

Bible Study on Ruth 4:13-22

A Group Exercise: Adapt this badly written bible study for your group:

The Genealogy of David (Matt 1:2–6)

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. ¹⁷ The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, ²² Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David. (NRSV)

Study Questions for a 6th and final session on the Book of Ruth

1. What happens to Ruth in this passage (v13)?
2. Why is Boaz's marriage to Ruth a good thing for Ruth?
3. How has Ruth's life changed since the beginning of the book?
4. Has God blessed you when you have helped someone else?
5. God is not mentioned very often, why do you think it specifically mentions that God makes Ruth conceive?
6. How did Naomi describe herself in Ruth 1:20-21?
7. How has that changed? What words might Naomi use now?
8. Has God turned a bitter experience into a happy one for you?
9. Do you nurse your grandchildren?
10. Compare the genealogy of Jesus in 1:2-6 with the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22. Do they match up?
11. The genealogy mentions only 4 women. Why do you think these 4 women are specially identified?
12. Do you see yourself as an unlikely member of God's kingdom?
13. Is Boaz blessed by marrying Ruth?
14. Matthew 1:5 states that Boaz was the son of Rahab. Why does the writer of Ruth not mention this?
15. How might that affect how people in Bethlehem saw Boaz? How might it affect how Boaz saw Ruth?
16. Ruth was a pagan foreigner who came with nothing, yet she played a significant part in bringing Jesus into the world. How have you played a significant part in bringing Jesus into the world?
17. What do you need to do this week to help God's plan of salvation through Jesus?



In your groups:

If you were given this Bible study, how would you adapt it to your group? What are the good things and what are the problems with it?

If stuck, you might like to think about some of these questions:

1. Are there any closed questions and how would you rewrite them for your group?
2. Are there any unanswerable, sensitive or So What? questions?
3. The Leader's Guide says that the purpose of the study is: "To help members see that God uses the most unlikely people to be part of God's salvation for the world". Which questions would lead us in this direction? Would you want to add to or alter the purpose?
4. Is it a balanced study?

With apologies for reworking the bible study in D & S Larsen, *Ruth* LifeBuilder Bible Studies Scripture Union 2015. Picture from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rooke-naomi-ruth-and-obed-a00839>

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Some Reflections on the Group Exercise

The exercise asked you to reflect on these questions. My thoughts are in red and alternative questions are in the box.

1. What happens to Ruth in this passage (v13)? *A Closed Question: A rather basic comprehension question that might belittle your group's intelligence.*
2. Why is Boaz's marriage to Ruth a good thing for Ruth? *So what? This could generate an interesting discussion or fall flat. It might raise feminist hackles. But what does it have to do with us? So what?*
3. How has Ruth's life changed since the beginning of the book? *This could be a good reminder of the overarching story and the study so far, but we then need to do something with this.*
4. Has God blessed you when you have helped someone else? *Good to have some application, but it is a closed question, that also closes down Ruth's life to one message. What if someone answers No?*
5. God is not mentioned very often, why do you think it specifically mentions that God makes Ruth conceive? *This raises the interesting topic of God's absence but doesn't open it for discussion. It looks rather like God isn't interested in the people until he wants something - a father for David.*

None of these questions clearly bring out that Ruth is an unlikely person - which is the study's aim.

Some alternative questions on Ruth and God:

- a) We have come to the end of the story, and thankfully it has a happy ending. Recap the story from Ruth's perspective by creating a bullet point biography/ or timeline of Ruth's life. *Purpose to recap the story we have studied, focusing on Ruth that is used for the following questions:*
- b) Which part of Ruth's life do you most identify with and why? *} These open-ended questions*
- c) Which part of Ruth's life do you least identify with and why? *} make connections with our lives*
- d) What is the most encouraging thing from Ruth's life for you? *} and let the story speak to each.*
- e) God is talked about and prayed to by the characters, but the narrator only attributes two actions to God: breaking the famine in 1:6, and 4.13 where he makes Ruth conceive. According to Naomi there is a third action, that of turning harshly against her. Why might the narrator have kept God out of the story, except for these times? How do you feel about the picture of God in this story? *Allows a discussion about God in the story, and God's presence and absence in life.*

