

THE OUTSIDER

EQUIP 2021 BIBLE STUDIES ON THE BOOK OF RUTH

Introduction

These three studies on Ruth are written thematically across the four chapters of the book. Each study, read the whole book of Ruth.

Grab a highlighter and underline/highlight any comments about the character, or words spoken by the character in focus.

Study 1 **God's Judgement and Provision (Naomi)**

Study 2 **God's *Hesed* (Ruth)**

Study 3 **God's Redeemer (Boaz)**

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Ruth lived during the time of the Judges, when Israel went through a particularly dark part of their history. A repeated phrase in the book of Judges is: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever he wanted." (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). It was a time of disobedience, violence, selfishness, ungodliness, and defiance. Even most of the judges themselves are highly flawed. The last few chapters of Judges show the corrupt, revolting behaviour of the rest of the nation. It is important for us to understand this as the background for the book of Ruth, because in the midst of these dark ages of Judges, the characters in the book of Ruth stand out as vastly different.

As Christians, we can read the book of Ruth, and learn about themes of God's judgement and provision, of God's faithful love (*hesed*), and God's redeemer. Ruth and Boaz are King David's great grandparents, and therefore also Jesus' great, great, great, great, etc. grandparents. In Jesus we see the ultimate example of God's judgement, provision, faithful love and our redeemer.

STUDY 1

God's Judgement & Provision

(FOCUS ON NAOMI)

What do you know about the time of the Judges?

Moab - A refresher

The nation of Moab goes all the way back to Lot's incestuous relationship with his daughter (Gen 19:30-18). Israel has a problematic relationship with Moab throughout their history. You can read more here if you'd like (Numbers 20, 22 & 25; Judges 11). Going to Moab was a bad move!

1. Read Ruth 1:1-5.

a) What do we learn about the family of Elimelech in these verses?

b) Why is this situation particularly hard for Naomi?

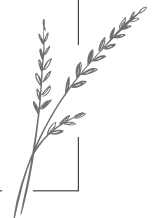
Names in the Old Testament

In the Bible the meanings of names are very significant. Names often tell us about the person and their character or highlight something important about the story. That is true of Ruth! If you can, it's useful to look up the names of characters. The footnotes in your Bible can help with this, or a good commentary, or Bible dictionary.

Naomi - pleasant

Mara - bitter

Bethlehem - house of bread



2. Read Ruth 1:6-22.

a. What signs of God’s judgement do we see in these verses?

b. In verses 20-21, Naomi says some startling words about her situation. Do you think she’s correct? Has the LORD pronounced judgement and afflicted her?

c. What signs of God’s provision do we also see in this section?

d. In what ways do you attribute loss and gain to God’s providence in your own life?

3. Skim read chapters 2-4. How can you see LORD’s *judgement* and provision for Naomi and the other characters? (you may like to do this in smaller groups)

	Ruth 2	Ruth 3	Ruth 4
God’s judgment			
God’s provision	<i>See also Leviticus 19:9-10</i>		



4. Naomi uses the name of the LORD (or Almighty) 9 times. What does this teach us about her understanding of God amidst her differing life situations?

Ruth 1:8	
Ruth 1:9	
Ruth 1:13	
Ruth 1:20	
Ruth 1:21 <i>(three times)</i> Ruth 2:19	
Ruth 2:20	

5. In what ways do you use God's name to explain your own life situations? How is this similar/different to Naomi?

6. How can we see evidence of God's judgement and provision in the Gospels?

7. What are some of the ways God has shown his provision in your life in:

a. the big picture?

b. the small details?

8. Give thanks and pray about these things.

STUDY 2

God's *Hesed* 

(FOCUS ON RUTH)

Hesed is a word used frequently of God in the book of Psalms, largely written by Boaz and Ruth's great grandson, David.

"Your faithful love is better than life" - Psalm 63:3

It is a difficult word to translate into English, as there is no direct equivalent.

"*Hesed* is one of those Hebrew words whose meaning cannot be captured in one English word. This is a strong relational term that wraps up in itself an entire cluster of concepts, all the positive attributes of God - love, mercy, kindness, goodness, benevolence, loyalty, covenant faithfulness; in short, that quality that moves a person to act for the benefit of another without respect to the advantage it might bring to the one who expresses it." Daniel Block, *Exegetical Commentary of the Old Testament*, p.86.



