

Ruth – A Study of Love
Widows of the Old Testament
Teacher/Facilitator Study Guide
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Italics indicate the text in the Student’s Study Guide.

*Indicates the author’s study helps for the teacher/facilitator.

Review of Naomi

a. In the last lesson, a cord of “Hope” drew Naomi from a bitterly painful and grief filled time to a time of renewed relationship with her LORD and joyful reunion with Hebrew friends and relatives.

1) *What was the turning point for her?* Her decision to return to Bethlehem

2) *How was her dashed hope, of an heir for her son, Mahlon, revived and realized?* Ruth remained loyal, returned to Bethlehem with Naomi and eventually married Boaz providing a son Obed, to be the heir. His name means “worshiper.”

b. We saw Naomi go from tragedy to triumph, from sorrow to joy, and from bitterness to sweet peace. When we give God our brokenness, He can make something beautiful out of our lives.

1) *Do you recall a time when you had such a turning point in your life?*

2) *Would you be willing to share about it with our group?*

Prayer: *Give opportunity for participants to share prayer requests.*

Ruth – A Study of Love

Read the Study of Ruth in *Widows of the Old Testament* and reread the book of Ruth in the Bible before answering the questions in this study.

Two Hebrew words translated LOVE apply to our study of Ruth.

a. *Ahavah* (Greek *agape*) is presented in Scripture as the very nature of God – Who He is. God is love and in this supreme attribute all His other attributes are harmonized.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, we read a definition by a listing of virtues. “Ahavah/agape” is patient, kind, does not envy, is not proud, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs and does not delight in evil. It rejoices with the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. Love does not fail.

“Ahavah” is central in a person’s relationship with God and with man. The greatest commandment in the Law is “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). The second greatest is “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18b).

b. *Hesedh* is translated loving kindness or loyal love - the outflow of love. “Hesedh” combines the ideas of love, commitment, duty and care, and stresses the loyalty with which love acts. The Lord’s “hesedh” leads Him to redeem His people. In consequence, it is how the Lord’s people act toward others, and how they should respond to the Lord Himself. The Lord looks on us with hesedh - loving kindness rooted in His grace. “Hesedh’s” strong emphasis is placed on the practical more than the emotional.

Map: Locate Ur (Near Babylon) on a map of Abraham’s journey and follow the route of Terah, Abraham and Lot to Haran; then of Abraham and Lot to Canaan, Egypt and back to Bethel. It was there where they separated. Lot chose the plains of the Jordan, moving to Sodom (later destroyed) and Abraham stayed in Canaan.

Read Ruth 1

1. *Ruth was a descendant of Terah, Lot and Moab. Why were the Moabite and Hebrew languages similar (pg. 47)? The Moabites and Hebrews both descended from Terah so their language had the same root.*

2. *Contrast Naomi's and Ruth's spiritual background (pg. 47). Naomi was a Hebrew and worshiped the LORD, the One True God. Ruth's people worshiped Chemosh and Ashtoreth and offered human sacrifices.*

Discuss: *Having been immersed in the Hebrew culture of Mahlon's family, Ruth learned spiritual values different from her heathen culture. Compare her experience with yours. How did you become aware of God's love for you and your need for Him?*

3. *How many years of marriage did Ruth have with Mahlon before he died? Ten.*

Discuss: *Naomi, Ruth and Orpah, all widows, faced an unclear future. Has there been a time in your life when you faced change and an unclear future? What did you do?*

4. *What did Orpah decide to do and was her love for Naomi hesedh - a loyal love? Orpha made the choice to go with Naomi and started out on the journey to Bethlehem. At Naomi's urging to turn back to her own people and gods, she wept, like Ruth, but she turned back. She did not have a loyal love.*

Consider: *Can you think of a time when your love was tested? Did it stand the test or fail?*

*This may be a sensitive issue. There may well be a hesitancy to talk about personal issues, thus these questions are for personal consideration. If someone wishes to share their answer, they may.

5. *What do the verses in Ruth 1:8-18 reveal about the relationship that developed between Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi? Naomi gave Ruth the opportunity to remain with her people and have another husband and children in her homeland. She kissed Ruth and released her from any obligation. Ruth loved Naomi, chose to continue to be a part of Naomi's life and people, and to worship Naomi's God.*

Consider: *What kind of relationship do you have with your mother-in-law or those closest to you? Does it exhibit the virtues of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7?*

6. *Ruth turned from her pagan gods to worship the One and Only True God.*

Consider: *Are there gods (objects of one's worship and love) in your life that you need to turn away from, today? Does anything keep you from committed worship of the Lord?*

Read Ruth 2

7. *What led Ruth to the field of Boaz? God's providence. He led her there. He used gleaning for food to draw her there. Another factor was her love for Naomi and desire to care for her.*

The LORD provided out of His love to meet their needs, not only for their present needs, but also for their future needs.

Discuss: *God is at work divinely orchestrating events in your life to bring about His will and purposes for you. Do you recognize His hand in your life? How did He lead you to study the Widows of the Old Testament?*

8. *What reputation preceded Ruth to Boaz's field (vv. 11-12)? What she had done for Naomi since her husband's death, that she left her parents and homeland and came to dwell in a strange land to help Naomi.*

What reputation did Ruth establish while working there (v. 6)? That she was a dutiful worker.

