

FIIFTY SHADES OF GRAIN



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(Re)new(ed) Perspectives on Ruth 3

OVERVIEW

THE PARTICIPANTS: This study series is designed for use in small to medium-sized groups (5-20) of Christians who have at least a basic foundation in scriptural study and knowledge of the biblical canon. It should not be used for a group comprised entirely of new believers or those who have little to no biblical knowledge.

THE SETTING: Any space that allows for comfort and security, with enough elbow room for small groups to form and function. The availability of breakout spaces for later sessions would be an asset.

The study consists of 7 sessions each designed to be 1 to 2 hours in length. The timing is flexible by design, as the primary goal of the study is to promote conversation and to interact with the text.

THE CONTENT: We will first discuss the book of Ruth as a single literary unit and explore its biblical and historical context. From there, we will dive into Ruth 3, commonly known as the “threshing floor scene,” using a four-fold method of interpretation to tease out multiple aspects of meaning.

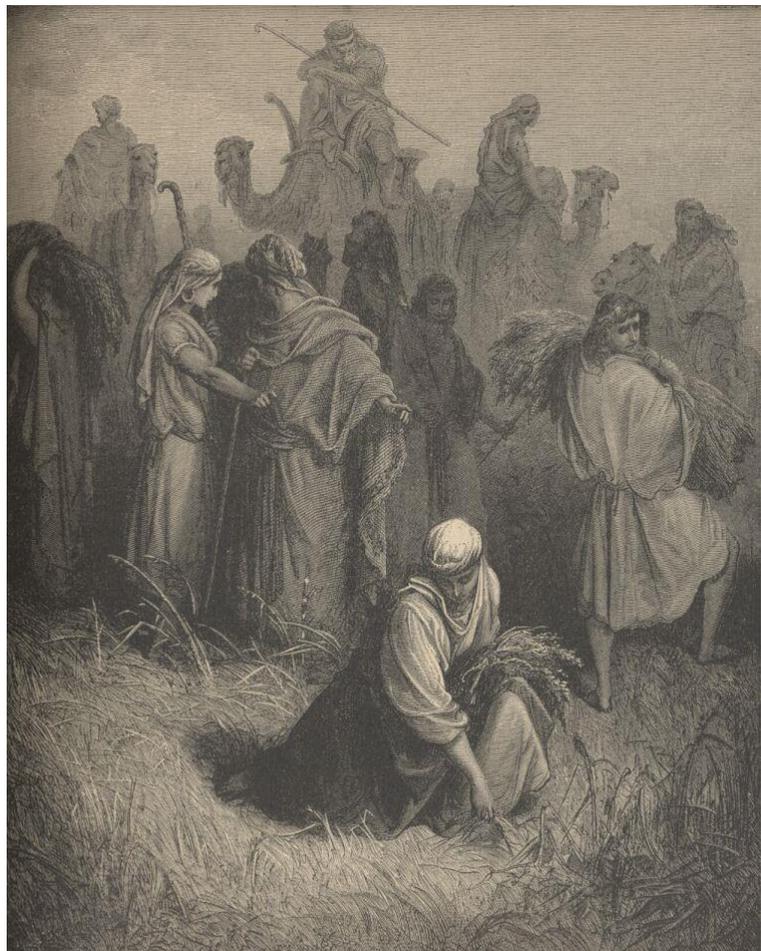
THE GOAL: Participants will have a better understanding of Ruth and of the narrative genre within the Bible. Through group discussion and interpretation, participants will be familiar with the four-fold method of interpretation and with its application to biblical texts. Participants will also be able to articulate a personal understanding of the importance of approaching biblical study and interpretation from a variety of perspectives.

THE OBJECTIVES: By the end of this study, participants will have:

- **Analysed** and **critiqued** various interpretations of Ruth, both historical and contemporary
- **Applied** techniques of narrative analysis to the book of Ruth
- **Identified** gaps and difficulties of interpretation within the book of Ruth
- **Created** a graphic representation of one literary aspect of Ruth
- **Discussed** the concept of biblical canon and **applied** it to the interpretation of Ruth
- **Explored** cultural and historical details and their relation to Ruth
- **Discussed** the four-fold method of interpretation and **applied** its component parts to Ruth 3
- **Retold** the threshing floor scene, paying attention to literary components and context

- **Analysed** the accuracy and usefulness of other groups' retellings
- **Produced** and **critiqued** allegorical interpretations of the threshing floor scene
- **Identified** themes of morality within the threshing floor scene and **presented** a moral lesson taken from this scene
- **Discussed** eschatological themes of Ruth 3 and **connected** this passage to other parts of Scripture
- **Developed** an eschatological interpretation of Ruth 3
- **Articulated** a personal understanding of the importance of Scriptural interpretation
- ... and most importantly, **had fun** 😊

Additional information can be found in the Facilitator's Guide ([Appendix I](#)).



Gustav Dore. *Ruth and Boaz*

ONE: RUTH AS A LITERARY UNIT

[**stohr-ee**] *a narrative, either true or fictitious, in prose or verse, designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the hearer or reader*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

A couple notes as we embark on our journey through Ruth:

First, the format of each session will be similar – we will open in prayer, then take some time to get to know one another and reflect on previous sessions and then we will dive in, first discussing a new way of approaching the text, and then you will be turned loose to use this new approach in dialogue with the text. Finally, we end with a few minutes of personal reflection, followed by a closing prayer.

Second, this is meant to be a safe space – no question is stupid and no idea too wild to be brought up for discussion. If you feel unsafe or disrespected at any time, please speak up and we will address your concern as a group. I will do my best as we go along to explain why we are doing what we are doing, but if at any time you need clarification, please let me know.

Today, we will be looking at the Book of Ruth as a distinct literary unit, as a story that has been written just as it is. We will focus on narrative analysis – something you are probably familiar with from prior schooling, but maybe something you haven't played with in a while.

This session involves a lot of listening and small group discussion; unfortunately, it won't be very active, but we will be taking a break in the middle to get up, refresh, refill, and any other re- words you can think of. If that sounds boring, hopefully you'll be proven wrong, but if not, hold on just a little longer. The majority of the following sessions will be spent combing Ruth chapter 3 with all variety of implements, but in order to get a handle on the specifics of the text, we need to ground it in a solid understanding of Ruth as a whole, and Ruth in her context – which we will discuss next time.

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

Father God, you are the author of salvation; Lord Jesus, you are the living Word of God; Holy Spirit, you draw us into the narrative of grace. Lead us as we seek to hear your voice in the story of your servants Ruth and Boaz. Guide us to greater understanding so that we might tell your story to the whole world. Amen.

