

Chapter-By-Chapter Bible Studies

Ruth Bible Study

Beauty for Ashes



Bible Studies
by Kathleen Dalton
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**Ruth Bible Study
Beauty for Ashes**
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Ruth Bible Study Beauty for Ashes

This booklet has been put together for you to use either

- in your own personal Bible Study time,
or...
- to help you lead a Bible Study discussion group.

It is divided into several lessons, usually covering one Bible chapter.

Each lesson has two (2) parts:

1. Questions for you to use as you read and think through the scripture.
2. Answers to those questions with my comments and thoughts.

If you are leading a discussion group, I suggest making sure each member of your group has a copy of the next week's questions in advance so that they can prepare if they want to. This is a great way to help establish the habit of getting into the Word every day.

An online version of this study is available for free download at:
www.kathleendalton.com

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Memory verse for this study:

"... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

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Introduction

This true story begins with a Jewish family living in Israel during the time of the Judges.

A Jewish man and his wife and their two sons lived in the Israelite city of Bethlehem, but moved to the neighboring country of Moab when they ran short of food because of a famine. We assume they ached in their hearts over the necessity of this move, and probably always intended to return to Bethlehem once the famine was over.

The people of Moab were not Jews. They were Gentiles...and they were idol-worshippers.

The father's name was Elimilech, which means "my God is King".

The mother's name was Naomi, which means "pleasant and lovely".

Their first son's name was Mahlon, which means "puny".

And their second son's name was Kilion, which means "pining"

Their names almost tell us their story of a family life which just fell apart. Elimilech and Naomi started out their life together as a young Jewish family full of joy and praise for God. Life was pleasant and full of hope. But soon they had two sons who weren't exactly the picture of health...and then a famine came to their land...and then things got worse....

Ruth is a story of hopelessness turned into hope, and bitterness turned to sweet peace. It's a story of God stretching out His arms to catch up seemingly insignificant people into His amazing plan for all creation.

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I'd like you to memorize the following verse during the time you are reading and studying the book of Ruth:

"... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

It will help you realize your times of mourning are so that God may be glorified.

And it will focus you on the hope that is always present for the children of God, even when all looks lost.

Ruth Chapter 1 - Questions

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

Memory verse for this study:

“... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

1. (:1&2) When is this happening? Where is it happening? Who is it happening to? What is the story?

2. (:3-5) What happened to this family when they got to Moab?

- Were they being punished by God?
- Was it wrong of them to have moved there in the first place?
- Was it wrong of the sons to have married Moabite women?

A little background:

It was forbidden for Jews to inter-marry with idol-worshippers:

Deuteronomy 23:3-6 (specifically Moabites!)

Exodus 34:12-16

2nd Corinthians 6:14-18 (repeated in New Testament)

But there were exceptions. Example: Rahab was a non-Jewish woman who was welcomed into the Jewish nation:

Joshua 6:22-25

Matthew 1:5 (Rahab ended up marrying a Jewish man)

Hebrews. 11:31 (Rahab had faith in the One, True God)

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- If they weren't being punished by God....why was all this happening to them?
-
3. (:6-7) Why did Naomi and her daughters-in-law start back to Israel?
 4. (:8-13) Why did Naomi tell each of her daughters-in-law to go back to their family homes?
 5. (:13) What word in verse 13 gives you a clue to the state of Naomi's heart and mind?
 - What is "bitterness"? Is it a sin? Is it preventable? Is it curable?
 6. (:14-18) Why did Orpah go? Why did Ruth stay?
 7. (:19-22) What clues do you see which indicate things are not as dark as Naomi thinks?
 - Why couldn't Naomi see these clues?

Application Questions:

8. When tragedy comes into your life, how can you tell whether or not it is God telling you that you have done something wrong? (James 5:13-16)
9. How can you remove bitterness from your life? (Ephesians 4:31&32)
10. Is it possible you think things are worse than they really are? What clues could you look for to tell you how things really are?
11. Why do bad things happen to good people?

