

A woman with long, wavy hair is holding a large bundle of green wheat stalks. The background is a soft-focus field of golden wheat. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white vertical band.

OUR
faithful
REDEEMER

Finding Restoration in Him

A STUDY OF RUTH

by

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Introduction

Welcome to this 6-week study on Ruth! We are so excited to embark on this journey with you. In this delightful story we will see God's faithfulness on full display, caring for the broken, restoring what was lost, and providing hope for the future.

This Old Testament story is gripping. It begins with the desperate plight of three women trying to survive in a foreign land. They are widows united by the bonds of family, yet they have no husbands or sons to provide food and protection for them. Their circumstances are bleak and they feel emptied of hope. Will these women survive? Will their hope be restored? We will find answers to these questions and so much more as we spend time studying Ruth.

We hope that you will fall in love with this heartwarming story and the people within it, just like we did. The relationship between Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, and the noble character of our hero, Boaz, are the drivers that propel this story. But throughout it all, you will see that there is a force much greater than human volition at work. Our faithful Lord uses even the most dire of circumstances to accomplish His good plans and purposes in His people.

We have a lot more to glean from this story than just understanding the historical account. As we examine the lives of the people in Ruth, we will see that we aren't much different. We often face desperate circumstances that empty us of hope, and wonder if anyone, God included, will protect and provide for us. Just like Ruth and Naomi, we realize that we are in need of someone to restore us and bring us hope. We need a Faithful Redeemer. Join us as we meet Him through the pages of Ruth.

Michelle, Ashlee, & Jo

A Process of Discovery

Studying God's word takes patience, but you will find rich reward in doing so. *"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103.*

To begin any study of scripture, it's important to have an understanding of what the original text meant to its original audience: What did it mean to **THEM THEN**? It sounds daunting, especially considering that we are living thousands of years past the time of the original writing. We haven't personally experienced the culture, location, people, and languages of the original audience. But people really haven't changed. *"What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:9.*

While we might not know what it was like to live in a city under Roman rule or how to shepherd sheep, we can understand what it is like to be human. The hopes, sorrows, joys, fears, sins, struggles, forgetfulness, and pride that plagued people in Bible times also plague us today. Not only that, we must also remember that our Lord, who is sovereign over all, never changes. *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8.*

So to understand the rich truths in God's word, we must first look at what it meant to **THEM THEN**. This practice will help prevent us from the common tendency to pull a verse out of context, thus losing its meaning and twisting it to fit our purposes and notions. To be good stewards of God's word, we must not go beyond what it says. *"You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you." Deuteronomy 4:2.* We must remain "on the line," interpreting what the text actually says, nothing more and nothing less.

Once we grasp the original context, the **THEM THEN**, we can begin to look for the **GOSPEL CONNECTIONS** in our text, and then finally we can apply the text to **US NOW**. *"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Romans 15:4.*

We have an advantage living in our 21st century because we possess a wealth of knowledge, research, historical documents, archeological finds, and commentaries available. But before you go start googling, we want to encourage you to trust your ability to understand scripture all on your own. While it may be difficult at first, don't give up. You don't have to be a trained Bible scholar to understand the truths in God's Word. Start where you are with what you know. All you need is a willing heart, an engaged mind, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord is pleased every time you seek Him in His Word! If we can learn to do it, you can do it. So let's get started!

Suggested Study Practices

Pray for God to give you understanding of the text. *“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” Psalm 119:18.* Don’t overlook this step!

Print out a copy of the text that you can mark up as you study. Use double spacing and generous margins to allow room to write your thoughts, questions, and notes.

Read and reread and reread the text again. The more familiar you are with it, the more you will begin to understand it. To better comprehend the context of the text, read the entire chapter it falls in, the surrounding chapters, and even better, the whole book if you have time. Ask, “Why did the author put this passage here at this place in the book?” Try to determine where this passage fits into the big story of the Bible (creation, fall, redemption, restoration).

Ask questions of the text throughout the entire study process. It’s like being a detective who digs for clues within the text he’s studying. As you begin, focus your questions on the big picture information: Who wrote this? What do I know about the author? Why did he write it? To whom was it written? What do I know about the audience? When was it written? What was going on at the time? Often you will find the answers to these questions directly in the passage. If not, try looking up other relevant passages that give clarity to these questions. Your Bible’s individual book introductions and other commentaries are also helpful to establish some big picture information, like the historical context and authorship. Then throughout your study of the passage, continue asking questions - who, what, where, when, why, and how. Look for the answers within your text first, then look at other passages that might provide clues.

Once you have read the passage several times and have gotten a preliminary handle on the big picture questions, you can start marking up the text. This takes some time. You’ll want to go slowly and have patience with the discovery process. You’ll also want to extend extra grace toward yourself as you are learning these study skills. The more you practice, the more you’ll get into a rhythm, developing your own methods of studying the text and gaining confidence in yourself. **The goal here initially is comprehension: understanding what the text says.**

We have included the English Standard Version of Ruth in this workbook for you to mark up. **There is no right or wrong way to mark up a text.** Make it personal and applicable to your style of learning. If this task seems overwhelming, then may we suggest starting small. If all you do is mark places in the text that tell you something about God (His attributes, character, sovereignty, and authority) you will be off to a great start! **Because the only way we can truly know ourselves is to know our God. What He says about Himself and about us is the foundation for sound doctrine.**

Comprehension (Them Then)

Here are some suggestions of practices we've found helpful in understanding the text.

- **Look up words in the dictionary** that you are unfamiliar with or any words that stand out to you even if they are familiar. Write down the definitions next to the word. To see how that word is used elsewhere in the Bible, **do a word search** on your Bible app, or use the concordance at the back of your Bible. This will broaden your understanding of the word and can bring a deeper meaning to your passage.
- Use colored pencils to **underline repeated words**. Often, themes of passages begin to emerge when you search for repeated words.
- **Circle transitional words** (and, but, therefore, like, then, also, similarly, furthermore, etc). These words show shifts in thinking while connecting phrases and thoughts. Draw arrows to the words and phrases they link. Sometimes these transitions occur at the beginning of a chapter or paragraph, so you will need to look back at the previous section to see what they are referring to.
- **Note any thoughts and questions** you have as you are reading. Write them in the margin, but don't feel like you have to answer them right away. Your questions are an important part of the learning process.
- **Read the text in other translations** to bring clarity, especially with difficult passages. Bible apps and websites are great tools for this step.
- **Look up cross references** and note what you discover next to the text.
- **Highlight imperatives** in the text. These are commands and instructions, and they are important for the original audience and for us.
- **Look for attributes of God** that are communicated in the passage. Highlight or underline them and note the attribute in the margin. **Put a "cross" anywhere Jesus is mentioned**, directly or indirectly. **Mark "HS" when you see references to the Holy Spirit.**
- **Summarize sections of the passage in your own words.** This is an important step and helps you grasp the main messages the author is trying to communicate.

As you mark up the passage, you will begin to see the author's aim emerge, giving you a better understanding of what he is communicating to his audience - **THEM THEN.**

Comprehension: (Gospel Connections)

Now you can start looking for **GOSPEL CONNECTIONS** in your passage. Sometimes they are obvious, sometimes not. Don't force them into your text. Allow your text to reveal any gospel connections, if they are present.

- Bracket or mark sections and phrases that connect to the gospel. Ask yourself, "How does my text relate to the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ?" Start with what you understand and can identify.
- Jesus Himself tells us that the entirety of the Bible points to Him. "*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me.*" *John 5:39* Since the gospel message is found throughout the entire Bible, look for people, events, themes, and objects that point you to Christ. Ask, "How does my text point to Christ and contribute to the redemption story of the Bible? Do I see any major biblical themes in my text (like forgiveness, grace, mercy, sin, sacrifice, covenant, righteousness, holiness, etc) that find fulfillment in Christ?"
- Remember that the apostles would have taught about Christ using the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) because that is what they had. The apostles' writings and teachings became our New Testament.

Application: (Us Now)

Once you have comprehended the text and discovered the gospel connections, you are now ready to move on to the final application piece. How does this text apply to **US NOW**? It's important not to skip straight to application without doing the comprehension work, for it's too easy to take Scripture out of context when we do. For our purposes, we will save these application questions for Day 5 of our homework each week, so we can have several days of comprehending the text first. To think through personal application, ask these types of questions:

- "What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc)?"
- "How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and my circumstances?"
- "Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?"

Text of Ruth, ESV

Chapter One

Naomi Widowed

1 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. **2** The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. **3** But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, **5** and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Ruth's Loyalty to Naomi

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. **7** So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. **8** But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. **9** The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. **10** And they said to her, "No, we will return

with you to your people.” **11** But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?

12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, **13** would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.” **14** Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” **16** But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. **17** Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” **18** And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Naomi and Ruth Return

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?” **20** She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. **21** I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Chapter Two

Ruth Meets Boaz

1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. **2** And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." **3** So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. **4** And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you." **5** Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" **6** And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. **7** She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. **9** Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to

touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.” **10** Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” **11** But Boaz answered her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. **12** The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!” **13** Then she said, “I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.”

14 And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. **15** When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. **16** And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. **18** And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. **19** And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz.” **20** And Naomi said to her

daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.” **21** And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’” **22** And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.” **23** So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Chapter Three

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? **2** Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. **3** Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. **4** But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” **5** And she replied, “All that you say I will do.”

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. **7** And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. **8** At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold,

a woman lay at his feet! **9** He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.” **10** And he said, “May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. **11** And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. **12** And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. **13** Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.”

14 So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, “Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”

15 And he said, “Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. **16** And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “How did you fare, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, **17** saying, “These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’” **18** She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today.”

Chapter Four

Boaz Redeems Ruth

1 Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, “Turn aside, friend; sit down here.”

And he turned aside and sat down. **2** And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. **3** Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. **4** So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." **5** Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." **6** Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. **8** So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. **9** Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. **10** Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." **11** Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be

renowned in Bethlehem, **12** and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.”

Ruth and Boaz Marry

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. **14** Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! **15** He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” **16** Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. **17** And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The Genealogy of David

18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, **19** Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, **20** Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, **21** Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, **22** Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

God's Big Story

Session 1 Notes

Video link available at: myabc.church/women



Week One

Ashlee

Empty

But Not Alone

Day 1 Savoring the Story

Today, your only assignment is to read the introduction and study guide in your workbook (pages 2-6) and the whole book of Ruth (7-14). Pray that the Lord opens your heart and mind to be inquisitive and gain understanding. Settle into your favorite reading spot and soak up the beauty of this redemption story.

Day 2 The Dark Days

For this first week of the study, we're going to focus on just the first 5 verses. **Read Ruth 1:1-5.** As you read, write any questions you have in the margin or throughout the text.

When studying any book of the Bible, the first question we need to ask ourselves is, "How would the original audience have understood this?" So, let's start with the basics.

We're not sure who the author was since it is never stated. Some scholars speculate it was written by Samuel during the reign of King David (hence the genealogy at the end). This would date the writing to somewhere between 1011 and 931 BC. However, it is telling a story that is much older. The author already knows how this little story will end, what will come of these women and the generations to follow. We think the actual timing of the story would have taken place between 1210-1050 BC (maybe even as early as 1375, depending on which archaeological timeline you adhere to).

To understand a story written 3000 years ago, we need context. It's so important to understand how ancient readers would have understood this ancient text. After all, this story was written for them. The fact that it still speaks to us is proof of God's divine nature.

Let's dig in where we're meant to, with verse 1.

"In the days when the judges ruled..."

Annnndddd....let's stop there.

These six little words place our story at a crucial point in time for the Israelites. We pick up in history after the death of Joshua. The Lord had delivered His people through Moses and Aaron from Egypt. The people wandered the desert for 40 years because

they were unfaithful to trust the Lord and take the promised land He'd commanded. After Moses' death, Joshua and Caleb were called to lead the people to take the land of Canaan, the promised land. If you don't know the story, you can read about it in the book of Joshua.

Within the book of Joshua is the story of the fall of the city Jericho (Joshua 2:1-22). Read Joshua 6:17 and 6:25 to see how Joshua and the spies were assisted in the takeover of Jericho.

We see that Rahab played a key role in helping the Israelite army siege the city. What was her occupation?

I find it to be such an incredible mercy from our God that he chose ordinary, sinful people to play a pivotal role in the story of Israel's deliverance from their decades of wandering. For starters, the two Israelite spies hid at the home of a prostitute (some commentators even state she was running a brothel). Then we see how Rahab, the prostitute, chose to help the spies, and more importantly, chose to serve the Lord that day. She showed true reverence for the God of the Israelites (Joshua 2:9). And she even makes it into the "Faith Hall of Fame." (Hebrews 11:31) Aren't we all so blessed that God loves sinners?

Now, we're piecing together this timeline like a puzzle. Stay the course. Read Ruth 4:18-21. Who was the father of Boaz?

Read Matthew 1:1-6. Who was the mother of Boaz?

Did you notice any other seemingly scandalous names in Jesus' family tree?

Boaz is one generation from the conquest of Joshua, the takeover of Canaan. His parents lived through it and he was born sometime afterwards. However, the conquest didn't quite bring about the land flowing with milk and honey like the people had hoped. The people disobeyed a God-given directive to rid the land of its current inhabitants.

Read Judges 2:16-17

The book of Judges is the sad story documenting the downward spiral of the Israelites trying to live in and around the land with the people they were supposed to have driven out. These people influenced Israel to worship idols and abandon their God.

What happened in Judges 2:21-23?

How would you answer someone who questions that a loving God would ever test people with war, famine, and strife?

The Bible is not silent on this issue. Proverbs 17:3 (NLT) says:

“Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart.”

The Psalmist was certainly familiar with the concept of pain and heartache. Look up at least 1 of these verses and jot any thoughts you have next to it:

Psalm 9:9-10

Psalm 46:1-3

Turn to the New Testament and chose at least 1 of these verses to look up and jot any thoughts you have next to it:

2 Corinthians 12:9

1 Peter 5:10

In both of these cases, Paul and Peter were speaking to a persecuted church while under persecution. What do these scriptural truths teach us about why God would test people?

I know I have waffled with this from time to time depending on my season and the hardship. I think the thing to keep in mind in this instance is that the Israelites

predictably warred with God over and over again, despite His deliverance, protection, and provision. They often chose to follow the very things God told them to run from.

The book of Judges records 12 judges who served over an approximately 200 year period. At the beginning of the book, we find the people living in Canaan, a region that today encompasses Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, and the southern portions of Syria and Lebanon. (See Map 2 on page 137.)

Judges 3:5-6 lists the people who the Israelites lived amongst. Who were they?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 4) |
| 2) | 5) |
| 3) | 6) |

Read Judges 2:11-13. Who did the Israelites worship?

The Israelites were called to worship Yahweh, and yet, as soon as Joshua died, they quickly fell to worshipping the demonic gods of the people they settled with, married, and lived amongst (see Map 1). And then the cycle was repeated with the death of each and every judge (Judges 2:19). With language like, “they whored after other gods” (2:17 ESV), it becomes pretty obvious that these stories are not safe for little ears.

If you can stomach it, read Leviticus 18:2-25. If you can’t, that’s understandable. It leaves little to the imagination when it comes to the ways of the Canaanite people.

Suffice it to say, they were involved in incest, sodomy, and bestiality, to name a few. We further learn in Deuteronomy 18:9-12 that they would sacrifice their children in the fire to the god Molech, practice sorcery, witchcraft, spell-binding, and the list goes on. They worshipped Baal most prominently, but were polytheistic, worshipping the goddesses Ashtoreth, Asherah, and Anath. “These goddesses were seen as both mother-goddesses and sacred prostitutes who, paradoxically, remained ever-virgin.” (Albright) You can’t make this stuff up.

To worship them, though, involved the services of temple prostitutes. It has been said that “these goddesses symbolized the quality not only of sexual lust but also of sadistic violence and warfare.” Archaeologist W.F. Albright observed that, “At its worst, ...the erotic aspect of their cult must have sunk to extremely sordid depths of social degradation.” (Archaeology and Religion of Israel 1968, p 76,77)

God appointed judges to try to bring the people back. When they didn't listen, there were serious consequences allowed at the hands of the people they'd chosen to live amongst. Judges is the story that reminds us that every time the people forgot the grace and mercy lavished on them, they fell into doing what was "right in their own eyes" (see Judges 17:6).