TASK C: GROUND RULES

Before we get to the nitty-gritty, let's **develop** some ground rules for discussion. I will **write** them down and ensure that they are available for all subsequent sessions.

TASK D: HELLO, MY NAME IS... (A WARM-UP)

Reflect on your own:

What character in Ruth do you most identify with? Why?

Write your choice on a sticky note and affix it to your person. **Find** your like-minded compatriots and briefly **introduce** yourself, saying your name (your real name) and the cardinal trait you share with this character.

TASK E: HEAR THE STORY

Listen as I tell the story of Ruth in my own words. You can follow along with [Appendix A](#) if you wish.

In small groups, **discuss** the following:

How well does this retelling follow the biblical account?

What was omitted, added or changed?

Do you agree with this interpretation of Ruth? Why or why not?

What questions does this raise for you?

Let's hear one or two insights in the large group.

TASK F: NEW PERSPECTIVES

Listen as the following quote is read. **Circle** or **highlight** anything that stands out to you.

The Bible makes plain that it ascribes great importance to stories and their presentation as a means of persuasion... The purpose of putting these stories in writing... was to secure their preservation for as long as possible and to try to ensure that they reflected their authors' aims.

~ Yairah Amit, Reading Biblical Narratives

What questions or comments do you have?

What do you think Ruth's author is trying to persuade his/her readers of?

In groups of 2 or 3, **select** one of the following aspects of literary analysis:

Plot

Setting

Characterization

As a group, **review** the extended explanation of your aspect found in [Appendix B](#) and **analyse** this aspect as it appears in the book of Ruth. Using the large piece of paper provided, **draw** a chart or diagram you could use to explain this aspect of Ruth to someone who is unfamiliar with the text.

Present your graphic to the large group and **listen** to the other presentations.

What questions do you have?

What new insights do you have into Ruth?

TASK G: TAKE IT TO GO

In the box below, **write down** one aspect of story that you will pay attention to in your encounters with Scripture this week.

Let's hear a few of your plans.

TASK H: CLOSING PRAYER



Thomas Matthews Rooke. *The Story of Ruth*.

TWO: RUTH IN CONTEXT

[**kon**-tekst] *the set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular event, situation, etc.*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Welcome back! Today, we are going to deal with Ruth as a part of a wider context – the historical, cultural and biblical background on which Ruth’s story is painted for us in living colour. You will be receiving a lot of new information, but you will have ample opportunity to wrestle with and apply your new-found knowledge. There will be a lot of small group discussion and a little bit of sharing in the large group, so we will try to take a break halfway through to refill our glasses and get up and walk around.

Take a moment to **reflect** on last session.

What aspect of story did you focus on?

What did you notice about this aspect in the Scripture you read or heard this week?

Take 2 minutes to **discuss** briefly with a neighbour (1 minute each).

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

God of Jacob, you have faithfully led your people through history and have connected your Church to its roots through Jesus Christ, your living Word, and through the words of Scripture. We ask that you send your Spirit to guide us as we seek to understand the story of Ruth within the great story of salvation. Amen.

TASK C: HI, MY CONTEXT IS... (A WARM-UP)

Take 2 minutes to **write** a brief introduction to yourself (2-3 sentences) on a spare piece of paper using only contextual details (e.g. where you are sitting right now, who your family is). When you are finished, I will shuffle your introductions and pass them out.

Identify the person who wrote the introduction you have.

Would you introduce yourself to a stranger this way? Why or why not?

Why is/isn't this information important to your identity?

TASK C: WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL CANON?

Listen to the following definition and **highlight** or **circle** anything that stands out to you.

“‘**CANON**’ comes from a Greek word that means ‘measuring stick.’ Since the fourth century A.D. this term has been used in Christian circles to refer to the standard or official list of books that make up the Bible, as a rule of faith and practice for God’s people.” (LaSor et al., 598)

Studies of the Biblical canon focus on the final form of the text as it has been handed down to us, asking such questions as: Who was the intended audience? Why was this form considered to be authoritative?

What comes to mind for you?

Discuss the following with a partner:

In the Christian Bible, Ruth is located after Judges, which describes Israel’s time in the Promised Land before the monarchy, and before 1 Samuel, which tells how the monarchy came into being.

From your reading of Ruth, why do you think this might be?

Why is this information important?

What assumptions do you make about how to read Ruth based on its context in the biblical canon?

On your own, briefly **skim** Proverbs 31:10-31 ([Appendix C](#)).

How does this placement of Ruth change or enhance how you understand Ruth and its themes?

In the Hebrew Bible, Ruth is included with the Wisdom literature and follows immediately after the book of Proverbs.

Let’s hear a few thoughts in the large group.

TASK D: THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE

The text boxes below contain information on three major cultural elements present in Ruth. **Divide** into 3 groups. With your group, **read** your assigned description and **discuss**:

How might this element contribute to your understanding of the events and/or themes of Ruth?

What new questions does this element have you asking?

Summarize your element for the large group and give ONE or TWO insights from your small group discussion.

GLEANING: gathering or picking up (corn or other produce) after the reapers, etc. (*OED*)

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner.” (Lev. 19:9-10, NIV)

In the Ancient Near East (Israel, Egypt, etc.), the general public were allowed to glean during harvest times; many of the area’s impoverished inhabitants used this as a primary method of subsistence during the harvest. The Israelites had an additional, divine mandate to leave food for the marginalized: the poor, the outsider, the orphan and the widow.

HESED: often translated “loving-kindness” or “love” or “kindness”; it is a core ethical principle of Jewish belief that is also intrinsically linked with covenant faithfulness and loyalty.

The covenant between God and Abraham (see Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 17:1-14) forms the basic axis of the entire Old Testament. To embody *hesed* is to go “above and beyond that which is normally required” (Elazar 1981, 46) by covenant law as set out in the book of Leviticus.

The term is used three times in Ruth: Ruth 1:8 (of God), 2:20 (of Boaz) and 3:10 (of Ruth).

MOAB: The Moabites were Israel’s neighbours to the southeast and, more often than not, their enemies. They were descended from incestuous unions between Abraham’s nephew Lot and his two daughters (see Gen. 19:30-38 for the story). Because they opposed Israel’s divinely mandated conquest of Canaan, they were cursed, not allowed to intermarry with the Israelites.

What other questions do you have about the cultural context of Ruth?

TASK E: TAKE IT TO GO

Identify one contextual element, either canonical or cultural, that you would like to investigate further.

Let's hear a couple of plans in the large group.

TASK F: CLOSING PRAYER



Jean-Francois Millet. *The Gleaners*.

