

Bible Stories for Adults

Ruth

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Opening

Gathering: When has someone personally shown God's love to you and how did it feel?

Today's Focus: God has called us to love and care for one another as He has first loved us.

Key Verses: *Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.* Ruth 1:16

Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. Ruth 4:14

Opening Prayer

Lesson

The Time of the Judges (*Judges 2:10-23*)

What command did Moses give to the Israelites about the people who lived in the Promised Land?

Deuteronomy 7:2-4 = Destroy them, do not intermarry – or be led away, then punished

How well did the Israelites remember and follow this command?

Judges 3:5-6 = Lived among other nations & intermarried & served their gods

How did God handle this?

Judges 2:14 = He punished with raiders & let enemies defeat them

How did God respond to Israel's cries? = *Shophet* - director, governor, savior, judge

Judges 2:16 = He raised up judges to save them

Did the judges have a lasting effect on Israel's faithfulness?

Judges 2:19 = After the judge died, they returned to evil & became more corrupt

Other than following other gods, did the people of Israel at least live good and moral lives?

Judges 21:25 = *In those days ... everyone did as he saw fit* - evil times

Elimelech's Family From Bethlehem (*Ruth 1:1-5*)

What do we learn about a family during the time of the judges? = E - *My God is king*, N - *pleasant*

Ruth 1:1-2 = Moved to Moab from Bethlehem (Ephrath) during famine (Gideon's time?)

What happened to this family in Moab?

Ruth 1:3-5 = Sons married Moabite women, all 3 men died

Besides the command not to intermarry, what other problem did Moabites in the family present?

Deuteronomy 23:3 = Descendants would be excluded for 10 generations

Going Home (*Ruth 1:5-13*)

Did Naomi stay in Moab the rest of her life?

Ruth 1:6-7 = No, she returned when she heard there was food in Judah

What did Naomi remember along the road?

Ruth 1:8-9 = That Orpah & Ruth were from Moab, not Judah - sent them back

How did Naomi use logic to send these daughters-in-law of ten years back home?

Ruth 1:10-13 = There were no more husbands for them through Naomi

What was this *levirate marriage* that Naomi was referring to? = *levir* is Latin for brother-in-law

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 (5-10) = Widows were to marry brother-in-law to carry on name

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Where You Go I Will Go (*Ruth 1:14-22*)

How well did this sensible logic work in getting these women to go back home?

Ruth 1:14-15 = Orpah reluctantly left, but Ruth *clung to her*

How did Ruth respond to Naomi's urging that has become a famous phrase of devotion?

Ruth 1:16-17 = She wouldn't leave the woman nor God she had met and loved

How did Naomi respond to Ruth's stubbornness?

Ruth 1:18-19 = She saw Ruth was truly dedicated so she let her come along

How happy was Naomi to see her friends after so many years? = Mara - *bitter*

Ruth 1:20-21 = She was too bitter about how God had mistreated her

What About Food? (*Ruth 2:1-3*)

How would two poor widows find food in Bethlehem? = Barley harvest was in the spring

Ruth 1:22, 2:2 = Glean (left-behind grain) the barley fields (only poor ate barley)

How would she be able to find a field where the owner would let her glean?

Leviticus 23:22 = Farmers were commanded by God to leave grain for poor to glean

Old Testament Harvesting

Harvesting grain in ancient Canaan took place in April and May (barley first, wheat a few weeks later)

1. Men cut ripened standing grain with hand sickles or pulled out of ground
2. Women bound the grain into sheaves
3. Gleaning - Stalks left behind were gathered
4. Sheaves were transported to the threshing floor - usually by donkey, sometimes by cart
5. Threshing - The grain was loosened from the straw by treading of cattle, by toothed threshing sledges or by the wheels of carts
6. Winnowing - Grain tossed in air so afternoon wind would blow away straw and chaff
7. Sifting - Grain was sifted to remove any leftover chaff, dirt, etc.
8. Grain was bagged for transportation and storage

Aren't You Lucky? (*Ruth 2:3*)

Whose field did Ruth happen to glean in?

Ruth 2:3, 1 = Boaz, a wealthy relative of her father-in-law's

Was it entirely by chance that Ruth happened upon Boaz's field?

Proverbs 20:24 = *A man's steps are directed by the Lord* - God led her there

A Friendly Relative (*Ruth 2:4-16*)

What did Boaz do when he learned that Ruth was gleaning in his field?

Ruth 2:4-9 = He offered her protection and refreshment

Did Boaz normally do this for strangers coming into his fields? = Ruth stayed humble & thankful

Ruth 2:10-13 = No, he did it in response to her reputation and what she had done

How else did Boaz go out of his way to help this poor Ruth?