Now we've seen how the Israelites fell into the culture around them. But if we're honest with ourselves, we've all had times of falling into the culture around us too.

At the heart of the story of the judges is God's rescue of His people in order to restore them to Himself.

Author Sheldon Vanauken uses the term, "a severe mercy." The stories in Judges are a severe mercy, a *whatever-it-costs, come-back-to-me* mercy issued by our God. Sometimes the trials in our lives are used by God to refine us, sometimes they're used as a reminder that God is close to the broken hearted (see Psalm 34:18), and sometimes they're a severe mercy, to bring us back to Him.

Can you identify with the need to be rescued, or have you experienced a "severe mercy" in your life? Write down something God rescued you from and thank Him for that today.

The judges must have lived lonely lives. Have you ever felt like the only Godly voice in a situation of darkness? How did you stay strong in that situation?

Chances are, we've all been in both situations. Remembering what brought us from darkness to light is not only humbling, but it can create grace and mercy in our heart. What/who brought you from darkness to light?

We can be grateful that we have an eternal hope in Jesus, who redeemed us and is working still to rescue His children, that none should perish (John 3:16-17).

Read John 8:12 and write it here:

Today, whatever your circumstances, where can you be light?

Congratulations! You've made it through the first 6 words of Ruth...buckle up.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Thank Jesus for being light in the darkness. Thank Him for suffering with us, like us, and for us. Ask Him to give you courage to walk in the light and to be His light to a dark and hurting world.

Day 3 People in Darkness

Read Chapter 1:1-5 again. If any questions come to mind, note them in the margins.

Where is the setting of this story right now?

Skim through the whole book of Ruth and circle every time it refers to Ruth as a Moabite. Why do you think the author makes a point of referring to her this way over and over again?

Verse one quickly sets the scene. We're told there was a famine in Bethlehem, where Elimelech and his family lived. So they sojourned in the country of Moab. There are at least three other times in the scriptures where the word, "sojourn" (Hebrew word: gēr) is used in connection with famine. Using an ESV Bible translation (Bible apps are great for seeing other translations), look up:

Genesis 12:10

Genesis 26:1-3

2 Kings 8:1-2

What do these verses have in common?

What stands out as different?

The Hebrew term and its translation for "sojourn" used in all of these cases was used to convey the basic idea "that a person (or group) residing, either temporarily or permanently, in a place that was not primarily their own was dependent on the goodwill of that community for their continued existence." (Spencer)

Another way to say this would be that anyone "sojourning" is in a place of desperation.

We saw in other Biblical examples that God would use the case of famine to force people to move in some circumstances. In others, He was very clear about them staying in a specific place so He could be their provider. In this case, the famine drove

Elimelech and his family from Bethlehem, but we're not sure if they should have gone to Moab, only that they did.

Moab was a country on the southeast side of the Dead Sea. Bethlehem was located on the northwest side. (See Map 2 on page 138.) Israel had a long, complicated past with the Moabites. We're told in verse two that Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons were Ephrathites. Look in the footnote or margin of your Bible. Does it have a reference to Genesis 35:19? (This is where a good ol' hardcopy of the Bible beats a Bible app). Write the "Gen. 35:19" reference on your printed copy of Ruth in your workbook over that word "Ephrathites" and turn there in your Bible.

Where is Ephrath?

The text is making a point to show us that Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion were Israelites through and through. This fact is juxtaposed against the setting of Moab.

Dig deep with me into Moab. The author of Ruth is writing to an audience who wouldn't have needed an explanation into the scandal of Moab. But, we are in a different time, so we need a frame of reference.

Your Bible may have a footnote about Moab in the story of Ruth. Look to see if it refers you anywhere based on the mention of Moab in Ruth 1:1.

Turn to Genesis 19. We're in the story of Lot and his escape from Sodom and Gomorrah after it was destroyed by God for the evil it committed. Read Genesis 19:29-38. What do you learn about the Moabites and the Ammonites?

It's cringeworthy, isn't it? Read Psalm 83:1-8. How are the people of Moab and Ammon described by the Psalmist?

Can you think of another example in Israel's history where someone took matters into their own hands and the results were catastrophic for future generations?

Read Numbers 25:1-3 for a brief glance of what Israel looked like when they chose the gods of Moab over the one true God.

Judges 11 records events that detail ways in which the Ammonites and the Moabites were enemies of Israel. The timing of the book of Ruth must have fallen when there was peace between Israel and Moab, but we see how this past enemy of Israel becomes a future enemy as well. Saul fought against them (1 Samuel 14:47), and David defeated them (2 Samuel 8:2). David's son, Solomon, married Moabite women and built a high place for their god, Chemosh (pronounced 'Kay-mosh'), introducing once again this worship of a demonic god to the Israelites.

The book of Judges records the history of the Israelite people before they were governed by their own king. The chart below is helpful in understanding the turmoil of this 200 year period. Keep in mind that many of these judges were serving concurrently in different parts of the Canaan region. (See Map 2 on page 138.)

I think it's hard for us to imagine the chaos an Israelite felt when he was invaded by neighboring people groups and oppressed by new leaders. This could happen many times in one lifetime. Granted, they should have driven these people from the land upon initial conquest, but they didn't obey the Lord, so history played out like this:

Events and Judges	Years
Israel serves Cushan-Rishathaim (3:7,8)	8
Peace following Othniel's deliverance (3:7-11)	40
Israel serves Moab (3:12)	18
Peace follows Ehud's deliverance (3:12-30)	80
Shamgar delivers Israel from Philistines (3:31)	?
Israel serves Canaan (4:1-3)	20
Peace following deliverance by Deborah and Barak (4:1-5:31)	40
Israel serves Midian (6:1-6)	7
Peace following Gideon's deliverance (6:1-8:35)	40
Abimelech, king of Israel (9:1-57)	3
Tola's career (10:1-2)	23
Jair's career (10:3-5)	22
Israel serves Ammon and Philistia (10:6-10)	18
Jephthah's career (10:6-12:7)	6
Ibzan's career (12:8-10)	7
Elon's career (12:11-12)	10
Abdon's career (12:13-15)	8
Israel serves Philistia (13:1)	40
Samson's career (13:1-16:31)	20

To understand the Moabite people, we need to understand what it looked like to worship their god, Chemosh. Keep in mind, like many pagan people groups of the time, they were polytheistic, worshipping many gods. Because if one god is good, more must be better, right? Look up Numbers 21:29. What is the sentiment here?

Look up 1 Kings 11:7. What does scripture call Chemosh? What other false god is mentioned in this passage?

Some scholars believe the name, Chemosh, may have meant “destroyer” or “subduer.” Chemosh was also seen as a fish-god. He was the god of the Moabites and Ammonites, and according to the Moabite Stone (Mesha Stele), Chemosh was associated with the goddess Ashteroth (remember her from yesterday?). They believe Chemosh was similar to the false deity, Baal, and there is evidence from the Moabite stone and from Scripture (see 1 Kings 11:7 above) that Chemosh and Moloch may have been the same deity. At the very least, they were manifestations of the same false god. Second Kings 3:27 records King Mesha, king of Moab, when faced with certain military defeat, sacrificing his first born son as a burnt offering on the city wall to his god, Moloch. The “fires of Moloch” are also referred to in Scripture as the act of child sacrifice to this false god.



Moabite Stone/Mesha Stele
Louvre Museum, Paris

Based on what we now know of Chemosh and Moloch, and what you learned yesterday about Baal and Ashteroth, how would you describe the people of Moab?

Jeremiah 48 records a prophecy against Moab and then a lament over Moab. Read Jeremiah 48:31, 46-47. Aside from some ancient imagery, what are the main ideas that Jeremiah is proclaiming to the people? Pay special attention to verses 46 and 47. (Hint, sometimes it's helpful to read confusing passages in simpler Bible versions, like the NIV, New Living Translation or even the Message).

Isaiah 16:11-14 (NLT) says:

My heart's cry for Moab is like a lament on a harp.

I am filled with anguish for Kir-hareseth.

*The people of Moab will worship at their pagan shrines,
but it will do them no good.*

*They will cry to the gods in their temples,
but no one will be able to save them.*

*The Lord has already said these things about Moab in the past. But now the Lord says,
"Within three years, counting each day, the glory of Moab will be ended. From its great
population, only a feeble few will be left alive."*

The commonality of both Jeremiah's and Isaiah's words is this: the Lord mourns for His people. Even though they may have been a great nation at one time and a descendant of Lot, they worshipped evil gods and performed evil acts toward one another as a form of worship.

And yet, He mourns for them. What does this say about the God we serve?

Look back at Ruth Chapter 1:2-4. How long did they live in Moab?

Do you think Elimelech was right for taking his family to Moab? Do you think Naomi was right for marrying her sons to Moabite women?

And yet, Jeremiah 48:47 tells us that God "will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days." So yes, Ruth was a Moabite, and Elimelech and Naomi probably acted in disobedience with their 10-year long "sojourn," but we serve a God who can restore and redeem all things. It becomes clear that the Lord was faithful, calling to Himself a

remnant that would bring about the ultimate restoration of all people, even though all these people were constantly breaking His heart.

How have you seen God's faithfulness displayed in your own life, despite your failures and disobedience?

How is our God different than any other "god" that people choose to serve today?

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Ask God to turn your heart to Him daily. May we always pray like the people who said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey." (Joshua 24:24) Thank the Lord for pursuing you even when you act in disobedience.

Day 4 Desperate, Yet Not Alone

Read Chapter 1:1-5. If any questions come to mind, note them in the margins.

Who were the characters that were introduced?

_____ married to _____

_____ married to _____ (see Ruth 4:10)

_____ married to _____

Hebrew culture would often use names to define the people. Their name was a description of who they are. Let's look at the meanings of the names we have here.

Elimelech: God is king

Naomi: To be pleasant

Mahlon and Chilion: Both names mean sickness and wasting

Ruth and Orpah were not Hebrew names, so their meaning is not known.

Looking at the names of Elimelech and his family, what are some things you can deduce about them?

Go back through verses 1-5 and underline or highlight any conflicts you see, any problems the people are facing. What are the main conflicts you took note of?

In your own words, quickly summarize the current state of life for Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah.

My summary would go something like: Everything is terrible. Simply unimaginably terrible.

Naomi is now in a country not her own, with a pagan people, widowed and childless. Her daughters-in-law are also widowed and childless. Maybe Mahlon and Chilion were ill from childhood, making it impossible to father a child. Whatever the case, these three women in this ancient day are now in the most vulnerable of positions.

Look at the wording of verse 1. Can you make any assumptions as to who's idea it was to move to Moab?

What we do know is that desperation brought this family to Moab. And 10 years later, they are still desperate. It's entirely probable that Elimelech acted on his own, moving his family to Moab in a desperate act to provide. And Naomi, in a desperate act to provide after the death of her husband, married her sons to Moabite women to carry on the family line and bring life where there was death. But now she finds herself with two young women, more desperate than ever.

Has God ever brought you to a place of utter desperation, where you knew the only one who could provide for you was Him?

As an Israelite, they would've certainly known the promise made to Abraham by Yahweh, "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3 ESV).

Look up Exodus 6:7. Yahweh declares a renewed covenant with Moses here. Write the verse here and pay careful attention to the wording (does any of it sound familiar?).

Exodus 6:7

But do you think they're wondering if God has abandoned them? Do they wonder if He sees their pain? How insignificant they must've felt to the Creator of the Universe. Can you identify with them? In our broken world, I'm afraid too many have felt this broken.

If you can identify, where did you turn? Was there a place in Scripture you clung to? A person who walked with you?

We have the benefit of knowing the end of the story here, but Naomi certainly did not. She had no idea that all of the events in her life up to this point were leading to something beautiful. And in our own lives, we don't know what tomorrow will bring either.

What if God's perfect plan doesn't feel perfect?

When we have times of questioning God's goodness, we need to go back to what we know about Him. Our Bibles are full of examples of God's character, the truth about who He is. And we can gain understanding from the book of Ruth, even from the study of these first 5 verses.

What are some ways you remind yourself of God's goodness in your life? A prayer journal or a gratitude journal are useful in this. Any other ideas? Spend some time discussing this with your small group, because we've seen what can happen when we forget God's mercy, grace, and goodness.

Thinking of the Moabites, we see that He pursues His people, all of His people, often through unconventional means. Despite the Israelites' failings, He preserved a remnant that would one day lead to King David, and then on to King Jesus. We see the clear example of God's pursuit in the gift of His Son, Jesus, and His sacrifice offered on our behalf. Evil turned to good. Destruction turned to eternal glory.

Today, let's take inventory of the circumstances around us. What is the hard thing right now, the strained relationship, the lost job, the empty bank account, the deep hurt of your heart, that God wants to use as a way of displaying His awesome power and love to a lost people? God gives "wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning" (Daniel 2:21). Ask for wisdom to look for the blessing that often comes as a result of the difficulty, not in spite of it.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Thank Jesus for the rest He offers. Remember that He tells us:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30)

We know this is true when we rely on Jesus’s strength, with the final victory in mind.

Day 5 Personal Application

Read Chapter 1:1-5 one last time and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

Application questions:

What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

Pray:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the section we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God. For example, one truth that I want to hold on to comes from verse 1, so my prayer might sound something like this: “God, I know I’m not in a literal famine, but right now my circumstances are causing me to feel desperate. Help me trust You in my circumstances and remind me of Your goodness, even in my pain. Thank You, Jesus, for your compassion and love for me. Amen.”

Look No Further

Session 2 Notes

Video link available at: myabc.church/women



Week Two

Jo

Faithful

Love

Day 1 Response to Crisis

This week we will continue to look at the crisis that was introduced in chapter 1. As we look at how these three widows respond to the crisis and grief they're experiencing, we will begin to answer the question, "Now what?" We also will explore how faithful lovingkindness plays an important role throughout the book of Ruth. **Read Chapter 1:6-22.** As you read, look for the word/phrase that is repeated throughout this chapter and circle it or mark it in some way. A repeated or "key" word can be an indication of a theme or concept important in understanding the text. We will come back to this later.

As we study the book of Ruth, most of what we learn about the characters, their circumstances, and God, we learn through the dialogue between the characters and less often from the narration. In this first chapter, there are four distinct dialogues between Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Today we are going to look at the first exchange which is found in verses 6-10. But first, we need the context in which the dialogue occurs.

Review verses 6-10. What new development emerges and how does the author account for this turn of events? (verse 6)

This is the first explicit mention of God in the book, however, the author's intended audience, the Israelites, would have seen God at work from the very first line of this account. Famine, back then, was associated with an act of God, often directed against His people due to their unfaithfulness and disobedience. (See Deuteronomy 11:13-17).

We aren't told that the return of rain is the result of their repentance, but the narration is clear that God has stepped in and given them food and Naomi has been made aware of His provision. This is our first glimpse of God's providence at work in the lives of His people as well as His loving care toward them. We will continue to see this woven throughout the book of Ruth. God's grace steps in and hope begins.

What does Naomi decide to do? (verse 6)

If you haven't already done so, go back and circle all of the occurrences of the word "return" (also translated "turn or go back") in chapter 1.

One definition of the word *providence* is, “The conviction that God sustains the world that He has created and directs it to its appointed destiny.” (Rosner) Can you think of circumstances in your life that resulted in you taking a certain path or making a particular decision? Think about the events and timing that led you to put your faith in Jesus. Do you consider these circumstances the result of God’s providence? How would your perspective change if you viewed life’s events through the lens of God’s providence?

Let’s get back to the first dialogue in the book of Ruth. In verse 7, Naomi has set out from Moab with her daughters-in-law and they are on their way to Bethlehem when Naomi has a change of heart. What is the new plan? What can you gather from verses 8 and 9 as the reasons for her change of heart?

We know that Naomi is not just making a suggestion or politely offering them a chance to opt out, because she starts her speech forcefully with a double command: “go”, immediately followed by “return.” She sincerely wants what is best for her daughters-in-law. Her sensitivity and loving concern are evident in the blessing she bestows on them in verses 8 and 9. Read verses 8-9 again and let’s look at this blessing, the first of many in the book of Ruth. What does she ask of the Lord?

