



Sterling

Study Guide to *Ruth*

How to use this guide

- The main purpose of this guide is to encourage groups to read and discuss Scripture together. It is meant to be life-giving, not a chore. If this becomes a chore, change it or use something different.
- Use what you find helpful, but do not let yourself be bound to the guide. Feel free to expand what you like and to not use what is not helpful for your group. Do not force conversation, but allow it to come naturally. Some parts will speak more to some groups than to others.
- This study has been divided into sections that should be readable in one sitting together. Again, do not be bound to the guide. If you read more or less than what is planned, that is okay. Work at your own pace.
- There are two models of questions provided to guide your conversation. There are **general questions** that can be applied to any text, as well as **text specific questions**. Use what works best for your group, or both.
- Remember to read Scripture in context. It is easy for us to pick and choose what we like and to miss the bigger picture. Be mindful of the difficulty of reading in context especially when we only read short sections at a time.
- Read, listen, share, pray. Allow the Spirit to work.

General Questions (can be asked after each section)

1. Which parts of this text resonated with you? Which parts did you like?
2. Which parts of this text did not resonate with you? Which parts did you not like?
3. Which parts of this text did you not understand? What questions do you have?
4. Which parts of this text teach you something about God?
5. Which parts of this text can you apply in your daily life?

Background to *Ruth*

- *Ruth* is a historical narrative of ordinary people in Israel who lived around the time of the Judges, around 1300 BC.
- The time of the Judges in Israel took place after Joshua until Samuel. It was a difficult time for Israel as they rejected God and followed their own gods.
- This is one of the rare books in the Bible that tells the story from the perspective of women, having women as the main characters of the story.
- The unlikely union of Ruth and Boaz is one of the many unique stories in the genealogy of Jesus.
- Women like Naomi and Ruth were reliant on men for their well-being. In their time, to be alone was very difficult.

Major Themes

- *Ruth* is full of the themes of grief, love, loyalty, charity, generosity, faith, and hope.
- God is present and active in the lives of ordinary, everyday people.
- God uses the unlikely and unexpected to bring about His plan of salvation.
- Boaz plays the role of the guardian-redeemer, an image of what Jesus does for us.

Text Specific Questions

1. The first five verses in *Ruth* summarize a lot of time and background to the story of Ruth. It also is plagued by tragedy. Is this something you can relate with? Leaving home, hard times, the passing of close family? How did you deal with this grief?
2. Can you relate to Naomi's sentiment that God's hand was turned against her (1:13)? Have you ever felt like God has been absent in your life? Do you think God has abandoned Naomi?
3. Put yourself in the position of Orpah and Ruth. Which reaction to Naomi's demand (1:11-13) do you think you would have?
4. What does Ruth's commitment to Naomi tell you about the loyalty and love between this family? What do you think goes into a choice like this, to find a new home, family and God?
5. How does Ruth's choice compare to our call to give up all, follow God and to be a part of a new family?

Text Specific Questions

1. Ruth talks to Naomi about going out to glean grain during the harvest (2:2). What does this tell you about the situation these women find themselves in? How does the Jewish law in Leviticus 23:22 play into this?
2. Ruth finds herself gleaning in the field of Naomi's relative Boaz (2:3). Is this simply coincidence or was this God's leading? Where do we see the hand of God in the little things in life?
3. Boaz shows Ruth extreme grace and kindness, going above what the law says he should do for the poor. Have you ever been on the receiving end of such kindness? Was it easy or difficult to accept?
4. Boaz had heard of Ruth and the kindness she showed to his relative, Naomi (2:11-12). He seems impressed with what she did. Do you think Ruth did what she did to get noticed or recognized? Kindness and loyalty can often be rewarded, but how do we react when they are not?
5. In what ways does Boaz go above and beyond in helping Ruth, who is a foreigner? What other blessings does he offer her?

Text Specific Questions

1. Naomi has a plan for Ruth (3:1-4). What do you think she is wanting to accomplish?
2. What kind of symbolism is present in the act Ruth does with Boaz (3:7-9)?
3. Ruth calls Boaz the guardian-redeemer of the family? What does it mean to be a guardian-redeemer (Leviticus 25:25-55)? What is Ruth asking Boaz to do?
4. A twist in this story comes when Boaz tells Ruth that there is someone else more closely related than Boaz who might want to take on the task of being the guardian-redeemer (3:12-13). What is Boaz's plan?
5. Ruth and Naomi are made to wait, at the mercy of Boaz (3:18). The outcome of this is life changing for them both. Have you ever had to wait at the mercy of someone else for something this important? How does it feel?
6. Boaz is often referred to as a Christ figure, making Ruth a symbol of humanity. Do you agree with this? What would or wouldn't support this comparison?

Text Specific Questions

1. Boaz makes a point of following the rules and not simply becoming the guardian-redeemer of Naomi and Ruth. What does this say about Boaz's character?
2. The redemption of the family was linked to the purchase of their land. With the land came Ruth (4:5). How do you react to this set of rules? Do we see anything like this today? What does it say about our culture?
3. What do you learn about the legal proceedings in ancient Israel (4:7-11)?
4. How do we reconcile the idea of Ruth being "bought" by Boaz to our understanding of love and relationships today? Would you call this a love story?
5. This story that started with extreme loss, ends with new life and rejoicing (4:14-17). How might this story be one of hope for those going through hard times?
6. The son of Ruth and Boaz becomes the grandfather of King David, of whom Jesus is a descendant. What does this say about the way God works and brings about His plans?