THREE: RUTH 3... LITERALLY

[**lit-er-uh-lee**] *in the literal or strict sense*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Today, we finally move from the big picture to a vignette, a single scene from Ruth. This session's topic is first of all an introduction to the "four-fold method" of interpretation, and then an in-depth look at the "literal" meaning of the text. Once we've discussed a couple of definitions, you will have an opportunity to get up and dance around, should you so desire. It's time to relax and have fun!

Tell a neighbour what contextual element you wanted to look into from last time and what new insights, if any, you have gained

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, you have given us the gift of your written Word so that we may come to know you. Help us to read the story of Ruth as it has been handed down to us with clear eyes and open hearts so that we may hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Amen.

TASK C: LOST IN TRANSLATION (A WARM-UP)

Think of a time when you misinterpreted something someone told you, or when something you said was misinterpreted.

What was the outcome?

How did you feel when the mistake was discovered?

Share your thoughts with a neighbour.

TASK D: NEW PERSPECTIVES

Listen to the following reading, following along if you wish with [Appendix D](#). On your own, **read** the following definition:

*Literal:
In accordance with,
involving, or being the
primary or strict meaning
of the word or words; not
figurative or metaphorical*

What comes to mind for you?

What initial insights about the book of Ruth does this bring to mind?

TASK E: LET THE TEXT SPEAK

In groups of 3 or 4, **read** Ruth 3, using different versions, if possible (the text from the NIV is found in [Appendix E](#) if you wish to take notes). Come up with a way to **retell** the story to the large group, keeping the following questions in mind:

What does the text say? What does it NOT say?

How do your versions differ? How might this affect your interpretation?

What clues can be found in the immediate context to how the author intended this passage to be interpreted?

What components of the text may be culturally bounded? What, if any, is a possible analog in your cultural context?

Listen to the other groups' presentations.

In what ways do you agree with the other groups' interpretations? In what ways do you disagree?

How did hearing the story told in this way make you feel?

In what ways are you beginning to think differently about Ruth?

What new aspects or understandings came to light for you through this retelling?

TASK F: TAKE IT TO GO

Identify and **write down** one thing that challenged you today. **Pray** about it this week, asking God for insight into how you might gain a better understanding.

Let's hear a couple of your thoughts in the large group

TASK G: CLOSING PRAYER



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld. *Ruth in Boaz's Field*

FOUR: RUTH 3... “LITERALLY”

[**lit-er-uh-lee**] *not in the literal or strict sense; allegorically*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Today, we move from the “historical/literal” realm into what our Christian forebears would have called the “spiritual” realm. The format will be almost identical to last time – first, we will discuss a new approach, and take a look at some examples from those same forebears. After that, you will have the opportunity to come at Ruth with all the combined power of the imaginations of you and three or four of your closest friends.

Take a look back at the item you identified last time that you were going to pray about. **Tell** your neighbour what insights or conclusions you have come to, or what further questions have emerged for you.

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

Holy Redeemer, as Boaz redeemed Ruth and Naomi, so you redeemed humanity by the precious sacrifice of your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that we may hear your voice and gain new insight into this text today, through our brother and saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

TASK C: A SYMBOL TASK (A WARM-UP)

Select or **draw** an object that represents how you view your faith. **Explain** your choice to your neighbour.

Who would like to share the object their partner selected?

TASK D: NEW PERSPECTIVES

Divide into 3 groups. In your groups, **read** the following:

The **ALLEGORICAL** or **TYOLOGICAL SENSE** deals with figurative interpretations of Scripture, especially in drawing connections between the Old and New Testaments. Allegory is a rather broader word that includes symbolism, numerology, etc. (for example, the color red might refer to Jesus' blood). Typology refers specifically to the identifying of similar people, places, things or events in the Bible as "types" of future events. For example, Adam is a "type" of Christ because a) he was the first created human and Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, and b) through Adam sin entered the world and through Christ sin is defeated (in this case, Adam would be an "antitype" of Christ).

What comes to mind for you?

In your groups, **select** ONE of the examples of allegorical/typological interpretation found in [Appendix F](#) and **discuss**:

How did the interpreter arrive at this conclusion?

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

How does this fit with the literal meaning of the text as you understand it?

How might you interpret the same passage allegorically?

Let's hear some insights in the large group.

TASK E: TELL THE STORY

In groups of 3 or 4, **reread** Ruth 3 and **brainstorm** ways of interpreting this passage allegorically/typologically. **Choose** your favourite interpretation (it doesn't have to be rock solid – maybe it's the zaniest one, or one that surprised you) and as a group, **create** a fun way to present your interpretation to the large group.

As you **listen to/watch** the other presentations, keep the following in mind:

What do you like about this interpretation?

How do you agree or disagree?

How can this be supported or debunked by other Scripture passages?

How does this relate to the literal sense we discussed last time?

TASK F: TAKE IT TO GO

Write down the idea you heard today that most intrigued you. Between now and the next time we meet, **reflect** on this idea and **ask** God to help you discern whether this is a true interpretation or not.

Let's hear a couple thoughts in the large group.

TASK G: CLOSING PRAYER



He Qi. *Ruth and Naomi.*

FIVE: RUTH 3... A MORAL DILEMMA

[troh-**pol**-uh-jee] *the use of a Scriptural text so as to give it a moral interpretation or significance apart from its direct meaning*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

In my experience, if modern interpreters venture outside the box of literal interpretation, they fall back on moral lessons. Of course, the nature of those lessons changes over time as social and cultural values shift. Your mission today, should you choose to accept it, is to glean (pun only sort of intended) morality from the tale of Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor. Bonus points are available if you can do it without talking about dating.

The format will be the same as last time – prayer, discussion of new information and examples, and then group interpretation of the passage, winding up with reflection and prayer.

With a neighbour, take one minute each to briefly **discuss** the interpretation you identified last time that challenged or surprised you.

What insights have you had since then? What new questions have arisen for you?

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

Righteous and Holy God, you sanctify and purify your Church through the blood of your Son and the gift of your Holy Spirit. Teach us to live worthy of your call through the example of your servants, Ruth, Boaz and Naomi. Amen.

TASK C: TO DO OR NOT TO DO... (A WARM-UP)

Take two minutes to **discuss** the following:

What does it mean to act morally?

TASK D: NEW PERSPECTIVES

Follow along as I read the following definition:

The **MORAL** or **TROPOLOGICAL SENSE** is pretty much what it sounds like. What moral lessons can we draw from the text? How does this text encourage us to live a holy life, or what does it say about the idea of living a holy life? For example, in the story of Noah and the ark, we can draw conclusions like: sometimes God asks us to do things that make no sense to us but we need to respond in faith and obedience.

What comes to mind for you?

