

Lesson Five

Ruth

~ Hope and Happy Endings ~

Lesson 5 of 6

hope.
WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

La Mirada Christian Church

www.LaMiradaChurch.com ~ 562-943-2213 ~ Jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com

Podcast of Lessons available at www.DwellingRichly.Podbean.com

Discussion Questions

~ Looking Back on Lesson Four ~

1. Have you ever done a study on Job before? Did you learn anything new or surprising in this study?
2. Share your answer to question #8 from the Psalm 8:2 at the top of page 142.
3. What truths about God did you find in Job chapters 4-5 (question #2 page 145)
4. On page 149 we read about some really honest struggles and the way Job and David responded. What did you observe in these verses?
5. Did you think Bildad's words of advice and conclusions about how things could play out accurate? Why or why not? (pg 150 question 11.d.)
6. What insights or thoughts did you have from Job's statement "I know that my Redeemer lives..." from your answer on page 156 #7?
7. What verse did you select to memorize and why? (page 157-158)
8. Have you experienced the apparent double-mindedness that we saw in Job's words? How did you respond after question #8 on page 160?
9. Have a group member read Hebrews 12:1-11 C.S. Lewis wrote: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." How did you respond to this quote on page 166 #11
10. How did you respond to the final prompt on page 167? Share your answers with the group.

"My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

by Edward Mote, 1797-1874

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, His covenant, and blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne!
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Hope Study Teaching Notes

Chapter Four Review: Our Hope Through Suffering

~ Lesson Five Introduction ~

Scripture Focus: Ruth

Welcome to this study through the wonderful book of Ruth. Ruth's story is beautiful and unique in the body of Scripture:

- There are only two books in the Bible that are named after women and Ruth is one of them.
- There are only five books in the Bible which are read in their entirety on Jewish holy days and Ruth is one of them
- There are only five women named in the genealogy of Christ, and guess what? Ruth is one of them!

Ruth is a rare women of great impact and worth in the Bible and worthy of our time to understand and appreciate as her story directly connects to us as followers of Jesus. Ruth is a gentile (not a Jew) and not only that, but she was a Moabitess – a cursed and hated nation. She is known for her kindness, loyalty and faith. Her story weaves together God's plan to continually "bless those who bless Him" and brings us moving reminders of where our hope lies.

The story of Ruth will remind you that your heavenly heritage trumps your earthly heritage. Her story will remind you of how deeply God values kindness and loyalty. You'll find joy and hope in recalling the power of redemption and sacrifice.

In addition, I trust that through this study you'll see the exciting story of love and hope woven through the genealogy of Jesus. Yes. The genealogy. You know, that part of the chapter we tend to skip? That list of hard-to-pronounce-names we stumble through? Those never-ending "begats" that we'd like to ignore? You will love them! At least I hope you will.

In writing this study I actually found myself giddy as I connected so-and-so's name through the generations and realized that his descendants eventually begat someone so pivotal. It's really quite thrilling to see!

We're going to kick off Ruth's story with the end. And the end is really just another beginning.

1. Read Matthew 1:1-17 After reading verse seventeen, stand up and shout, "Tah-Dah!" Just kidding, but actually, I do feel like that after reading this! Now go back and read re-read the genealogy and underline in the names of the women listed then write their names here:

- a. _____ (v3)
- b. _____ (v5a)
- c. _____ (v5b)
- d. _____ (v6 not by name but by implication)
- e. _____ (v16)

The genealogy mentions five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba ("her that had been the wife of Urias"), and Mary. Not only is this unusual in a Jewish genealogy, but all of them had a tarnished reputation in some way or another. Tamar had her children by acting as a prostitute. Rahab was a prostitute before she joined the Israelites. Ruth was of Moab, a hated people in scripture. Bathsheba

had an adulterous affair with David. Mary, though pure, was with child out of wedlock. Rahab and Ruth were also Gentiles; something a Jew would not expect in the line of the Messiah. Certainly, the grace of God is displayed in this record and is a reminder that His grace is for all.

Do you ever struggle with doubting that God could use you, bless you, fix you after all you feel you have done wrong in your life? Do you know someone who struggles with this? Satan, as we have seen over and over again throughout this “Lessons in Hope” study, is dedicated to keeping you in this mindset. But God wants us to renew our mind and have the mind of Christ. He wants us to be daughters of Truth and Light not children of lies and darkness.

Like we learned from Job’s story (Lesson Four in this Hope study) we may never know the reasons for our hardship, our struggle, but we can be assured of this: the course of history is truly “His story.” Our plans and our trials are small in comparison to His grand Plan. “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (Ecc 3:11)

Let our time together in this study affirm in your heart this truth. Let this study equip you to offer words of encouragement and wisdom from God’s Word to those He brings into your life. (“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Prov 25:11)

~ Lesson Five – Day One ~

The Book of Ruth

There are only two books in the Bible that are named for women: Ruth and Esther. The story of Ruth’s life is one of the most touching reminders of God’s grace in entire Bible. It’s only four chapters long, and because it reads so easily as a story we’re going to take our first day to simply read through the book. This will give you the big picture for this story as well as alert you to details you may not see if we just began by digging in verse by verse. As you read you’ll take notes also. Write a few notes for each chapter. Here’s a guide to the kind of notes that will be helpful when we begin our study tomorrow:

- 1) The names of God used throughout the story.
- 2) What does the passage reveal about who God is?
- 3) Where is this passage taking place and with whom? Noting the “who/what/when/where/why” of a passage is a simple way to keep things organized as you read.

You can read from your Bible and take notes in your journal or on notebook pages. But, if possible, print the text of Ruth with wide margins so you can read and take notes while you read. Ruth is an easy read and should take you about 25 minutes at a relaxed pace to read through. Have your notes handy as you meet with your discussion group. Highlight at least four questions, comments or observations you made in your read-through and be prepared to share these with your group.