Consider: *What reputation do you have where you live and work? How are you known by your neighbors and co-workers?*

9. *Describe what it must have been like for Ruth to do this work (vv. 7, 17-18). Hot, dusty, painful for the back, legs and arms, tiring, and irritating for the eyes and skin. It was also fulfilling to bring home so much grain for their food supply.*

There is conflicting data concerning an ephah measurement. The word ephah means basket. It may hold 22 liters or about 25 lbs. (1/2 English bushel) or about 50 lbs (1 English bushel) of grain depending on the size of the basket. It was not a uniform measure.

Consider: *What labor of love are you accomplishing for your family or those you love? Are you fulfilled in the work you do?*

10. *As you read this passage of Ruth, contrast Boaz's kind care of Ruth to our Lord's loving kindness for us. Record your findings. Boaz saw her. The Lord sees us in our circumstances (Psalm 139:1-4). Boaz invited her to work there under His protection. The Lord is our protector (Psalm 16:1,8-9). Boaz invited her to eat and drink. The Lord invites us to come and dine; come to Him and drink when we are thirsty (Isaiah 55:1-2). Boaz invited her to dip bread in wine vinegar and partake. In our communion, we take of the bread and the juice, representing Jesus' body and blood, shed for us (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Boaz asked his workers to leave extra grain for her. Our Lord promises to meet our needs and not let His children go hungry (Psalm 34:9-10).*

See Psalm 16:1, 8-9; Isaiah 55:1-2; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Psalm 34:9-10.

**Other contrasts may be observed. Answers may vary.*

Read Ruth 3

11. *Naomi shares with Ruth about the kinsman-redeemer (levirate marriage). Why did she instruct Ruth to approach Boaz concerning this? Boaz was closely related and would qualify to be a kinsman-redeemer. In their culture, the widow must propose to the kinsman-redeemer.*

Discuss: *Was there anything immoral in Ruth's or Boaz's behavior at the threshing floor?*

**This custom was understood and though it seems strange to us, their conduct was pure in every way.*

12. *How did Boaz respond to Ruth's proposal? Positively. He was pleased that she would choose him, but said there was another relative even closer than him that he must approach first.*

Discuss: *Look at how the Scripture describes Boaz and share what characteristics you would want to instill in young men in your family or want the young women in your family to look for in choosing a mate.*

**Moral character, kindness, giving, protective, caring, trustworthy, diligent.*

Read Ruth 4

13. *When Boaz talked with the closer kinsman-redeemer at the city gate about Naomi and Ruth in the presence of ten elders, as witnesses, did he use his wealth or power to get his way? Neither, he presented the truth and allowed the man to make his choice.*

Discuss: *In today's culture, wealth and power are often used to get what one wants. God provides His very best to those who yield to and wait on Him (Isaiah 30:18-21). Can you give an example of that in your life?*

14. *Did the elders caution Boaz about marriage to a Moabitess or did they encourage this union? Why do you think they did this? They encouraged him by comparing Ruth to Rachel and Leah who built up the house of Israel. They knew Ruth's reputation of being a loving daughter-in-law to Naomi, a hard worker and a virtuous woman.*

15. *Whom do you believe was the most delighted about this marriage – Ruth, Boaz or Naomi? Why? Answers will vary.*

16. *Look at the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22. Name the mothers of Perez, Boaz and Obed, and give their place of origin. Perez's mother, Tamar was a Canaanite woman. Boaz's mother, Rahab was a Canaanite woman from Jericho and Ruth was a Moabitess.*

Discuss: *What does the LORD God's inclusion of these women in the ancestry of His Son, Jesus Christ, demonstrate to us? See John 14:6; 17:1-3, 20; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.*

*God's love for Gentiles as well as Hebrews. Jesus came into this world, died and lived again, for both Hebrews and Gentiles.

Personal Application

Fill in the blanks

17. *A beautiful picture of God's character is the kinsman-redeemer. The Hebrew word for kinsman-redeemer is gaal, "the one who has a right to redeem" (pg. 60). God provided a Redeemer, His only Son, Jesus Christ, who paid the price for our sins, setting us free from them. He bought us with His blood, allowing us to become the bride of Christ. Please copy Romans 3:23-25a and 1 John 1:7b, 9-10.*

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. The blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

18. *Before the Hebrew wedding ceremony (often a year earlier) there is a betrothal. It is a legal transaction where the dowry (bride price) is agreed on and paid. In Ruth's case, the redemption price was paid by Boaz before witnesses. This pictures our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, paying the price for His bride, the Church (believers who have personally received Christ's gift of redemption). Please copy 1 Peter 1:18-19. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life, handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

19. *Just prior to the wedding ceremony, the bride waits at her home for the groom to appear and take her to his home where there is a wedding feast prepared. Our groom Jesus Christ will return for us and take us to His home. The Bible speaks of the home He is preparing for us and the wedding feast we will share with Him there (John 14:1-4; Revelation 19:5-10).*

20. *Between the redemption and the wedding ceremony is the betrothal period in which we are Jesus Christ's purchased possession. Our Redeemer has set us free from sin to serve Him. We are no longer servants of the prince and power of this world, Satan (Galatians 5:1-5).*

God's wondrous love reached down to Ruth and drew her out of a pagan culture into His family of true believers. His love has reached your heart and mine. He is drawing us to serve Him as true believers, who share His love and truth with others. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit, the righteousness for which we hope. You, my brothers [and sisters] were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:1a, 5, 13a). Do this while we await the return of Christ to bring us home to be with Him.

Exercise: *Ask God to reveal to you the things in your life that do not honor Him. List them, confess them, and ask Him to empower you to remove or change them.*

**Go over the exercise and encourage participants to do it.*

***Invite anyone who would like to make certain their relationship with the Lord to stay and talk with you after the meeting ends.*

Prayer