



Cridersville United Methodist Church

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RUTH
A STUDY IN
GRACE & PROVISION

Greetings, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

Have you ever felt like the stranger— abandoned, alone, forgotten? The book of Ruth brings us into the story of God's love for all people. Through one family's loss, God brought redemption. In your needs and joys, I invite you to spend these weeks searching for God's redemption, and restoring your hope. God promises to walk with those who commit to follow. Together, we'll seek life abundant.

Each week, spend time in the reading guide, then check Pastor Casey's blog for weekly video teaching and opportunity to discuss with other participants. New discussions go live every Monday night at beautifulcovenantchaos.wordpress.com.

May you find joy in the journey,
Pastor Casey

Gleanings (pun intended)

As we end our study together, take time to mark down what questions and passages were most important to you/ Mark them in your bible, post them around your home, or just take time to revisit the work of God has been doing in our 6 weeks together.

If you're looking for another study, here's an easy option while you choose another study:

Each day read and reflect on 1 Psalm & 1 Proverb

"There is no one in whom god does not come to life. No one through whom God does not work. No man whose work is greater than the works of the women."

- Joan Chittister, *The Story of Ruth*

Week 6 Reading Guide—Wrapping Up

Review the book of Ruth briefly. Where is the name of God written in this book? Does that change anything for you

Who caused these situations, God or the people? Was it manipulative? Does it matter?

Make any notes on lingering questions you have about Ruth:

Prayer

Lord teach us to walk in the ways of your redeeming love, no matter the sacrifice. Guide our hearts and minds to recognize your love for those around us, and teach us to participate in that work of redemption. God of all, transform our broken lives into your image of grace and truth by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Chapter
6/19/17	Introduction & Outline	
6/26/17	Turn, Turn, Turn	Ruth 1
7/3/17	Known and Unknown	Ruth 2
7/10/17	Uncovering and Recovering	Ruth 3
7/17/17	The Roots of Israel's Redemption	Ruth 4
7/24/17	Final Thoughts	

Outline of Ruth

- I. Turn, Turn, Turn (1:1-22)
 - A. Turning Away (1:1-5)
 - B. Turning Back (1:6-22)
 1. "Return to your mother's house" (1:6-14)
 2. "Don't tell me to turn my back on you!" (1:15-18)
 3. Turning bitter (1:19-22)
- II. Known and Unknown (2:1-23)
 - A. Portrait of a "worthy" man (2:1-16)
 1. "Happening" to find the right field (2:1-7)
 2. Boaz "notices" Ruth (2:8-16)
 - B. "Kindness" has not forsaken living or dead (2:17-23)
- III. Uncovering and Recovering (3:1-18)
 - A. The Plan: Uncovering (3:1-7)
 - B. Recovering: Midnight on the Threshing Floor (3:8-13)
 - C. The Beginning of an End to Emptiness (3:14-18)
- IV. The Roots of Israel's Redemption (4:1-22)
 - A. Boaz settles the matter (4:1-11a)
 1. The trap is baited and set (4:1-4)
 2. The trap is sprung (4:5-6)
 3. Legal formalities (4:7-11)
 - B. Naming the Mothers of the Messiah (4:11b-17)
 1. Blessing the union (4:11b-12)
 2. Redemption incarnate (4:13-17)
 - C. David's Family Tree (4:18-22)

WHAT MAKES RUTH UNIQUE? The book of Ruth is set in the time of the judges, but the book itself probably took shape many centuries later. Most scholars, in fact, believe that Ruth was written during the post-exilic period, after the people of Israel had been allowed to return home from their exile in Babylonia. Two of the leaders in post-exilic Israel -Ezra and Nehemiah- taught the people to be very strict about separating themselves from foreigners. This likely created a climate of suspicion and

distrust of anyone who was a non-Jew in post-exilic Israel. The book of Ruth, then, is an excellent example of Israel's post-exilic literature, which challenged traditional ways of thinking about God, God's purposes, and God's chosen people (Israel).

WHY WAS RUTH WRITTEN? The story of Ruth was written to show the people of Israel that God's purposes may be fulfilled in unexpected ways, that God works in the lives of anyone who is faithful, and that God's love and goodness is for everyone, not just those who were part of the covenant people of Israel. These messages seem easy enough for us to comprehend, but for Jews living in the days when scholars believe the book of Ruth was written, these messages were anything but easy to accept! Ruth was not from any of the tribes of Israel: but from Moab, which was situated across the Jordan River, and whose people were a longtime enemy of Israel. Ruth left the security of her own family to live in Israel with her mother-in-law, Naomi, and to take care of this childless widow. Ruth married and eventually had a child of her own-and surprisingly became an ancestor of King David himself.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE SCENE? The story of Ruth tells about events that happened during the time of the judges, which was a period of many years before David became king of Israel in 1000 B.C. Many of the Hebrew terms and customs that are mentioned in the story come from this time, but some of the language and laws at work in the book come from as late as 250 B.C. This means that the final version of the story was probably written down centuries after the time when the story took place, in the time scholars refer as the post-exilic period, that is, after the people of Israel had returned from their exile around 539 B.C.

There is an interesting custom behind the story told in Ruth. In the ancient world, when a married man died and left no children, it was the custom for one of his brothers to marry his widow. Any children they had would then be thought of as the children of the dead brother, so that his name could live on (see Deuteronomy 25:5, 6).