Divide into 3 groups. **Select** ONE of the examples of moral/tropological interpretation found in [Appendix G](#) and **discuss**:

How did the interpreter arrive at this conclusion?

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

How does this fit with the literal meaning of the text as you understand it?

How might you interpret the same passage from a moral standpoint?

Let's hear ONE or TWO insights from each group.

TASK E: TELL THE STORY

In groups of 3 or 4, **reread** Ruth 3 and **discuss** moral lessons that this passage may suggest to you. **Choose** your favourite and **develop** a creative, engaging way to present this lesson to the large group.

As you **watch** the other groups' presentations, **ponder**:

What do you like about this interpretation?

How do you agree or disagree?

How can this be supported or debunked by other Scripture passages?

How does this relate to the literal sense of this passage?

TASK F: TAKE IT TO GO

Write down ONE way you will apply the moral teachings of Ruth 3 to your life over the next week.

Let's hear one or two inspirations in the large group.

TASK G: CLOSING PRAYER



Marc Chagall. *Ruth at the Feet of Boaz*.

SIX: RUTH 3... FURTHER UP & FURTHER IN

[es-kuh-**tol**-uh-jee] *concerning last, or final, matters, as death, the Judgment, the future state, etc.*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Today's topic is heaven and the end times – it's a very complex topic, so keep in mind that this study is meant to help you dip your toes in, not to solve theological issues that have been raging since the beginning of the Church. The format of this session will be the same as the last two, but in the group interpretation activity, you will be asked to reflect on other biblical knowledge you might have, or other teaching you have heard. The reason for this is that end-times theology needs to be grounded very firmly in contextual elements, both historical and canonical.

With a neighbour, **discuss** what moral teaching you drew from last week's session.

Did you attempt to apply this teaching to your life? Why or why not?

How did it make you feel to think about moral behaviour in this way?

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you save us into new life in Christ. Open our eyes to behold in Ruth the mysteries of your kingdom, which both is and is to come. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen and triumphant Lord. Amen.

TASK C: IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT... (A WARM-UP)

What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "the end times"?

Write your answer on a sticky note. **Read** it out to the group and **post** it somewhere conspicuous within the room.

TASK D: NEW PERSPECTIVES

With a partner, **read** the following definition.

The **ESCHATOLOGICAL** or **ANAGOGICAL SENSE** refers to the hereafter – “anagogy” refers to a climb or ascent, so the anagogical sense of a text looks heavenward, toward what is coming (heaven and the end times) and what we aspire to (the spiritual afterlife).

As Christians, we live in a constant state of waiting – we know Jesus will return, but darned if we know when. As such, the focus of much of what we do is anchored in the future. As we believe that the Bible is the Word and Revelation of God, we therefore believe that it speaks to our future hopes as well as our past and present realities.

What questions arise for you?

Divide into 3 groups. **Select** one of the examples found in [Appendix H](#) and **discuss**:

How did the interpreter arrive at this conclusion?

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

How does this fit with the literal meaning of the text as you understand it?

How might you interpret the same passage with respect to eternal life and the kingdom of God?

TASK E: TELL THE STORY

In groups of 3 or 4, **reread** Ruth 3 and **discuss** how you might interpret this passage as it relates to eternal life and the Kingdom of God. Try to use other biblical knowledge and scripture passages as well as sermons or talks you may have heard. Refer to the sticky notes around the room for additional inspiration.

Present your interpretation to the large group however you feel is most effective.

Watch the other groups' presentations and **reflect**:

What do you like about this interpretation?

How do you agree or disagree?

How can this be supported or debunked by other Scripture passages?

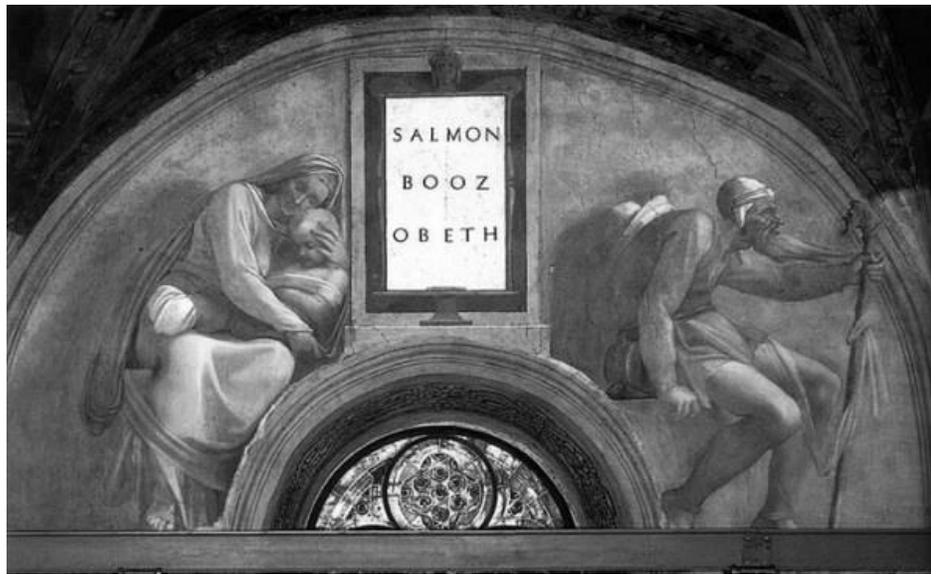
How does this relate to the literal sense of this passage?

TASK F: TAKE IT TO GO

Write down ONE insight you heard today that challenged you and ONE practical way you will work toward meeting this challenge.

Let's hear one or two ideas in the large group.

TASK G: CLOSING PRAYER



Michelangelo. *Ruth and Obed with Salmon (Sistine Chapel)*.

SEVEN: RUTH IN REFLECTION

[ri-**flek** –shuh n] *a fixing of the thoughts on something; careful consideration*

TASK A: WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Welcome to our last session on Ruth. Thank you for your contributions and heart as we have journeyed together. This session will be of a different ilk than the others. Today, we tackle the more difficult questions of WHY this is important – especially, what impact this will have on your lives going forward. There will be lots of time for reflection and small group discussion. If your primary outlet for self-expression is interpretive dance, we'll find time for that too.

But first, take a minute or two with a neighbour to **reflect** on last session, especially the insight you identified last time as being particularly challenging.

TASK B: OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Redeemer, we thank you for your Word and your Spirit that have led us through the story of your servants Ruth, Boaz and Naomi. May we not leave Ruth behind unchanged and unaffected. Open our hearts to the many ways you speak to us through Scripture and through the voices of saints past and present. In the name of Christ Jesus, our saviour and our friend, Amen.