A double command and a double blessing. Naomi is on a roll. Let’s examine the first blessing which is in verse 8. Naomi is calling on Yahweh, translated as *the Lord*. This is the special covenant name of God, chosen by Him and given to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-15). It was given only to Israel and is associated with the covenant promises made to them and His particular covenant relationship with them.

Naomi’s request shows her apparent belief that Yahweh’s loving kindness and authority to bless extends to those outside his chosen people and beyond the borders of the promised land. This is especially astonishing based on what we learned last week. These are Moabite women from Moab, considered despised enemies of God and the Israelite people. Even more astonishing is what Naomi suggests should be the basis of God’s kindness toward them. On what basis should Yahweh “deal kindly” with Orpah and Ruth?

Naomi has introduced a key theological term. The Hebrew word translated here as “kindness” is *hesed*. This term is a covenant word relating to God’s covenant love, but it cannot be summed up by the translation to any one word. It is frequently translated as “lovingkindness” or “steadfast love,” but these fall short of the full richness of its meaning. Look up at least two of the following scriptures and note the aspects of *hesed* that you discover:

Exodus 34:6

Deuteronomy 7:9

Psalms 85:7

Psalms 86:13

Psalms 119:76

Psalms 130: 7,8

Psalms 136

Isaiah 54:8

Isaiah 63:7

Jonah 4:2

This is only a small sample of the scriptures that describe God’s *hesed*. If you’re game, go ahead and write a definition based on what you discovered.

I’m going to give it my best shot and give you a definition of *hesed* that I gleaned from several resources and have combined into one definition. Here goes...

Hesed: a covenant term, wrapping up in itself all the positive attributes of God: love, covenant faithfulness, mercy, grace, kindness, loyalty, etc. It is realized through its outward expression in acts of devotion and lovingkindness that contain a gracious element in that they go beyond the perceived requirements of duty in order to meet an extreme need and arising from personal affection or goodness.

I know. It’s a mouthful, but even so, it likely doesn’t capture the true fullness of the meaning of *hesed*. How might this expanded definition of lovingkindness expand the way you perceive or relate to God?

Hesed, by its definition, is not limited to the God-to-human relationship. Mankind also can, and has, exemplified *hesed* in its relationships with one another. Both God's *hesed* and man's *hesed* are represented in Naomi's blessing. She acknowledges Orpah and Ruth's *hesed* shown to her deceased husband and two sons as well as to herself, and astonishingly, presents her daughters-in-law, two Moabite women, as the standard by which Yahweh Himself should show kindness in return. Do you think how we treat others will affect how God treats us? Why or why not? Is there scripture to back it up?

Is there someone in your life to whom you have difficulty giving *hesed*? How might changing your perspective make it easier?

Look up Titus 3:3-6 and John 13:34-35. Why should we extend *hesed* to others? Name some practical ways you can show *hesed* in your home, church, community, etc.

Let's turn our attention now to the second blessing which is in verse 9. What do you think is meant by "rest" in this context? Why would it be found in the "house of her husband?" Consider everything you know about that culture at the time and what you can infer from Isaiah 54:4 and Exodus 22:21-23 in your answer.

Where can we find rest? Look at Psalm 91:1-4 and Matthew 11:28.

What do you turn to rather than the Lord for rest and restoration when life is unsettling, uncertain, and seems hopeless? Why is finding rest in Jesus more satisfying?

Naomi asks God to show *hesed* to her daughters-in-law by giving them security. At that time, security was found through the men in society, first in the provision and

protection of one's father, and then in one's husband and sons. Although there were exceptions, the life of a widow was one of penury, reproach, and dependence on the charity of family. Without protection and provision, they were vulnerable to mistreatment and a variety of injustices. And without sons, there was little reason for future hope. What would it mean for Naomi if Orpah and Ruth return to Moab? What does this reveal about Naomi's character?

Naomi is sensitive to their situation and wants her daughters-in-law to have an opportunity to find security. So putting their needs above her own, and at great personal sacrifice, she pleads with them to return to their families. Although a widow's plight was real and often dire, God was not absent. Look up at least 2 of the verses below and note God's loving concern for widows and orphans.

Jeremiah 49:11

Psalms 68:5

Psalms 145:9

Psalms 146:9

Note the ways God provided for widows in the following verses:

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

Deuteronomy 16:10-14

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

God cared about the widows and knew of their vulnerability. By His law and repeated warnings (Exodus 22:21-23), God provided grace for them. His *hesed* never fails. Widows today can still experience some of the same struggles. What are some practical ways you can give God's love to widows you know?

Let's look at our final verse for today's homework. Read the end of verse 9 through 10. How do Orpah and Ruth respond to Naomi's command to "Go, return?" What does this reveal about their relationship with their mother-in-law?

Mothers-in-law have gotten a bad rap in our culture. They are the fodder for many stand up comedy routines and plots in bad made-for-TV movies. But there are many mothers-in-law who are examples of selfless devotion (*hesed*) and who develop relationships with their daughters-in-law that are as deep and affectionate as their relationship with their own children, as exemplified with Orpah and Ruth. These women seem more attached to Naomi than their own families. The text doesn't tell us, but what might you infer could be the reason for their tender affection for one another?

Do you have a close relationship with your mother-in-law or a "mother" figure in your life? What makes it special? Or difficult? Is there something you can do to improve it?

In spite of Naomi's urging, Orpah and Ruth refuse to return to Moab and declare their intention to return with her. The dialogue we will look at tomorrow begins with the word "but." Apparently, the discussion is not over. But that is for another day.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Praise God that He is at work bringing hope in the midst of grief and troubles. Ask Him to show you someone in need of *hesed* today and then pray a blessing for them.

Day 2 Crossroads

Read Chapter 1:6-22 again and mark up any additional insights or questions you have.

Yesterday I asked you to identify and circle the word “return” and its synonyms. One of the commentaries that I read stated there were 10 occurrences of the word “return” in Chapter 1, but no matter how many times I count, I only count 9. I hope you take that as a challenge and one of you can show me all 10.

At first glance, it might seem like the repetition of the word “return” doesn’t signify anything except a way to describe the action. We don’t want to overemphasize the importance of a repeated word, but we ought to pay attention and give it some thought as it might aid in understanding the text, especially an author’s intent. Let’s start.

The word “return” was used 4 times in verses 6-10 that we looked at yesterday. Based on what you remember, jot down any thoughts about what that word signified in those verses.

Don’t force it. If nothing came to mind, that’s okay. The goal was to think about it, so goal accomplished.

Today, we are going to look at the second dialogue in Chapter 1, verses 11-14. Clearly, Naomi has not given up on trying to convince her daughters-in-law that returning to their families in Moab is in their best interest. She has ramped up her efforts of persuasion.

List the 3 arguments she presents in her speech. (Hint: each argument is preceded by an emphatic word and a tender address to Orpah and Ruth as “my daughters”.)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

In order to make sense of Naomi’s first and second arguments, we need to understand the Israelite custom of Levirate marriage. Look up Deuteronomy 25:5-6. What was the purpose of the Levirate marriage? See also Ruth Chapter 4:5.

Explain Naomi's first argument in verse 11 in your own words.

Explain Naomi's second argument which is in verse 12 and the beginning of verse 13.

Describe the tone of the speech she gives. Notice that she uses rhetorical questions. What do you think was the point of expressing her arguments this way?

How are these first two arguments for returning to Moab valid? How are they not?

Now look at the third argument in the second half of verse 13. Look up the definition of "bitter" in the dictionary and write it below.

Bitter:

What do you think she means when she says she is bitter "for their sake"?

Why do you think she says "the hand of the Lord has gone out against me?" Do you think this is an accurate statement? Why or why not?

This is the third time that The Lord, or Yahweh, has been mentioned in the book of Ruth. Each instance has had a connection to Naomi and reveals something about her beliefs regarding Yahweh. Look back at each mention. Note the common thread between them and the differences.

Verse 6

Verses 8, 9

Verse 13

Summarize what you learned about her beliefs from these verses.

In the midst of the crisis and her grief, Naomi blamed God for her suffering and bitterness. She acknowledged the sovereignty of God over the tragic events of her life and concluded that He must be against her. Is this an accurate conclusion? Look at Romans 8:31 and skim Psalm 103:2-19 for the answer.

Yet, Naomi's suffering was real. We all experience suffering and the truth remains that God controls all things, including the events that cause our suffering (Psalm 103:19). Do we have reason to fear the hand of God?

Look up the following verses. What do they say about the hand of God?

Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 49:14-16

John 10:29

1 Peter 5:6

Read Romans 8:31-39 for a beautiful assurance of how God feels about those who put their faith in Him. What does Paul, the author of Romans, present as the evidence/proof that God is not against us (verses 31 and 32)?

God was not holding out on Naomi, He was holding on to her. He is holding on to us too. We have the blessing of knowing that God kept His promise to send One who can restore us from spiritual poverty and hopelessness and give us eternal rest. Jesus Christ, who reached out His hands to be nailed to the cross, died, was raised and is now seated at the right hand of God. We don't need to fear His hands, but instead, find rest in them. How have you responded when life's circumstances suddenly change and you are left with grief, suffering or uncertainty? How can the verses above help you respond with greater peace and hope?

So, Naomi has presented three arguments, and whether or not they are totally based in reality, they were meant to convince her daughters-in-law that there was no benefit in returning with her to the land of Judah. Clearly, she loved her "daughters" and wanted what was best for them. Was she right? Was this wise counsel?

Let's do a cost/benefit analysis. In the first column, list everything that awaits Orpah and Ruth if they return with Naomi. In the second, list all that awaits them in returning to Moab.

Judah

Moab

Let's compare lists. In Judah, they will each have a loving mother-in-law and sister-in-law, but they will be widows and foreigners (Moabites no less), have a life of destitution, possible alienation, singleness, childlessness, no rest or security in an unknown land of strangers. Naomi is right in that as Moabites, they would have less chance of remarrying due to Moab's history with Israel and Jewish law and tradition regarding marriage with foreigners. In Moab, they would not have Naomi but, although still poor, they would have their family and friends, be in a familiar place and culture, with the possibility of remarrying and having children. It is on this latter reason

(remarrying) that Naomi is so focused. She sees it as their only hope for rest and restoration.

Practically, on paper Naomi's argument seems strong. However it is based on her understanding and not on God's. His ways are mysterious. Last week, you read through the entire book of Ruth, so I am not giving anything away when I remind you that, by His providential working, He is going to provide the rest that Naomi prayed for and restore what she has lost.

Read verse 14. Did Orpah and Ruth take Naomi's advice? What do you think you would have done in their situation?

Naomi has created a crossroad for them. They have been presented with a choice. Clearly, not an easy one as they protest ("lifted up their voices") and wept for the second time. They can take the road returning to Judah with Naomi or they can take the road back home to Moab. In the end, Orpah kisses her mother in law good-bye. She has chosen to return home to her family. But Ruth clings to Naomi.

Have you ever been at a crossroad? How did you decide which path to take?

What are some crossroads that a follower of Jesus might face? What advice would you give to someone who has a difficult choice to make?

I don't think that we are meant to criticize Orpah for her choice. The author gives no indication in the text here, or later, that she is insincere or should be seen as an example of selfishness. By contrast, Orpah's choice just highlights Ruth's faith, sacrifice and courage all the more in making the choice she does.

Does Naomi have any arguments left up her sleeve or is she going to settle for one daughter-in-law out of two? We will take a look at that tomorrow.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Praise the Lord for His loving, providential hand that guides your life as a follower of Him. Ask the Lord to help you respond with greater peace and hope when life's circumstances leave you feeling uncertain and sorrowful. Pray that you will be a woman who trusts the Lord and seeks His wisdom every time you are at a crossroads.

Day 3 Ruth's Loyalty

Read Chapter 1:6-22 again and mark up any additional insights or questions you have.

On the first day of this week's study, we saw that Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to Moab, putting their needs and interests above her own at great personal sacrifice. Yesterday, we looked at the crossroad presented to Orpah and Ruth and detailed their choices. Before we go to today's passage, I want to detail the crossroad Naomi had faced. Her crossroad was one of inaction versus action. She could either do nothing, stay quiet, and return to her homeland with two loving devoted younger women who could provide companionship and share the burden of caring for their physical needs. Or, she could insist her daughters-in-law go back to their families and she would return home to Judah widowed, lonely, poor, without sons to provide for her, and uncertain if she had family remaining in Bethlehem willing to help. I think Naomi's choice carried the additional burden of conscience.

What do you think I mean by "burden of conscience"? Do you agree with me that there was a burden of conscience? Support your answer.

Have you ever faced a crossroad where saying nothing was a self-serving option or one based in fear? What did you do? What was the result?

Keeping your mouth shut is not always an act of ungodliness or sin. Can you give examples of godly and ungodly silence? Does one seem harder than the other for you?

In Naomi's case, motivated by *hesed*, conscience won. She opened her mouth. Naomi stands as a model of *hesed* for all who read and learn from her story.

When we concluded yesterday, Orpah had left to return home, but Ruth clung to Naomi. Today we will focus on Chapter 1:15-18. As you read these verses, remember

to pay attention to the word “return” and note any themes or concepts you can observe.

Naomi still has some fight in her. What is her argument in verse 15?

At first glance, this does not seem like a new argument except for one addition. What is new? What do you think is the significance of her adding this?

Naomi’s command to Ruth in verse 15 is forceful, almost harsh. She does not tenderly address her as “my daughter” this time. Her statement has the cadence and tone of a schoolyard bully’s challenge, “See, your buddy knows what’s good for him. Why don’t you run home to Mommy too?”

It reminds me of the challenge Joshua gave to the Israelites when he gathered them together at Shechem. Read Joshua 24:15,19. Compare Joshua’s challenge to Israel to Naomi’s challenge to Ruth and write your thoughts.

Naomi’s reference to Orpah’s gods seems to conflict with the Israelite belief in Yahweh as the one true God. Naomi appears to be acknowledging not just the existence of another god, but many gods. This has raised questions about her faith and theologians are not in agreement on how to interpret her comment.

Thinking about what we learned last week and what we learned yesterday about Naomi’s beliefs regarding Yahweh, what is your own assessment of her faith?

Naomi’s may not have been a perfect faith, but it was a tested faith. Despite her current troubles, she clearly still considered Yahweh active in the affairs of her life, even if she didn’t always like the results. She continued to speak to Him and of Him, calling on Him for blessing and blaming Him for her circumstances. It doesn’t appear to me that Naomi has replaced Yahweh for another.

And now Ruth must choose.

A return to Moab would almost assuredly mean a return to the worship of Chemosh and other gods. Originally, Orpah had been willing to stay with Naomi and live with her under the authority of Yahweh as she had done for 10 years. But given a choice in the face of hardship and uncertainty, she made the easier, more familiar, and from a human perspective, the more sensible choice.

Have you ever made a choice because of your faith that probably looked foolish to the world? Or one that caused hardship or cost you something you wanted? How were you able to make that choice? What was the result?

Read the first sentence of verse 16. How does Ruth reply to Naomi's directive to return to her people and her gods? What emotions do you think her words convey?

Now read her entire speech, verses 16-18. This is Ruth's longest speech of the book. How would you describe the tone of her speech?

How would you assess her sincerity? What in the text leads you to your conclusion?

Look at each piece of Ruth's declaration of commitment. Paraphrase in your own words what you think her intended meaning was, and what it would mean practically as they go forward.

"For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge."

"Your people shall be my people and your God my God."

"Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried."

This is a radical commitment, demonstrating radical self-sacrifice and a high degree of loyalty. Ruth is committing to turn away from every remaining source of security that a widow in her day might still be able to hold on to (her homeland, her people and her gods), and instead, cling to Naomi and Naomi's God. She will set aside her own life for Naomi's sake. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). She is an example of living out Jesus' command to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). She will now align herself with Naomi, Naomi's people and Naomi's God.

She is not merely deciding where she wants to live, Ruth is declaring that her fate is now tied to Naomi's fate. They will rise together and fall together, their lives and even deaths will be forever intertwined.

She is not just identifying with Naomi, she is identifying with the Israelites, counting herself as one of "the people of Yahweh" and committing to worship Him alone. In doing so, she enters into covenant relationship with Him. Read Exodus 19:3-6, one of the passages of scripture in which God details His covenant with Israel. What does God state are His role and commitments in the partnership? What must the people of God agree to do?