~ Lesson Five – Day Two ~

Ruth 1:1-4 Part 1 of 2

If I told you that my relative kept her child in a closet and only let him see the light of day through a small opening in a locked window, that she fed him scraps of food, and never let him speak above a whisper, you would be horrified. But if I told you that my relative was a Jew living in 1934 during the reign of Hitler and she was hiding to save her child and herself from concentration camps, you'd shift your thoughts. Understanding the times surrounding a person's story will give you a greater insight. Let's begin with that kind of openness to understanding Ruth's story. We'll need to go back a ways to grasp what's going on...

Are you ready? Let's study!

1. Read Ruth 1:1-2 then read the helpful verses with each question to give you the big picture. Bring out your Bible map and find the locations mentioned as well.
 - Read Judges 3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1 and 21:25 -- Who is ruling the land and what was life like during this time period?

From Ruth 1:1-2 what was happening in the land?

Where were the people mentioned living?

Interesting Note: Bethlehem is "beit+lechem" in Hebrew which means "house of bread." Therefore this verse is a pun since it says there was a "famine" in the "house of bread." Later in Scripture, this town is also referred to as the "City of David." We'll see the reason for this at the very last chapter, verse and word in this book. (no peeking... just kidding, you should have already read the whole book!)

What were their names? (The man, wife and sons' names)

Man: _____ means "my God is king"

Wife: _____ means "pleasant"

Son #1: _____ means "sickness/weakling"

Son #2: _____ means "consumptive/destruction"

They traveled from where to where?

_____ to _____

You noted above that this was during a time when God's people were ruled by Judges – not kings. A quick overview of Old Testament periods takes us from the time of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob plus Joshua through Moses) to the period of Judges when the Jews didn't honor God then to the time of

the Kings (Saul, David, Solomon) and divided kingdom (Rehoboam/Jeroboam through Zedekiah/Hoshea). Ruth is set during the time of the Judges and again, to fully understand the power of this story – which we know ends not only happily, but triumphantly since from Ruth our own savior, Jesus, is born – we need to understand the background. That’s going to take us even further back...

From the opening two verses of the book of Ruth the entire story is set, but you’ll miss the drama if you miss the background. Famine...husband leaves to find food for his family...travels to another country. He’s just looking out for his family, right?

2. Read Genesis 19:30-38 (not a nice story) Summarize basically what happens in this account:

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So, the Moabite people come from the disgusting and incestuous relations of Lot and his daughters. The descendants of this evil union become bitter enemies of Abraham. They are cursed by God.

3. Read Deuteronomy 23:3-6 The Ammonites and Moabites continued to be enemies of God and His people, so what does God declare against them in this passage?

|

4. THIS IS IMPORTANT...DON’T SKIP THIS ANSWER! Take note from Deuteronomy the length of time God says the Moabites will be forbidden. How many generations is the curse?

5. According to Deut 23:4, for what two reasons did God curse the Moabites? (Also, super duper important! Don’t skip this one!)

| 1)

| 2)

- 3) Read Ruth 1:1-3 (especially verse 3) Elimelech (“el-ee-meh-leck” or “ee-lim-el-eck”) takes his wife and sons out of the famine-stricken land – the Promised Land – and journeys to Moab. A cursed land of a cursed people. Why is this a cursed land? Read the following and note why God cursed Moab:

| Numbers 22:1-12

| Numbers 25:1-3

6. Deut 23:6 – God admonishes the Israelites not to do what with the Ammonites or Moabites?

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And yet, if you do your studies, something exciting is revealed. We read a turn in the stories that reminds us not only of God’s sovereignty, but ultimately that **true hope is found in Him!** Hang in there, we’ll get to that part soon!

~ Lesson Five – Day Three ~

Ruth 1:1-4 Part 2 of 2

(Continued from Day Two)

In addition, the Moabites worshiped the god Chemosh to whom they offered live child sacrifices. This was an evil disgusting people whose ways were condemned over and over again by God.

And yet, Elimelech leaves his homeland the “house of bread” and travels to this accursed land of the people who had refused his ancestors bread and water (Deut 23:4-5). Would a man who truly believes that His God is King abandon his people at the time of famine?

7. Do you think he was leaving from faith or fear? Why or why not?

Remember Elimelech’s name meant “my God is King” and yet, was he acting as though he believed this? In the Jewish commentaries the rabbis translate his name to mean: “kingship is due to me.” He is leaving the blessed land and taking his family to the cursed land. Currently his homeland is under judgment through the famine, but why leave? Why not trust God to bless and deliver right there in the midst of the trial? There seems to be a disconnect between his name and his behavior, but perhaps he had a sense of entitlement instead of submission and humility before God. Which explains why he departs the blessed land and dies in the cursed.

When God called and set apart His people, He described exactly how He expected them to live. The essentials are outlined in the Ten Commandments and the details are recorded throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

8. Read Leviticus 26:3-4 Who causes famine? _____

9. If you’re under judgment (famine) from God what should you do?

But Elimelech doesn’t, does he? Instead of staying and repenting through God’s judgment, Elimelech “sojourns” or “went to live for a while” in Moab. Interesting to note that the Hebrew phrase for where Elimelech goes is not “land of Moab” but “field of Moab.” Implying that he was intending to set up for a while and grow crops. This isn’t a short visit, is it?

10. Read Ruth 1:4 What do Elimelech's sons do? And with whom?

Now, you and I have an advantage here. Just like in our reading through of the book of Job, we know the end of the story. We can see the big picture. But for a moment let’s just read without that knowledge and see the situation as these characters would have seen it. These sons marry women from a cursed land in direct violation against God’s law. Don’t marry those evil people. They’ll keep your heart from me.