TASK C: HOW FAR WE'VE COME

In groups of 2 or 3, **describe** the insight or idea that most surprised or challenged you over the course of this study.

How did hearing this insight make you feel?

What further understandings have you gained into this insight through the rest of this study?

How does this insight affect how you perceive Ruth as a whole and as part of a wider context?

Let's hear ONE insight from each group.

TASK D: SO WHAT?

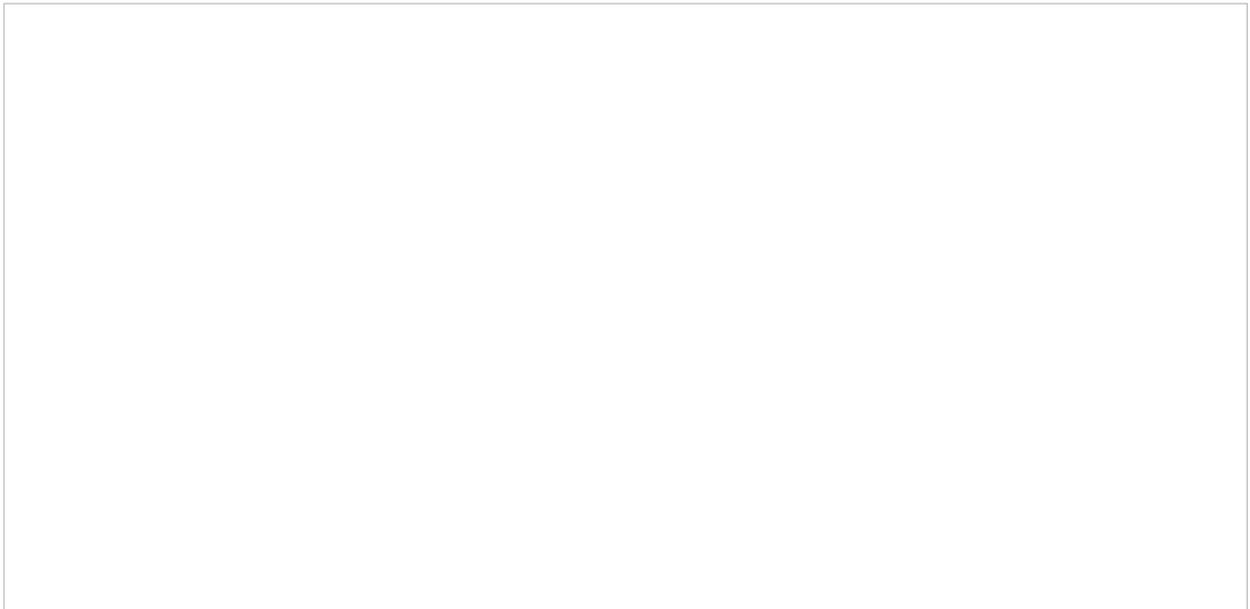
By yourself, find a quiet place – a corner, another room, or go for a 10 minute walk – and **reflect** on the following questions:

Why is it important to study Scripture?

How has this study affected how you view Scripture and interpretation?

How can you apply what you have learned here to other parts of the Bible? Of Christian faith? Of your life?

Take a few minutes to **write out** a concise, personal answer to the above questions. You may use the space below or a spare sheet of paper, which will be provided. If you prefer, you may **draw** or otherwise illustrate your answer in a way that makes sense to you.



TASK E: TELL YOUR STORY

With 1 or 2 other people, **share** your thoughts from Task D above, as well as any other insights, questions, or inspirations that have arisen through the course of this study.

Discuss how you might use what you have learned in your life going forward and in further study of Scripture.

Pray together over these insights, giving thanks to God for what you have learned and asking for clarity and help in tackling the things that challenged and discomforted you.

TASK F: TALKING CIRCLE

Please **sit** in a circle. As a final time of reflection, we will go around the circle and **share** one thing that is on our hearts and minds as this study draws to a close.

But first, let's take a moment to **review** the following guidelines:

- This circle is meant to be a sacred and safe space. We listen and speak from our hearts, meaning that all views and experiences are welcome and are to be heard with respect and equality.
- Please refrain from speaking while another is sharing and when it is your turn to share, please address your own perspective without commenting on what others have said.
- It is perfectly acceptable to pass and not provide an answer.
- Be mindful that anything that is shared within the circle remains within the circle's confines when you leave.

TASK G: DEBRIEF AND FEEDBACK

What did you find helpful about this workshop?

What did you like about this workshop?

What improvements or changes would you suggest?

TASK F: CLOSING PRAYER



Edward Burne-Jones. *Ruth Meets Boaz*.

APPENDIX A: RUTH ACCORDING TO MELISSA

Once upon a time – specifically, a time before Israel had a king – a man named Elimelech took his wife and two sons to seek fortune in Moab (fortune? In MOAB?) because Judah was in the middle of a famine. Well, anyway, he died and then his sons died – after marrying Moabite women. It seemed that no good could come from Moab after all. Naomi, Elimelech’s widow, got word through the grapevine that Judah seemed to be pulling out of its troubles, and she decided it was time to go home. Her daughters-in-law followed.

Naomi, tired of life and hardly feeling up to caring for herself, let alone two young childless widows, told them to go home and find Moabite husbands. It would be better for all of them in the long run. Orpah wept bitterly, but eventually, she was persuaded to return. Ruth, on the other hand, had a stubborn streak. No matter how Naomi pleaded, cajoled, or bullied, Ruth refused to leave, saying, “Your people will become my people, and your God, my God.” Bold words, for a Moabite. But Naomi caved in the end. She was touched in spite of herself. And so the two women returned to Naomi’s hometown, Bethlehem, together.

The women of the town welcomed them with shouts of joy, on Naomi’s behalf, and trepidation, on Ruth’s. Naomi knew they were all wondering why she had come home with a Moabite in tow. Settling in proved to be difficult – two widows with no male kin had very few options. One of them being foreign certainly didn’t make those options any more numerous. In spite of that, Naomi couldn’t help but thank God for Ruth’s presence. No wilting flower, Ruth had marched out to the fields the first chance she got in order to glean after the harvesters. It was hard work and dangerous – with no protection, she could end up plying the “trade of the night” whether she wanted to or not. As luck – or maybe God – would have it, Ruth stumbled into the field of Elimelech’s relative, Boaz. Naomi had always liked Boaz; he had a good head on his shoulders and a compassionate heart. It seemed he hadn’t changed in the years she’d been gone. Ruth came home having eaten her fill, and her basket overflowing with the grain she’d been able to glean. “He even told me that he would make sure no one harassed me, as long as I stayed in his fields,” Ruth told Naomi cheerfully.