God's role:

Israel's agreement:

What happens when we don't keep our part of the covenant agreement with God?
Read Psalm 103:10-14, 1 John 1:9.

Ruth has declared her faith and commitment to the one true God. She has placed herself under His authority and will be the object of His *hesed*. The book of Ruth is an example that neither ethnicity nor one's gender is a disqualifier for God's Kingdom. God accepts all who put their faith in Him. "In every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to Him" (Acts 10:35). God can use any circumstance to advance His plan of redemption. In God's providence, even a Moabite widow can become the great grandmother of King David.

Look at the concluding oath in Ruth's speech, verse 17. Write a paraphrase in your own words.

“Ruth’s pledge of devotion to Naomi ranks among the loftiest expressions of commitment in scripture.” (Block, p. 643) How does Naomi respond? (verse 18)

Naomi is left speechless! Ruth gets the last word and it is memorable. So much so, that it is frequently read at marriage ceremonies. Her poetic declaration of devotion is an expression of her love and loyalty. Her radical self-sacrifice and commitment are a demonstration of God’s *hesed* to Naomi. Both her words and her actions demonstrate evidence of her faith in God, the ultimate model of steadfast love.

Ruth and Naomi are living examples of God’s Faithful love. Until tomorrow...

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

If you have a mother-in-law or daughter-in-law in your life, spend some time praying for them. Ask the Lord to help you find ways to demonstrate *hesed* to them. Praise God for the gift of His covenant commitment and love for us.

Day 4 Naomi's Homecoming

Read Chapter 1:6-22 again and mark up any insights or questions you have.

At the start of this week's homework, we discovered that Naomi, with husbands and sons now dead, had decided to return to her homeland from Moab with her two daughters-in-law in tow, having heard that the Lord had provided food for His people. They had barely started on their way when the plan was put on hold, creating a pause in the action while the three widows considered the paths they would take, both physical and spiritual.

Their choices have been made. Orpah has returned to Moab while Naomi and Ruth have continued on to the Land of Judah. Today's text begins by pressing play again on the action. Let's look more closely at Chapter 1:19-22.

The two women's journey to Bethlehem is only mentioned in passing and the story quickly transitions to a new scene. Looking at verse 19, answer the questions who, what, where, when, why and how.

Who:

What:

Where:

When:

Why:

How:

The Hebrew word translated here as "stirred" has a range of meanings depending on the context: to hum, groan, be agitated, be excited, panic, make a noise, buzz. Look at Matthew 21:10, where the word is used in a similar setting. Now, based on your study of Ruth up to this point, what are some possible reasons that Naomi's arrival in Bethlehem created such a "buzz"?

What do you think is behind the women's question, "Is this Naomi?"

Naomi does not hesitate to set them straight. Read the first part of verse 20. What does Naomi retort?

Naomi demands a name change. What are the meanings of the names Naomi and Mara? Your own Bible is a great resource. Check the footnotes after the main text, or the cross-references typically in the margins.

Naomi's outburst reveals how she interprets the devastating events resulting in her current circumstances. She makes four accusations against God. Let's examine each complaint in verses 20 and 21.

Complaint 1: "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me."

Naomi refers to God as the Almighty here, which is the translation of Shaddai. Whereas Yahweh is the name of God, Shaddai is a title for God. Yahweh in His role as Shaddai (the Almighty) is the creator and ruler over everything, including moral order, punishing evil and rewarding good. It is Yahweh, the Almighty, who Naomi declares has caused her bitterness.

We defined the word, "bitter" on Day 2. Today we will see what God's Word tells us about bitterness. Using the scripture references provided, answer the following:

What is God's command regarding bitterness? Ephesians 4:31

What is God's warning regarding bitterness? Hebrews 12:15

What are the consequences of bitterness? Job 21:25 and Acts 8:23

What can you do when struggling with bitterness? 1Samuel 1:10, Job 10:1

How do we get rid of bitterness? Ephesians 4:32

How does God deal with bitterness? Isaiah 38:17

Have you ever struggled with bitterness? How did it exhibit itself in your thoughts, attitudes, words, and behaviors? How did it resolve? Did any of the verses above speak to you?

Naomi expands on her bitterness in her remaining three complaints.

Complaint 2: “I went away full and the Lord has brought me back empty.”

Let’s look at the validity of her statement. Go back to the very first verse of Chapter 1. What did she have when she left Judah? What was she without? (Why did her family leave Judah and go to Moab?)

What did she have when she returned? (verses 6 and 18) What had she lost? (verse 5)

Notice in verse 21 that Naomi doesn’t say the Lord sent her away full, she only holds Him responsible for bringing her back empty.

Based on this observation, what is her view of God’s sovereignty here? Can you think of scripture that would counter her view? Use the concordance in your Bible or a Bible app to help you find verses.

Complaint 3: “The Lord has testified against me.”

What do you think of when you hear the word “testify”?

What do you think Naomi meant by her statement?

What one aspect of God's sovereignty has Naomi focused on here? Find a scripture verse or two that speak of other aspects of His sovereignty.

Complaint 4: “The Almighty has brought calamity upon me.”

Where does the text talk about how God carried out His sentence against her?

What events in her life does she attribute to God's sovereignty? Look for a verse that gives an example of the opposite.

It is true that Naomi's husband and sons are dead, resulting in the loss of her present and future security, but we don't see any indication in the text that their deaths were the result of God's hand against Naomi. According to scripture, what is the ultimate cause of death? See Romans 5:12.

Naomi has publicly vented her bitter complaints against God, accusing Him of being unfair and blaming Him for her bitterness, emptiness and calamitous circumstances. She acknowledges God's sovereignty, but it is a distorted, one-sided sovereignty, absent of grace. What do you think accounts for Naomi's interpretation of her circumstances?

It is easy to praise God's sovereignty when things are going well, but when hardships come, the doctrine of God's sovereignty is harder to accept. Bitterness is a symptom that our view of God is distorted. A distorted view of God results in a distorted view of our problems and of reality. What are some other ways that a distorted view of God distorts our perception?

Although God is directly mentioned only once in the narration so far (verse 6), He plays a major role in the book of Ruth. Where do you see God's providence and *hesed* on display in Chapter 1?

Think about the last hardship you went through. Looking back, do you see God's *hesed* in the difficulties? Do you have a hard time seeing how God is at work in your life?

Count how many times Ruth is mentioned in verses 19-22.

It seems strange that no one mentions Ruth in the exchange between Naomi and the women. Perhaps it would have poked a hole in Naomi's argument that she had returned empty.

List the 3 ways Ruth is described in verse 22.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

How many times does the author refer to Moab in this description? What is being emphasized?

How many times do you see the key word "return" in verse 22? Why do you think "returning" is being emphasized here?

We also learn the timing of their return. When was it?

Thinking back to verse 1, what is the significance of returning to Bethlehem then?

There is a reversal theme being developed. Naomi is back in Bethlehem and there is food again in Judah. The return of rain leads to the return to Judah. Naomi has come full circle by the end of chapter 1. The end of the famine signifies hope. The reversal theme in Chapter 1 “reflects the whole book in microcosm in its movement from deprivation to restoration.” (Rosner, p. 177) Naomi and Ruth are home, but this is not the end of the story. They have a faithful redeemer who will bring full restoration. We will meet him next week.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

If you are in a season of bitterness, pour out your complaint to the Lord and allow His peace and compassion to fill your heart. Praise Him for His sovereignty and goodness in all situations, even the hard-to-understand ones.

Day 5 Personal Application

Read Chapter 1:6-22 one last time and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

Application questions:

What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

Pray:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

Covenant Love

Session 3 Notes

Video link available at: myabc.church/women



Week Three

Jo

Faithful
Provision

Day 1 Ruth's Provision Plan

We finished last week just as Naomi and Ruth arrived at their destination. The journey to return to Bethlehem is complete. A new chapter starts (literally and figuratively) as their journey to finding full restoration through a faithful redeemer continues. We don't know at this point how these two destitute widows are going to survive and provide for themselves. We don't know if Ruth's commitment to Naomi will be realized. All we know so far is that the rest of their story will play out in a new location. This week's homework will cover Chapter 2.

In preparation, **read all 23 verses of Ruth Chapter 2**, marking transitional words or phrases and repeated words in your text. Jot your questions and observations in the margins.

Today we will focus on Chapter 2:1-3. But first, go back and review verse 22 of Chapter 1. When did Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem? What is the significance of the timing of their arrival?

Barley was the first of the grains to be harvested each year, in April or early March; wheat was the last. Harvest season was a time of celebration and thanksgiving. Eventually, the barley and wheat harvests came to be associated with the festivals of Passover and Pentecost.

"Virtually every aspect of harvesting and the growth of fruit is pressed into service by the biblical writers to illustrate various truths about the spiritual life, both individual and corporate." (Rosner, p. 534) What do you think the spiritual lesson is, if any, in this case with the barley harvest?

Now look at today's passage, Chapter 2, verses 1-3. We have been introduced to a new character, Boaz. Write down everything you learn about Boaz in verse 1.

Since most of the author's descriptions of Boaz are statements of fact, it's notable that he includes one character quality, "worthy." Look up the definition of "worthy" in a dictionary and write it below.

Worthy:

The Hebrew word translated here as "worthy" is *chayil*. It can also be translated as virtuous, valiant, wealthy. It can signify 1) power, strength, 2) wealth, property, 3) able, valiant, 4) army and 5) upper-class. It is difficult to know the specific interpretation based on verse one alone, but we will soon learn more about Boaz and will discover that he possesses several aspects of worthiness.

Read verse 2 of Chapter 2. The roles have switched and it is Ruth who is taking the lead in initiating a plan. What does she want to do?

Look up Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22 for an explanation of the Mosaic law regarding gleaning. What distinguishes gleaning from ordinary harvesting?

What was the purpose of this command? Why do you think they needed to be commanded to do this (Deuteronomy 24:22)?

What characteristics of God are demonstrated by his command?

God provided grace for those who were struggling by allowing them to glean after the reapers. By making it law, he increased the likelihood that they would be provided for. What does Ruth's desire to glean in the fields indicate about their situation?

Ruth is asking for Naomi's permission to glean in the fields so that she can bring food home for them. Why do you think she requested permission?

Thinking back to the laws for gleaners, what two qualifications does Ruth possess that would allow her to glean?

What additional requirement does Ruth mention she will need in order to glean?

Look up the definition of the word "favor" in the dictionary and write it down. This word is also translated as "grace". Why would she need to find favor if the law permitted her to glean in the fields?

Favor:

Think of a time when you sought favor or grace from someone? Was it given? Do you think God played a role? Read Psalm 5:12 as you formulate your answer.

Ruth's plan required a bit of providential intervention. She would have to find favor in the fields if she and Naomi were going to have a means of providing food for themselves. How does Naomi respond to Ruth's request (verse 2)?

Compare Naomi's tone here to the last time we heard her speak in Chapter 1. What can you "glean" about Ruth's character from her one sentence spoken in verse 2?

Finally, look at verse 3. In whose field does Ruth end up? How does she end up there?

What additional piece of information do we learn about Boaz from this verse?

Do you think we are supposed to believe that Ruth just "happened to" end up in the field of a relative who just "happened to" be mentioned two verses earlier?

It seems more likely that the author bookends this section with references to Boaz in order to draw our attention to all of the actions, both human and divine, that have led up to Ruth being in this particular field at this particular time. Thinking all the way back to the beginning of the book, can you name just a few?

Has Ruth found the favor she was hoping for? Explain.

We are leaving Ruth out in the field for now but we will check in with her again tomorrow.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

End today's study time praising God for His sovereign activity in your life. Thank Him for providing your daily bread and for all His daily provisions. Ask Him to help you extend hospitality to others in need so that His name would be glorified.

For Deeper Study: The Feast of Weeks

The Feast of Weeks, *Shavuot* in Hebrew, is one of the seven annual feasts that God commanded the Israelites to celebrate, as told to Moses. This feast was a harvest feast and it occurred 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits. It is also called “Pentecost,” which means 50. This feast celebrates God’s provision, and it is important to our study because the book of Ruth is read during the celebration of this feast.

Read Leviticus 23:1-2, 15-22: God’s commands about the Feast of Weeks.

What is the first offering mentioned in verse 16?

As part of God’s directions for the feast, what specific command did He give them regarding the poor and the sojourner?

Read Deuteronomy 16:9-12: Additional information about the Feast of Weeks.

Who is invited to join in the celebration?

What were the Israelites told to remember at this feast?

Read Acts 2: A New Testament account of the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

What important event happened at this feast?

According to verse 21, who can be saved?

Given what you’ve learned so far, why do you think the Jewish people read Ruth in their celebration of the Feast of Weeks?

As we begin to study the concept of a redeemer this week, consider why you think God would use this feast as the setting to launch the movement of His church.

Day 2 Ruth and Boaz Meet

Yesterday we left Ruth in the field of Boaz. She had arrived in the hopes of providing food for herself and Naomi, knowing that her success was dependent on finding favor. Today's scene takes place in the barley field. If you haven't already done so, circle the word "favor" as you **read through all of Chapter 2** again. Write any additional observations or questions in the margins of the text.

Today we will be focusing on Chapter 2:4-13, where we will meet Boaz for the first time. Read verse 4. This section opens with the expression "behold." What modern day expressions could you substitute in the place of "behold"?

What does the author's use of this word signify to the reader?

The NIV translation uses the expression "just then" emphasizing the timing of this new development. Not only are we to pay attention, we are to wonder at the arrival of Boaz and its timing. Paraphrasing the author, it might read, "Take a look at that, by the providence of God, Boaz and Ruth have ended up in the field at the same time." It certainly raises curiosity as to where this might be leading.

In verse 4, Boaz shares a brief exchange with his workers. What is the tone of this interaction? What does it say about the kind of boss he might be?

This verse also contains the first of four blessings in Chapter 2. What truths about God are expressed in these greetings of blessing?

Read verses 5 and 6. It doesn't take long for Boaz to notice Ruth's presence in the field and he asks his servant about her. What does Boaz want to know? Don't overlook the way the question is phrased.

List what Boaz learns about Ruth from his worker.

Boaz had recognized that Ruth was not one of his workers. The servant established her identity by her connection with Naomi and by her status as a foreigner and a Moabite. Read verse 7. Here the servant reports an earlier conversation he had with Ruth now establishing her character as well. What does his interaction with Ruth reveal about her character?

Ruth had found favor with the supervisor. Let's see how she finds favor with Boaz as he turns his attention to Ruth and speaks to her directly. Read the entire dialogue, verses 8-13. How does Boaz address Ruth in verse 8? What conclusions might you draw from this?

In verses 8 and 9, Boaz gives Ruth instructions. Explain each part of his instructions in your own words.

What can you infer about gleaning in the fields from Boaz's statement, "Have I not charged the young men not to touch you?"

What are the tone and the intent of his instructions?

The actions and speech of Boaz throughout the second chapter are a revelation of his character. How do verses 8 and 9 speak to his character?

Ruth recognizes the extraordinary favor that she has been given. Read her response in verse 10. What is the first thing Ruth does and what does this say about her?

What is the reason she gives for her astonishment that Boaz should notice her?

What does his behavior toward Ruth as a foreigner say about Boaz?

Boaz responds to Ruth in verses 11-13. We learn in verse 11 that he has already heard about Ruth and Naomi's journey from Moab to Bethlehem. The buzz about town had apparently continued and spread; people were speaking about Ruth and it had reached

the ears of Boaz. Ruth's reputation had preceded her. What about her reputation had Boaz found favorable?

A reputation is formed when a quality or behavior is consistently observed and then judged by other people. Ruth had just arrived in town, was previously unknown to anyone and was from Moab. What does it say about Ruth that she had already earned a good reputation among the Israelites? What does it say about God?

I find it interesting that the very thing that would have made her a spectacle among the Israelites, that is her Moabite origins, is the very thing that also brought attention to her acts of kindness, sacrifice, and courage. Why should Boaz take notice of Ruth, a lowly foreigner? It is because the acts of *hesed* by that lowly foreigner got noticed. When we display God's *hesed*, people notice.