Ruth Chapter 1 - Answers

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

Memory verse for this study:

“... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

1. (:1&2) When is this happening? Where is it happening? Who is it happening to? What is the story?

Verse 1 gives us an awful lot of information. We find out that this story is taking place “in the time the judges ruled.” It is happening at that time in Israel’s history after the days of Joshua and before the days of the kings.

This was a time when lawlessness was widespread, leadership was practically non-existent, and the Jewish people were in a terrible state. Judges 21:25 describes it best: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”* Every man was a law unto himself. If it feels good, do it! If you want it, take it!

The story begins with a Jewish family living in Israel, in the city of Bethlehem. They were of the tribe of Judah. (The future king of Israel was promised to come from the tribe of Judah). Bethlehem was the central city for the tribe of Judah.

This family, a man and his wife and their two sons, lived in Bethlehem, but moved to the neighboring country of Moab when they ran short of food because

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of a famine. This was not an unusual custom for those days. A man had to feed his family. They probably always intended to return to Bethlehem once the famine was over.

The people of Moab were not Jews. They were Gentiles... idol-worshippers. At this time in history they were neighbors who lived at peace with the Jews. They traded goods with them and allowed immigration back and forth between the two countries. They weren't exactly friends with the Jews, but they weren't at war either.

I think names of the people in this family are significant:

The father, Elimilech – his name means “my God is King”

The mother, Naomi – her name means “pleasant and lovely”

The first son, Mahlon - his name means “puny”

The second son, Kilion – his name means “pining”

Their names seem to tell us their story. Elimilech and Naomi started out their life together full of joy and praise for God...but soon they had two sons who weren't exactly the picture of health...and then a famine...and then things got worse....

2. (:3-5) What happened to this family when they got to Moab?

We are not told how long our little Jewish family lived in Moab before life got harder, but at some point Elimilech died, and Naomi was left with two sons to raise by herself. The life of a single mom was much harder then than it is now, but at least she did have her boys. They would be her ticket to the future. They would grow up and take care of her some day. They would move her back to her home in Bethlehem some day. They would bring sons into the world who would also be a hope and a future for her.

But ten years later the family was still in Moab. The sons had married two Moabite women...no children yet. I can imagine Naomi wondering if she would ever get back to Bethlehem now that she had two daughters-in-law whose families were right there in Moab. But, at least she did have her sons and their two wonderful wives. She had a family. She had a future. Then the unthinkable happened – the two sons died. Three widows were left to stare across an empty table at each other every morning, wondering...what will become of us?

Society wasn't exactly friendly to widows and unmarried women...especially those without children. There just simply wasn't a future for women without someone to support and protect them.

- Were they being punished by God?

Everything had gone wrong. Was God mad at them? Why would He be mad at them?

- Was it wrong of them to have moved to Moab in the first place?

Perhaps it had been wrong...after all, the Lord God had told the Jewish people to inhabit the land of Israel. He hadn't told them to run to a safer place when things got bad. Jewish people had left their homeland in time of famine before, but should they have?

- Was it wrong of the sons to have married Moabite women?

God had told them in the books of the law never to take a wife from the Gentile lands surrounding them. It was forbidden for Jews to inter-marry with idol-worshippers, specifically Moabites! (Deuteronomy 23:3-6 & Exodus 34:12-16)

But, in their defense, there were exceptions. They would have known the story of Rahab. Years before she had been a gentile harlot from an idol-worshipping city who came to believe that the God of the Jews was the One, True God...and she put her life on the line to prove it. She had been a non-Jew who was welcomed into the Jewish nation. (Joshua 6:22-25, Hebrews 11:31)

The answer to the question (was God mad at them?) is: we just don't know. We don't know if they were being purposely disobedient to God, or if they were simply doing the best they could, maybe making mistakes along the way.

So let's do a little "if-ing". If God wasn't mad at them....if they weren't being punished by God....why was all this happening to them?

It's possible they were a weak little family doing the best they could and life just beat them up. If that's the case, then God, whom they worshipped, let it happen. Why? By the time we get to the end of this book, we'll know.

3. (:6-7) Why did Naomi and her daughters-in-law start back to Israel?

