A STUDY IN RUTH

How to approach studying the Bible

1. *Read the text: Establish author, audience and context (completed)*
2. Read the text: Identify the message being communicated
3. Identify questions that you want to have answered: Use resources to find answers.
4. Read the text: Identify the message being communicated
5. Map the audience & message: Apply the message to your life
6. Compare your conclusions with others: Trace back any differences to the text

Understanding Chapter 2

Objective: Identify the message of Ruth Chapter 2 and apply it as God's word spoken into our lives.

Step Two: Read the chapter and identify the message the author is communicating to the audience.

1. Dramatis Personae – Introducing Boaz (1):

- Of Elimelech's clan
- A relative of Elimelech
- A worthy man

2. Ruth's faith in action (2-3):

- Let me go out and gather grain
- In the process I will encounter someone who will show favor toward me/us
- By chance or fortune she came to the field of Boaz
- She asked permission and began gleaning early in the morning and worked diligently

3. Boaz's Attention Captured (4-7):

- Boaz's grace toward the women who harvested for him
- Boaz noticed Ruth – who was not one of his reapers
- Boaz's question to the man who supervised the reapers in the field and the explanation of Ruth's actions

4. Boaz's Response (8-16):

- Care for Ruth's safety (8-9)
- Appreciation of Ruth's character (11-12)
    - Recognition that Ruth & Naomi are under the care of the Lord.
- Provision for Ruth's needs (14)
- Relief for Ruth's household (15-16)

5. Naomi's changed Perspective (17-23)

- Appreciation for the landowner who was so generous to Ruth (19)
- Recognition of Boaz as a redeemer (20)
- Changed perspective on God as showing kindness toward her and her late husband's inheritance (20)
- Confirmation of God's providence and the need to follow the kindness shown toward them (21-22)

Step Three: Identify and write down any questions that arise out of the chapter.

Use resources to research and answer the questions you've written down.

What does "worthy" mean in verse 1?

- [BLB] Looking up the word in the original language, it means mighty or notable. Someone with resources or wealth. This same word is used of both Boaz and Ruth.

What does Ruth mean by "favor" in verse 2?

- [BLB] Looking up the word in the original language, it means grace (unmerited favor) or acceptance.

What does the word "happened" mean in verse 3?

- [BLB] Looking up the word in the original language, it means by chance or by fortune, or something that was unforeseen.

What is "gleaning?"

- [Unger's Bible Dictionary] Leviticus 19:9-10: When harvesting the field, the landowner was not to strip it bare, but leave grain around the edges or fruit on the ground. This would provide means for the sojourner and the poor person to come and gather some of the harvest for themselves since they did not have means to provide for themselves from the land.
- [Unger's Bible Dictionary] Deuteronomy 24:19-20: Similar to above. When harvesting, the goal was not to pick every grain or fruit but to intentionally leave some behind for the sojourner and poor. Even to the point of leaving behind some that was forgotten. The point is to remember that once the Israelites were sojourners themselves, and so they should care for those in the same position.

How much is an "ephah"?

- [ESV Study Bible] From the footnotes, an ephah is about 5.5 gallons/22 liters.

Step Four: Read the chapter and refine the message the author is communicating to the audience

(now that your questions are answered)

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Boaz: A worthy man whose character is displayed through his actions

- He is introduced as possessing the means and position to redeem Naomi and Ruth ("a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech")
- He knew of Ruth, her past and her needs
- He Provided:
    - Care for Ruth's safety (8-9)
    - Appreciation of Ruth's character (11-12)
    - Provision for Ruth's needs (14)
    - Relief for Ruth's household (15-16)

Boaz paints a picture of Jesus

- He possessed the means and position to redeem us
- He knew of our past and our needs
- Through His actions, He provide for us what we needed

Ruth: A worthy woman who acted in faith

- She suggested a plan of action – where she would go, what she would do and how she would rely upon God (finding favor)
- She worked hard all day
- She thought of Naomi and extended grace to her

Ruth's faith produced action and God shaped her steps

- She went, but God determined where she would go
- She demonstrated patience and waited throughout the barley and wheat harvest

Naomi: From the depths of despair to hope in God.

- In chapter 1 she blamed God for her circumstances.
- In chapter 2 she praised God for remembering her and her husband's inheritance
- She demonstrates an emotional swing from despair to hope.

Step Five part 1: Map the Audience (review & revise)

(how much and in what ways is the audience like us today?)

Since the story is focusing on their circumstances, which is the part that is most like me, I want to apply the picture the story is painting as a close approximation to me and therefore apply it very directly.

Step Five part 2: Map the message to apply to me today

- What commands must I obey?
- What truth must I hold dear?
- What error must I flee?
- How is God revealed?

- How is the gospel made clear?

Naomi's emotionalism caused spiritual whiplash.

- Super low
- Super high
- Super irrelevant to what God was doing.
- She did not see God clearly and faith did not fill in the gaps of her vision

Ruth's simple faith activates God's plan

- Her only action was showing up and watching God spring into action
- Provision came through her preparedness, diligence and hard work

Boaz paints a picture of our Savior

- His care and concern for us
- His protection of us
- His provision for us

Boaz's modest actions in chapter 2 are a foreshadowing of his greater actions in chapter 4.

- A picture of the "down payment" we have received against our greater inheritance
- Immediate limited benefits to be replaced by later greater benefits

- What actions can I take in the next 7 days that will demonstrate what I said above is real?

Questions to answer:

1. What clouds my eyes of faith when life seems hard?
2. How do I supplant quiet faith with frantic action in order to get your way?
3. Where do I need to refocus your vision on your Savior?

Step Six: Compare your conclusions

Share your study results with a study buddy or compare it to a commentary to see how others have understood the passage.