Who is the kindest most giving person you can think of? What makes you think so highly of them?

Why do you think it's important to have a good reputation? Is there anything you would like to improve about yours?

Boaz gives Ruth only one reason for his kindness, that he was responding to her kindness to Naomi. As far as we know from the text, Ruth is not aware that Boaz is a relative. Do you think Boaz's kindness to Ruth is merely repayment for her kindness shown to a relative? How do you think he would have treated Ruth if he didn't know anything about her?

Read verse 12. This is the second blessing in this chapter. Having just offered his provision and protection to Ruth, Boaz then asked Yahweh for His provision and protection for her as well.

Boaz's blessing can be divided into two parts distinguished by the conjunction "and". First, the Lord is to repay Ruth for what she has done, referring back to verse 11 and her faithfulness to Naomi. Second, the Lord is to give Ruth a full reward. In this latter part of the blessing, we discover that there was more to Ruth's reputation than just her faithfulness to her mother-in-law. What else had Boaz heard about Ruth?

Boaz uses beautiful and tender imagery to portray God's loving care, that of a mother bird sheltering her young under the protection of her wings. What aspects of God are expressed by this metaphor?

Boaz had heard of Ruth's faith in the Lord. Why do you think Boaz addressed God as "the Lord, the God of Israel" in this part of the blessing, referring to His covenant relationship with the people of Israel? To help you with your answer, look back at Ruth 1:16 and Psalm 61:4-5.

Optional exercise: Look up Psalm 91:1-4. Write out or pray these verses in your own words substituting your name, circumstances, troubles, or petitions.

What are the rewards of taking refuge in the Lord?

Let's look back at Naomi's blessing for Orpah and Ruth, in Chapter 1:9. Naomi had asked Yahweh to bless them with the "rest" that a husband could offer, namely, shelter, protection and provision. How has the Lord already begun to answer Naomi's prayer? Name some of the specific provisions.

By returning with Naomi, Ruth may have thought she had sacrificed the hope of remarrying. But when she put her faith in the God of the Israelites and His covenant promises, she did not give up the hope of rest, but instead, was given refuge under His wings. God has already begun restoring some of the lost security and rest through Boaz's kindness and generosity. The Lord will continue to bring restoration to Ruth and then Naomi through an earthly redeemer. But Ruth's "full reward," and ours, will be realized in the perfect restoration found in Christ Jesus through faith.

Read Ruth's expression of gratitude in verse 13. Overall, Ruth is grateful for having found favor in the eyes of Boaz. For what 2 aspects of that favor is Ruth grateful?

- 1)
- 2)

Look up the word "comfort" in the dictionary. What do you think Ruth means when she says that Boaz comforted her?

Comfort:

Ruth also expresses her gratitude to Boaz for "speaking kindly to her". She is using the Hebrew idiom *dibber 'im leb*, "to speak on the heart." In this context, what would you say that means? What does she say is the basis for her gratitude?

Ruth refers to herself as Boaz's servant and then says "though I am not one of your servants." What is she inferring about her status? What does this infer about her?

Thanks to God's providence, Ruth ended up in the field belonging to Boaz. Boaz, being a man of exquisite character and generosity, extended favor to Ruth and eased her mind regarding Naomi's and her lack of provision and protection. If Ruth had ended up in another man's field, she may not have been treated so kindly or generously.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Praise the Lord for His undeserved favor which He has lavished on us through the redeeming work of His Son, Jesus. Thank Him for His provision and protection. Ask Him to show you where you can extend kindness to others so that His reputation may be glorified. Take refuge in the shadow of His wings for any need that you may have today.

Day 3 Boaz's Abundant Provision

Boaz is the main focus of Chapter 2 and he is introduced as a worthy man. "The lines of his picture are few, but they are strong and a man of fine quality is revealed...Then all the rest of the story evidences the graciousness of his temper and the greatness of his heart...In short, Boaz stands out as a man of the finest fiber, simple, and strongly living in a degenerate age." (Morgan, p. 113)

Today we will continue to look at Ruth's first day gleaning in the field of Boaz. **First, read through Chapter 2 again** and mark or note any new observations.

The focus of today's study is Chapter 2:14-18. In spite of the fact that Ruth does not speak in this passage, we will discover that her presence in the scene speaks volumes. Look at verse 14. What phrase in verse 14 tells you that we have transitioned to a new scene? When does this scene take place and where do we find Ruth?

Besides satisfying hunger, meals in the ancient Near East had symbolic and social significance as well. Providing a shared meal was an expression of hospitality and a way to celebrate special occasions. Treaties were finalized over a meal and other social, cultural and religious realities were observed. A meal could also just be an occasion to have a good time. (Block, p. 666) What is the purpose of the meal described in today's passage?

Who is present at this meal? What does the presence of Boaz at the meal tell you about him?

Boaz calls Ruth over. What does he invite her to do?

His invitation tells us that Ruth has not been invited over to just join a bagged lunch. Rather, Ruth is encouraged to sit with them and share the meal that had been prepared

for the workers. What is the significance of Ruth sitting beside the reapers and being included in their meal?

Considering Ruth's previous reactions to finding favor with Boaz, I imagine her mind was blown by this new development. Maybe no words of Ruth are recorded in this scene because she was indeed rendered speechless by her astonishment at being elevated in status equal to that of an employed field worker. What refreshments are offered to Ruth?

Let's go over a couple of the translations of the Hebrew words in this verse. First, the Hebrew word translated here as "wine" and in the NIV as "vinegar" is probably "best understood as a sour sauce or condiment used to moisten and spice up dry bread." (Block p. 667). Your Bible's footnotes or text notes may also give an explanation.

Second, our text says that Boaz "passed" Ruth some roasted grain. The word "passed" is based on the root of the word, *sabat*, and means "to grasp with the hand" and has come to mean "to give with the hand." We learn that Boaz himself served Ruth some roasted grain. Looking back at verse 13, what reversal motif do you see here?

What else are we told about the roasted grain that Boaz served Ruth?

We are gaining a fuller picture of the generosity of Boaz. We can add some adjectives to his generosity, such as impartial, astonishing, humble, abundant. Boaz's above-and-beyond kindness to Ruth is a true picture of *hesed*. God has chosen this man to be part of His providential plan to provide for our two widows. What does this tell us about God's grace and care? Look up Ephesians 3:20-21 to help with your answer.

When was the last time you received more than you expected or asked for? What was your heart reaction? How did you respond?

What are some other ways you might have experienced God's abundance?

Ruth had eaten until she was satisfied and now, she is ready to go back to work. Read verses 15 and 16. What transitional word is used at the beginning of this verse? Do you think Ruth heard the instructions?

It makes the most sense if she heard the instructions; otherwise, she would not know the permissions he gave and thus would not benefit from them while she was gleaning. Before we look at Boaz's instructions, go back and look at the request Ruth made in verse 7. Review the laws for gleaning in Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19. How did Ruth's original request exceed the law? Why do you think she made this request?

Now list the four instructions that Boaz gave to his workers.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

How do his instructions exceed the requirements of the law and Ruth's request?

How often do you go beyond the minimum requirement or exceed the common practices of giving? Could you do more?

The permission Boaz gives is extraordinary. He goes beyond the letter of the law. Ruth has not been limited to the edges of the field. She is again allowed to be in the same position as the employed field hands, extending her elevated status beyond the meal. In fact, they are instructed to serve her by pulling out some of the sheaves and leaving them for her making it easier for her to glean. She won't even have to cut or pull out the stalks herself.

Each instruction in verses 15 and 16 regarding Ruth's permission to glean is followed by an instruction on how to treat her. What are they?

1)

2)

The first word *kalam* means "to be humiliated, ashamed, disgraced." The second word, *ga`ar* means "to insult, rebuke." Why do you think Boaz included these instructions among the others?

Look back at the charge that Boaz gave his young men in verse 9. What kind of protection was he giving her? What additional protection was he providing her in verses 15 and 16?

Now go back through verses 14-16 and circle the word "and." How many times does it occur in these 3 verses?

Each occurrence indicates an additional or extra favor shown to Ruth, favor that goes beyond what was common or required by the laws. Briefly record each one.

Exceeding, abundant grace was given to Ruth. She was accepted and shown favor in spite of her “alien” status. Touched by Ruth’s and Naomi’s destitute situation and wanting to help, Boaz provided for their present and future needs by ensuring that they would have plenty of food to eat. Rather than using his position in society for personal gain, Boaz is using his influence and authority to avert any threats to Ruth’s physical and mental well-being. The image of Boaz as a good, generous and compassionate man is firmly established.

Read verses 17 and 18, our final verses for today. What are the results of Boaz’s astounding and abundant grace?

Use your own Bible as a resource to find the modern-day equivalent of an *ephah*. Check the footnotes, text commentary or sometimes the cross reference section. What did you discover?

Now I do not have any farming background so I have to trust my Bible’s study notes claiming that an *ephah* was a large amount to have gleaned in one day’s work. Ruth may have left Naomi that morning hungry and empty handed but she was returning to Naomi full, having made a good start in restoring their food supply. What reversal motif do you see?

Thanks to Boaz, Ruth has begun to reap her “full reward.” If we have sought refuge in the Lord and are trusting in His *hesed*, we can be sure that we will return home protected and provided for, even in the midst of trying circumstances, although it may not always look the way we would like. Just as God’s providence is working toward full restoration for Ruth and Naomi, it is working for us as well. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 NIV). He will return us to our eternal home, fully accepted and fully restored.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Praise the Lord for His abundant provision and protection over you. Ask Him to show you someone that you can extend kindness and generosity to. Thank Him for the people in your life who have shown kindness and generosity to you.

Day 4 God's Faithful Provision

In Chapter 2 of the book of Ruth, we witness a touching display of extraordinary *hesed* by both Ruth and Boaz, as these ordinary people went about their ordinary lives. God's providence was displayed in a disruptive season of famine, but it was also at work in the daily workplace. God often works out His plan for our lives as we faithfully perform our daily routines and accomplish whatever work He has set before us for the day.

When we came to the end of the homework yesterday, Ruth had just finished what must have been a very long day. According to scholars, she possibly carried home 30-40 pounds of grain. Today we will look at the rest of Chapter 2 and see what Naomi thought of Ruth's haul and the events of her day. **Read through all of Chapter 2** one last time.

Today's passage will be Chapter 2:19-23. In verse 19, Naomi begins to question Ruth, but before Ruth has a chance to answer, Naomi breaks out in a blessing. What do you think she is feeling at that moment?

Who is she blessing and why?

It was clear to Naomi before Ruth answered, that the Lord had intervened, providing the favor Ruth needed to supply them with food. How did she know this? She knew because she "saw what she had gleaned...what food she had left over (verse 18)". She "sees" God's provision. She "sees" His blessing.

God was blessing and providing for Ruth and Naomi throughout their story even if it didn't "look" like it. Naomi may have reacted to her suffering and loss with bitter complaints about God, but her faith was not dead, just shaken. God was not punitive, withholding His provision until she got her faith right. "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14) God provided abundant blessings and Naomi's hope grew.

It's easy to have hope when we can see God's faithfulness. But what about those times or occasions when we don't "see" blessings or provision? Look up Hebrews 11:1-3. What does it say about faith?

Is there an area in your life that requires a strong dose of faith? What have you done or could you do to keep trusting in the Lord when you can't see Him at work?

See Mark 9:24 and Matthew 7:7. What can you do if you lack faith or have weak faith?

Note in Matthew 7:7 that this is not a passive infusing of faith. Yes, it begins with asking but it is followed by an active seeking. It is in the midst of the pursuit that God steps in and helps faith grow. Don't give up, keep earnestly knocking until it is found. "He rewards those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)".

I can imagine that Naomi was chomping at the bit to know every detail of Ruth's day. Luckily Ruth quickly satisfies her curiosity. How does she answer Naomi's inquiries in verse 19?

Knowing what we know, we might have expected a little more fanfare when Ruth's benefactor is identified, except that Ruth is not yet aware of their family connection. Read verse 20. Ruth's revelation moves Naomi to declare another blessing, this one more effusive than the first. Her blessing is followed by new information about Boaz. Let's look at this second statement first, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers." We learned that Boaz was a relative of Naomi's husband back in verse 1. Ruth however is hearing this for the first time. What else is she told about Boaz?

To understand who a redeemer was, we need to look at the Israelite laws of redemption. According to the law, the closest male blood relative, the "kinsman-redeemer" or *go'el*, was obligated to preserve the family name and property of relatives in distress. Look up the following verses and note the duties of the *go'el* in securing redemption for his unfortunate relatives.

Leviticus 25:25

Leviticus 25:47-49

Deuteronomy 25:5-6

Which of these duties do you think Naomi had in mind when she recognized Boaz as one of their redeemers?

This isn't a big leap if you think back to Chapter 1. Naomi has had marriage in mind for her daughter-in-law from the very beginning. And now God has provided hope. I love the way one commentator put it, "When Naomi learns that Ruth met up with Boaz, the sun rises again in her life." (Block p. 676) As a kinsman redeemer, Boaz *could* marry Ruth, but why might Naomi believe that Boaz *would* marry Ruth?

Has God provided something in your life recently that has brought you hope regarding a difficult situation? Have you praised Him for the hope?

Naomi does the equivalent of raising her hands and shouting, "Hallelujah!" Look at Naomi's second blessing in verse 20. Compare this blessing to the first one in verse 19. How are they the same and how are they different?

Similar:

Different:

God is not explicitly acknowledged in the first blessing, but Naomi has a lot to say about Him in the second one. She prays blessing on Boaz, but the focus of her prayer is her praise of the Lord. Before we look at it in detail, I need to acknowledge that there can be some ambiguity regarding the interpretation of the last half of the blessing, specifically, "whose kindness" is being praised. Is Naomi commending Boaz to the Lord for his kindness or is it the Lord's kindness she is praising?

Trying to explain the ambiguity is complicated enough so I am going to spare you all of the structural and grammatical reasons in the Hebrew language that it should be one way or the other (of which there are alarmingly many and they are very difficult to understand). Instead, we are going to look at the structure and context of the text. The translation of the book of Ruth provided in your workbook is the English Standard Version (ESV). The ESV is one of the more formal equivalence translations, which simply means it tries to do a word for word translation maintaining the original structure as much as possible. If you're curious, look at this blessing in the NIV translation and you will see quite a difference.

In the ESV, the clause, “whose kindness has not forsaken,” is directly adjacent to “the Lord” not to “he” which refers to Boaz. Boaz (“he”) is a passive subject; he is not the active player in giving the blessing, the Lord is. Therefore, the Lord could be seen as the main subject of the sentence making the case that the praise was meant for Him.

Now let’s consider the context. What has prompted this second outpouring of blessing and praise?

How would Naomi account for the wonder of Ruth meeting Boaz, who just happens to be their kinsman-redeemer? How does this support the argument that Naomi’s exclamation of praise in her blessing was meant for the Lord and not Boaz?

Naomi recognizes that, ultimately, it is the Lord who has provided and protected through his providential placement of Ruth in the field of Boaz, therefore, her praise would reflect her acknowledgement of that truth, and therefore it was meant for the Lord. Most scholars seemed to agree with this interpretation and we will use it as well as we look at each part of the blessing in more detail.

Here is Naomi’s blessing for easy reference as we break it down: **“May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!”**

- 1. “the Lord”:** Naomi is using God’s covenant name, Yahweh, referring to the covenant relationship He has with his people and acknowledging His covenant kindness.
- 2. “whose kindness”:** By now you should know the Hebrew word that is used here for kindness. What is it? Can you define it? (To help you, think of all of the ways it was displayed by Ruth and Boaz in this chapter.)

If you still aren’t sure of the meaning, look back at page 38 to review.

- 3. “has not forsaken”:** Choose 2 of the following 5 verses and write down what you learn about God.

Deuteronomy 4:31

Deuteronomy 31:8

Psalms 94:14

Isaiah 41:17

Matthew 28:20

Compare Naomi's present attitude about God, reflected in this statement, with her attitude back in Chapter 1. How has it changed?

What has prompted Naomi's change in attitude and her resulting declaration that God has not abandoned His *hesed*?

