

Session 1 Dream Redeemer: The story of Ruth Ruth 1:1-22

Leader notes:

- The author of Ruth is unknown. The date written is hard to fix but probably during the period of the Israelite monarchy (1000-722BC) by the way the book ends in 4:17-22. The story itself seems set about 1100BC during the tumultuous time of the Judges.
- The book goes to great lengths to legitimize the Moabite connection. This was important since Moabite women were considered immoral by many Israelites (Gen 19:30-38; Numbers 25:1-3).
- This story also elevates the need to take care of bereft widows, and disenfranchised poor people and how the next of kin was obliged to extend the family name (Deut. 25:5-10) and redeem their lost property (Lev. 25:23-28).

Open:

- What was the economic climate like for the family in which you were raised?
- When have you felt quite alone in the world, or most cared for? Explain

Dig:

- Read Ruth 1:1-22
- What is the climate of the times for Naomi? What personal disasters befall her?
- Without husband or sons, what crises is Naomi facing? In a male-dominated, pre-welfare age, how important would male relatives be for widows?
 - What ethnic enmity complicates prospects for her daughters-in-law? Why this hatred of the Moabites?
 - Both Ruth and Naomi confess God's control of events, each in her own way.

What truth does each convey of God? Of themselves? Of their success in coping with stress? Which confession do you think would startle the original readers most? Why?

Reflect:

- Like Ruth, have you ever had to cross over to another ethnic or cultural group? Where you able to assimilate, or did you remain a stranger?
- What kinds of groups do you feel like a stranger among and why?
- Like Ruth, have you embraced God's people as your own, forever? Or have you settled in with a church?
 - What has been stressful for you this year? Did you cope like Naomi, Orpah, or Ruth? How so?
 - Who in your life is like Ruth, who is loyal to you in your emptiness? How can you be like Ruth to someone else in their desolation?

Session 2 Dream Redeemer: The story of Ruth Ruth 2:1-23

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Open:

- Have you ever worked on a farm? What was it like?
- Have you ever been a part of a harvest? What was it like?

Dig:

- Read Ruth 2:1-23
- What signs of hope do you see in the opening? As it is harvest time, how long until Naomi and Ruth can grow their own food? In the interim, how will they meet their most pressing need?
 - What initiatives do Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz and his men take to meet this need? What does that say about the character of the mother-daughter bond? The Hebrew-Moabite fear?
 - What hope is awakened at the close of this chapter (vv.20-22)? What law about “gleaning” is Boaz heeding (See Lev 19:9-10)? What role does a “kinsman-redeemer” play in providing an heir for a brother who died (see Deut 25:5-10)?
 - Do you think Naomi dares to hope in any of these provisions (v.20)? Or is she still feeling like “Mara”? How has this change been brought about? What does this reveal about the power of God’s love?
 - Given the sad state of Israel-Moab relations, what surprising turn of events would the original readers see in this chapter?

Reflect:

- If you suddenly had no means of supporting yourself, do you think your reaction would be like Orpah? Like Ruth? Or like Naomi? Why?
- When have you shared Naomi’s experience of God using a Ruth to show his kindness to you? How did this unmerited act of kindness change you?
- Whom do you know that needs to be reminded that God still loves them? How will you demonstrate that to them?

Session 3 Dream Redeemer: The story of Ruth Ruth 3:1-18

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Open:

- Did your parents ever encourage you to date, even to marry someone? How did you feel about that?
- How did you “pop the question” or receive it?

Dig:

- Read Ruth 3:1-18
- What instructions does Naomi give to Ruth? What is their goal? In their male-dominated world, how do you account for such boldness?
 - What factors could lead readers to believe a sexual indiscretion took place?
 - If found together, who would likely get blamed: Naomi, Ruth, or Boaz? Why doesn't Boaz take advantage of her? Why bless her and consider her proposal?
 - Does this story reflect some kind of romantic love, or a proper sense of duty to an ethical code of conduct? Why?

Reflect:

- If this love story were re-made for TV, what liberty with the script might the director take to appeal to the audience? How might that obscure the main point? For whom is this story most appealing, “as is”?
- In your circle of friends, what “do's” and “don'ts” of sexual morality prevail? Which rules are the first to be bent or broken?

Session 4 Dream Redeemer: The story of Ruth Ruth 4:1-22

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Open:

- Do you like going barefoot? When and where?
- When have you sealed a promise in an unusual way?
- Of which ancestors are you very proud? Of whom are you embarrassed?

Dig:

- Read Ruth 4:1-22
- What cost is involved for the kinsman-redeemer who follows these laws from Lev 25:23-43?
 - What does it say about Boaz, being willing to take on all the expenses and duties, when he will get nothing tangible in return? What ancestor of Boaz was born from the same practice of this kinsman-redeemer law (vv.12, 18-21; see Gen 38)?
 - Why do you think the story of Ruth concludes with a genealogy of David?
 - Define "providence". In this story, what evidence do you see for divine providence superceding?

Reflect:

- How large a problem are our poor, hungry, and homeless? How could the biblical principle of gleaning be applied to our situation?
- When have you faced great physical need? How did God provide for you?
- When have you seen God as your kinsman-redeemer like Boaz?
- Where have you seen the God of Ruth and Boaz act providentially and redemptively on your behalf? Where have you see the God of Israel and Moab concern himself equally for any and all people who put their trust in him?