

Grace Amidst Hardship



Four Bible Studies from the Book of Ruth



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Study 1

Coping with the bitterness of life - Ruth 1

Had a bad day recently, one where things went from bad to worse? Do you know anyone who you'd say had had a bad *life*?

Read Ruth 1:1-5 and list all the terrible things that have happened to Naomi.

Are Naomi and her family innocent sufferers? What do you know about the time when this story is set (see verse 1, also Judges 2:16-18)? Was moving to Moab a commendable action for Elimelek and his family? (See also Deuteronomy 7:3-4)

How strongly do you feel the temptation to run away from God and his ways when times get tough?

Read vs 6-9. What prompts Naomi to return to Israel? How has she started to show a return her faith in God as she speaks to her daughters?

Read vs 11-18. How do Ruth and Orpah differ in their decisions?
Where has Ruth placed her trust?

Read vs 19-22. Do you think Naomi has it right when she declares
that God has brought misfortune against her?

What note of hope does the chapter end with in v22?

What parallels can you see with the parable of the prodigal son?
(Luke 15:11-24)? What does this chapter teach us about God's
dealing with wayward disciples?

In what ways does this passage help us when interacting with
people who've run away from God?

Identify something to pray for:

- a) regarding yourself,
- b) regarding a friend of yours

Study 2

Reviewing God's performance - Ruth 2

What mark out of ten would you give God and his care for you over the last year? Given what we read last week, what mark might Ruth and Naomi give God?

Read the whole of Ruth chapter 2. What evidence is there that the characters believe that God is active in their lives?

What is admirable about Ruth's approach to her predicament? Does it differ to Naomi's response? What is your default response to life's troubles?

What is your reaction to the character of Boaz? Identify the variety of ways he cares for Ruth (ad Pent ref).

What does it mean for Boaz to be a *guardian-redeemer* (v20)? See also Lev 25:25-55.

How does the role of guardian-redeemer echo the ministry of Jesus? See Mark 10:45.

What does this story teach us about the means God uses to care for his people? Have there been periods in your own life when you can look back and see God's hand, even though you might have missed it at the time?

How does this example of God's *providence* (look the word up!) encourage us? Does it change your expectations of how God works in his world? How does the story showcase God's care for both big and small things?

Give thanks to God for a time in your life when God has been at work in unexpected ways.

Study 3

People are friends, not food! - Ruth 3

Have you ever been taken advantage of? Do you have to fight the temptation to take advantage of others?

What concern for Ruth does Naomi show in 3:5-6?

How does her description of Boaz differ from 2:20 to 3:2? Why might she have dropped the idea of Boaz being a guardian-redeemer (skip ahead to v13)? Why might Naomi be trying so hard to make the match happen, and for it to happen quickly?

What cost would there be to Naomi herself if Boaz simply marries Ruth without being a guardian-redeemer? What does it say about Naomi that she's willing to let this happen?

Read vs 7-9. How does Ruth describe Boaz in v 9? What has she brought back into the equation that Naomi decided to leave out? Why might she have done this? How does this fit with what we already know of Ruth?

Read vs 10-14. What kindness is Boaz referring to in v 10? Is Boaz the kind of guy who needs 'kindness' shown to him? What would have happened to Naomi if Ruth went after a different man?

What cost would there be to Boaz and his existing family if he acted upon his ability to be a guardian-redeemer?

In what ways do Naomi, Ruth and Boaz each make a decision to act selflessly? How are each an antitype to how people usually behave in the world? How do they each pre-figure the selflessness of Christ?

Pray that you might have both the opportunity and will to live graciously towards others.

Study 4

The Benefits of Grace - Ruth 4

When has grace been shown to you? When the opportunity arises to show grace to others, how quick are you to do so?

Read Ruth 4:1-4. How does Boaz show himself to be a man of honour?

What is the other relative's initial response to the opportunity to acquire Naomi's land? Read vs 5-8. Why does this relative have a change of heart? What does it emphasize about Boaz?

Read vs 9-10. Even after death, how are Elimelek and his sons honoured? In what way is this a gracious giving of honour?

How does the blessing of vs 11-12 locate this story in the wider Biblical narrative? What does this indicate about the significance of what has transpired over the last 4 chapters?

Read vs 13-17. How has Naomi been treated graciously?

Consider the praise apportioned to Ruth in v15. What can we learn about the benefits of showing grace to others? How does this story inspire you to act selflessly rather than selfishly?

Read vs18-22, and then read Matthew 1:1-16. Whose names are repeated in these two lists? Who is Ruth an ancestor of? What does this teach us about how:

- a. God achieves his plan of salvation;
- b. How we might view our own times of hardship.

Review all that you have learnt during your study of the book of Ruth. What new things have you learnt, what surprises have delighted you, what old truths have you been sustained by? Give thanks to God for some of these things.