Because they had no where else to go. Maybe in Israel there would be some hope of survival.

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4. (:8-13) Why did Naomi tell each of her daughters-in-law to go back to their family homes?

Going back to Israel made sense for Naomi. She could find a small shelter to live in and beg for food until she died. But the girls – that was another story. She knew the girls might have had a chance to find another husband if they would go back to their Moabite families. Maybe there would be a man of Moab who had been widowed who would not mind marrying a young, beautiful, although “used” wife.

In Israel, however, Naomi could see no hope for Orpah and Ruth. If Naomi had been younger herself she could possibly have married again and born another son. Then either Orpah or Ruth would have had the right, legally, to be married to that other son, and have a future. But Naomi was past child-bearing age. And there was no reason to think any good Jewish man would have wanted a Moabite widow for his wife.

There was no future in Israel for Orpah and Ruth. If they returned to Israel with Naomi, they would have had to beg to eat, too.

Apparently, Naomi loved these two girls enough to want the best for them, even though losing them would have been another tragedy for her.

5. (:13) What phrase in verse 13 gives you a clue to the state of Naomi’s heart and mind?

“The hand of the LORD has gone out against me.” She was bitter. She was beaten down. I’ll bet she was very afraid. She believed the One, True God had raised his hand against her.

- What is “bitterness”? Is it a sin? Is it preventable? Is it curable?

Bitterness. It’s that hard place in your chest which you won’t or can’t let go of... because someone has chosen to fail you utterly. Naomi was bitter against God. She believed in Him. She knew He existed. But she thought He had not loved her. She thought He was not all He had claimed to be. She thought He had failed her.

- Bitterness is a cancer which hides within. Sometimes it hides a very long time before it is acknowledged. While it hides it does damage.

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- Proverbs 14:10 says “*The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy.*” Bitterness is private.
- Proverbs 17:25 says “*A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.*” Bitterness runs deep and stays long.
- Romans 3:14, in describing the wicked of the world, says “*...whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*” Bitterness is a characteristic of evil.

What could possibly melt and remove bitterness? Is there a cure? Watch and see.

6. (:14-18) Why did Orpah go? Why did Ruth stay?

Orpah chose survival by going back to her family and to their Gods. She went back to a possible future in a familiar place. She made a practical choice.

Ruth chose to beg to stay with Naomi, and to throw her future into the hands of the God of her mother-in-law, a God she had just learned about in the last few years, a God, apparently, who had been proclaimed to her by her new family, the family she had come to love. Ruth made a faith choice. And a love choice.

7. (:19-22) What clues do you see which indicate things are not as dark as Naomi thinks?

1. Naomi talked about her bitterness – a good sign. She was not keeping it private anymore, locked up inside where it would poison her even more.
2. Naomi was going back to God’s land. Even when she was not sure He liked her anymore she was subconsciously choosing God. Even when she spoke bitterly of Him she was turning towards Him, going in His direction.
3. Naomi’s friends surrounded her at her return – she had community.
4. Ruth, her lovely daughter-in-law was with her – she had family.
5. The famine was over.
6. The barley harvest had just begun...there would be food to survive.

- Why couldn’t Naomi see these good things?

She was bitter, afraid, beat down. But, Naomi didn’t have to see these good signs. God works even when we are unable to see what He is doing.

Application Questions:

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8. When tragedy comes into your life, how do you know whether or not it is God telling you that you have done something wrong? (James 5:13-16)
9. Ever been mad at God? Bitter? What should you do? (Ephesians 4:31&32)
10. Orpah made a practical choice. Ruth made a faith choice. Have you ever made a “faith” choice instead of a “practical” choice? How did it turn out?
11. Is it possible you think things are worse than they really are? What clues could you look for to tell you how things really are?
12. Why do bad things happen to good people?

Ruth Chapter 2 - Questions And Hope Does Not Disappoint Us

Memory verse for this study:

“... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

1. First, read chapter 2.
2. Then, before you answer the questions for chapter 2, read Romans 5:1-5 and put each of its phrases into your own words:

Therefore, having been justified by faith,

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom

also we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand,

and rejoice

in hope of the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations,

knowing that tribulation produces perseverance,

and perseverance, character;

and character, hope.

