

Tapes For Growing Christians

Study Guide for
RUTH

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Lesson 1

Ruth 1:1-5

The Events Which Set the Stage for Ruth to Be Brought into the Nation of Israel and Become a Link in the Lineage of Christ

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Believers should not make decisions based only on immediate circumstances.
2. Believers should not make decisions based only on human reasoning.

practical application

1. Remember, the decisions you make will make you.

questions

1. Describe the conditions of the nation Israel during this time (political, economic, spiritual).
2. What is the deeper meaning of famine in the Old Testament?
3. Why is the Book of Ruth considered an oasis in a desert?
4. Why shouldn't believers make decisions based only on immediate circumstances? Relate this to Elimelech.
5. If believers shouldn't make decisions based only on human reasoning, then how should they make decisions? Relate this to Elimelech.

answers

1. The nation was ruled by judges, before the time of kings in Israel. There was famine in the land. The nation was in a moral decline because of its idolatry and immorality.
2. Famine was a sign of God's discipline because of Israel's idolatry and rebellion. See Deuteronomy 11:16-17 and chapter 28.
3. During the dark days of the judges, the people of Israel were continually departing from the Lord. Spiritual decline and moral decay characterized the nation. Ruth is a refreshing story in this scene, showing God's sovereign grace at work, in spite of man's idolatry and immorality.
4. Because there are apt to be long range negative consequences. God's covenant said the people were to stay in the land regardless of circumstances. When the Lord's will is sought, usually there is a waiting period. Elimelech acted in haste by going to Moab.
5. Believers should look to the Lord, asking for His will to be known in their lives. Human reasoning is not enough. Human reasoning cannot see the future. Elimelech did not foresee his death, nor the death of his sons, nor the three widows left bereft.

discuss / consider

1. In times of "famine" in your life, have you made quick decisions without due consideration of biblical principles?
2. Have you been lured into making quick decisions based on reasoning alone? What were the results? Remember, you cannot see into the future, but God can.

challenge

The decisions you make will make you. This works in both a positive and a negative way. If you make decisions based only on circumstances and human reasoning, you will live with the sad consequences of a life lived out of the perfect will of God. Conversely, if you pray, seek God's will and use biblical guidelines, your life will be molded by the results of these decisions.

memorize

"There was a famine in the land. A certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife, Naomi and his two sons. Then Elimelech died. The sons took wives of the women of Moab, Orpah and Ruth. They dwelt there about ten years. Then the sons also died." Ruth 1:1-5

Lesson 2

Ruth 1:6-18

Naomi's Decision to Return to Israel & Decisions of Naomi's Daughters-in Law

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. The right decision may not be an easy choice.
2. The right decision may involve considerable change.

practical applications

1. Is your commitment more than words?
2. Is your commitment more than emotions?

questions

1. Did Naomi counsel her daughters-in-law wisely?
2. Is the right decision an easy choice? Consider the decisions of Orpah and Ruth.
3. There may be considerable change involved in the right decision. How did this apply to Ruth?
4. How did Orpah show her commitment to Naomi? How did Ruth show her commitment to Naomi?
5. How did Orpah and Ruth show their commitment by their emotions?

answers

1. From a human point of view, some would say it was wise counsel, for widows had no means of support and they would be going to a strange land and culture. However, others would say that from a spiritual point of view, Naomi lacked faith because they all could have trusted in God.
2. Sometimes it is, but many times it isn't. Orpah returned to her home and failed to receive the Lord's blessing. Ruth chose to leave the security of her homeland, and she would have the additional burden of her aging mother-in-law. It was not an easy decision, but she followed the true God.
3. Ruth was leaving familiar surroundings and going into a totally new situation, a different country and culture. She would have to adapt and adjust to significant changes.
4. Orpah showed it by words by beginning the journey from Moab, but she returned to Moab and the gods of Moab. Ruth's commitment was more than words, and she showed faith by going with Naomi.
5. Orpah kissed Naomi and wept. Ruth clung to her.

discuss / consider

1. Recall some major decisions you've made. Were they easy? Did they involve change? Were you at peace with your decision? Did you see God's hand at work in your life?
2. Is your commitment more than words? Do your actions confirm it?

challenge

Is your commitment more than emotions? When you are with other Christians, it is easy to get caught up in the emotion of the moment, but what about times alone with the Lord? Are you fully caught up in Him?