While Solomon - a direct descendant of Ruth - lived well after this time period, his story is a vivid reminder of why God said "No" to marrying women from this idolatrous nation:

11. Read 1 Kings 11:1-9 What does Solomon do and what was the consequence/punishment from God?

12. Read Ruth 1:4-5

How long had they lived in Moab? _____

Then what happens?

Foodless...Fatherless...Familyless – Naomi has been through a famine, the death of her husband and father to her sons and now, without sons she has no prospects for a family to continue. Hard enough in our culture today for a woman to suffer such losses, but in Naomi's day she was done. Completely emptied of all that could fill her life with promise and blessing, by man's standards it's over for her.

The consequences of Elimelech's unbelief are severe. Naomi is left with three graves, two daughters-in-law, and no way to provide for herself or these Moabite women. And yet, we know that God indeed will provide, and His provision will be a most tender and gracious kind. For now, however, we'll close today's study here. Let's pause to reflect on two points:

- 1) God has set restrictions on our behavior for our benefit and blessing.
- 2) When we break His laws He still provides a way for our redemption.

Where are you today in your walk with God? Is God calling you to repent? Take time today and do what Elimelech should have done: reflect on your situation and if you are under discipline from God, repent! Don't run from God's hand of discipline. Take shelter in Him and ask Him to forgive your sins and to bless you as you are willing to live for Him.

~ Lesson Five – Day Four ~

Ruth 1:6-22 Part 1 of 2

Naomi is of God's chosen people and yet she and her husband chose to reject His discipline seeking instead to find a way even in the most forbidden of places. Like a prodigal child running away from the protection and responsibilities of life with the father, the Elimelech family had attempted to run from God. Tragedy strikes and we see God's hand of judgment against the family. But the story begins to turn and the turning is as a result of the kindness and loyalty of the most unlikely of people: A Moabite.

1. Read Ruth 1:6a – What news comes to Naomi's ears?

This is the first time the name of God is mentioned. Note that it is the YHVH name of God – The "I Am" name given to Moses from the burning bush when Moses asked God, "Who should I say is sending me to Pharaoh?" This is the personal name of God that reminds us of His desire to be in relationship with us.

As you read, it is interesting to understand what is recorded and what is done. Interesting also though, is what is NOT said or done. For example, Naomi hears that the Lord had "given them food" back home.

2. What does this indicate that Naomi is interested in?

Food or Faithfulness to God? FOOD. She wants to return to the land for food not for fellowship with God. Again, her priorities, like her deceased husband's are off. Am I being harsh on Naomi?

3. Read Isaiah 55:7 – What is the plea of the prophet here?

We're asked to return to a "Who" not a "what." Return to God, THEN you get the blessing of food, land, peace, etc. Naomi's decision to go back home was the right one. But her focus is wrong. I don't think this is a harsh assessment of Naomi. If she had had right motives the book of the Bible might have been named "Naomi" instead of Ruth. But Ruth is the one who rises above and does the ultimate act. Naomi should have known better. Naomi was from the land of Promise and of the people of Promise. She should have acted accordingly.

4. Read Ruth 1:67 – Hope for Naomi! After hearing of the food she prepares to do what and with whom?

Good job, Naomi! THEY prepare to return "home" from Moab. She's bringing her daughters-in-law to the Promised Land!

5. Read Ruth 1:8-9 A Shift. A second thought? What does Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to do?

Remember, where is Naomi heading? Home, and not just any home, the home of the Promised land and to the people of the Promise. Where is she leaving? A cursed land and a cursed people. Why on earth would she insist that these two Moabite women should stay in this land of cursing? Why not keep them with her? Think about possible motivations Naomi might have in saying this. Write your ideas here:

Be prepared to share your thoughts with your group.

Naomi is clearly out. Of. Hope. Devastated by the losses she's suffered, she has not kept her eyes on the God of the Promise. While she hears about what the I Am has done for the land (v6) she is not trusting what He could do in her life.

I have shared in our previous studies of my own lack of hope that used to define my life. In a broken marriage to an abusive alcoholic husband, infertile and lonely, I had all but lost hope for me on a personal level in my own life. I knew of hope – God's hope – in the big picture, but for me personally in the smallness of my little life I was on the edge of despair.

I will say this for Naomi, at least she's on the right road.

6. Re-read Ruth 1:7 On road is she heading? (Not a specific name, just the general idea.)

The journey from Moab to Judah was about 60 miles – a two, maybe three-day journey. At least she was heading in the right direction albeit for wrong motives.

Our "Lessons in Hope" study began with an encounter on a road. Do you remember? In Lesson One we read of the two disciples and their walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus and the encounter they had on that road. God intervened and turned their hearts back to the place of promise where they would declare their remarkable meeting with the resurrected Lord. Naomi is about to embark on a road that will take her from the land and experiences of despair to a land that will ultimately bring complete restoration. But she still needs an encounter and little does she know, but she's trying to let go of the very person who will be an instrument of restoration in her life.

7. Read Ruth 1:11-15 Summarize what takes place in these verses:

8. Review Ruth 1:8, and 11-12 How many times does Naomi urge Orpah and Ruth to return?

Does this number seem significant to you? Where else in Scripture do we read of three urgings for the wrong thing? (Hint: Matthew 26:69-75)

There is no direct correlation in the text to connect the account of Peter's three denials to Naomi's three urgings, however I found it interesting! In fact, re-read Matt 26:75 and note the word used to describe Peter's weeping: _____

Keep that word in mind as we read on. So interesting!