Now hope does not disappoint,

*because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
who was given to us.*

3. After reading Chapter 2, do you think Romans 5:1-5 could be a good description of Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, at this point in her life?

Now...read Ruth Chapter 2 again, and note, as you read, the facts about Boaz, and his character traits:

4. What did you learn about Boaz – what is he like? What are his character-traits?
 - :1
 - :2
 - :4
 - :5
 - :8
 - :9
 - :10
 - :15&16
 - :20

Notice Boaz's character-traits as you read through the rest of the chapter.

5. Why was Boaz attracted to Ruth? (:11&12)
6. What is happening to Naomi? (:19-23)

Application Question:

7. Have you experienced the *suffering > perseverance > character > hope* cycle in your life? Who benefits when you go through this cycle? (James 1:2-4)

Ruth Chapter 2 - Answers And Hope Does Not Disappoint Us

Memory verse for this study:

“... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

1. First, read chapter 2.
2. Then, before you answer the questions for chapter 2, read Romans 5:1-5 and put each of its phrases into your own words:

Therefore, having been justified by faith,
Because I have believed what God said, and that made me OK with God,

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom
I am at peace with God, and Jesus is the One Who made it possible

also we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand
God's grace to come to me and when I believed in Jesus (faith) I was no longer an enemy of God

and rejoice
I'm full of happiness

in hope of the glory of God.
at the thought of someday seeing God in all His glory

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations,
And not only that, but I'm also happy when I suffer!

Knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
Why? Because when I suffer I learn to not give up – I keep on believing God,

and perseverance, character;
and that completes me as a person,

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and character, hope.

which in turn changes me into a person who has an eye on the future, not just on the now,

And hope does not disappoint ,

And I know I will not be disappointed when the future is here, and I can see what I have been hoping for.

because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.

How do I know that? God the Holy Spirit is pouring His love into my life right now – I have no doubt it will be even more so in the future.

3. After reading Chapter 2, do you think Romans 5:1-5 could be a good description of Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, at this point in her life?

Yes. She has suffered, persevered, developed character, and is making her decisions for the future based on hope. And she seems to not only love God, but also realize how much God loves her.

Now...read Ruth Chapter 2 again, and note, as you read, the facts about Boaz, and his character traits:

4. What did you learn about Boaz – what is he like?
 - :1 Relative of Elimilech
 - :2 A man of importance in his community
 - :4 A man of God – the words of God are his conversation
 - :5 Notices the little people – good leader
 - :8 Protective of the weak
 - :9 Morally upright
 - :10 Attracted to people of faith
 - :15&16 Kind and thoughtful of others' needs and feelings
 - :20 Has a sense of responsibility for family

5. Why was Boaz attracted to Ruth? (:11&12)

She also was responsible, kind and thoughtful, a woman of faith, and morally upright. He was attracted to her because she was like the God he was in love with.

6. What is happening to Naomi? (:19-23)

She is beginning to see the signs of hope all around her.

Application Question:

7. Have you experienced the *suffering > perseverance > character > hope* cycle in your life? Who benefits when you go through this cycle? (James 1:2-4)

Most of us can point to times in our lives when this has happened to us. In New Testament times, James, the brother of Jesus, also experienced this cycle, and learned this from it: *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4*

Walking by hope through a suffering experience means we allow the suffering to push us closer to Jesus. In so doing, we become the people God had in mind when He created us. We are completed. And we have something to draw on when others need our advice in their suffering. We can tell them – “Look to Jesus to be your rescuer. Pray. Trust Him no matter how things look.”

There is no better way to walk through difficulty. As we walk in this way, eventually trusting God will become our first choice, our first thought, not our last. We will never be disappointed when we choose the faith / hope path instead of the worry path or the manipulation path or the helplessness path or the anger path or the bitterness path.