memorize

"Ruth said, 'Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'" Ruth 1:16

Lesson 3

Ruth 1:19-22

Naomi and Ruth Return from Moab to the Land of Bethlehem in the Land of Israel

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Naomi's life is a picture of the history of Israel.
2. Ruth's commitment is a picture of the faith of the church.

practical applications

1. Remember that the grass is not greener on the other side of the fence.
2. Remember, it's not too late yet to return.

questions

1. Could the deaths of the three men have been a sign of God's discipline?
2. How is Naomi's life a picture of the history of Israel?
3. Discuss Naomi's words in Ruth 1:20-21.
4. How is Ruth's commitment a picture of the faith of the church?

answers

1. Yes. They had gone to a foreign land with pagan gods, leaving the land God had given to them. Furthermore the two sons had married Moabite women, expressly forbidden by God. See Ezra 9:10-14 and Nehemiah 13:23ff.
2. It begins with Elimelech and Naomi together. Elimelech's name means "my God is King," and Naomi's name means "pleasant". In the beginning of Israel's history, God was her king, but as Elimelech did not live up to his name, neither did Israel. As Elimelech and his family left God's land of promise and went to a foreign land with its pagan gods, so Israel turned away from the living God to worship foreign gods and idols. As God brought in discipline and the hard times that Naomi suffered, so God has had to discipline the Jewish people. The nation of Israel has been set aside temporarily from the place of privilege and blessing. Because of the hard times, Naomi returned knowing that God had rightly afflicted her. In the same way, because of the hard times and the tribulation that is yet to come, the nation Israel, as a widow in need, will return to the land. This is even now happening, and Israel will one day return to the Lord, acknowledging the Messiah that they've rejected. Then will come a time of great blessing for Israel, even as it was for Naomi.
3. Naomi's words show that she did not have the joy of the Lord. She went from Naomi (pleasant) to Mara (bitter). She knew that her bitter experience was the Lord's discipline.
4. Ruth was a Gentile, outside of the covenant promises of God to Israel. In the same way, the faith of the church, which is primarily Gentile, is in the God of Israel, the God of the Bible. As Ruth turned her back on the gods of her surroundings and by faith turned to the true God, so it is with the true church around the world. As Ruth became the bride of Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, so the church is the bride of Christ.

discuss / consider

1. Do you become bitter when God disciplines you? Think beyond the discipline to the reason for the discipline - God has blessing in mind for you.
2. Are there times when you get caught up in foreign gods, gods of this world (materialism and prestige)? God has much more in mind for you.

challenge

Do you have a gnawing or dissatisfaction in your soul? Is the grass greener on the other side of the fence? The greener hills of Moab were not greener. Don't lose out on God's greater blessings for your life. Read Psalm 106:15.

memorize

"Naomi said, 'Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. The Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me.'"
Ruth 1:20-21

Lesson 4

Ruth 2:1-7

The Introduction of Boaz

background notes

1.

2.

3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. God's plans are accomplished through what the world calls "happenstances."
2. God's workfare program is better than the world's welfare program.

practical applications

1. Are we conscious that all blessing comes from the Lord?
2. Are we willing to glean?

questions

1. What were God's gleaning laws? How did Ruth take advantage of these laws?
2. What is a "happenstance?" Apply to this lesson.
3. How is Boaz a spiritual picture of Christ?
4. How does this story make us conscious that all blessing comes from the Lord?

answers

1. When farmers harvested their crops, they were not to reap the corners of their fields or gather every last stalk of grain, but they were to leave some for the poor people of the land, for the stranger, and for the fatherless and the widow. See Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19. Ruth didn't sit back and wait for others to help when she came to Bethlehem. She took on responsibility for herself and for her mother-in-law by going to the fields to glean.
2. A happenstance is a circumstance regarded as due to chance. Did Ruth just happen to go to Boaz' field? Did Boaz just happen to be a kinsman of Elimelech? From the human perspective, it looked like chance. But here was divine providence at work.
3. Boaz was a kinsman redeemer to Ruth as he took on the responsibility to help and redeem her. Christ is our kinsman redeemer.
4. Read Ruth 2:4, as to the greetings between Boaz and his workers. See also James 1:17.

discuss / consider

1. Have there been times in your life that things just seem to have "happened" to fall into place? Did you recognize them as God's divine providence and sovereign will at work? See Ephesians 1:11 and Romans 8:28.
2. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:10. What does this reference and the story of Ruth tell us about welfare/workfare?