And with that, Naomi began to form a plan.

Her chance didn’t come until the harvest was nearly done – if she didn’t take it, who knew what would happen to two widows without even gleaned grain to sustain them...

“Boaz will be drinking and celebrating tonight,” she told Ruth. “Take off your mourning clothes, wash your face, and go down to the threshing floor. When Boaz falls asleep, lie down at his feet

and turn back his blanket. He'll know the right thing to do." Ruth merely nodded and went to do as Naomi told her, but Naomi caught the glint in her eye. *Spine of iron, that one, and bold as brass.*

Boaz awoke with a start in the heat of the night, feeling a breeze across his feet. The shape of a woman took form in the shifting shadows at his feet. "Who's there?"

"Your servant, Ruth," came the reply. They sat there a moment, holding a pregnant silence between them. Boaz smiled, he couldn't help himself.

"You've made the right decision, for both you and Naomi," he said. "But there's a relative who is closer to you than me who has a prior claim on Elimelech's inheritance. Go back to Naomi and I'll take care of it." He gave her a bundle filled with grain and sent her on her way, before the other threshers woke and her reputation was called into question.

Naomi was waiting when Ruth arrived home. "Well?"

Ruth told her what happened and Naomi nodded. They'd done all they could. The rest was in Boaz's hands.

As the sun rose over the town, Boaz made his way to the gate, where the elders were beginning to gather to debate that day's petitions. Just as he sat down, his quarry arrived. "Hey, you!" Boaz called, gesturing for the man to sit next to him. In the presence of the elders, Boaz explained the situation to Naomi's relative: "Naomi has decided to sell Elimelech's land – you have the first right to redeem it, if you choose."

"Of course I will," the man replied.

"Well, then I should tell you that you will also be marrying Ruth, who is the widow of Elimelech's son, in order to carry on the line."

"That's no good! That will endanger my own line! You redeem it."

Boaz nodded deferentially. Addressing the elders, he said, "With you all as my witnesses, I redeem the land belonging to Elimelech, and I will marry Ruth so that Elimelech's line will not die." The elders blessed him then, congratulating him on the fine character of his new wife.

In time, Ruth bore a son to Boaz and he was named Obed. Naomi loved him like her own son.

Obed, in his time, had a son named Jesse, and Jesse, in his time, had a son named David.

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APPENDIX B: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Adapted from: Amit, Yairah. Reading Biblical Narratives. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

PLOT:

Every story has a beginning and ending that respectively sets up and wraps up the events of the narrative. The beginning is usually constructed from more functional elements than the fabric of the story itself, often providing character and setting details. The story proper begins when something changes. The ending marks a return to stasis – the hero or heroine returns to whence they came, but carrying the marks of their experiences.

Amit identifies 4 types of plot structures present in biblical narrative:

1. Classic pediment structure:

This structure follows the sequence of: complication or crisis → change → unraveling (the consequences of the change). You may have drawn diagrams in school that look something like this:

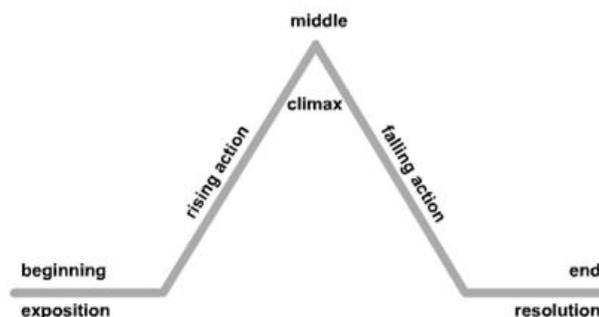


Image taken from www.readwritethink.org

This structure emphasizes the story's background info.

2. Scenic structure:

Using this structure, a story can be divided into separate scenes that are differentiated by a change in location, time, or characters. The level of drama can be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the amount of “telling” the narrator does. As the characters are allowed to speak for themselves more, the story becomes more dramatic; as the narrator's voice becomes more dominant, the story becomes less dramatic.

This structure can be used to highlight specific elements of the story, such as characterization or setting.

3. 3-and-4 structure:

This structure consists of telling four events that have similar basic elements; the first three are ineffective attempts at persuasion, while the fourth conveys a successful change in attitude (for a clear example, see Judges 9:7-21).

4. Mission:

This structure is often used to tell the story of an individual's appointment or commissioning (usually by God) and follows fairly closely the pattern of: encounter → appointment → refusal → encouragement → request for proof → fear (see Judges 6:11-24).

SETTING:

Setting consists of **place** and **time**.

A) Place

Due to the brief nature of biblical narrative, biblical stories rarely contain much detail on location. Any details given play a functional role within the narrative (e.g. descriptions of the ark and Tabernacle in Exodus).

Where place names and other geographical indicators are used, they are meant to give the impression that the account is historical (conversely, the absence of such indicators may indicate that the author wishes to give a fictional sense). They may also have ideological significance (e.g. Jerusalem as the city of God) or the place names themselves may have linguistic meaning. Places can also be used in characterization; take for example Nathaniel's reaction upon finding out Jesus' birthplace, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46, NIV).

B) Time

A distinction must be made between the time that a story takes place (historical context) and the time over which a story takes place (the literary passage of time within an account). As the topic of session 1 is Ruth as its own literary unit, the focus here is on the literary time of the story.

The biblical authors use a number of standard devices to denote the passage of time within a small narrative space or to slow time down within that space. These devices include:

a) Lists and genealogies

- b) Stock phrases which summarize an entire period of time (e.g. “when Moses had grown up” (Exodus 2:11))
- c) Repetition of words and phrases slows time and calls attention to details the author considers of vital importance to the narrative
- d) Dialogue extends the narrative and when used in an instance where the narrator tells us that time is short, it calls attention to the impact of an event

Biblical narrative as a rule follows a chronological order. When the sequence of events deviates, for example by the inclusion of a prediction or prophecy about the future or the postponement of an important detail until a later point in the story, the deviation plays a specific function within the story.

CHARACTERIZATION:

Characters in any narrative fall within a spectrum, from “flat”, or less complex, to “round”, or more complex. Amit identifies three broad categories of characters:

1. **Agents** are characters that are subordinate to the story. They may not have any identifiable traits and their function in the story is essentially to fill space or to advance the plot.
2. **Types** are characters that are fairly one-dimensional and have only limited traits that fit within a stereotypical mould.
3. **Characters** are, well, characters that display a broader range of traits and show observable development through the course of a story.

Generally speaking, the degree of character complexity within biblical narrative is inversely proportional to God’s direct presence in the narrative – as God becomes more present and anthropomorphic, other characters become more flat, and vice versa.