~ Lesson Five – Day Five ~

Ruth 1:6-22 Part 2 of 2

(Continued from Day Four)

In verses 11-13 of chapter one, Naomi paints a ridiculous scenario as she tries to spell out how futile the future is for her daughters-in-law. I've often thought that if criminals were to spend the same amount of mental energy they use in plotting their schemes and apply that energy to getting a legitimate job then they'd be millionaires! Do you see that same mindset here with Naomi? God promises so much good and abundance and blessing and promise to His people. Why not spend our energies in attempting to fathom the potential of God's blessing than in spinning a crazy scenario of ridiculousness?

9. Read Ephesians 3:20 - Our God is the same yesterday, today and forever and while these words were written about Him many centuries after Naomi lived, they were true of Him in her lifetime as well as in yours. Write Ephesians 3:20 here:

10. Re-read Ruth 1:14-15
What does Orpah do?

What does Ruth do?

A kiss and a cling. Another interesting parallel to the New Testament.

11. Read Matthew 26:47-49 – Summarize this passage:

While not a kiss of betrayal, Orpah still kisses Naomi goodbye, in effect betraying her own future. Rather than embracing the potential future in the land of Promise she returns to “her people and her gods.” Ouch. Her gods? Horrid. Her gods were the child-sacrifice demanding disgusting gods known for their vile requirements. Orpah misses the out on the promise of God as she shows her preference for the practices of her gods. What about you? Perhaps you feel horror at Orpah’s choice, and yet are you prone to abandon the unknown for the known even though the known is not God’s best?

Ruth on the other hand, clings to Naomi. Where else do we find this word “cling” in the Bible?

12. Read Genesis 2:24 Write the verse here:

Depending on your translation you have the word “be united” or “cling.” In Hebrew, this word is **וַיִּדְבַּק** (weh-day-back) meaning “and shall cleave” and is a beautiful word picture of full and complete connection with the provision of God and His desire to establish “home.” The letter **ב** means house and is in the word for cleave! Do you see it there? So cool!

So Ruth clings to Naomi and in so doing says in effect, “I’m going to make my house with you.” Maybe she even knows that the place to where they’re returning is indeed the “house of bread” Beth(house)lehem(bread). Whether or not she knows, she is surely leaving the known for the unknown, the fields of the familiar for the road of risk.

But it gets better. Ruth speaks the rich and famous words that have stood through the millennia to represent the truest of devotion and the paragon of godliness:

13. Read Ruth 1:16-17 Write Ruth’s beautiful covenant promise here:

List the promises she makes:

14. Has Ruth become a believer in YHVH – The Lord? _____ Why or why not do you think?

“Church is just a place where a bunch of hypocrites go to make themselves feel better.” Someone once said to me. “I can’t stand Christians. They’re so fake. They say one thing and do another.” The reality is – she’s right to some degree. Identifying myself as a follower of Christ – a Christian – isn’t a statement about myself and my worthiness as much as it is a statement about God and His. Christians are not unique in their hypocrisy. All faiths have their hypocrites. Judaism is no exception. Case and point: Naomi.

She was actually a weak and hypocritical example of her faith. She was hardly a testimony of faithfulness much less a missionary for her Jewish faith in allowing her sons to marry Moabites or in urging her now widowed daughters-in-law to stay in a pagan land or in her lack of faith in YHVH to provide for her upon her return. Perhaps, however, in the decade that Ruth lived with Naomi she heard Naomi recite the Shema? The Shema is the daily Scripture recited by observant Jews. It is so called because the first word, “Hear” is the Hebrew word Shema which means to hear, listen, and do.

15. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 What could Ruth have gleaned from the daily recitation of this Scripture?

Perhaps she observed the feasts as ordained by God? Perhaps she had the outward signs of faith even though when her life is marked with tragedy, she shows a lack of depth. I hope this is a reminder for each of us that in spite of our lack of faith, the world is still seeking and God still will be found. We don’t have to be a perfect testimony to point people to Jesus! Never forget this....and don’t let Satan speak otherwise to you. Naomi was imperfect, and yet God used her. Wait for it...we’ll get there.

16. Read Ruth 1:18-22 Summarize the passage here:

“I went away full...I’ve returned empty.” Naomi and her husband had left Bethlehem a decade ago with the false hope that Moab would be the land of prospering.

17. Read Deuteronomy 30:19-20 After outlining His expectations for living as children of God, the LORD says what to His people (sum up from these verses):

Naomi wants to be called Mara - “bitter” now instead of Naomi - “pleasant.”

Oh, Naomi -er, “Mara.” So melodramatic! You’re alive. You’ve made the journey from Moab to Bethlehem. You have a beautiful and loyal daughter-in-law. And yet still you cling to your past and your

bitterness and your loss. Not only that, but you want to be defined by it. Contrast her story with that of Job's! Job gets assaulted by Satan and literally loses everything and still he says, "Yet He slay me still I will trust in Him!"

Naomi has yet to acknowledge what God has actually done. Her husband abandoned God and God's people, her sons married pagans, and she is now returning widowed and childless – but. She. Is. Returning! Instead of wanting to be called "bitter" why not be called "God is providing for me in spite of myself because I have this wonderful daughter-in-law and I'm home in the place where God can surely bless me because I'm willing to repent and serve Him." That's kind of long, I admit, but I'm sure there's a Hebrew word that she could have chosen! But no. Naomi's heart is still far from God. She is home in body only – not in heart.

Sister, where are you today? Are you heading back to Moab? Or are you embracing Bethlehem? Is your life being defined by a willingness to totally and completely cling to God and His ways even if you honestly have no idea what is on the road ahead? Or are you defined by your loss and grief and your need for the familiar ways from your past? Take a moment as we close today to seek the Father in this. Ask Him to search your heart and reveal to you any tendency you may have to deny Him and avoid the road ahead He may have for you.

