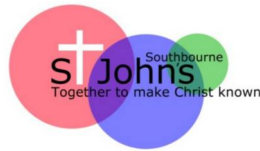


RUTH

Grace & Redemption

STUDY NOTES



Introduction to Ruth

Life is often pictured as a journey. Along the way, we sometimes talk about being at a crossroads - key decisions that will shape the future of our journey through life.

Ruth is a young lady who was faced with just such a decision. Her story unfolds during the time of the 'Judges' - rulers sent by God to lead the Israelites, before the days of David and the kings of Israel.

But Ruth is a Moabite, not an Israelite. Through marriage, she is drawn into God's people and comes to experience the Lord's grace and redemption. Having made her choice at the crossroads to cling to Naomi and her God, she discovers that Israel's God shows unfailing grace to those ready to receive it.

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This guide is intended for homegroups and individuals to read through the book of Ruth, and consider how God is still speaking from her story today. Questions such as...

*How do we know we can trust God when things seems hopeless?
What does commitment look like in all our different relationships?
Will we always understand what God is doing in our lives?
How can we know that God has worked all things for the good?*

Kinsmen-Redeemer

A key theme in Ruth is the 'Kinsmen-Redeemer' (NIV/ESV translations) or 'Next of kin' (NRSV).

Under Israelite law, there was a duty on the closest family member to buy back property that had been sold when a family member got into trouble, and even to marry a widow so that she and her children could still live within the family. Although it sounds odd to us, it was a way of ensuring welfare within an agricultural/subsistence society.

It would often prove costly to the one who paid the price.

Overview of the series

Week 1 - Ruth 1:1-5 - 'Departure'

Week 2 - Ruth 1:6-22 - 'Return'

Week 3 - Ruth 2:1-13 - 'Grace'

Week 4 - Ruth 2:14-23 - 'Generosity'

Week 5 - Ruth 3:1-18 - 'Loyalty'

Week 6 - Ruth 4:1-12 - 'Redemption'

Week 7 - Ruth 4:13-22 - 'Descendant'

Week 1 - Ruth 1:1-5 - 'Departure'

Intro

By this point in the story of the Bible, God's people the Israelites are in the land promised to their forefather Abraham. However, all is not well as almost every generation keeps turning away from the Lord. We get a glimpse of this in the final line of the previous book, Judges: *In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.*

That is the context in which Ruth's story plays out, and as we'll see, things don't begin well in her family's situation either...

Opening Discussion

"Have you ever had a particularly disastrous journey?"

Please read Ruth 1:1-5

Discussion Questions

Why is Naomi's family's move to Moab more significant than moving for us?

Does Elimelech and Naomi's decision to leave Israel lack faith?

How do you feel about the 'matter of fact' way these verses unfold?

How do you think the writer would like us to feel for Naomi by v5?

Is it helpful when the Bible deals in the realities of life and death?

How might Naomi have felt about God and her life at that point?

Prayer Suggestions

For many of us the issues in these verses will be very real. It would be good to pray for ourselves, and for one another. We can ask that God's grace would meet us in whatever situation we're in.

Week 2 - Ruth 1:6-22 - 'Return'

Intro

Last week we were introduced to an Israelite family. They'd moved to Moab only for three family bereavements to leave Naomi in a sad and difficult place. This week we see crucial choices for them over which path they will each choose to take...

Opening Discussion

"Do you know what your name means and why you were given it?"

Please read Ruth 1:6-22

Discussion Questions

What does Naomi decide to do and why? (V6)

Why does Naomi encourage them to leave her and stay in Moab?

What do we learn about Ruth from vv16-17?

How does Naomi use her name to reflect her experience? (V20)

Naomi blames the Lord, but are we told whether she's right to?

Are there times when you wonder how God is at work in your life?

How should we respond to the difficulties we will face?

Prayer Suggestions

Let's pray particularly for those who are suffering, those at a crossroads of big decisions and those who, for one reason or another, feel bitterness towards God. These are real feelings and situations, so let's pray that God's grace would meet us and them in those moments and bring gospel-hope.

Week 3 - Ruth 2:1-13 - 'Grace'

Intro

With Naomi back in Israel with her daughter-in-law Ruth, the question now is how they will survive. As we'll hear, a number of people and situations come together to help, as if to imply that there is a power at work behind the scenes...

Opening Discussion

"How would you describe the Biblical theme of Grace?"

Please read Ruth 2:1-13

Discussion Questions

Why do you think we're told in v1 that Boaz is a family relation?

What might have been the issues in trying to live off 'gleaning'?

The writer says 'As it happened' (v3), is it a coincidence?

What do you glean about the character of Ruth and Boaz?

What had particularly impressed Boaz about Ruth?

In v13, why does Ruth not expect to find favour from Boaz?

But what does she find?

How does this illustrate God's grace to us, especially as Gentiles?

Can you identify with 'coming under God's wings for refuge'?

Prayer Suggestions

Perhaps pray prayers of thankfulness to God for the times when his grace has found us, forgiven us, restored us, lifted us and given us hope.

Week 4 - Ruth 2:14-23 - 'Generosity'

Intro

Last week we started to see Ruth and Naomi's situation turning around. The kindness of their kinsmen Boaz now extends even further...