Is there something in your life that you are waiting for God to provide or some prayer that he hasn't answered that is holding you back from being thankful or declaring that the Lord has been faithful to you? Are there any scriptures or lessons from this week's homework that might be helpful to you?

4. "the living or the dead": This phrase is not as strange as it at first may seem. Using the context of a few of the surrounding verses, who are the living?

And who are the dead? You might need to also look back at Deuteronomy 25:5-6 to help you answer this one.

This phrase, "the living and the dead," makes sense now, doesn't it? God had provided a redeemer, one who under Levirate marriage laws could marry Ruth and restore the security they had lost with the deaths of their husbands. If a union between Ruth and Boaz produced a son, the son would carry on the rights and entitlements of her dead husband, preserving his property and name. God has given Naomi hope for the present and for the future.

We've looked at the parts of the blessing, now let's put it back together. Write out Naomi's blessing in your own words.

Read the rest of the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi in verses 21 and 22. What does Ruth tell Naomi about Boaz's instructions?

If you look back at his instructions, you'll find that Boaz never actually said that Ruth should glean in his fields "until they have finished all my harvest." Do you think Ruth's assumption is a reasonable or logical interpretation of his instructions? Explain.

In verse 22, Naomi advises Ruth to accept Boaz's offer. Why?

How does Naomi modify the instruction that Ruth disclosed to her?

Naomi's concern for Ruth's safety confirms the danger for young women who went out to glean in the fields. Besides a healthy supply of grain and concern for Ruth's welfare, why else might Naomi have thought it a good idea for Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz, keeping close to his young women for the duration of the harvest?

Verse 23 wraps up the chapter. We see that Ruth followed Naomi's instructions and kept close to the young women of Boaz. How long did she glean?

Ruth would have been in Boaz's fields for 6-7 weeks. Where did she live during this time?

Ruth has fulfilled her commitment to her mother-in-law made back in Chapter 1:16-17. "For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge..."

Chapter 2 began with Naomi and Ruth in desperate need of food in order to survive. Unable to provide for themselves, they had to depend on the kindness of others. Ruth finds favor from Boaz who graciously helps supply her with grain, giving them temporary rest from their struggles. We discover at the end of the chapter that he may be able to provide more permanent security as well. Having recognized God's covenant faithfulness in His abundant provision through Boaz, Naomi's bitterness subsides. She praises God and acknowledges that He has not forsaken His kindness to her. The glimmer of hope that was born when she heard that there was food in Judah grew when Ruth was able to provide food for them by gleaning in the fields, and further matured when she realized that God had provided a redeemer.

God's *hesed* is faithful. He doesn't forget those He loves. He won't forsake those who have, by faith, sought refuge under His wings. Whether an Israelite in covenant relationship with God, a Moabite widow who vowed that Yahweh would be her God, or us, when we put our faith in Jesus, God will provide whatever we need, material or spiritual, out of His endless supply of *hesed*. "And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Think about all the ways God provides for you and thank Him for His faithfulness.

Day 5 Personal Application

Read Chapter 2:1-23 one last time and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

Application questions:

What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

Pray:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

Providence in Provision

Session 4 Notes

Video link available at: myabc.church/women



Week Four

Michelle

Redemption

Promised & Purchased

Day 1 The Risky Plan

This week we are going to study the largest section of text, but we'll break it up into smaller chunks so it's not overwhelming. It's also the most dramatic portion of the book and contains the climax to the story. **Read Chapter 3:1-4:12.** Note any questions or thoughts you may have.

Today we are going to focus on the first 5 verses. At this point in our story, some time has passed. Look back at Chapter 2:23. How long has Ruth been gleaning? (Refer to Chapter 1:22 to refresh your memory on when they arrived in Bethlehem & Ruth first went to glean.)

While we don't know the exact number of days, we can estimate that a couple of months have passed for the harvesting season to be completed. Because of Boaz's generosity and kindness, our women have secured enough food to survive and now have a place to live. But there is a longer-term problem for them. Look at verse 1. What does Naomi want to secure for Ruth? Why?

What does Naomi mean when she says, "seek rest"?

This concern has been on Naomi's mind since the beginning, when they were in Moab. (Remember Chapter 1:9-13?) Here, the Hebrew word for "rest" is *manowach*, and it means a settled spot or home, a place of rest. Naomi wants Ruth to have the security and tranquility of a home with a loving husband. She wants Ruth's circumstances "to be well" with her.

So Naomi decides to take it upon herself to solve the problem. Can you relate? Do you remember a time when your parents worried about your future and tried to help? If you are a mom, have you ever been worried about your child's future and tried to solve the problem yourself? Did it "go well" with you or your child?

In verse 2, Naomi reminds Ruth of two facts about their unique situation. List the 2 facts from the first half of verse 2 and why you think Naomi emphasizes those facts now. (Look back at chapter 2 for help as you are formulating your answers.)

1)

2)

As Naomi is formulating her plan, she tells Ruth where Boaz will be that night and what he will be doing.

Where will Boaz be?

What will Boaz be doing?

After the barley and wheat crops have been reaped from the fields, the men would take the sheaves of grain to the threshing floor for the final steps of the harvesting process. The threshing floor was a smooth flat surface where the men would place the sheaves of grain they reaped for threshing. Threshing grain is a process of loosening the edible part of grain from the chaff to which it is attached. When threshing, they often used animals to crush the sheaves, or if they didn't have animals they would beat the sheaves with sticks to separate the grain. Winnowing is the final step after the grain was separated. When winnowing, they would toss everything in the air so the wind could blow the lighter chaff away, leaving only the good, edible grain that would fall to the ground to be collected. This process is time-consuming. Because of the volume of grain to process, it would usually take a group of men to complete.

Read verses 3-4. What is Naomi's plan?

Why do you think she tells Ruth to wait until Boaz has finished eating and drinking to make herself known? (Glance at verse 7 to aide in your understanding.)

Verse 4 tells us that Boaz (and most likely the men who were working with him) slept on the threshing floor during harvest. Why do you think they did that? Read 1 Samuel 23:1 for an example of one possible reason.

Do you see any potential risks with Naomi's plan?

Read Hosea 9:1. What sinful activity sometimes happened on threshing floors?

At this point, you are probably wondering why Naomi would devise a plan that would potentially put Ruth and her reputation in danger. While we can't know for sure since our text doesn't tell us, we can look for clues. One way we can gain insight into a person's feelings and motivations is by looking at their recorded words and actions. Take two different colored highlighters or pens and mark all of Naomi's dialogue with one color and all of Ruth's dialogue with the other color throughout the book.

Now, reflecting on their dialogue up to this point in the story, what is their relationship like? How does Naomi feel about Ruth? How does Ruth feel about Naomi?

Take a third colored highlighter or pen and mark all of Boaz's dialogue in the book. Remember that Ruth reported back to Naomi everything that Boaz did and said when they were in the fields (2:18-23).

Reflecting on Boaz's words and actions to this point in the story, what does Naomi know about Boaz, his character, and his treatment of Ruth? How do you think this knowledge plays into Naomi's plan and her hoped-for outcome?

Read Ruth's response to Naomi's plan in verse 5. What do her words tell you about her feelings toward Naomi and her thoughts about Naomi's plan?

Given Ruth's prior experience with Boaz and her first-hand knowledge of his character, how do you think she expects him to react?

It's interesting that the writer of Ruth doesn't comment on the potential dangers of Naomi's plan. Rather, it seems he wants us to focus on the character traits of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, and allow their character traits to frame our thoughts about their actions in these circumstances. For now, let's reserve judgment until we've looked at the rest of the story. Tomorrow we'll look at Naomi's plan being put into action and see what happens when our heroine goes to the threshing floor.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Spend a few minutes praying. Ask God to show you any areas where your desires for circumstances to “be well” with yourself or your child cause you to take matters into your own hands. Ask the Lord to help you trust Him in all circumstances as you surrender them into His hands.

For Deeper Study: The Threshing Floor

Threshing floors appear throughout the Bible, often representing God's blessing and provision or His judgment. Look up these scriptures and write what you learn about threshing floors. If you're curious, feel free to do your own word search on threshing floors and explore additional scriptures to add to your understanding about this setting.

Blessing/Provision

Deuteronomy 16:13-15

Joel 2:23-27

Judgment

Hosea 13:2-3

Matthew 3:11-12

A threshing floor also plays heavily into the city of Jerusalem and worship of God. Read these two passages and write what you discover.

1 Chronicles 21-22

2 Chronicles 3:1

Given what you've learned, what do you think is the significance of the threshing floor in Ruth?

Day 2 Expectant Request

Read Chapter 3:1 - 4:12 again and mark all of the instances of the words “redeem” and “redeemer” with a colored pencil. Paying attention to repeated words gives us a clue to the emphasis of a section. How many times are these words used in this section?

Today we are focusing on verses 3:6-18, where Ruth goes to the threshing floor to carry out Naomi’s plan. Compare verses 6-7 with verses 3-4 from yesterday. Did Ruth follow Naomi’s instructions exactly like she told her?

Verse 7 states Boaz’s attitude after a hard day of work and then tells us he lies down at the end of a heap of grain. How is he feeling? Why do you think he feels that way?

Now it’s time for Ruth to enter the scene. Once Boaz is asleep, Ruth quietly goes to him, uncovers his feet and lies down. Now she must wait. What do you think is going through her mind?

It seems odd that she uncovered Boaz’s feet. Why do you think she did that?

I wonder if she uncovered his feet in order for the cool air to wake him up? We don’t know for sure, but at midnight, something startled Boaz and woke him up, where he discovered a woman lying at his feet! In his confusion he asked, “Who are you?” Verse 9 carries Ruth’s answer in one short, yet powerful sentence. In fact, this sentence

contains the only words she spoke to Boaz in this entire encounter. Though her words are few, they are bold! Let's take a look.

How does Ruth identify herself?

How does Ruth identify Boaz?

What is Ruth's request?

In her request, Ruth mentioned the word, "wings". We've seen that word before in our story back in chapter 2:12. Let's refresh our memory. Who was speaking then? Who did the wings refer to and what did they provide?

Here Ruth is repeating Boaz's earlier words. But this time, she is requesting that Boaz provide the refuge. My Bible has a cross reference for the phrase, "spread your wings" that references Ezekiel 16:8. A cross reference is a note placed alongside the biblical text which directs the reader to another place in the Bible where she can find the same thing or something similar. Cross references are identified with a tiny letter by the word.

Read Ezekiel 16:8. How does this text relate to "spread your wings" in our text?

My Bible has an additional footnote saying that the Hebrew word used in 3:9 for "wings" can also mean "corners of a garment." Hmmmm, interesting!

In common Hebrew usage "to spread one's wings over someone" was a euphemistic idiom for marriage. The gesture of a man covering a woman with his garment was a symbolic act, which according to Near Eastern custom signified "the establishment of a new relationship and the symbolic declaration of the husband to provide for the sustenance of the future wife." (Block, p. 691)

Perhaps this is why she uncovered his feet - as a symbol of her desire for Boaz to cover her with his garment and claim her as his wife. We don't know for sure, but we do know that Ruth came to Boaz boldly and expectantly. She had found favor from him

before (2:10, 2:13), so she seemed confident that she'd find favor again. Now we will see if Boaz's reaction lives up to her hopes.

In verses 10-13, Boaz responds to Ruth. The first sentence out of his mouth sets the tone for the rest of his answer. What does he say and what is the tone?

Rather than turn Ruth away or take advantage of her, Boaz blesses her and calls her "daughter." To our ears, that may sound a little creepy. But not so in their culture. Here Boaz is using a term of affection, recognizing their age difference and his desire to protect her. Ruth must feel tremendous relief. Let's break down Boaz's entire response.

Verse 10 contains the blessing and words of praise for Ruth. Write down what you learn. Based on what you have learned so far, what do you think he's referring to when he says, "her kindness is greater than the first?"

Verse 11 contains a reassurance, a promise, and praise of Ruth. What are they?

Reassurance:

Promise:

Praise of Ruth:

This phrase, "worthy woman," is used only two other times in the Bible, both in Proverbs. Look up each one below and write what you discover.

Proverbs 12:4

Proverbs 31:10

Fun fact: Unlike our Bible, in the Hebrew Bible the book of Ruth comes right after the book of Proverbs. It is arranged that way to showcase the idea that Ruth best exemplifies the Proverbs 31 woman.

Wow! That's high praise for Ruth. Who else is called "worthy" in our story (2:1)?

The fact that Ruth is called "worthy" shows that even though she is a Moabite, she has earned a good reputation in the community, just like Boaz. But, she still needs an answer to her request. There are three issues Boaz must address as he answers Ruth in verses 12-13. Let's see what the text has to say about these issues by answering these questions.

- 1) Is he a redeemer?
- 2) Is he willing?
- 3) Is he able?

Happily the answers to the first two are yes and yes! But, along with this happy news, Boaz reveals a complication. What is it?

Poor Ruth! How do you think she feels after hearing this revelation?

Once again, Boaz reassures her that he will take care of the situation and take care of her. As much as Boaz wants to redeem her, he willingly defers to the redeemer who is a closer relative than he is. Read Leviticus 25:25. What does this tell you about Boaz's regard for God and his laws?

Their exchange ends the next morning with Boaz again providing his protection and provision to Ruth. In verse 14, what is he protecting?

In verse 15, what does he give her?

Ruth returns to the city and reports how she fared to Naomi. I wonder if Naomi got much sleep that night as she anxiously awaited Ruth's return? After she listened to Ruth's recap of the previous night, she tells her to wait. Naomi recognizes that Ruth's future is now in the hands of another. Boaz is the one being called to action this time instead of Ruth. And Naomi expresses great confidence in him, "for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Spend a few minutes praying. Thank God for His Word and ask Him to help you have a high regard for it like Boaz had. Praise Him that through Jesus's grace, we are made worthy.

Day 3 Will Not Rest

Read Chapter 3:1 - 4:12 again and mark any additional insights or questions you have.

Today we are focusing on chapter 4:1-10. Here we find our hero, Boaz, on a mission to settle the matter of redeeming Ruth. Read the first sentence of 4:1. Where does Boaz go and what does he do?

This seems odd to us, that a man on a mission would go to a gate and ... sit. Shouldn't he be actively doing *something*? Well actually, he was. In Bible times, city gates were places of central activity, where large numbers of people gathered and passed through on their way in and out of the city. So if someone wanted to find a specific person, the city gate was the best place to go.

But city gates were also the center of business transactions and court cases. Read Joshua 20:1-6 and Deuteronomy 21:18-20. Who were the men responsible for conducting these transactions and cases at city gates?

Now consider what we just learned and then read Ruth 4:1-2. Why did Boaz go to the city gate and sit?

OK, it's making a little more sense. But just because Boaz went to the gate, he wasn't guaranteed that the "nearer" redeemer would pass by. Boaz might have to wait all day, or several days, in order to speak to him. In the second half of verse 1, we find a word meant to draw our attention. It signifies that something important will follow. What is that word and what is it drawing our attention to?

Boaz must be thrilled! A new person is introduced and this person is important to our story. We don't know his name, but Boaz calls him, "friend," so we can assume they have a good relationship, as well as being relatives.

But before we move on, I want to back up a minute and think about the word, "Behold." It appears two previous times in our story: in 2:4 when Boaz is introduced in the barley fields, and again in 3:8 when Ruth appears at Boaz's feet on the threshing floor. Obviously the writer is calling attention to these three scenes. Why? What is their importance to the overall narrative of Ruth?

Taken together, what can we learn from these three instances? Are they related somehow? Do you see God at work anywhere in these three situations? Give these questions some thought and prepare to discuss them with your small group.

So Boaz gathers 10 elders to be witnesses at his meeting with the redeemer and lays out the situation. What follows contains all the drama of a TV courtroom case. Read Boaz's dialogue in verses 3-4. Do you notice an important detail missing?

I'm reading a lot about land redemption, but what about Ruth? Has she been forgotten? Let's find out. The redeemer immediately answers Boaz, saying he will redeem Naomi's land. Oh no! What does that mean for Boaz & Ruth? It feels like their hope is being crushed before it even gets started.