I'm praying today that you and I will become women defined by our desire to dwell in the house of the Lord and feast on His bread of life...no matter the cost.

p.s. Chapter one concludes with words of "emptiness", "affliction", "misfortune" and "bitterness." Not a very happy scene. And yet....

18. Read Ruth 1:1 and Ruth 1:22 Note what events are in stark contrast in the opening of this story and in the closing of this chapter...

_____ and _____

We'll pick up here in our next lesson.

~ Lesson Five – Day Six ~

Ruth chapter 2 part 1 of 2

The book of Ruth is set right after the book of Judges in our Christian Bible. However, in the Jewish Bible, Ruth is set among four other books which are called the Megillot (Scrolls) and are a part of the third section of the Jewish Bible called the Kethuvim. The books of the Megillot are (in this order): Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. They are set apart because they are each read aloud on the occasion of the feast days in the annual cycle. Yawn?

Well, this tradition is actually helpful to our understanding as we read the next chapters in Ruth which take place during the barley harvest. Why is Ruth read aloud on this special feast day?

We're going to need to do a little background digging so we can reeeeeeally grasp the super amazing provision of God here in this sweet story of love and devotion.

When calling out His people, God tells them how he wants them to behave toward others and how He wants them to interact with Him. He sets up "appointed feasts" (mo-a-deem) for Israel to observe. As you read, perhaps your Bible has this passage divided and labeled to make it more clear what these feasts are. There are seven altogether with three appointed feasts in the first month (Aviv/Nissan) one in the third month (Sivan) and three in the seventh month (Tishri).

1. Read Leviticus 23 – Using the following verse guides, write the names of each of these feasts and when they are to be observed:

NAME OF FEAST	WHEN OBSERVED
v5: _____	_____
v6: _____	_____
v10: <u>FirstFruits or Wave Offering</u>	<u>The day after the Sabbath following Passover</u>
v15: <u>Feast of Weeks</u>	<u>After counting off seven weeks after the Sabbath following Passover</u>
v23: _____	_____
v28: _____	v27: _____
v34: _____	_____

2. Read Ruth 1:22 During which feast season have Naomi and Ruth arrived?

Now are you seeing the specialness?

3. Read Ruth 2:1 What words/phrases are used to describe this man?

➤ From the clan of? _____

➤ A man of? _____

*In the Hebrew this word is "chayil" and means valor, strength, wealth, capability
Proverbs 31:10 "A wife of noble character who can find? – Guess what the Hebrew word is here for "wife of noble character?" – eshet chayil. Boaz is uplifted as an ultimate man in a similar way that the Proverbs 31 Woman is lifted up as the ultimate woman.*

➤ Whose name was? _____ - His name means: "in him is strength"

4. Read Ruth 2:2 What does Ruth ask to do?

Read Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19 What did God’s law instruct landowners to do?

For whom are they to do this?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5. Do you think Ruth was aware of this law? Why or why not?

6. What does this law say about God’s:

➤ Character:

➤ Priorities:

➤ Expectations for us:

I have heard many describe the difference between the Old Testament and the New

Testament as “God is mean and harsh in the Old” but the God of the New they describe as gentle and kind. Actually, in reading the Law I find this to be a fallacy and a sad one that causes us to distance ourselves from God. If God is the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) then there is no difference in the character of the God from 3000 years ago and now.

In fact, loving kindness is a central characteristic of God and He outlined how His people

would be defined by kindness from the very moments He called and set them apart. Think of this law we’ve just read about from Leviticus.

In harvesting the fields God makes special provision for the “least of these” by instructing His people to leave to the poor the corners of the field and the grains that fall from the harvesting.

That is a good God - a kind God.

7. What is your view of God? Have you ever thought that the God of the Old Testament was a mean God? The Strict One. The Harsh God? If so, how has this study impacted your view of God?

8. What examples from Scripture could you use to redirect someone who you hear speak wrongly about God?

What benefit is there to you having a wrong view of God? None. Unless you're Satan! Satan wants us to think as many incorrect things about God's character as he can! Pray as you close your study time the words of Psalm 119:104 and write them here:

Lesson Five – Day Seven ~

Ruth chapter 2 part 2 of 3

(continued from Day Six)

In the sixth grade I was once again the new kid in my school. Because of my dad's work I had moved six times since kindergarten and now, as a 6th grader, I was starting over again. As out-going and friendly as I was – and I really was! – I still felt timid and shy and worried. Sixth graders can be a mean, petty bunch and starting again was making me feel unsure and weak and tired of it all. I wanted to blend in, keep my head down and just come and go unnoticed – and yet, I wanted to belong. I wanted to connect, have a friend and be a friend in return. But starting out in a school where most of these kids had been together since kindergarten was not easy and to make it worse, I didn't get to start school on the first day. I started a week late. I walked down the echoing hallway into room 23 with a transfer slip from the office that may as well have read: "This is Jana Garrett*. She's the new kid. Be sure to have all the kids stare at her and snicker and give her mean glares if she wants to sit near them." Sigh.

I made it to room 23. Mr. Garber read the note, seated me in a wobbly, lift-top desk near the front, and I slumped trying to will the powers of invisibility to come over me even as I felt the stares of the students behind me. Soon enough the recess bell rang and I took my time so I'd leave the room last behind the pushing swarm of giggling 12 year-olds.

I slipped out and stood by the classroom door surveying the playground. Kids bolting for the handball courts, running for the monkey bars, and already untangling ropes to jump in trios scattered across the blacktop. I walked slowly out from under the shade and covering of the hallway awning and made my way to the blue fiberglass-topped tables to eat my snack.