Opening Discussion

"Do you have your own story of receiving real kindness from others?"

Please read Ruth 2:14-23

Discussion Questions

How does Boaz' kindness to them go even further here?

Has Naomi's response to God changed by v20?

What has God been doing behind the scenes?

Do you find Boaz' generosity and kindness inspiring?

As ch2 comes to a close, how has their situation changed?

How often is it that when we look back we see God's love at work?

What can we do to remember God's grace, even whilst we're still going through it?

Prayer Suggestions

For those in need of God's grace and goodness to breakthrough in their life. For us to learn from Boaz' example of gracious generosity—we give because of all that God has given to us.

Week 5 - Ruth 3:1-18 - 'Loyalty'

Intro

Finally it seems that Naomi is able to envisage a future and a hope for Ruth and herself. Having recognised Boaz as a relative, the thought comes to her that perhaps he could be the kinsman-redeemer to bring them to a place of security and possibility...

Opening Discussion

"Do things always work out well in the end?"

Please read Ruth 3:1-18

Discussion Questions

Do you sense any change in Naomi's attitude in this chapter?

Is there a little 'ambiguity' in Naomi's instructions?

What does Boaz praise in Ruth and where have we seen it before?

Why do you think we have the added detail of vv12-13?

How has life changed for Ruth and Naomi by this point?

Does that mean every problem we face will be perfectly resolved?

If not, then what do we learn about life and God from Ruth?

Where might you be called to demonstrate loyalty and trust?

Prayer Suggestions

It might be a good opportunity to pray for those who situations haven't seen this kind of transformation. For patience and grace to trust God and know that because of Christ, our eternal future will see a complete transformation.

Week 6 - Ruth 4:1-12 - 'Redemption'

Intro

At the end of chapter 3, Boaz promised that if her closer relative did not offer to 'redeem,' that he would. In the first half of chapter 4 we are then party to the legal process that follows. Some aspects seem strange across the time and cultural divide...

Opening Discussion

"What have you learned from time spent in different cultures?"

Please read Ruth 4:1-12

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Boaz begins with the field in his discussions?*
- Why would maintaining the family line have been so important?*
- What is this other man's motivation behind saying no?*
- What does that tell us about the risk Boaz is prepared to take?*
- Although the idea of Ruth coming with the land seems horrendous to us, how do you sense Boaz felt towards Ruth?*
- How is Boaz' action received by the community? (v11)*
- Where else in the Bible do we see this motif of costly redemption?*

Prayer Suggestions

For ourselves, to grow in the kind of love that Boaz showed. Committing to help people even at our own cost. Also prayers for those who feel hopeless and helpless, especially if they don't yet know the price that Jesus was prepared to pay for them.

Week 7 - Ruth 4:13-22 - 'Descendant'

Intro

After quite a detailed prelude, the description of the wedding in v13 feels brief. But hidden within these verses are some fantastic indicators of God's enduring grace and blessing.

Of course, not everyone's situation turns from grief to joy quite as dramatically as Ruth and Naomi's. It would be unhelpful to miss-apply this story as 'everyone will find their Ruth/Boaz.' But God particularly intervened in their lives as part of his bigger plan to intervene in the world itself. Our hope is not that everything in this life will turn out to be 'happy ever after,' but because of Ruth's descent we can know the forgiveness, love and joy of relationship restored with our maker and life with him forever.

Opening Discussion

"What has particularly struck you about Ruth's story so far?"

Please read Ruth 4:13-22 (& if time, Matthew 1:5-16, over)

Discussion Questions

How would their culture view childbirth differently to ours?

What would Naomi have felt as she held that baby?

Has the community changed its attitude towards Moabite Ruth?

How different is this final chapter from the first?

Who or what has contributed to that difference?

Are there issues in trying to apply their story directly to our lives?

How does their story apply to us? (Hint: Genealogy!)

So, what can we learn about life, God, grace and redemption?

Prayer Suggestions

As we come to the end, we've seen great lows and highs throughout the story. In the New Testament we are encouraged to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those rejoice. Let's pray for people in every situation in life, giving thanks that God worked through this family to bring about his plan to offer redemption to every family through their descendent, Jesus.

Further Reading

As we go through this series as a church, the talks will be added to our website following each Sunday service:

<http://stjohnssouthbourne.com> Click on the link: Sermons

Books

- A Loving Life by Paul Miller
- A Sweet & Bitter Providence by John Piper
- Unshaken—Ruth by Francine Rivers

Boaz the father of Obed by *Ruth*,

and Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of King David.

and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

and Solomon the father of Rehoboam,

and Rehoboam the father of Abijah,

and Abijah the father of Asaph,

and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat,

and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,

and Joram the father of Uzziah,

and Uzziah the father of Jotham,

and Jotham the father of Ahaz,

and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,

and Manasseh the father of Amos,

and Amos the father of Josiah,

and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers

and Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel,

and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel,

and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud,

and Abiud the father of Eliakim,

and Eliakim the father of Azor,

and Azor the father of Zadok,

and Zadok the father of Achim,

and Achim the father of Eliud,

and Eliud the father of Eleazar,

and Eleazar the father of Matthan,

and Matthan the father of Jacob,

and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary,

of whom *Jesus* was born, who is called the Messiah.