Ruth Chapter 3 - Questions Extravagant Provision

Memory verse for this study:

“... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

Let's begin this chapter by backing up to Ruth 2:20 *“...that man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsmen-redeemers.” (KJV)*

1. What is a kinsman-redeemer? (Leviticus 25:23-25, Deut. 25:5-10)
2. (:1-2) Why wouldn't a kinsman-redeemer be looking at Naomi? Why was it going to be Ruth? Wasn't Naomi the wife of the man who had originally owned the land?
3. How does the kinsman-redeemer law further explain our salvation by Jesus?
4. In what way are we the same as Ruth?
5. (:1-9) How do Ruth's actions in 3:1-9 parallel our experience of coming to Christ?
6. (:10-15) What does Boaz's reaction in 3:10-15 show us about how the Lord feels about us? What does it explain to us about the motive for His decision to redeem us?
7. What can we learn about a Godly man-woman relationship from Ruth & Boaz? (see also I Peter 3:1-7)

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8. :16 -18 From these verses, describe the confidence Naomi has in Boaz.
- What can we learn from that confidence when it comes to our Redeemer?
 - What do you suppose Naomi is feeling as she realizes her poverty is only a day or so away from being over?
 - What do we compare that poverty to as we think in terms of our own salvation?

Application Question:

9. Compare Ruth's kinsman-redeemer with our Kinsman-Redeemer: (fill in the last column yourself)

Fact	Ruth/Boaz	Us/Jesus
There has to be something which needs to be redeemed.	Elimilech's land and Ruth and Naomi needed to be redeemed.	
There has to be a qualified kinsman, the closest relative.	Boaz qualified. He was related to Elimilech.	
The kinsman-redeemer has to have the money to make the purchase.	Boaz was a man of wealth. He could afford to buy the land.	
The kinsman-redeemer has to agree to take all of the property which needs to be redeemed, not just a part of it.	Boaz was willing to buy back the land, and to provide a marriage and a child for Kilion's widow (Ruth) and a home for her mother-in-law (Naomi).	
The kinsman-redeemer has to be willing – not forced.	Boaz was willing. He was more than willing – he loved Ruth.	

Ruth Chapter 3 - Answers Extravagant Provision

Memory verse for this study:

“... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:3)

Let's begin this chapter by backing up to Ruth 2:20 *“...that man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsmen-redeemers.” (KJV)*

1. What is a kinsman-redeemer? Leviticus 25:23-25, Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Leviticus 25:23-25 tells us that when the Lord gave the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He intended for that land to always stay in their possession. The sons of Jacob were divided up into 12 tribes, and each tribe of Israel had certain lands which were assigned to them. They were the caretakers of the land, but were never to think of themselves as the owners. God was the owner.

Because of that, they were to always keep ownership of each parcel of the land within each tribe. If any Jewish person became so poor that he/she had to sell land in order to survive, the Jewish law made a provision for that land to be bought back some day by themselves or by someone else from their tribe.

The nearest relative to the person who had to sell the land had the right and the responsibility, if he could, to buy back the land which had been sold. That nearest relative was called a kinsman-redeemer - a kinsman who would redeem (or buy back) what had been lost.

Simple enough. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 tells us a little more. The kinsman-redeemer not only had to be able to buy back the land, he also had to be willing to “buy back”, or, marry the widow (if there was one) and provide for her. Part of

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that provision was to give her a son who would carry on the family name and would be the future owner of the land which had been bought back.

Not every qualified kinsman-redeemer would want to do this. He might be hesitant because he would jeopardize his own inheritance to his own sons by bringing another son into the family who would eventually go his own way...own his own land. And not everyone would want to take on a wife, either.

Refusal to be the kinsman-redeemer was allowed - for this had to be a free choice, not forced. But it was shameful to refuse – for it meant the qualified kinsman-redeemer cared more for his own interests than for the interests of the nation as a whole.

2. (:1-2) Why wouldn't a kinsman-redeemer be looking at Naomi? Why was it going to be Ruth? Wasn't Naomi the wife of the man who had originally owned the land?