HOW IS RUTH CONSTRUCTED? Ruth is like a short story with interesting characters and a plot that leads to a happy conclusion. It is meant to be read as a story with an important message about God and God's people. The story told in the book unfolds in four scenes, each one corresponding to a chapter.

1. Scene One (Chapter 1): Ruth and Naomi leave Moab
2. Scene Two (Chapter 2): In Israel, Ruth meets Boaz
3. Scene Three (Chapter 3): Boaz accepts Ruth
4. Scene Four (Chapter 4): Ruth and Boaz marry

Week 5 Reading Guide- Ruth 4

IV. The Roots of Israel's Redemption (4:1-22)

A. Boaz settles the matter (4:1-11a)

1. The trap is baited and set (4:1-4)
2. The trap is sprung (4:5-6)
3. Legal formalities (4:7-11)

B. Naming the Mothers of the Messiah (4:11b-17)

1. Blessing the union (4:11b-12)
2. Redemption incarnate (4:13-17)

C. David's Family Tree (4:18-22)

Is Boaz being respectful or manipulative in approaching the kinsman-redeemer in 4:1-6? _____

When has God offered you an unexpected solution to a problem, or relief? _____

Read 4:11-12. Is a comparison to Judah and Tamar appropriate for a blessing? (Reread Genesis 38 if you are not familiar with the story)

Why do you think their lineage is included as blessing?

When have you sacrificed your name or benefits for the sake of another? (Ruth's firstborn, Elimilech, is not considered her own, but Naomi's heir, as a part of the kinsman-redeemer agreement.)

God persisted in loving Naomi in the face of her bitterness, denial, and manipulation. When have you experienced or pursued someone with that kind of persistent love? _____

Week 4 Reading Guide- Ruth 3

III. Uncovering and Recovering (3:1-18)

- A. The Plan: Uncovering (3:1-7)
- B. Recovering: Midnight on the Threshing Floor (3:8-13)
- C. The Beginning of an End to Emptiness (3:14-18)

As you read this chapter, consider the following:

Is this marriage Boaz's inclination, traditional piety, or entrapment?

economic need, loving relationship, or shamed into duty?

When have you tried something new to guarantee security or economic stability? How has God provided as you step out in faith?

Read again Boaz's actions to redeem Naomi's family.

When have you experienced this type of unmerited favor?

Grace- unmerited favor, a gift not deserved yet freely given

This week's points of interest

1. Hebrew is ambiguous
2. It's not enough to pray for an open door, we also have to walk through it.
3. God is in the practice of redeeming desperate situations.

O Lord, how absolutely necessary Your grace is for me, both to begin a good work and to persevere until I accomplish it. Without grace I can do nothing (Jn 15:5), but I can do all things in You, when Your grace strengthens me (Ph 4:13). Thank you for your grace that goes before me and follows me through my daily life through Jesus Christ.

Week 1- Introduction

Read the outline and introduction on pages 3-4. If your Bible has an introduction to the book of Ruth, read that as well.

"Whom am I when I am no longer who and what I was?"

- John August Swanson

Whether recent or long-forgotten, we all experience change, transition, and loss of identity. When have you had cause to doubt who you are? How did you respond? _____

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17)
I cannot be what I was before. I must be something new. Can I allow more of God in me? How? _____

Spend time this week reading through Ruth, and use the space below to note your questions and interests. Be sure to stop in at Pastor Casey's blog for discussion with other participants.

Week 2 Reading Guide- Ruth 1

I. Turn, Turn, Turn (1:1-22)

A. Turning Away (1:1-5)

B. Turning Back (1:6-22)

1. "Return to your mother's house" (1:6-14)
2. "Don't tell me to turn my back on you!" (1:15-18)
3. Turning bitter (1:19-22)

Naomi loses husband, 2 sons, and all hope for a family to preserve their estate and their future. Have you ever experienced great losses in a short amount of time? How did you react? Who did you turn to for help or comfort?

Reread 1:6-22 knowing the conversation stems from grief and fear. Describe the two daughters' reactions in your own words.

Orpah _____

Ruth- _____

Whom do you identify more with? Why? _____

How does God begin to bring redemption and joy to their griefs?

Prayer

How can you pray for redeeming joy and love in your overwhelming situations?

Write your prayers and griefs that you are handing over to God:

Personal life _____

Community _____

Family _____

Week 3 Reading Guide- Ruth 2

II. Known and Unknown (2:1-23)

A. Portrait of a "worthy" man (2:1-16)

1. "Happening" to find the right field (2:1-7)

2. Boaz "notices" Ruth (2:8-16)

B. "Kindness" has not forsaken living or dead (2:17-23)

Who in our world faces the same kinds of problems as Naomi and Ruth? (lack of resources, gleaned from others, living on charity without employment) Consider both local and global communities.

What would have happened to Ruth if Israel had an immigration policy? _____

Does this challenge or affirm your view on modern immigration laws? Explain. _____

Read 2:8-16 How does Boaz protect Ruth as she works?

Boaz, regardless of motivation is used by God for redemption. When has circumstance allowed you to act as God's agent for redemption?

This week, pray for those who do not have enough.

Record any thoughts below as you pray:

for redemption _____

for resources _____

for relationships that can relieve the poverty _____