Characterization can be accomplished **directly** or **indirectly**. Direct characterization involves the description of a character by the narrator or another character (e.g. “Ruth is a good person”), and may not always be reliable, especially when coming from another character. Indirect characterization comes from the reader’s observance of a character’s actions and speech.

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APPENDIX C: PROVERBS 31:10-31

- ¹⁰ A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
- ¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.
- ¹² She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.
- ¹³ She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands.
- ¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.
- ¹⁵ She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.
- ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- ¹⁷ She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.
- ¹⁸ She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.
- ¹⁹ In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
- ²⁰ She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.
- ²¹ When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
- ²² She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.
- ²³ Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
- ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.
- ²⁵ She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.
- ²⁶ She speaks with wisdom,

- and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- ²⁷ She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- ²⁸ Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
- ²⁹ “Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”
- ³⁰ Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
- ³¹ Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

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APPENDIX D: THE FOURFOLD METHOD

Adapted from an unsourced handout, titled “History of Interpretation.”

Over the thousand years following the Council of Ephesus in 431, various systems for interpreting the OT were developed that had anywhere from 2 to 7 levels of meaning. The most common method of interpretation was called the **fourfold method of interpretation**. According to this method, each biblical text had four senses: the **literal** (or historical) meaning, the **allegorical** (or spiritual) meaning, the **moral** (or tropological) meaning and the **eschatological** (or anagogical) meaning.

For example: “Jerusalem” could have a number of distinct meanings

1. **Literal:** Jerusalem is an actual city in Palestine in which historical events occurred and historical people lived
2. **Spiritual:** Jerusalem symbolizes the Church of Christ
3. **Moral:** Jerusalem is an example on which individual conduct and behavior should be based
4. **Eschatological:** Jerusalem is the heavenly city of God.

Another example is the manna eaten by the Israelites during their time in the wilderness:

1. **Literal:** manna is food provided for the Israelites by God
2. **Allegorical:** manna is the body of Christ, the bread we eat at eucharist
3. **Moral:** manna is the spiritual food given to us every day by the Holy Spirit which sustains our souls
4. **Eschatological:** manna is symbolic of the food we will eat in heaven when we are perfectly united with Christ.

This method can be abused. The important question to ask is always, “does this fit with what I understand the literal meaning of the text to be?”

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APPENDIX E: RUTH 3

3 One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. ² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³ Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.”

⁵ “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

⁹ “Who are you?” he asked.

“I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”

¹⁰ “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.”

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”

¹⁵ He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?”¹

Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

¹⁸ Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

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¹ Literally: “Who are you, my daughter?”

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLES (ALLEGORICAL)

- 1 “...Naomi and Ruth are inseparable... in what way do these two women belong together, so much that one is nothing without the other? One possible answer sees them as the two faces of the same Eve, a composite figure which embodies two separate aspects of the same entity. These are youth’s hopeful femininity on the one hand and aged, spent womanhood on the other.”

Brenner, Athalya. 1993. “Naomi and Ruth.”

In *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, edited by Athalya Brenner, 70-84. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press.

- 2 “Now let us look at Ruth, for she is a type of the church. First she is a type because she is a stranger from the Gentile people who renounced her native land and all things belonging to it. She made her way to the land of Israel. And when her mother-in-law forbade her from coming with her she persisted... This voice without a doubt shows that she is a type of the church. For the church was called to God from the Gentiles in just this way: leaving her native land (which is idolatry) and giving up all earthly associations, she confessed that he in whom the saints believed is the Lord God; and that she herself will go where the flesh of Christ ascended after his passion; and that on account of his name she would suffer in this world unto death; and that she will unite with the community of the saints, that is, the patriarchs and the prophets.”

Isidore of Seville. “On Ruth.”

In *MEIT*, 7-8. Translated by Lesley Smith. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996.

- 3 “Country friends need no explanation of what is meant by gleaning... I am afraid that many who see gleaning every year in the fields of their own parish are not yet wise enough to understand the heavenly art of spiritual gleaning... My text is taken from the charming story of Ruth (Ruth 2:15), which is known to every one of you... In the first place, we shall observe that there is *a great Husbandman*: it was Boaz in Ruth’s case, it is our heavenly Father who is the Husbandman in our case. Secondly, we shall notice a

humble gleaner: the gleaner was Ruth in this instance, but she may be looked upon as the representative of every believer. And, in the third place, there is a *gracious permission given* to Ruth: “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not,” and the same permission is spiritually given to us.” (He goes on to explain that we are able to glean in such fields as Doctrine, Promise and Ordinance through prayer and meditation and participation in the life of the church.)

Spurgeon, Charles H. “Spiritual Gleaning.”
The Spurgeon Archive. <http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/glean.htm>.

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APPENDIX G: EXAMPLES (MORAL)

- 1 “Church, I ask you—is the Body of Christ compassionate and bold enough to tackle and transform these issues? Isaiah 1:17 says, “Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” And James 1:27 says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Let us come together to be a Boaz, a kinsman redeemer, to those who seek freedom only to find bondage. Join with me in praying for the modern-day Naomis—those who think of their lives as bitter, who have lost all hope in their journey for survival. Pray for the Ruths who are without a Boaz. Pray for those in our high schools, middle schools—and yes, our elementary schools—who are being sexually abused by those that should be protecting them. Pray for those in the DRC who are raped on the same day as their sisters, mothers, and neighbors because there is no kinsman redeemer to protect them from wicked and greedy men trying to control the minerals that power our cell phones.

And when you pray, do not be surprised if God asks you to be a Boaz to speak out and take action.”

Love, Donald and Emily Love Esworthy. “Message 3: A Deeper Look at the Book of Ruth.” In *One in Three: Preventing Sexual Violence in our Communities*. IMA World Health, 2011.

- 2 “For if the law was given for the irreverent and sinners, then surely Ruth, who exceeded the limits of the law and entered the church and was made an Israelite and deserved to be counted among the honored figures in the Lord’s genealogy, chosen for kinship of mind, not of body, is a great example for us, because she prefigures all of us who were gathered from the nations for the purpose of joining the church of the Lord. We should emulate her, therefore, who merited by her deeds this privilege of being admitted to his society, as history teaches, so that we also, by our deeds and accompanying merits might be chosen for election to the church of the Lord.”

Ambrose. “Exposition of the Gospel of Luke.”

In *MEIT, passim*. Translated by Lesley Smith. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996.

3 “Most women prefer to wait for the men to send the first message... While there is nothing wrong with men pursuing women and women wanting to be pursued, we believe... that this is a cultural norm that has somehow been assumed to be biblically based. We have not found anywhere in the Bible that women should not pursue men, although we know it is clear that men are to be the spiritual leaders of the household after marriage... The Book of Ruth reveals some interesting insights on the topics of “dating and mating.” ...