There would be no future for Elimilech's land – no posterity – unless Kilion's young widow could offer herself as a bride for a kinsman-redeemer. Since Kilion rightfully inherited the land from his father on his father's death, Ruth was the legal choice. Not only that, Ruth was the only logical choice, because Naomi was too old to be counted on to birth another son who would carry on the family line for Elimilech.

3. How does the kinsman-redeemer law further explain our salvation by Jesus?

We (all the people in the world) are like the family of Elimilech in that we have lost our inheritance. The Lord God, when He created us, intended us to live with Him forever. When Adam and Eve sinned, our inheritance was lost. We needed a kinsman to come in and redeem us...buy us back.

Jesus is our Kinsman-Redeemer. He is related to us because He is human like us. When Jesus is called The Son of Man, that literally means He is a man and therefore qualified to be our redeemer. He's also qualified because He was willing to pay the price for our redemption. His life was the price to be paid to buy us back.

4. In what way are we the same as Ruth?

We need to be redeemed. We are poverty-stricken and cannot possibly buy back our own inheritance. Our only hope is our Kinsman-Redeemer.

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5. (:1-9) How do Ruth's actions in 3:1-9 parallel our experience of coming to Christ?

Ruth comes just as she is to the one who could save her. She offers herself, knowing she doesn't have any claim on him. She waits in hope to see if he will accept her. She trusts Him and does whatever he says to do.

6. (:10-15) What does Boaz's reaction in 3:10-15 show us about how the Lord feels about us? What does it explain to us about the motive for His decision to redeem us?

Jesus loves us, just as Boaz loved Ruth. Our Lord reacts to our approaching Him with genuine love and concern for us. He is eager to redeem us!

7. What can we learn about a Godly man-woman relationship from Ruth & Boaz? (see also I Peter 3:1-7)

They protected each other. They trusted each other. They chose purity. She submitted to his leadership. She brought her strengths and abilities and faith.

This is a subject I feel very strongly about. If a young man is willing to ask a young woman to lose her purity and her reputation in order to live with him before marriage, then I am quite sure that young man does not truly love the young woman. Love means giving, protecting purity, trusting, and respecting. If a relationship begins with selfish taking, callous unconcern for reputation and purity, lack of trust and lack of respect...well...the young woman should realize she is settling for less than love...and, unfortunately, that is probably the way she will be treated for the rest of her life.

8. (:16 -18) From this passage describe the confidence Naomi has in Boaz.
- What can we learn from that confidence when it comes to our Redeemer?
 - What do you suppose Naomi is feeling as she realizes her poverty is only a day or so away from being over?
 - What do we compare that poverty to as we think in terms of our own salvation?

Naomi knew the reputation of Boaz. She knew he would be true to his word. She is full of hope again.

Once we know who Jesus is, and realize He never lied, and that everything He said we can trust to be true, then we have confidence that He will do everything

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He said He would do. He paid the redemption price for our sin. He will always be with us and always protect us.

When we come to faith in Christ our poverty is over.

Application Question:

9. Compare Ruth's kinsman-redeemer with our Kinsman-Redeemer:

Fact	Ruth/Boaz	Us/Jesus
There has to be something which needs to be redeemed.	Elimilech's land and Ruth and Naomi needed to be redeemed.	We are what needs to be redeemed (John 3:16)
There has to be a qualified kinsman, the closest relative.	Boaz qualified. He was related to Elimilech.	Jesus is qualified because he was a human being, just like we are, therefore, He's related to us. (John 1:14)
The kinsman-redeemer has to have the money to make the purchase.	Boaz was a man of wealth. He could afford to buy the land.	Jesus had the purchase price. His own sinless life. (John 10:14)
The kinsman-redeemer has to agree to take all of the property which needs to be redeemed, not just a part of it.	Boaz was willing to buy back the land, and to provide a marriage and a child for Kilion's widow (Ruth) and a home for her mother-in-law (Naomi).	Jesus was willing to buy back all of it – the whole world and everyone in it throughout all time. (John 3:16)
The kinsman-redeemer has to be willing – not forced.	Boaz was willing. He was more than willing – he loved Ruth.	Jesus was willing. His love for the world and all people in it was his motivation for giving His life. No one took it from Him. (John 10:17&18)