6. How did Naomi describe herself in Ruth 1:20-21? *A closed recap question that does lead into the next question*
 7. How has that changed? What words might Naomi use now? *Could be a good question to highlight the change for Naomi, and note things can get better.*
 8. Has God turned a bitter experience into a happy one for you? *Good to have some application, but it is another closed question, that limits what we learn from Naomi. Again, what if someone answers No?*
 9. Do you nurse your grandchildren? *A big assumption about your group!*
- We have still not got anywhere near the main aim of the study so we might want to rewrite the aim.*

Some alternative questions on Naomi:

- a) The neighbours certainly believe that God has now been kind to Naomi, but Naomi says nothing. Recall how Naomi felt on her return to Israel (1:21-22). If you were Naomi how would you feel about God at this stage? *Purpose to identify with Naomi*
- b) Which part of Naomi's life do you most identify with and why?

10. Compare the genealogy of Jesus in 1:2-6 with the genealogy in Ruth 4:18-22. Do they match up? A closed question, dependent on the bible translation people have (Aram is Ram in some versions - which might lead the group into a dead-end debate)
11. The genealogy mentions only 4 women. Why do you think these 4 women are specially identified? An interesting question that assumes a great deal of knowledge on the part of the group about Tamar, Rahab and the wife of Uriah. Probably over most people's heads.
12. Do you see yourself as an unlikely member of God's kingdom? This question seems to come out of nowhere but is obviously the answer that you were meant to reach in question 11. If that was not your answer to question 11 then the study implies you were wrong.
13. Is Boaz blessed by marrying Ruth? A closed question you can hardly say no to!
14. Matthew 1:5 states that Boaz was the son of Rahab. Why does the writer of Ruth not mention this? An unanswerable question. Who knows? Maybe the writer didn't know, maybe the writer didn't think it relevant or maybe the writer was embarrassed by it. What is the point of such speculation?
15. How might that affect how people in Bethlehem saw Boaz? How might it affect how Boaz saw Ruth? This also is very speculative, given that the story doesn't mention Rahab and so it is probably not what the writer is intending us to think about.

Some alternative questions on the genealogy:

- a) The genealogy appears again in Mt 1:2-6. In Matthew's genealogy for Jesus, Ruth is one of only four women mentioned. The others are Tamar, Rahab and the wife of Uriah? Does anyone know anything about these rather obscure women? This allows the group to pool any knowledge with out feeling they ought to know. It would be followed by a brief paragraph about the other three women to be read out so that the group has real knowledge to deal with the next question.
- b) What strikes you about these particular women and why might Matthew have mentioned them? A chance to reflect on the input given. I would not ask any questions about Boaz as he really does not feature in this passage and we already have enough questions.

16. Ruth was a pagan foreigner who came with nothing, yet she played a significant part in bringing Jesus into the world. How have you played a significant part in bringing Jesus into the world? Good to have application, but the way it is phrased may leave people feeling quite inadequate!
 17. What do you need to do this week to help God's plan of salvation through Jesus? Good to have application but it is a big nebulous question
- At last we have got to the aim of the study, but we may have run out of time to answer these questions.

Some alternative questions on the aim:

- a) Ruth was a pagan foreigner who came with nothing, but generosity and care for Naomi. Yet, as far as the narrator is concerned, God chose her to be the grandmother of David, Israel's greatest king. For Matthew she is one of the unlikely ancestors of David's greatest son, Jesus. God still uses unlikely people to work through. Help each other to identify how God works through each one in the group. Some group members may not feel that God works through them at all. It is often easier for others to see this, hence the chance to help each other.
- b) In the light of this is there one thing you can do this week to make yourself available for God to continue working through you? A small concrete action to go away with.

Overall, there are far too many questions and you would need to cut some out. The new set has 10 questions in 4 batches which would be 20 minutes for each batch in a 90-minute study. A new aim might be: To conclude the series by seeking to identify with and learn from the overall experiences of Ruth and Naomi as they connect with our lives.