Ruth 2:14-16 = Fed her lunch, told harvesters to leave grain for her

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A Fruitful First Day (*Ruth 2:17-23*)

- What did Naomi think of what Ruth was able to bring home that first evening? = *ephah* ~ 40 lbs
 - Ruth 2:17-19a = Someone nice obviously helped her to get so much
- Did Naomi know who Boaz was? = Kinsman-redeemer was in line for levirate marriage
 - Ruth 2:19b-20 = Yes, Ruth apparently didn't until now
- Did Boaz's kindness to Ruth go beyond the first day?
 - Ruth 2:21-23 = Yes, she gleaned in Boaz's fields through the barley & wheat harvests

Naomi's Concern (*Ruth 3:1-6*)

- What was Naomi's concern as harvest and their source of food were ending?
 - Ruth 3:1 = Not that she would be without food, but that Ruth needed a home
- What idea did Naomi come up with to solve this problem?
 - Ruth 3:2-4 = For Ruth to lay at Boaz's feet at night like a servant
- What did Ruth think about such a strange suggestion?
 - Ruth 3:5-6 = She obediently did whatever Naomi told her

Boaz's Surprise (*Ruth 3:7-18*)

- How did Ruth explain her actions when Boaz woke up and found her there?
 - Ruth 3:7-9 = She asked Boaz for protection from a kinsman-redeemer
 - Corner of garment* = Same word as *wings* in Ruth 2:12
- How did Boaz respond to this request by the young Ruth?
 - Ruth 3:10-13 = He was impressed by her uprightness, promised to get her redeemed
- How else did Boaz show concern for Ruth that night?
 - Ruth 3:14-15 = Let her stay the night, sent her before recognizable, sent with food
- What did Naomi think of what Boaz had done and promised?
 - Ruth 3:16-18 = She knew Boaz was a man of his word and would resolve it that day

The Kinsman-Redeemer (*Ruth 4:1-4*)

- What was the first thing Boaz did that morning? = Town gate was center of important activity
 - Ruth 4:1 = Went to the town gate to catch the kinsman-redeemer when he walked by
- Why else was it important for Boaz to be at the town gate?
 - Deuteronomy 25:7-10 = Where the elders were & where a kinsman-redeemer would say no
- What did Boaz present to the kinsman-redeemer and how did he reply?
 - Ruth 4:2-4 = There was land to be redeemed, He said yes
- What Jewish law was Boaz referring to?
 - Leviticus 25:25 = Land was to stay in the family, relatives were to buy (redeem)

Hidden Treasure (*Ruth 4:5*)

- What treasure came with the land that Boaz tried to present as a liability?
 - Ruth 4:5 = The widow of the man to whom the property belonged
- What parable of Jesus might Boaz's action remind you of?
 - Matthew 13:44 = Man who found a treasure, hid it again and bought the field to get treasure

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Always a Catch (*Ruth 4:6-12*)

- How did the kinsman-redeemer respond to this catch? = Ruth's first son would be Mahlon's son & heir
Ruth 4:6-8 = He backed out of the deal and told Boaz to buy the land
- How long did Boaz wait before laying claim to this land and Ruth?
Ruth 4:9-10 = He immediately formalized his claim
- How did the elders and witnesses accept Boaz's claim? = Israelites came from Rachel & Leah
Ruth 4:11-12 = They offered marriage blessings – Bethlehemites came from Perez's line

Naomi and the World are Blessed (*Ruth 4:13-22*)

- Besides being paid for the land, how else was Naomi blessed through Ruth's marriage to Boaz?
Ruth 4:13-16 = She was given a grandson to carry the family name
- Though interesting, what made Ruth's story important enough to become part of the Scripture?
Ruth 4:17 = Boaz and Ruth's son Obed was David's grandfather
- What other important Bible character descended from Ruth?
Matthew 1:1 = Jesus Christ

Jesus' Ancestry (*Matthew 1:11-17*)

- How could God allow a non-Jew to taint Jesus' ancestry? Were there any others?
Matthew 1:5 (Joshua 6) = Boaz's ancestor was Rahab - Canaanite prostitute at Jericho
- Were there any other scandalous women in Jesus' ancestry? = Tamar was Perez's mother
Matthew 1:3 (Genesis 38) = Tamar posed as a prostitute to trick father-in-law Judah
- Are any other women mentioned in Jesus' family tree? = Next week's lesson
Matthew 1:6 (2 Samuel 11) = Bathsheba; David had husband Uriah killed to get her
- What does this tainted ancestry remind us?
Galatians 3:26-29 = Jesus came to save the world, we are all heirs of Abraham
- Who is our kinsman-redeemer?
Galatians 4:4-7 = Jesus, sent by God specifically to redeem us

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. How do I act when I am all-alone and no one is watching?
(*Judges 17:6; Ruth 2:11-12; 2 Samuel 12:12; Psalm 44:21; 90:8; Matthew 6:1-18; Eph 5:1-21*)
2. For whom would I forsake everything to go where they go?
(*Ruth 1:16-17; Deut 31:6-8, 16-18; Proverbs 4:1-6; 27:10; Mark 10:28; Luke 5:11, 28*)
3. Who do I try to please or impress where I would make their god my god?
(*Ruth 1:16-17; 1 Kings 11:1-13; 2 Kings 17:7-20; Matthew 6:33; Mark 10:29-30*)
4. When have I gone out of my way to care for those in need?
(*Ruth 2:8-16; Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 10:40-42; 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37; 1:5-13*)
5. Do I see my part in God's overall plan?
(*Ruth 4:17-22; Matthew 1:1, 5-6; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 3:1-14*)