Ruth Chapter 4 - Questions It's All About the Future

Memory verse for this study:

"... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

1. (:1-5) When Boaz sat at the town gate where business was conducted, why do you think he waited so long – even after the discussion of the property – to bring up Ruth?
2. (:6-10) Why didn't the nearest kinsman want to redeem the land? Have you experienced times in your life when someone could have helped you out, but chose not to? What did you do when someone wouldn't or couldn't come to your rescue?
3. (:11&12) In the elders' blessing, why do they refer to Rachel & Leah, two sisters married to Jacob (Genesis 30:1-22).... and to Perez, the son of Judah & Tamar (Genesis 38) ?
4. (:13-16) What is the significance of the blessing given to Naomi from the women? What is the significance of their praise of Ruth?
5. What do the elders' prayers and the women's wishes tell you about the community's values? (Psalm 127:3, 128:3)
6. (:18-22) Why does the book end with a genealogy?
7. Read Matthew 1:1-16. How does this genealogy differ from the one at the end of Ruth? How is it the same?

Application Questions:

8. Sketch out a physical genealogy for yourself – make it as long as you can. Go back to your great-greats if you can.

9. Now sketch out a *spiritual* genealogy for yourself... make it as long as you can. (Meaning: Who led you to Christ? Who led that person to Christ, etc.)

10. Compare the two genealogies – what do you learn from them? Are you listed somewhere on someone's spiritual genealogy?

11. When you think of your future, what do you think of?

12. Give someone in your group a blessing for the future.

Ruth Chapter 4 - Answers It's All About the Future

Memory verse for this study:

"... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

A few beginning thoughts:

Because of the culture in which we live, we could miss the importance of what happens in this book.

In our culture the marriage is all about the two people getting married. The wedding is a celebration of a milestone reached – a goal achieved – two lives becoming one – happiness and fulfillment guaranteed.

But in the culture of Old Testament times – especially in the Hebrew culture – the marriage is all about the "future" to come out of the union. The wedding is a celebration of the future – wrapped up in the yet-to-be-born child – who will carry on the family line, guarantee the old-age pension for the parents, occupy the land, and, in the big picture, hold out the promise of a future.

The union of Ruth and Boaz is a *romance* in our eyes – but in the eyes of the people who lived through it, it is a *promise of the future*.

The *love* was less important than the *hope*.

1. (:1-5) When Boaz sat at the town gate where business was conducted, why do you think he waited so long – even after the discussion of the property – to bring up Ruth?

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I think it's because he wanted to do the whole thing right. He wanted there to be no question about what the other kinsman-redeemer was accepting or rejecting. This had to be a "clean deal". He didn't want to lose Ruth on a technicality.

2. (:6-10) Why didn't the nearest kinsman want to redeem the land? Have you experienced times in your life when someone could have helped you out, but chose not to. What did you do when someone wouldn't or couldn't come to your rescue?

It seems that somehow the buying of the land and taking Ruth on as a wife would hurt the property and inheritance he had already accumulated. Perhaps he knew his wife would never stand for it. Perhaps he had sons of his own and didn't want another son around to mess up what he had already parceled out. Maybe he was just plain selfish and lazy and wanted prosperity without having to work too hard at it.

3. In the elders' blessing, why do they refer to Rachel & Leah, two sisters married to Jacob (Genesis 30:1-22).... and Perez, the son of Judah & Tamar? (Genesis 38)

Rachel and Leah together brought Jacob 12 sons. Many sons were a great blessing.

Perez was a son born out of season. A son who really had no chance of existing, but did. (A son who carried the seed of the Messiah)

Rachel and Leah's 12 sons were a blessing. Perez was a miracle. The elders are praying for blessings and miracles for Ruth and Boaz. And, knowing that Boaz was a descendant of Judah, perhaps they are also praying that Boaz and Ruth might have the privilege of carrying on the seed of the Messiah into the future.