“First, although Naomi and her husband were Israelites... their sons both married Moabite women... So this answers the question of interracial marriage, in our humble opinion. Taking that one step further, it seems to affirm that remarriage after the death of a spouse is acceptable in God’s eyes.

“Second... Naomi encourages Ruth to ‘wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes.’ So much for ‘he should like me for who I am on the inside.’...

“Fourth... Ruth... asked a startled Boaz to spread the corner of his garment over her... The act of spreading the corner of a garment was and still is practiced in parts of the Middle East today, and is a request for marriage. How’s that for pursuing a man?”

Martin, Linda. 2011. “The Book of Ruth Lends Dating Advice.”
Cache’ Connections Christian Matchmaking Blog, February 27.
<http://cacheconnections.blogspot.ca/2011/02/book-of-ruth-lends-dating-advice.html>.

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APPENDIX H: EXAMPLES (ESCHATOLOGICAL)

- 1 “Ruth lay down with a man on the threshing floor for your [Christ’s] sake. Her love was bold for your sake. She taught boldness to all penitents. Her ears held in contempt all [other] voices for the sake of your voice.

“The fiery coal that crept into the bed of Boaz went up and lay down. She saw the Chief Priest hidden in his loins, the fire for his censer. She ran and became the heifer of Boaz. For you she brought forth the fatted ox.

“She went gleaning for love of you; she gathered straw. You repaid her quickly the wage of her humiliation: instead of ears [of wheat], the Root of kings, and instead of straw, the Sheaf of Life that descends from her.”

Ephrem the Syrian. *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*.

Translated by Kathleen E. McVey. *The Classics of Western Spirituality*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989.

- 2 Ruth and Boaz’s “union symbolized the meeting of extremes, prefigured an age of charity when the hearts of men should be larger than their creeds and the spirit of nations bigger than their boundaries. In the soul of Jesus, the wedding-bells of Ruth and Boaz are rung once more. Here again Moab and Israel meet together. In the heart of the Son of Man the Gentile stands side by side with the Jew as the recipient of a common Divine fatherhood... The marriage-bells of Ruth at Bethlehem were the same bells which sounded at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.”

Matheson, George. *The Representative Women of the Bible*.

London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907. Pp. 200-201.

- 3 “The elders confirmed the marriage with a blessing, saying, ‘The Lord made this woman,’ etc. Moreover, ‘So that she may be an example of virtue in Ephrathah,’ they predicted the salvific birth through which Bethlehem was made famous among all people.”

Theodoret of Cyr. “Questions on Ruth.” In *MEIT*, *passim*.

Translated by Lesley Smith. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996.

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APPENDIX I: FACILITATOR GUIDE

ALL PARTICIPANTS SHOULD HAVE READ RUTH IN ITS ENTIRETY AT LEAST ONCE PRIOR TO BEGINNING THE STUDY.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

- As you develop ground rules in session 1, consider the following:
 - *This is a safe space* – it may be useful to make explicit rules like: “no interrupting”, “when someone is speaking, everyone listens”, “no disparaging/condescending comments or rebuttals”.
 - *Keep creature comforts in mind* – participants may want to build breaks into the session’s structure at the very beginning. Also consider who will provide food/wine and come up with a system at the very beginning. Ensure that the host of each session indicates where participants may or may not go during group-work times.

SUPPLIES:

- Please ensure that there are enough spare Bibles for everyone to have one. Multiple translations are an asset.
- Writing utensils, as well as coloured pencils, crayons and markers should be available.
- Provide spare (preferably white) paper, 8 ½ x 11, for note-taking and use in various learning tasks.
- Large sticky notes will be necessary for two of the warm-ups (bright colors are more fun, but plain yellow will do in a pinch)
- Budget one large piece of paper per group of 3 (flip-chart sized – or you can get cheap poster paper from any dollar store worth its salt) for learning task E in session 1.
- Notify your learners ahead of time for sessions 2-6 and encourage them to bring their own supplies (costumes, glitter, whatever – the wackier the better) for the retelling component.

TIMING:

- As a general rule, try to give 2-3 minutes per warm-up, 10 minutes for the first discussion (definition and example), 20-30 minutes for the group interpretation, and 3-5 minutes per group presentation. The sessions should each be able to be completed in about 1 hour, but if you are able to allow up to 2 hours, please try to encourage, rather than curtail discussion.

PRAYERS:

- The opening prayers written out for each session have been written with the theme of the session in mind, but they are by no means compulsory as written – you may extemporise as you see fit.
- The Closing Prayer “task” is an open option. You may wish to invite learners to pray for the group, or have them pray in small groups. The point is to always start and end with God.

OVERVIEW AND WELCOME TASKS

- The information included in these tasks is meant to be a brief overview of the session. You may wish to fill in details of tasks (e.g. introducing the Talking Circle at the beginning of session 7 may be useful, just to get participants used to the idea) and/or remind participants of the ground rules developed in session 1.
- The discussion component should be brief – 1 to 2 minutes – and is meant to help participants recall the previous session and keep one another accountable in actually doing the “Take it to go” tasks.

SESSION 1, TASK E (APPENDIX A)

- You may use this particular retelling of Ruth as you see fit, but you may also use your own retelling, emphasizing different parts of the story. If you do not choose to use Appendix A as included herein, you should provide a typed copy of your own retelling to the participants so that they can use it for note-taking and reference during their discussions.

TALKING CIRCLE (SESSION SEVEN, TASK F)

- The Talking Circle is based on a sacred indigenous practice. The circle is a sacred space where all participants are heard respectfully and their contributions valued equally.

Participants should be informed that anything spoken within the circle should not leave the confines of the circle.

- Discussion is facilitated by means of the passing of a “talking piece” which, in indigenous circles, is something that symbolizes the land, such as a feather, a stone or a stick (for the purposes of this study, a piece of wheat might be symbolically appropriate, if you have access to one). The talking piece is passed in one direction until all participants around the circle have had a chance to participate. It can go around multiple times – you may introduce a second (or third) question if you so desire.
- A talking piece is not strictly necessary, but if one is not used, prior to discussion, you should discuss with the group how you will determine whose turn it is to speak and ensure that this guideline is followed all the way around the circle to avoid interruption or missed sharing.
- Participants should also be informed of the following guidelines:
 - The point of the circle is to hear one another and to speak and listen from the heart.
 - Each participant should bring his or her own understanding and experience without commenting on or rebutting what another participant has spoken.
 - Only the person holding the talking piece may speak.
 - Silence is perfectly acceptable – the talking piece may simply be passed to the next person.

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