As I sat down and reached into my brown lunch sack, I felt the table shudder as a big girl sat down next to me. So much for disappearing. "Hey," she said looking right into my face.

"Hey," I said weakly looking up and then back to my apple.

“You’re new. My name is Noelle. I saw you come in today. I was in the back. But I saw you and you looked a little freaked out so I figured I’d say hey and let you know it’s ok. Stick with me. We can be friends. I was new last year. It’s a good school. There’s some mean kids – there always are. But there’s a lot of good ones too and well, anyway, if you want, we can be friends.”

I don’t think I have to tell you what relief and peace came over me that day at the lunch tables of Weathersfield Elementary School. But the openness that Noelle showed me that day led to a year of friendship that helped me grow in kindness and strength that year. I gain a best friend and a lifelong appreciation for the blessings that come from reaching out in kindness to others. Perhaps you have experienced a kind act like this? Perhaps you’ve reached out in kindness to someone? Our story of Ruth is one of loyalty and faith but is marked significantly by kindness.

The Hebrew word translated “kindness” is “chehsed.” It is found explicitly three times – in the beginning, middle and end of the book - and implied throughout the story. As we continue, make note of the acts of kindness mentioned in the book and perhaps highlight them in your Bible as you read.

9. Read Ruth 2:3 How does this verse characterize Ruth’s ending up in the field of her clansmen?

Are there any accidents with God? That Ruth “happens” to “find herself” working in the field of none other than her relative through Naomi is a confirmation of God’s hand of blessing on her life! It only gets better from here! Read on...

10. Read Ruth 2:4 Note the start contrast of this greeting and the greeting of Naomi by the women back in Ruth 1:19-20 What differences do you see?

11. Read Ruth 2:5-7 With this brief report, Boaz’ foreman give him the basics of who Ruth is. Based on his statement, how does he characterize Ruth?

12. Read Ruth 2:8-9 Summarize these words of Boaz:

13. Read Isaiah 55:1-7 What is God’s call to those who will follow Him? What similarities to you read in this prophecy and Boaz’s words to Ruth?

Boaz is a “type of Christ.” He is pictured throughout the story in this way and this is just the beginning. Remember the setting – they time period in which the story of Ruth takes place? It is during the period of time when God’s people were constantly cycling around and around from obedience to rebellion to punishment and discipline to repentance and back to obedience. Boaz stands as a man of strength and consistency in this time. Even as he implies that the other men in the field might do her harm, he assures her of her place and safety in his field.

14. We’ll read more of how Boaz is a type of Christ, but for now, what Christ-like characteristics are you already noticing in Boaz? List at least three here:

1)

2)

3)

~ Lesson Five – Day Eight ~

Ruth chapter 2 part 3 of 3

(continued from Day Seven)

15. Read Ruth 2:10 How would you characterize Ruth’s response to Boaz’s kindness?

How does she still identify herself? As a _____

She’s still the “new kid” and yet as exemplified by Boaz, and prophesied by Isaiah: “Ho everyone that thirsteth...” Everyone is welcome in God’s family. Everyone.

16. Read Ruth 2:11-12 Boaz has heard of Ruth and what she had done. What does he hope will happen to her as result of she has done (v12)?

17. Look again at 2:12 – This verse is perhaps the summary of the theme of the entire story! What does Boaz state that Ruth has done?

Read Psalm 46 and note the similarities in Ruth’s behavior:

18. Read Ruth 2:2 and Ruth 2:13 What had she hoped for in v2 and what has she found (v13)?

19. Read Ruth 2:14-16 List examples of the extraordinary care and kindness of Boaz in what he does and in the instructions he gives his workers:

20. Read Luke 6:36-42 What principle does Jesus speak of that is exemplified by Ruth and what she is now receiving?

21. Read Ruth 2:17-23 Ruth returns home and relates the day's amazing events to her. Summarize the events here:

22. What does Naomi say of Boaz in verse 20?

"he is one of our _____

23. From which harvests was Ruth able to glean?

(v23) _____ and _____

24. If you recall from your notes about the Appointed Feasts (Moadim) in Leviticus 23, how many

“full weeks” was it from barley to wheat harvest? _____ (Lev 23:15)

In the New Testament (Acts 2:1), this Feast of Weeks is known as Pentecost (penta = 50) – because there were 50 days to be counted during this time. This gives us a timeline for the story. Ruth gleaned seven weeks.

Over and over again we are encountering evidence of God’s kindness in establishing laws that would protect the weakest and most vulnerable in a society – from the very books that so many today use to try to justify their bad view of God as a brute out to kill and destroy those who don’t bend to His will.

My hope in our focus on the kindness of God is to equip you as you encounter people in your life who have a prejudice against the God of the Bible. And now, as we move into chapter three we’ll see even more evidence of God’s loving-kindness.

~ Lesson Five – Day Nine ~

Ruth chapter 3

What a change we’re now reading in the demeanor of Naomi! From emptied to being filled...She is a changed woman whose heart of bitterness is warming by the kindling of kindnesses...Ruth’s and now Boaz’s. And the realization that Boaz isn’t any ordinary landowner but providentially, THE best of landowners, a relative who is her kinsmen-redeemer.

A kinsmen-redeemer is not a concept we’re familiar with in the West. We need to understand what this means though in order to appreciate not just the grace of God in Naomi’s and Ruth’s immediate circumstances but the sovereignty of God through this relationship and what it means to you and me! Yes, you and I are directly benefitting from this story! It’s quite exciting! Let’s read on...