challenge

How conscious are you that all blessing comes from the Lord? Do you have a thankful heart because of His blessings in your life? How do you show it?

memorize

"Ruth said, 'Please let me go to the field, and glean grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.'" Ruth 2:2

"She came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech." Ruth 2:3

Lesson 5

Ruth 2:8-16 The Kindness of Boaz Expressed Toward Ruth

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching point

1. The Bible teaches the Boaz method of encouragement.

practical application

1. Have you found refuge under the wings of the Almighty?

questions

1. List some of the characteristics of Boaz that portray a spiritual picture of Christ.
2. How did Ruth show her appreciation to Boaz for his kindness to her?
3. What is the Boaz method of encouragement?
4. How did Boaz use this method with Ruth?
5. Where did Ruth find refuge?

answers

1. He was a man of great wealth (Hebrew translation, a man of valor). He would be known for his courage as a protector standing up for all that was rightfully his. Boaz was concerned for Ruth's safety. He knew all about her, and that she was a foreigner, not of God's covenant people. Our Lord has fought the enemy, Satan, and protects what is His (believers). We can entrust ourselves to His care. He knows all about us. Even though we are outside of God's covenant promises, He has taken notice of us and has saved us.

2. See Ruth 2:10, noting Ruth's humble response.

3. It is threefold:

- a) accept - take fellow believers as they are, with all their differences
- b) animate - give spirit and support to fellow believers
- c) assist - encourage and edify one another.

4.

- a) Ruth was a poor foreigner, totally different from Boaz in person and in culture; he was no respecter of persons
- b) After their conversation, she was stirred to glean; he commended her, giving encouragement to go on
- c) He didn't tell her that she no longer had to glean, and he didn't do the gleaning for her, but he assisted her; he made sure that she had food and water, and that his workmen would help by dropping some of the grain on purpose.

5. Read Ruth 2:12 - under the wings of the Almighty.

discuss / consider

1. How do you show your appreciation for what the Lord has done for you? Is it like Ruth's response to Boaz' kindness?
2. How have you experienced the Boaz method of encouragement? How have you used the Boaz method with others?

challenge

Our Lord offers refuge from sin and its penalty to the non-Christian. To the Christian, He offers refuge from worries and anxieties. Have you found refuge under the wings of the Almighty?

memorize

"It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done...and how you have left your land and come to a people whom you did not know." Ruth 2:11

"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." Ruth 2:12

"Let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her." Ruth 2:16

Lesson 6

Ruth 2:17-23

Naomi Learns that Ruth Has Been Gleaning in the Fields of Boaz

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Boaz is a picture of Christ in his kindness.
2. Boaz is a picture of Christ in his position.

practical application

1. Let's glean only in the field of Boaz.

questions

1. How much is an ephah (of barley)? This doesn't seem like a lot for a full days work. Discuss.
2. What was Naomi's reaction when she found out that Ruth had been gleaning in the field of Boaz?
3. What is another word for kinsman or relative in the Old Testament? What does it mean?
4. How is Boaz a picture of Christ in kindness?
5. How is Boaz a picture of Christ in position?
6. What were the three prerequisites for the kinsman redeemer?

answers

1. About half a bushel. This would be half a bushel of pure grain. Actually it is quite a bit, considering that Ruth had threshed the stalks and winnowed it so the chaff was eliminated.
2. She was elated, exclaiming, "Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead!" Boaz was a close relative. Naomi realized that God had not forgotten them.
3. "Redeemer." The responsibility of the close kinsman was to help out and redeem what the impoverished relative had lost.
4. Both Naomi and Ruth spoke about his kindness (Ruth 2:13, 20). Boaz provided water and food for Ruth. He provided and personally passed the roasted grain to her, and ate with her. She ate and was satisfied. This is a picture of the communion that we enjoy with Christ in His kindness. He invites us to dine with Him. In His kindness, the Lord not only provides the spiritual food that we need, but He wants to have fellowship with us.
5. Boaz was a kinsman redeemer, and under the law the kinsman had several responsibilities. See Leviticus 25:25 and Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Christ is our kinsman redeemer.
6.
 - a) he had to be a close relative
 - b) he had to have the means to redeem
 - c) he had to be willing. The Lord Jesus, as our kinsman redeemer fulfills these requisites perfectly. See Hebrews 2:14-15 and 1 Peter 1:18-19.