Let's continue reading verses 5-6. Whew! Boaz hasn't forgotten Ruth. But it seems there may be two different Israelite laws at work here in this discussion. Let's clarify

what is going on. One Israelite law involves the preservation of a genealogical line through the Levirate Law, which we talked about in Weeks 2 and 3. (This law is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-6). The other Israelite law concerns the redemption of property. Read Leviticus 25:23-25. I love the way this law is framed. Let's break it down.

Who does all land belong to at all times?

What adjectives describe the people who temporarily possess the land?

This is a good reminder to us. The land and property we "own" doesn't really belong to us. Ultimately it belongs to God. We are simply strangers and sojourners who are granted the privilege of temporarily living on God's land and caring for it. How does this knowledge change your attitude regarding your home? Does it change how you will maintain it?

Back to Leviticus 25:23-25. If a brother becomes poor and must sell part of his property, who redeems it?

The Redemption of Property Law is what the redeemer initially responded to. But then Boaz adds a complication - the land comes with a person, Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead. If the redeemer wants the land, he must also take responsibility to marry Ruth in order to perpetuate the name of the dead (Mahlon & the line of Elimelech) in his inheritance, a reference to Deuteronomy 25:5-6.

In verse 6, the redeemer declines the right of redemption. What is his reason?

The redeemer's statement is short, just two sentences. But even though he is a man of few words, we can get a feel for his attitude and character. Circle the words "my" and "myself" in his statement. What does this reveal about him, at least in this situation?

The last section of our text today, verses 7-10, contains the official transaction of the exchange between the redeemer and Boaz. Read those verses.

I love how the author explains the custom concerning redeeming and exchanging to the original audience in verse 7. This tells us that by the time that the book of Ruth was written (sometime after the events), the custom had fallen out of practice. So it must have sounded odd to the original audience, just like it sounds odd to us! Where did this custom come from? Read Deuteronomy 25:5-6 again, but this time add verses 7-10. Write what you learn.

This transaction was a symbolic act declaring that the redeemer was giving his right of redemption to Boaz. It was witnessed by the 10 elders as well as “all the people” who were watching at the city gate, so it was official and binding. Boaz was very clear about the details of the exchange when he spoke in verses 9-10. He confirmed that he was redeeming not only all of Elimelech’s land, but also Ruth, the Moabite widow. Thus Boaz fulfilled both Israelite laws discussed earlier.

Verse 10 demonstrates the selflessness of Boaz. Unlike the redeemer who was only concerned with his own inheritance and family line, Boaz is concerned about perpetuating Elimelech’s family line. By marrying Ruth, Boaz is “perpetuating the name of the dead in his inheritance.” Why? Two reasons are stated at the end of verse 10. Write each reason and what you think he means below.

Boaz actions will ensure that Elimelech’s family name will not be cut off from:

1)

2)

Elimelech’s name will continue to be a part of the Israelite people and their land. Boaz is an honorable man who does the honorable thing. Tomorrow we will see the reaction of all of the witnesses who were present at the city gate.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Spend a few minutes praying. Praise the Lord that He is a God who is concerned about the well-being of His people, especially the poor and downtrodden. Thank Him for the home/land that He has given you to take care of, and ask Him to show you how He wants you to use it.

Day 4 Celebration!

Read Chapter 3:1 - 4:12 again and mark any final insights or questions you have.

Our text today will take us back to the final scene at the city gate. The exchange is over. Boaz has redeemed Elimelech's land and gained a future bride, but the witnesses haven't dispersed yet. Now is the time for a community celebration! Read 4:11-12.

Here we get to see the reaction of the 10 elders and all of the witnesses to the preceding events. What do they do after witnessing Boaz's noble actions? They BLESS the worthy couple! This is a joyous occasion, and the blessing is full of hope!

This blessing has three parts and each part is designated by the word "may". Write out the blessing.

1) May

2) May

3) May

Let's look at each blessing, one at a time. The first blessing is focused on Boaz's bride, Ruth. In this blessing, the people call upon the Lord to bless Ruth like Rachel and Leah. Who are Rachel and Leah? Let's go to scripture to find out. Read Genesis 29:1-30:24 and also Genesis 35:16-19. Write down any details you want to remember.

Now that we have read their story, let's go back to our text in verse 11. The first blessing asks God to bless Ruth like Rachel and Leah, "who together build up the house of Israel." What do you think is the intent of this blessing?

The second blessing is for Boaz, and it is concerned with his character and his reputation. This blessing contains two location names, Ephrathah and Bethlehem. (Turn to Genesis 35:19 for a reminder on the names.)

Why do you think the blessing contains the ancient name of the city as well as the current name?

I don't know for sure. But my guess is that the name, Ephrathah, is a reminder of their long-standing heritage of the land. It's a call to reflect on the history of their family line, so that Boaz will continue to act in a manner worthy of their heritage with the Lord in the land that He gave them.

Look up the word "renowned" in the dictionary and write its definition.

Renowned:

Not only is Boaz to act worthily, but the people also express their desire for Boaz to be renowned throughout their city both now and in the future. Isn't it amazing that God continues to faithfully honor that request today? Boaz becomes part of the Savior's lineage, and because of the Bible, Boaz's renown has spread beyond the city of Bethlehem to the whole world, and it will continue spreading until Jesus returns.

The third and final blessing is for Boaz and Ruth's house, which would include the children they will have together and all future generations. How do we know this? It's because of the reference to the house of Perez in verse 12.

Perez is the ancestor to Boaz's (and Elimelech's) clan in Bethlehem. We will read more about the house of Perez next week. But for our purposes this week, note that the comparison of Boaz's house to Perez's house is tapping into the notion of descendants. This is a blessing for future offspring, that will preserve the family line.

Look up these verses. Note what you learn about the house of Perez and it's descendants:

1 Chronicles 2:5

Numbers 26:21

1 Chronicles 27:2-3

Nehemiah 11:6

It's interesting to consider that Boaz's unselfish act of redemption that preserved Elimelech's name and family line, was the very act that ensured Boaz's own name and family line would be preserved. Whatever happened to the other redeemer's family line? We don't know. We don't even know his name. He has been lost to history.

Before we end today's work, let's look one last time at the blessing. In the minds of the elders and witnesses, the source of blessing is evident. Look at the beginning and ending of their blessing over Boaz and Ruth in verses 11-12. Who is the source?

The elders and witnesses begin their blessing by calling upon the Lord to bless Ruth with offspring, and they end their blessing by recognizing that it is the Lord alone who is the source for all offspring. This begs a response of gratitude toward the Lord, the giver of life and blessings.

As you think about your own life, what are the blessings the Lord has given you? Have you taken the time to express your gratitude to Him? Use this space to record your thoughts.

I love the community aspect featured here in this part of our story. These people rallied around Boaz and Ruth. They accepted Ruth, who was a Moabite, into their community and lavished blessings and well-wishes upon her. This is a good example for us today. In your small groups, spend time discussing the following questions:

Is there anyone in your community or neighborhood in need of support and friendship?

How can we as a church body be welcoming to newcomers and outsiders?

How can we find ways to celebrate together, recognizing the good fortune of others and expressing our genuine gratitude to God for His blessings?

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Spend some time thanking God for the gifts of your family and your community. Ask Him to show you how you can be a blessing to others and celebrate their good fortune.

Day 5 Personal Application

Read Chapter 3:1 - 4:12 one last time and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

Application questions:

What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

Pray:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

Worthy

Session 5 Notes

Video link available at: myabc.church/women



Week Five

Ashlee

Restored

Life, Hope, & Rest

Day 1 Protected by our Great Redeemer

For this last week of study, we're going to look at the last 10 verses of Ruth. **Read Ruth 4:13-22.** As you read, highlight every gift you see bestowed on Ruth and Naomi.

For today, we're going to narrow our focus to verse 13. It seems simple enough, but there's a lot implied in these two short sentences.

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD, gave her conception, and she bore a son.

How is Ruth identified here? What "title" seems to be missing from her name for the first time?

Why do you think that is?

We see here that Boaz, being a worthy man, fulfills his promise to Ruth and redeems her by marrying her, fulfilling the law of Levirate marriage.

But there is another example in scripture of a Levirate marriage where things didn't quite work out so well for the widow involved. Before we read her story, let's establish the background.

Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac. Isaac married Rebekah and they had twins, Esau and Jacob. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, so the family line followed Jacob. Jacob (who's name was changed to Israel) was tricked into marrying Leah, so he later married her sister, Rachel, as well, since he had set his sights on her from the beginning. Oh, and the wives' servants played a part in that story, too...don't get me started. Leah gave birth to 7 children, one of which was Judah.

The example of our unfortunate widow is found in the story of Judah, the great grandson of Abraham and Sarah. Read Genesis 38:6-11.

We've discussed the practice of Levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5) in the Israelite community throughout this study. Let's dig into this practice a little more because,

frankly, there are just some really weird things in here and it'd be a shame to miss them.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 reads:

v5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' 8Then the elders of the city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her,' 9then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.'

If you have a study bible, look up those verses in Deuteronomy and see if there is a notation regarding 25:5-10.

The Levirate Law states that if the wife of a dead brother was childless, it became the responsibility of the living brother to marry his brother's widow in order to produce a child. We've seen that one reason for this was so the family land would be protected within the family. However, verse 6 here tells us that this practice of Levirate marriage was used so *"that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."*

"The desire to continue the name was a desire to continue the family line. The desire to continue the family line was rooted in the promise made to Abraham that he would have many descendants (Genesis 17:6-8), and this promise was rooted in the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). At the heart of both of these promises was the hope of a coming Redeemer. So, the responsibility of a brother to produce a child with a deceased brother's wife was an exercise of faith in the promise of God that a Redeemer would one day come, perhaps from the very family line." (Gospel Transformation Study Bible, p. 270)

Can you see how Judah was practicing Levirate marriage with Tamar, the wife of his oldest son, by giving her to Onan after Er died? Give a brief recap of how things were going for Judah's first two sons.

Knowing what you now know about the reasons behind Levirate marriage, why were Onan's actions seen as evil by the Lord?

What must Tamar have been feeling at this point? How had she been wronged? What clues do you get about the culture in regards to women from this story?

We see in Genesis 38:11 that Judah sent Tamar back to live with her family until his youngest son was old enough to marry her. Read Genesis 38:12-30 for the rest of the story. Why do you think Judah didn't honor his promise to Tamar to give her his youngest son, Shelah?

What did Tamar do to ensure an heir? Why?

What does her action say about the kind of man she thought Judah to be?

We can deduce from this story that women were not exactly seen as equals in ancient society. Levirate marriage was actually put in place as a way to protect them. Men who did not honor the practice could be viewed as dishonorable. As it turns out, being spit at by your brother's widow and having the elders declare that "the name of your house shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal pulled off,'" were not characteristics of a worthy man.

Did you catch the names of Tamar's twins? Why was her firstborn significant (hint: see Ruth 4:12)?

Putting aside whether or not you think Tamar's actions were justified or right, how did God redeem Tamar's situation when the men in her life failed her? What does this tell you about God's nature or character? What does this tell you about the nature of humans?

Go to Ruth 4:18-22 in your homework packet. Write in where Tamar's name fits in the genealogy. Genealogies are more than just a boring list of names, aren't they?

The book of Ruth is a beautiful reminder of God's predictable faithfulness to redeem all things. Boaz comes from the very line of Judah by way of Tamar, a woman whom Judah tried to abandon and forget. While Judah and his sons were disobedient and sinful, we see Boaz, generations later, acting in obedience and righteousness, selflessly redeeming Ruth and Naomi's line by way of Ruth. Boaz fulfilled the role of redeemer, took responsibility for these women, and offered them his protection.

Look up Romans 8:18 and write Paul's words here:

How do his words bring comfort in times of suffering?

If anyone knew a thing or two about suffering, it was Paul, who was beaten many times, imprisoned many times, and eventually executed for his faith and work for Jesus. If you feel like you could use some encouragement today, I'd strongly recommend reading Romans 8:18-28. Either way, read Romans 8:28. How have you seen this promise fulfilled in the lives of Tamar, Naomi and Ruth?

How have you seen the promise of Romans 8:28 fulfilled in your own life?

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Thank the Lord for His protection over you. We know that we can hold fast to the promise that He works all things together for good for those who love Him. Ask God to make you so very aware of His protection of you this day.

Day 2 No Longer Empty

Read Ruth 4:13-22 again. As you read, underline or highlight the blessing bestowed upon Naomi by the women of her community. Circle the words “restorer” and “redeemer” if you haven’t already.

Today, we’re going to focus on Ruth 4:14-15. The scene opens with the women surrounding Naomi and celebrating in her joy. Ruth has had a baby! Verse 13 tells us that “the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.” Knowing what you now know about Levirate marriage, what would have changed for Ruth if she’d have had a son with Mahlon?

I’m sure, at the time of her marriage to Mahlon, her infertility was the foremost thing on her mind. Looking back at chapter 1:4-5, can you make an educated guess as to how long she was married to Mahlon?

While we don’t have exact dates, it was clearly long enough that a baby should have been expected. Probably a few babies, really. As painful as infertility is now, we’ve seen how not having an heir in that day could mean the difference between poverty and fullness, death and life. In Biblical culture, the son would care for his parents in their old age. This is why Naomi begs her daughters-in-law to return to their people, so they can marry again and hopefully have a son who will one day take care of them. This also gives us a greater understanding of the self-sacrifice Naomi is making when she encourages them to return to Moab. Naomi would have been utterly alone. In that moment, Naomi is demonstrating *hesed*, by placing the welfare of Ruth and Orpah before her own.

We know that Naomi felt that the hurt of her heart and the desperation of her circumstances was somehow a punishment from the Lord, being sent “away full, but brought back empty” (1:21). You can bet that Ruth felt empty as well.

But the beauty of this story is God’s sovereignty. The Lord’s providence plays out here: the very ache of their hearts is the reason for the Redeemer.

Have you had the privilege of experiencing this kind of grace in your life, where the Lord turned your *mourning into dancing* (Psalm 30:11-12)? Can you share about it in your small group as a testament to God's faithfulness?

Read Ruth 1:20-21 and Ruth 4:14-15. Compare how Naomi felt when she came home to Bethlehem with how she is feeling now. Think about her question to the women in 1:21. How do the women now answer her question?

Do you have friends and/or family who will remind you of God's promises whether life is difficult or delightful?

Are you the type of friend who will stand by your friends when life is either difficult or delightful, offering encouragement in the Lord? Sometimes, we need to first be the friend we want to have.

Let's compare the blessing of these women (verses 14-15) with the blessing of the elders and witnesses (verses 11-12). How are these blessings similar? How are they different?

Similar:

Different:

Who do the women praise/bless for the good fortune of Naomi in verse 14? What does this tell you about their faith?

Can you feel the utter joy that Naomi's friends feel for her? They celebrate with her. They are not jealous of her. They don't accuse her of being undeserving of her good fortune. They don't think Boaz would've been better off marrying someone else, say a non-Moabite, for example. In fact, look closely at verse 15. Just like in verse 14, Ruth is no longer identified as a Moabite. She is Ruth, the wife of Boaz, the daughter-in-law of Naomi who loves her. Ruth is accepted into the community and praised. She is worth more than seven sons!

In a culture where having sons was the end-all, be-all, this speaks volumes to Ruth's character. One story that clearly highlights this fact is the story of Rachel and Leah, sisters and wives to Jacob. In order to gain approval, love, and self-worth, they had a "battle of the babies." They hoped that with each new son, Jacob would love them more, and God's favor for them would be more evident to everyone else (Genesis 29:31-30:24 and 35:16-19.)

But Ruth, the former Moabite, whose family tree goes back to Lot and his daughter's incestuous affair, is praised and loved, being worth more than seven sons. The number "7" in Hebrew culture, and throughout the Bible, is seen as a sign of completion (think, 7 days of creation, the sabbath day being the 7th day, etc). So, if having seven sons would mean being complete and fulfilled, and if Ruth is worth *more* than seven sons, what does that say about her? What does it say about her love for Naomi?

Daniel Block says it better than I ever could:

But "love" is not demonstrated primarily in words; it is expressed in acts of hesed, placing the welfare of the other ahead of oneself. In fact, more than anyone else in the history of Israel, Ruth embodies the fundamental principle of the nation's ethic: "You shall love your God with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5) "and your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). In Leviticus 19:34 Moses instructs the Israelites to love the stranger as they love themselves. Ironically, it is the stranger from Moab who shows the Israelites what this means." (Block, p. 729)

It's costly to love like this, isn't it? What motivates you to practice *hesed* with the people God has put in your life?