1. Read the following and answer: What responsibility did a kinsman-redeemer have according to these laws set by God?

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Leviticus 25:25-28

Leviticus 25:47-49

Numbers 35:19-21

As we continue in reading through Ruth remember that this is not just a history of Ruth's life but it points to a bigger plan and reminds us of the picture of Christ and our relationship with Him. In the following verses note the steps that Ruth takes to come into a deeper relationship with Boaz and note how this parallels the steps we must take as we draw to Christ. Note that unlike Naomi returning to her homeland for bread we must desire Christ not for what we can get from Him (bread/sustenance) but we must desire Christ. Period.

2. Read Ruth 3:1-5 Ruth prepares herself in five ways for Boaz. It may seem odd because it is not part of our culture, but set your western mindset aside and embrace the culture of Ruth's day. Naomi is telling Ruth to prepare herself as a bride. The imagery of a bride is used throughout the Bible to compare the church (the bride) to becoming ready for the return of Christ (the bridegroom)

List the five ways you read Ruth preparing herself and the corresponding way we should prepare ourselves for Christ:

1) Ruth 3:3a and 2 Corinthians 7:1

2) Ruth 3:3b and 1 John 2:20, 27

3) Ruth 3:3c, Isaiah 61:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 5:21

4) Ruth 3:3-4 and Hebrews 10:19-25 and John 4:24 (relates to our literal and spiritual position)

5) Ruth 3:5 and John 7:17 (speaks to her willingness to do what?)

3. And now it begins! Ruth is fully informed of what she needs to do in this culture to make this happen. And she sets out to do it. Do you feel the tension? The excitement and perhaps the doubt in Ruth's heart as she "approached quietly" to carry out this plan in the fields of Boaz?

Read Ruth 3:7-15 She does it all! How does Boaz respond? What ways does he demonstrate his integrity and honor toward Ruth?

4. In verse 10 we read once again that beautiful word: “kindness” And Boaz remarks that this kindness of Ruth’s is what in comparison to all the other acts of kindness she has previously shown... _____

5. In submitting to Boaz in this way Ruth’s action is counted as a kindness. Does that surprise you? Why or why not?

6. Read 3:15 again...What does Boaz give Ruth? _____

As a type of Christ again we see that Boaz goes above the requirements of the law. There is a traditional Jewish song called the “Dayenu.” At the Passover meal, called a Seder, Jewish families sing this song joyfully as they recount the many ways God has been more than enough in their lives. Boaz exemplifies this right here in verse 15 but all throughout the story! What-a-guy! Here’s the lyrics to the Dayenu:

Ilu hotzianu mi-mitzrayim (if He had taken us out of Egypt...)

Ilu natan lanu et ha-shabat (if He had given us the Sabbath...)

Ilu natan lanu eta ha-torah (if He had given us the Torah...)

Dai-yenu, dai-yenu, dayeinu!

Dai-yenu, dai-yenu!

It would have been enough! It would have been enough!

The concept of the song that is 15+ stanzas long and recounts the many, many abundant ways God has provided for Israel, is to be thankful for God’s kindness and to recognize that He has gone over and above all that we could ask or imagine.

You can find the Dayenu song on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/VtLKOcFwct4>

Or search YouTube for “Dayenu – Israeli Passover Songs”

Ruth and Naomi would have arrived back in Bethlehem not long after the Passover feast would have been observed. Recall that in Ruth 1:22 they arrived “as the barley harvest was beginning.” The barley harvest begins around two days after Passover.

It was a joyous occasion and a time of singing and preparations for the harvest. Boaz continues the spirit of happiness and rejoicing as we saw through his happy greeting of his men in 2:4, in his thoughtful attention to Ruth in 2:14 and now here in 3:15, Boaz is again a model of generosity and kindness.

As we close today think of ways God has been abundant in His kindness to you. Make a list here of at least 5 ways God has shown His grace and goodness to you. (Five is the number of grace and goodness in the Bible!)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Why not share this and encourage others? Take a photo of your list and share it on Facebook or Instagram. Tag me in your post! I can't wait to see it!

Not on social media? Send your photo to me at 562.755.4964 or Jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com

~ Lesson Five – Day Ten ~

Ruth chapter 4

Remember that this story is set during a time when “Israel had no king, and everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25). More often than not this meant NOT obeying God’s laws and not honoring God’s ways. This is why the period of time recorded in Judges is filled with the many times God’s people were under discipline. But Boaz and Ruth stand as shining examples of the rewards and lasting blessings that come when we are honorable in our ways toward God.

1. Read Ruth 4:1-12 In contrast to the times, instead of doing what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25) Boaz does what is right in God’s eyes. He’s careful to get his all right and do it legally. Review the following verses and note what specific actions he took:

4:1a He went to the _____ (this is where legal transactions took place.)

4:1b Ruth’s _____ - _____ comes by and Boaz gets the man to join him by the gate

4:2 Boaz took _____ of the elders to the gate also. Ten elders were required for a full court to make any legal proceedings official.

4:3-10 (What does Boaz do here in front of the witnesses?) _____

4:11 How do the witnesses respond? _____

Note especially the phrase in verse 11 – “may you be...famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the Lord gives you...” Indeed!

2. Read Ruth 4:13-22 The book of Ruth is well-known not only as a beautiful love story but as an amazing balanced work of fine literature. The story is balanced from the first through the final chapter in theme as well as words. In the Hebrew, the opening verses have the same number of words as the closing verses you just read. Take a moment to note any parallels from Ruth 1:1-5 to Ruth 4:13-22 Think about the who, when, where, details mentioned.

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3. Read Ruth 4:13 "...and the LORD enabled her to conceive..." What does this verse remind us of in terms of God's sovereignty?

What if Ruth had conceived from her first husband? Do you think Ruth was sad and worried about the thought of being childless? She was ten years without an heir, without hope and even in her move back to Bethlehem, she had no promise of marriage or children. And yet, God, in His time provided for her. What area of your life are you waiting on God to provide? After reading Ruth's story are you more willing to trust in God's plan and timing?