discuss / consider

1. Have you experienced some unexpected sheaves and grain from the Lord that sweetened your life?
2. Do you know some unfulfilled and unsatisfied Christians? Where are they gleaning?

challenge

Are you gleaning only in the field of Boaz? What does the Lord say to us in 1 John 2:15-17 about gleaning in fields other than His?

memorize

"Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" Ruth 2:20

Lesson 7

Ruth 3:1-9

Naomi Comes Up with a Plan to Bring Boaz and Ruth Together in Marriage

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching point

1. Generation gaps are not biblical.

practical application

1. Have you found rest at the feet of Jesus?

questions

1. Under Old Testament law, what were the responsibilities of a kinsman redeemer?
2. How does this apply to the story of Ruth?
3. Was Naomi's plan to bring about the marriage of Boaz and Ruth a bit risque?
4. We have experienced generation gaps in our time. Is this biblical?
5. How is Boaz a picture of the Lord as he sleeps by the grain?

answers

1. If a man died with no children, then the closest eligible relative was to marry the widow and raise up an heir for the man who had died. Also, he was to buy back or redeem the property of any extended family members who were impoverished or poor.
2. Boaz was the kinsman redeemer. The property of Naomi was in jeopardy, and Boaz had a responsibility to redeem it and keep it in the family of Elimelech. Furthermore, there was no heir in the family. Naomi and Ruth were both widows, and Naomi was past child bearing age, but Boaz might be able to marry Ruth.
3. Not according to the culture of their time.
4. No, as is evidenced by the mutual trust and respect between Naomi and Ruth.
5. Boaz made sure that the grain was threshed, winnowed and guarded. Grain from the field of Boaz could represent the word of God, food for our souls. As Boaz guarded the grain, our Lord guards His word and gives it to believers pure and without chaff.

discuss / consider

1. Are you sensing a generation gap in your family? If so, what can you do to help bridge the gap?
2. Ruth found security and rest at the feet of Boaz. Mary of Bethany found rest at the feet of Jesus. Have you found rest at the feet of Jesus?

challenge

Are you eating from the pure grain, the word of the Lord? Are you satisfied?

memorize

“Shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?” Ruth 3:1

“All that you say to me, I will do.” Ruth 3:5

“Take your maidservant under your wing.” Ruth 3:9

Lesson 8

Ruth 3:10-18 Boaz is Willing to Fulfill His Responsibility as Kinsman Redeemer

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Waiting on God involves a time of testing.
2. Waiting on God assumes that God is working.

practical applications

1. Don't give those who gossip an opportunity.
2. You will never lose out on the best deal if you wait on God.

questions

1. Did Boaz grudgingly accept his position as kinsman redeemer?
2. What was the kindness of Ruth commended by Boaz, both at the beginning and the end?
3. How do we see Boaz' assurance of care for Naomi as well as for Ruth?
4. What does waiting on God involve? Relate it to this story.
5. Why is it that believers can wait on God without getting uptight?

answers

1. No, not grudgingly but happily. See Ruth 3:10-11.
2. Her kindness in the beginning was to leave her homeland and care for Naomi. At the end, it was giving up the chance to marry a younger man, so that Naomi would be cared for, the property kept in the family, and an heir raised up for Elimelech.
3. See Ruth 3:17.
4. Waiting involves a time of testing. Boaz told Ruth that he was willing to marry her, but that there was a closer relative who had first option. Although Boaz and Ruth desired marriage, they waited and trusted God to work it out.
5. Because waiting on God assumes that He is working behind the scenes with their best interests in mind.

discuss / consider

1. What kindnesses have you shown to relatives who depend on you?
2. When you must wait for God to work, what is the quality of your waiting time? Are you anxious, trying to make things work out, or are you resting in the better plan of God?

challenge

See Ruth 3:11b. Do you enjoy this kind of a reputation?

memorize

“Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning.” Ruth 3:10

“All the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman.” Ruth 3:11

“Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out.” Ruth 3:18

Lesson 9

Ruth 4:1-12

The Way Opens for Boaz to Fulfill His Responsibilities as Kinsman

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. The law cannot redeem anyone.
2. Christ can redeem everyone

practical application

1. Remember the women in the genealogy of Christ.

questions

1. Naomi's plan for getting Ruth and Boaz worked, but there was one problem to be resolved. What was it?
2. Describe the gate scene and its significance.
3. What was the outcome?
4. The other kinsman took off his sandal. What did this mean?
5. Who does the other kinsman represent in this story?
6. Why did God give the law?
7. Apart from Boaz, there was no hope for redemption or marriage. How does this relate to the church?