Hesed is used three times in the book of Ruth. (1:8; 2:20 and 3:10). Although it is only used three times, the action of *hesed* runs through most of the verses, most notably in the character of Ruth. This time we will zoom in on Ruth and notice the *hesed* that runs through the story.

Can you think of an example of someone who has shown you a compassionate, kind, gracious or other-centred act of love?

1. Let's begin by looking at the first two verses which specifically use the word *hesed*.

Read Ruth 1:8.

8 She said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home. May the LORD show faithful love [hesed] to you as you have shown to the dead and to me." (HCSB)

a. How does Naomi use the word *hesed* in 1:8?

b. What does this teach us about Naomi? What does it teach us about God?

c. Do you pray similar prayers for other people in your life?
How might you pray like this?

2. Read Ruth 2:20.

20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness [hesed] to the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers." (HCSB)

- a. How does Naomi use the word *hesed* in this verse?

- b. What does this teach us about Boaz? What does it teach us about God?

- c. How has God shown you his *hesed* in your life?

3. Read Ruth 1:16-17. Why are Ruth's words here particularly remarkable?**4. Quickly scan through Ruth 2.**

- a. How does Ruth show loving kindness to Naomi in this chapter?

- b. How is Ruth fulfilling her promises in chapter 1 by her actions in chapter 2?

- c. How does Boaz show loving kindness to Ruth and Naomi?

5. Quickly scan through Ruth 3.

Without getting bogged down in details about the family redeemer (which we'll look at next week), why does Boaz use the word *hesed* in 3:10 of Ruth?

6. What *hesed* can you see in Ruth 4:15-17?

7. From what we have looked at, if you had to define *hesed*, using only Ruth's example, what would you say it was?

8. Can you think of any similar examples of *hesed* in the New Testament?

9. How can you show *hesed* to those around you:

a. at church

b. in your family

c. at work

d. in the community

Pray about these things.

STUDY 3

God's Redeemer 

(FOCUS ON BOAZ)

What does the word 'redeem' mean to you?

When have you last used it in a regular sense? In a biblical sense?

1. Read Ruth 2:1.

a. The narrator introduces us to Boaz. What does the narrator tell us about him?

b. Why do you think the narrator mentions these things?

2. Read Ruth 2:2-23.

What do we learn about Boaz through his words and actions in this chapter. Look also for what we learn about his relationship with God. (The verses with * are the most important.)

Ruth 2	What do we learn about Boaz?
Verse 4	
Verse 5	
Verse 8-9	
Verse 11-12*	
Verse 14	
Verse 15-16	
Verse 19	
Verse 20*	
Verse 21-23	

3. In Ruth 2:20, Naomi uses the phrase “family redeemer” for the first time. Quickly scan through the book of Ruth, and underline (and count) how many times the word “redeemer” (or ‘redeem, redemption, etc.) is used from this verse onwards. (if you used the manuscript discovery questions before EQUIP you’ve already done this!)

How is ‘redeem’ and redeemer’ being used here?

4. Read Ruth 3:6-18.

a. In verse 9, Ruth makes an unusual request of Boaz. What is she asking him to do? (See also Deuteronomy 25:5-10.)

b. How is this similar to what Boaz has prayed for her in Ruth 2:12?

5. Read Ruth 4:1-14.

a. What does it cost Boaz to become Ruth and Naomi’s family redeemer?

b. What do the elders and all the people at the gate think of Boaz’s actions?

c. In what ways did Boaz keep his word?

6. Read Ruth 4:17-22.

a. What is remarkable about this baby Obed?

b. Even though Boaz wanted to perpetuate Mahlon’s name on his property, whose name does Obed have? (see also 1 Chronicles 2:11-12; Matthew 1:5; Luke 3:32).

7. In Boaz, we have a foreshadowing of our redeemer, Jesus Christ. Looking back over the characteristics Boaz showed Ruth in chapters 2 and 3, how are his actions similar to Jesus? How is Jesus an even better redeemer than Boaz?

8. What can we learn about redemption from the book of Ruth?

9. Pray.

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