.

3. How does Boaz respond? What stands in the way? How does Boaz go beyond the requirement of law?

Read Ruth 3:16-18


Lesson 3 (Ruth 4:1-22)

Read Ruth 4:1-8

1. What was the significance of going up to the town gate? What was going on there?

2. Why did Boaz confront the man, who had first right to serve as kinsman-redeemer, in the presence of the town elders?
3. At first the man was willing to carry out the responsibility of kinsman-redeemer with regard to the land. What was his additional duty toward Naomi and Ruth?

4. Why did he change his mind? What was the significance of taking off his sandal?

5. What does the word "redeem" mean?

6. Why might the man have thought he would endanger his own estate if he married Ruth and fulfilled the obligation of kinsman-redeemer by her?

Read Ruth 4:9-12

1. The town elders witnessed Boaz' statement and blessed Boaz and Ruth. What was the significance of their blessing of Ruth with the words, "like Rachel and Leah"?

Read Ruth 4:13-22

1. How was the blessing spoken by the townswomen to Naomi fulfilled by the Lord?

2. How was Ruth better to Naomi "than seven sons"?

3. How did God bless the marriage of Ruth and Boaz?
4. Compare Naomi's attitude toward God now with her feelings toward God at her return to Bethlehem? (See Ruth 1:20-21)

5. What was important about Ruth's marriage to Boaz in the light of God's promise to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you?"


7. God's ways are often mysterious to us. How did God make all things work together for good to Naomi, and to Ruth, in spite of the losses that each had suffered? How did God show grace to Ruth?

Lessons from Ruth

1. Show how the promise of Romans 8:28 is fulfilled in the story of Ruth. In what situation might this be especially comforting to a fellow Christian?

2. What would you say to Naomi, if you were one of those who had greeted Naomi upon her return to Bethlehem, and she expressed her bitterness toward the Lord?

3. 1 Corinthians 13. How was the love of Ruth for Naomi and for Boaz like the perfect love described in this chapter?
4. How is Ruth's love for Naomi like the love of Christ for sinful mankind?

5. Compare what love lead Christ to do with what love led Ruth to do.

6. How is Ruth's love for Naomi an example for husbands and wives today?

7. How do the actions of Ruth show us what it means to "love your neighbor as yourself?" Apply the lessons of Ruth to other relationships besides those of husband and wife.