answers

1. Another kinsman redeemer was a closer relative. He must first decline his responsibility before Boaz could claim Ruth as his wife.
2. In ancient days, the city gate was like the town hall, where official transactions were carried out. This is where Boaz took the matter of redeeming Elimelech's property and taking Ruth to be his wife. Boaz stated his intentions officially before the elders of the city.
3. The other kinsman redeemer said that he would buy back the land, but he changed his mind when he realized that Ruth was in the picture. He not only would lose the land, but the money he paid out for it. He deferred to Boaz and the elders gave their blessing.
4. According to custom, he relinquished his right to walk on Elimelech's land or to own it. Thus the door was open for Boaz to buy the land and to marry Ruth.
5. The law. The ten elders administering the legal transaction enhance the picture. God's moral law is focused in the ten commandments. The law cannot be by-passed in redemption, but the law in itself cannot redeem. (Galatians 3:11).
6. The law is like a mirror, showing that your face is dirty, but the mirror cannot wash your face. In the same way, the law can show you that you are a sinner and need to be redeemed. No one is justified by the law, but it brings knowledge of sin and becomes our tutor to bring us to Christ. See Romans 3:20 and Galatians 3:24.
7. Apart from Christ, there is no hope for mankind. His atoning work was sufficient, unlimited and universal. We are Christ's purchased possession (Ephesians 1:14); the church was purchased by His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19).

discuss / consider

1. Do you know someone trying to get to heaven by keeping the ten commandments? How would you speak to him? How could you use this story?
2. Review the history of the women named in the genealogy of Christ: Tamar, Ruth, Rahab and Bathsheba. Think of God's grace by including them in His Son's genealogy.

challenge

Does God's longsuffering and grace encourage you? Does it encourage you to encourage other believers?

memorize

"I cannot redeem it...you redeem it." Ruth 4:6

"He took off his sandal...you are witnesses this day...we are witnesses." Ruth 4:8-11

Lesson 10

Ruth 4:13-22 The Birth of a Son to Ruth and Boaz

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal / teaching points

1. Children are a gift from the Lord.
2. God can turn mourning to joy.

practical applications

1. Your link to Christ is more important than living happily ever after on earth.
2. You, too, can be a happy grandparent.

questions

1. Which books of the Bible are named after women? What is the overall theme?
2. How is God's providence at work seen in the Book of Ruth?
3. What high compliment was given to Ruth by Naomi's friends?
4. Read Psalm 127:3. Discuss.
5. What does Obed's name mean?
6. How did the Lord turn Naomi's mourning into joy?
7. Which is more important, your link to Christ or living happily ever after on earth?

answers

1. Ruth and Esther. God's providence at work. That is, the hand of God works behind the scenes and accomplishes His purposes through human history. In both books we see God guiding human history through natural events.
2. God brought Ruth, the Gentile from Moab, into the land of Israel and to the God of Israel through her mother-in-law, Naomi. God gave Ruth to glean in the field of Boaz, the kind relative who was both able and willing to fulfill his responsibilities as kinsman redeemer. God opened the door for Boaz to marry. God enabled Ruth to conceive and bare a son who would become the grandfather of King David, and thus she became a vital link in the lineage of Christ.
3. That she was better than seven sons. Seven sons would be the supreme blessing to a Hebrew family.
4. Children are a gift from the Lord, because He is in control of all the factors and variables in conception. See Ruth 4:13, and also recall the story of Hannah (see 1 Samuel 1).
5. Servant
6. Note the difference between the Naomi of chapter 1 and chapter 4.
7. Your link to Christ, of course. You not only have a right relationship with Christ when He becomes your personal Savior, but you will live happily ever after with Him in heaven.

discuss / consider

1. Do you consider your children a gift from the Lord? Re-read the biblical accounts of Ruth and Hannah.
2. Has God given you experiences where mourning was turned into joy?
3. If you are a grandparent, consider some of the ways that you can nourish your grandchildren in the faith.

challenge

See Ruth 4:15a. Do you know someone who needs this encouragement?

memorize

"The Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son." Ruth 4:13

"Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative...may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age." Ruth 4:14-15

"They called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Ruth 4:17