4. (:13-16) What is the significance of the blessing given to Naomi from the women? What is the significance of their praise of Ruth?

The grandson in Naomi's arms was her future. She was abundantly blessed.

Ruth had obeyed and trusted God....and had given Naomi a future. She deserved their praise.

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5. (:17) What do the elders' prayers and the women's wishes tell you about the community's values? (Psalm 127:3, 128:3)

They knew that children were a gift from God, not just the result of a physical union. They knew that a home was built by God, not people. They knew that power and protection came from God. They knew that many sons made a man of true wealth.

6. (:18-22) Why does the book end with a genealogy?

To prove that the son who came from Ruth and Boaz was the grandfather of King David, and therefore, the blessing given by the elders did come true! Boaz and Ruth did have the privilege of carrying the seed of the Messiah forward into the future.

7. Read Matthew 1:1-16. How does this genealogy differ from the one at the end of Ruth? How is it the same?

Of course the huge difference is that the Matthew genealogy shows in great detail that the son of Ruth and Boaz was in the line of the Messiah of Israel.

But, also, there is a small difference. Look who the mother of Boaz was! She was Rahab, the non-Jewish harlot who believed in the One, True God, and became a part of the nation of Israel when the walls of Jericho came "a-tumblin'" down. Rahab is a sweet picture of the grace of God in the ancestry of the Messiah, just as Ruth is another sweet picture of the same. And we can't help but note that because of his ancestry, Boaz would have been comfortable with the thought of a non-Jewish wife!

Application Questions:

8. Sketch out a physical genealogy for yourself – make it as long as you can. Go back to your great-greats if you can.
9. Now sketch out a *spiritual* genealogy for yourself... make it as long as you can. (Meaning: Who led you to Christ? Who led that person to Christ, etc.)

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10. Compare the two genealogies – what do you learn from them? Are you listed somewhere on someone's spiritual genealogy?
11. When you think of your future, what do you think of? Is your life all about the future?
12. Give someone in your group a blessing for the future.

Examples:

1. *May your summer days be like the Bahamas in June.*
2. *May you be more beautiful ten years from now than you are today.*
3. *May you dance on the streets of gold.*
4. *May you spend forever doing the things you love to do.*
5. *May you see the face of Jesus the instant you take your last breath.*
6. *May your ashes be turned into beauty. May your mourning be turned into joy. May you overflow with praise where you used to be weighted down with cares.*
7. *May God be glorified in you.*

"... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

Need a suggestion for your next Bible Study? ***How about Esther?***

The two books in the Bible named for the women whose stories they tell – Ruth and Esther – are the same in their message, but startling in their contrasts:

- Ruth is a pagan gentile who moves to Israel. Esther is a Jew who has never lived anywhere but a pagan gentile country.
- Ruth is penniless, a beggar. Esther is a queen.
- Ruth is a gentile who marries a Jew. Esther is a Jew who marries a gentile.
- Ruth walks through her fear and follows her heart because she has come to know and love the God of the Jews. Esther walks through her fear and follows her heart because she has come to know and love the God of the Jews.
- Ruth clings to her mother-in-law's faith until it must become her own. Esther clings to her uncle's faith until it must become her own.
- Ruth learns to walk by faith in the One, True God and goes on to be an irreplaceable element in the coming of the Messiah to the earth. Esther learns to walk by faith in the One, True God, and goes on to be an irreplaceable element in the survival of the Jews who awaited the coming of the Messiah to the earth.
- Ruth faced the hatred and fear of Jews who did not trust her because she was a gentile. Esther faced the hatred and fear of a gentile who did not trust her because she was a Jew.
- Ruth lived in a time when Jews, politically, began to long for a king who could lead them and bring them through the wickedness of the world they lived in. Esther lived in a time when Jews knew without a doubt that political kings had always failed to do what they were supposed to do.
- Ruth lived 1,000 years before Christ. Esther lived 500 years after Ruth. They never knew each other in this life.

Ruth and Esther were both chosen by God for tasks which could only be accomplished by them. You also have been chosen by God for tasks which can only be accomplished by you.

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