4. Read Psalm 37 and select a verse that will help you when your mind and heart fret about God's timing. Write your verse here:

5. Read Ruth 4:14 Which two people are mentioned in the story that they would become "famous?"

_____ and _____

Do they? How so?

6. Re-Read Ruth 4:1 What is the name of the man who was first in line to be Ruth's Kinsman-Redeemer? Hint: This is sort of a trick question. ;-)

7. What reason did this un-named man give for not wanting to be her kinsman-redeemer? Hint: Read 4:5-6 Write his exact words here:

*We're going to come back to this question in a minute! (So exciting!!!) ☺

8. Read Ruth 4:15 Naomi's friends say what about Ruth to Naomi?

In a culture that whose mark of prosperity was defined by sons and land this is a powerful statement!

9. What did Ruth and Boaz name their son? _____
His name means "servant" or more fully: "servant of the Lord"

10. Read Matthew 1:2-6 Highlight any names in the genealogy that also appear in Ruth 4:18-22

11. Read Deuteronomy 23:3-4 What is the prohibition the LORD spoke against the Ammonites and Moabites in verse three?

12. There are ten generations of names listed from Perez to David. How many generations were the Ammonites prohibited? _____ Guess what? Ruth is of the eleventh generation!
The next time you are tempted to skip a genealogy, remember this! Genealogies are helpful in seeing the amazing provision of God!

In Day Six of the study I asked you to outline the Feasts that the Lord ordained. These were described in Leviticus chapter twenty-three. The feasts were given by God to His people to commemorate miraculous deliverance (Passover), grateful Harvest (First-Fruits), the giving of the Law at Sinai and the blessing of harvest (Shavuot/Weeks), etc.. Every year the book of Ruth is read in to this day among observant Jews around the world during the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot in Hebrew and Pentacost in Greek). But why? Why read the book of Ruth?

13. Read Ruth 1:22 Does this give you a hint? Why do you think the book of Ruth is read on the first day of the Feast of Weeks?

14. Ok, I promised earlier that we'd come back to Ruth 4:6 - the statement of Mr. Not-So-Kinsman-Redeemer (NSKR for short). He was unwilling to redeem Ruth because he did not want to do what? (I know you probably already wrote it down earlier...but do it again here. I promise, this is really important!

15. Mr. NSKR didn't see the value in Ruth, didn't see a future in Ruth, didn't see a need for Ruth in his life, did he? What, by implication then, did he value? Hint: starts with "e" and ends with "state" (Ruth 4:6)

His _____ and by extension, his name.

The interesting thing to note is that by looking out for his estate and name he missed out on the greatest Estate and the legacy of having the greatest Name above all names descend from his line. In his shortsightedness this man, trying to protect his name gains the distinction of being unnamed. Mr. NSKR is never named in a chapter that repeatedly honors the names of the men who stepped up – even calling on God to make their names famous!

Dear Sister,

this is what I want you to grasp today:

This world,
that man,
that person may not treasure you,
may not see the hope in you, may not grasp your value,
but you have a Kinsman-Redeemer who does....

Jesus Christ.

Like Boaz who saw the beauty and future in Ruth, Jesus sees the beauty and future in you. Like Boaz who treasured and protected Ruth, Jesus – your kinsman-redeemer – treasures and protects you!

The book of Ruth begins with loss and emptiness.
No future. No hope.
But the story of Ruth ends with gain and fullness
It ends not only with a future but the ultimate future
the Ultimate Hope as it concludes with the name of David
the king who was a man after God's own heart and from whom
descends the Hope of the Nations –
all nations.

Like Ruth, you were bought with a price and your name cannot be blotted out from the Book of Life when you surrender fully to the Name that is above all names – Jesus Christ.

I am praying for you today that you will renew your love for Jesus, deepen your trust in His plan, and grow ever more faithful in surrendering to the one who knows you by name.

Until we meet again, know that you are loved and prayed for – by name.

Jennifer

A Story of Hope from Cathy Wells



I grew up without hope. I was born into a religious sect that did not put an emphasis on hope, but rules. I had heard of Jesus and even attended Sunday school, but by the time I finished high school I became an agnostic. I didn't care one way or the other. I knew deep in my heart that there was no God in heaven who was going to help someone like me. I was in so much pain. If there were a God, I would be happier because He wouldn't have all these bad things happening to me. I would have a better relationship with my mother. My father would not have left. My boyfriend wouldn't be abusing me. I wouldn't be addicted to various things to numb my pain.

I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior in August 2012. One month later I was introduced to a recovery ministry at my new church I started attending. Part of

this recovery ministry was that everyone broke up into small groups, called Open Share Groups. These groups are similar to what one would find at Alcoholics Anonymous, but the program I was in was a Christ-centered 12-step program. I was terrified to share. I wasn't what you would call a people person. I just didn't want anyone else knowing my problems, what's the point? Nobody would understand. But eventually I did. I started opening up and sharing with other believers in my Open Share Groups things that I was going through, things that were troubling me, things that were on my heart. Instead of receiving judgment, I received prayer. It didn't make the things that I was going through go away. But it gave me a feeling of joy – that other people took the time to listen to me and pray for me and direct me to God for answers. It gave me a resolve to hang in there, to hold on for another day, to never give up, and to stick to it. The feeling that eventually, everything is going to be okay if I let God be in control of my life and I answer and report directly to Him. The feeling of unexplained and unspeakable joy regardless of what I may be going through. That to me is hope – my very first experience with hope.

These verses mean so much to me and have helped me through a lot of tough, dark times: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." Romans 5:1-5

You are loved
AND
prayed for.