How would you encourage others to love like this, when it often defies the world's logic?

In the blessing over Naomi, the women say that her grandson will be to her “a restorer of life.” The Hebrew word here is *meshiv nefesh*. Look up the following verses to see how King David used the same expression:

Psalm 19:7

Psalm 23:3

What word do they all have in common?

Meshiv Nefesh literally translates into “restorer of soul.” It would seem, wouldn't it, that practicing *hesed* is directly linked to restoring our souls?

The ultimate act of restoration for our souls by the ultimate act of *hesed*, of course, is Jesus's death on the cross.

Look up 1 Timothy 1:15 and write it here:

What does Romans 5:7-8 tell us about God's *hesed* toward us?

God loves sinners. He didn't have to die for us but He chose to, even though we didn't deserve it. As receivers of this glorious grace, we can be empowered to love others with a sacrificial love by embracing the sacrificial love bestowed on us. How great is God's *hesed* toward us!

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Ask God to empower you to love each other, as sisters in Christ. May we mourn with each other, celebrate with each other, and lift each other up in His name. Ask Him to help you rest in Him and to fully adopt your identity as His child, secure in Christ.

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Day 3 True Rest: God's Calling

Read Ruth 4:13-22 again. We're going to focus in on verses 16 and 17.

We read such a simple statement in verse 16: *Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.*

The word *nurse* (*omenet*) in this context literally means guardian or “nanny.” Naomi is acting in the most natural way, like a new grandmother, lovingly receiving her long awaited grandson. But let's think about the significance of this action and what this must have meant to her and to Ruth.

Our timeline, from verse 13 to verse 16, now encompasses at least 9 months. Ruth and Naomi are in a much different position compared to a year ago, when they showed up in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Fill in the chart with what their life looked like a year ago, versus what it looks like now:

Life in Moab (Chapter 1)	Life now in Bethlehem (Chapter 4)

If you were to title the state of their lives a year ago and the state of their lives now, what would you call these seasons?

As women in this middle eastern, ancient society, they desperately needed a redeemer (*go'e*). And now, their redeemer has given them a redeemer in the form of a baby son. After seeing Ruth and Naomi walk into Bethlehem, empty of food, housing, loved ones, and hope, we now rejoice as Naomi holds in her arms the blessing of the Lord. They are full, so very full.

Can you identify with this kind of restoration?

And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name...(verse 17)

By calling them “women of the neighborhood,” the author is showing their relationship to Naomi and Ruth. These are their neighbors and friends, their community.

As interesting as it would be if the women actually did name the baby, a more literal translation of this statement is, “And the neighbors (i.e. women) called for him a name saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi,’ and they called his name Obed.” In other words, the author is showcasing the fact that this “female chorus” is celebrating the birth and declaring its significance. This is the only recorded place in the Old Testament scriptures where women, other than the mother, were at the naming of a child. (Block, p. 730-731).

The community surrounded this family with support and rejoicing.

And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David” (verse 17).

Look in your Bible to see if it has a footnote as to the meaning of the name, “Obed”.

Mine doesn't. It is strange in this case that the name “Obed” seems to be left unexplained. After all, the Bible often expresses the meaning or significance of names throughout its pages. Even in our story, Naomi was quick to explain why her name was now Mara in chapter 1:20. But remember, this narrative account was written at a different time and culture than ours. The original Hebrew audience would have known what “Obed” meant. A quick google search for the meaning of the Hebrew name, Obed, sheds some light. It means, “to serve, to worship.” It could have also been the abbreviated version of Obadiah, “servant of Yahweh.” Why do you think they named him Obed?

If you were to be named based on who you are as a person, what would your name be and why?

Have you gone through hard seasons like Naomi, where you felt that name should have changed? What would your name(s) have been in those seasons?

Look in your Bible at the name, "Obed." Are there any references to where his name is found elsewhere in scripture that isn't part of a genealogy?

We see the significance of Obed in two ways: he redeemed Naomi and Ruth, bringing life where there was death, and fullness where there was emptiness. And he became the father of Jesse and the great grandfather of King David. Other than those two facts, we know nothing else about him. And yet, these are incredibly significant facts brought about by the obedience and *hesed* of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz to each other and to God. Simple, yet costly, acts of obedience by ordinary people brought about this beautiful redemption.

Turn to Luke 1:26-38 and read another story of an ordinary person following obediently after the things of God. How does Mary respond in verse 38?

Chances are, you read this story every December. We like to think of Mary as blessed because she was chosen by God to carry the baby Jesus. But there's a piece of this story I think I've missed, even with all of the repeated readings. Mary said *yes*, and the Lord blessed her with this miracle. Mary was just an ordinary teenager, trying to go about her life, when God called her to a higher purpose. She obeyed. And in that obedience, she was blessed to bring the Redeemer into the world who would one day come to redeem us all.

Where is God calling you to obey? How can you say "yes" to Him today?

I urge you, don't take your assignment lightly. After all, to say "no," might cause you to miss the miracle. I think few of us are as "lucky" as the prophet, Jonah. He often comes to mind as the archetype of disobedience. Yet God pursued him. Jonah was swallowed by a fish, given three solid days of quiet reflection in its belly, and then vomited up with no other option but obedience. For many of us, though, we might simply miss being a part of God's miraculous plans.

Read Luke 7:28-35. Pay attention to who was there for Jesus' teaching, but didn't obey his calling (v.30).

Rest this day in knowing that our Redeemer is working out His plans in your life, even if those plans don't make sense at the time. He is a God of restoration. And He has a calling for you.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

We know that our weaknesses will be used by God to display His glory to us and to those around us. Thank the Lord for His Word, which encourages us and challenges us to grow in Him. Bravely say "yes" to the calling put before you today. And may that "yes" be repeated tomorrow, and next week, and all the days of your life.

Day 4 More than a Genealogy

Read Chapter 4:13-22 again and mark any final insights or questions you have. We're going to focus in on the last five verses of Ruth today, verses 18-22.

Most of your Bibles probably have a subheading here that says, "The Genealogy of David." So, straight away, you're thinking, "this is boring, who cares?" Or maybe that's just me... But, if you'll stay with me a minute here, maybe we can figure out why the author of Ruth decided to end his story in the most boring way possible.

For starters, the fact that there is a genealogy brings so much validity to the book of Ruth. This isn't just a parable or a good story that ends well. It's a true story about real people. The proof is in the lineage.

But also, this lineage brings to mind the promises of the Davidic Covenant (God's Covenant with King David). The story of Ruth takes place during the dark days of the Judges, remember? But it was written down sometime after King David came to the throne (see page 17 in your homework). The original audience reading this story would have found comfort in this lineage, for they were still waiting for a perfect King to deliver them.

Read 2 Samuel 7, focusing on verses 8-17. In this chapter we read the account of the prophet, Nathan, reporting to David what the Lord has promised to him, and we see David's reaction to God's Covenant. Thinking about the story of Ruth and the need she and Naomi had for a Redeemer, why do you think the author of Ruth ends this story with a lineage that leads to David?

Could it be that the author is trying to inspire hope in the faithful remnant of Israel, that a Redeemer is coming? We see a promise that this kingdom, from the line of David, will be established forever. He will be a faithful king and lead Israel toward faithfulness in God. The people are promised a redeemer, someone who will deliver them from their enemies, a king who's "throne will be established forever" (2 Sam 7:16).

But a quick study of 1 and 2 Kings and the Chronicles shows us how quickly these earthly kingdoms failed and fell. We find the people still waiting for that *forever-throne*, while surrounded by enemies and false gods.

Let's move forward in time to the prophet Isaiah. The book of Isaiah recorded a time period after the judges and after King David's reign. It was a familiar story of Israel's faithlessness, being pulled toward false idols and not trusting the Lord's deliverance. The threat of attack by the Assyrian empire, and then the Babylon empire, permeated everyone's daily thought-lives, causing many to live in fear. Isaiah's words to the people, however, do not necessarily provide a solution to their current political crisis, but instead describe a coming king who will renew all of creation.

In the midst of the Assyrian invasion, the people would have remembered Isaiah's words, looking forward to a king who would've been like King David, a King who's faith in Yahweh could save them.

Look up Isaiah 9:2-7. Sound familiar? Of course, at this time, the people were still expecting an earthly king. What were some of the things they expected of this earthly king?

Look up Isaiah 11:1-2. Who does Isaiah say is coming?

What would prophecies like this do for a nation who had lived in turmoil for so many generations?

Tim Mackie of the Bible Project does a great job of explaining the role of Biblical prophets. They weren't "looking at a crystal ball and predicting events far removed from their own day. Rather, they looked to God's promises in the past (to Abraham and David) to generate hope for their own day and beyond. The prophets believed that God's promises called every generation of Israel and its kings to repentance and faithfulness. But as the story turns out, none of David's descendants lived up to this call...This is how the promise of the Messiah became a hope for the distant future once the kingdom of David was hauled off to Babylon." (Mackie)

Turn to the book of Matthew. Clumsily read through Chapter 1:1-17 with me. Hopefully, some of those names now look familiar, and, at the very least, repetitive. Why do you think Matthew starts his account of Jesus's life with his genealogy? Keep in mind that Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience.

In the midst of all of these hard-to-pronounce names, there are five women named in the genealogy of Jesus. Can you find them?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

It might surprise you to learn that Jewish genealogies typically don't include women. Actually, most genealogies in the Bible don't include women. Of these 5 women, how many were of Jewish descent? (If you're not sure, that's OK. We'll read more about them in a minute.)

Look up Revelation 7:9-10. With these verses in mind, why do you think Matthew made it a point to include foreign women?

Let's look at the story of each of these women. Read or skim through the passages below and fill in their "scandal" in the chart.

Woman	Scandal
Tamar (see Genesis 38)	
Rahab (see Joshua 2, 6)	
Ruth (see homework week 1)	
The Wife of Uriah - Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12)	
Mary, Mother of Jesus (Matt 1:18-25)	

The fact is, the Bible is full of scandal, isn't it? Even the people who feared and loved the Lord messed up in some pretty irrevocable ways (we can just start with Adam and, well, keep going until we get to Jesus). Some might even call it shameful.

And here we find Jesus, born right into the middle of it all. If your family tree has a few hidden skeletons, Jesus's tree had more. If you feel like you've spent your life trying to rebuild a family line with little to work with, Jesus understands that better than anyone. He took on the shame of His history, and He takes the shame of our history, as well. He was the One the entire story had been leading up to all along. Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, fulfilling all that God had promised to Abraham and David. He is the snake-crusher (Genesis 3:15), the true deliverer, the final, once-and-for-all King.

What a beautiful gift we find in Ruth 4:18-22 in the lineage leading up to David. How would you explain to someone why this lineage matters?

It isn't just a long list of names, is it? It's the promise of a Deliverer to come from the line of Boaz and Ruth, one greater than David. It's the promise of a Redeemer, who took all of our scandal and shame with Him to the cross, purchasing salvation for us - not because we deserve it, but because He loves us. And it's such a beautiful reminder that God uses ordinary people, like Ruth and Boaz, who actively obey His commands and live them out with *hesed* toward others to bring about His Kingdom among us.

Comprehension questions:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I have any new insights into the people in this section - their feelings, motivations, fears, or character? What about insights into the setting or plot? Did they change?

People:

Setting:

Plot:

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

Pray:

Thank Jesus for taking on the shame of all of His people. Thank Him for being the true King, the true Deliverer, and the One who can truly offer rest to a weary people. May this gift of salvation always inspire us to live a life of *hesed* toward others in obedience to Him.

For Deeper Study: The Moabite Mandate

Read Deuteronomy 23:3. Does it seem like a contradiction of scripture that King David, the great-grandson of a Moabite woman, would be allowed in the assembly of God?

Maybe you've heard people using this verse as an example of a way in which scripture contradicts itself. Let's look at how the original Biblical audience would have understood this.

The Hebrew people had been warned time and again not to intermarry with pagan people because their hearts would be drawn away from Yahweh after the false gods of the pagan people. We've seen how time and time again, that very thing happened (the book of Judges recounts it in gory detail). But we also can't ignore the fact that God always honored those who turned their hearts toward Him, Jew or gentile alike. Rahab, a Canaanite who chose to trust the Lord, was a perfect example of this. She and her family were saved the day Joshua and the Israelites took over Jericho because of her faith. Ruth was another example of someone turning from the gods of her Moabite people when she declared that Naomi's "people shall be my people, and (her) God my God." Our scriptures are full of stories where God honored a repentant heart and welcomed them into His family. While Ruth may have been born a Moabite, everything about the way she lived proved that she served the Lord.

The other thing to consider is how the Hebrew people would've kept track of their genealogy. The nationality of the mother did not determine the nationality of the children. For example, Joseph's Egyptian wife did not make their sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, Egyptians. Moses married a Midianite (Zipporah) but his sons were not considered Midianites. Salmon's marriage to Rahab did not make Boaz a Canaanite of Jericho. So when Boaz married Ruth, their son, Obed, was not seen as a Moabite but as an Israelite. As far as everyone in Israel was concerned, David was a legitimate descendant of Abraham. David's son, Solomon, was also a true Israelite even though his mother was Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, the Hittite.

It's hard to know exactly how that command was meant 3,500 years ago. The precise meaning of the term, *assembly of the Lord*, isn't known. But we do know Moses was referring to the enemies of Israel who were surrounding the camp of Israel. We have many examples in scripture where Jesus' sacrifice is what allows us to come close to the Lord, as we were all enemies of God at one time. But we can hold fast to the knowledge that the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ display how God feels about us. Because of Jesus, we not only become part of the assembly of God, we become His beloved children and heirs to the Kingdom. (Titus 3:3-7, Romans 8)

Day 5 Personal Application

Read Chapter 4:13-22 one last time and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

Application questions:

What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

Pray:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

Soul Restoration

Session 6 Notes

Video link available at: myabc.church/women

Facilitator Guide

Dear facilitator, THANK YOU for leading the discussion on Ruth in your small group. Your faithfulness to the ladies in your group and to God's word honors the Lord.

At the end of each day's homework, you will find the same comprehension questions. You can go over those questions in your group, or you can choose to go through the homework day by day asking your small group members what stood out to them. We've also scattered questions throughout the homework for small group discussion. Encourage your ladies to share their thoughts with the study method they're practicing, including any struggles or successes they've experienced. After you've spent some time going over the 4 days of comprehension questions, move on to the application questions on day 5. It is our hope that your small group will begin to share the truths about God and themselves they are learning, and will encourage one another to live out those truths in a way that brings glory to God.

We know it can be challenging, but try to save time in your group for prayer. Along with praying for the needs within the group, you can use one of the prayer prompts at the end of each day for inspiration. Or try picking a verse or two from the passage studied and pray it through together.

Since there will be no homework to discuss on our first day of the study, we've compiled some questions and an icebreaker below to generate discussion and sharing in your group. You can also discuss the teaching session from today and go over the introductory sections of the workbook.

Session One Questions:

Icebreaker idea: In chapter 1 of Ruth, Naomi and her family have to move to another country because of a famine. Have you ever had to move from your home to another city, state, or country? What prompted the move? How did you feel about leaving? What were the biggest challenges? Who/what did you leave behind?

- 1) What has been your experience with studying Scripture on your own? Are there any study tools that help you? What frustrates you when studying scripture?
- 2) What drew you to this study? What do you hope to learn?
- 3) Have you ever studied Ruth before? What is your impression of the book? What do you remember from it?

Map 1



The Setting of Judges

c. 1375/1210 B.C.

The incomplete conquest of the Promised Land set the stage for the book of Judges, which recounts the exploits of various leaders raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors.

<https://media.thegospelcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/04132704/Judges-Map1-1024x927.png>

Map 2



The Judges of Israel

c. 1375–1050/1210–1050 B.C.

The judges came from various tribes and regions of Israel, and they likely held varying degrees of influence over their neighboring regions and tribes.

<https://media.thegospelcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/04132710/Judges-Map2-1024x926.png>

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, Wheaton, IL., Crossway, 2001) unless otherwise noted.



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