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 3

Objective: Identify the message of a chapter 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.

For Naomi and Ruth, waiting on God turned to action and asking.

- God had already arranged the Boaz connection seemingly out of chance
- God had provided for their needs through Boaz's generosity
- God had spread Ruth's reputation all around Bethlehem

Naomi advised Ruth to directly raise the topic of Redemption

- Naomi presented this as a means of "getting Ruth settled" – getting married again.
- The greater context was that Naomi could be redeemed through this.

The women identified an opportunity when Boaz was alone (sleeping) to present their request.

Redemption was requested by them not forced upon them

- From God's protection & care to Boaz's protection and care

Boaz's care for Ruth

- Her reputation – leaving before she could be recognized
- Her physical needs – giving her six measures of barley

Naomi was content to wait on God's outcome – "for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

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 was the significance of going to Boaz at night?

- I could not find a reference for this. Logically speaking, this would be a way to get Boaz alone and make the request of him privately.

What was the significance of uncovering his feet?

- [ESV Study Bible] The position of "at his feet" is one of submission to his authority. It is a picture of the marriage for which she is asking.
- A second perspective is that uncovering his feet, exposing them to the cool night air, was a mechanism to cause Boaz to naturally wake and prompt the private conversation.

What does Boaz mean by "there is a redeemer nearer than I"?

- [ESV Study Bible] I found references to several passages in Leviticus:
  - Leviticus 25:23-25 – This passage lays out the rules of land redemption. It follows on several key principles:
    - The land is the Lord's, He makes up the rules about how it's handled – everyone else is just using His land.
    - The land is to stay in the family line. It can leave temporarily, but it will always revert to the family.
    - Every 50 years the Year of Jubilee is the event that triggers the return of all land to its hereditary clan/family ownership
    - "Selling the land" is more like a lease until the Year of Jubilee reverts it back to the family – time to the Year of Jubilee will help determine the price
    - If the land is sold (to raise cash in time of need), the family always has the right to redeem the land by paying the price to buy it back.
  - Leviticus 25:48-49 – These verses lay out the rules for redeeming back a relative's property.
    - If a Hebrew sells himself (including his land) to a foreigner and does not have the means to redeem himself, then one of his relatives may do so for him.
    - The relatives are listed in a priority order of redemption: Brothers, Uncle, Cousin, another close relative.
    - The redemption price is determined by the number of years until the year of Jubilee.
  - While Boaz was a close relative, he was not the first in line to make the redemption. If he was a cousin of Elimelech, then perhaps Elimelech's uncle was still living and had a superior claim to the redemption.

How much grain is "six measures"?

- I could not find an answer to that. According to Blue Letter Bible and the interlinear tool, the word "measures" is implied. The original text says. "he measured out six of barley". The measure is implied. It could have been six scoops or six handfuls or six ephahs. We don't know exactly what it was.

What is the meaning of the word "worthy" in 3:11?

- [BLB] This is the same word used in 2:1 to describe Boaz. It could mean "substance" or "virtue" in the sense that Ruth evidenced strong character and kindness toward Naomi when she didn't have to.

Step Four: Read the chapter and refine the message the author is communicating to the audience (now that your questions are answered)

Timing: End of the harvest (2:23). The dependence upon Boaz's generosity and protection was about to end.

Naomi prompts action for Ruth's benefit ("should I not seek rest for you").

- Naomi gives Ruth 7 instructions for how to proceed
- The objective is to secure Ruth's future as one of "rest" contrasted with the present of toil in gleaning
- She trusts Ruth to know what to say – it's the only part of the event she does not instruct
- Ruth agrees to obey

Ruth takes action for Naomi's benefit ("spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer")

- Ruth follows Naomi's instructions, and they work as planned
- When Boaz asked who she was, Ruth immediately asks for redemption (for herself and Naomi)

Boaz agrees to the request

- Boaz acknowledges her generosity because she didn't seek a young handsome man but did something that benefitted her in-laws and the whole family
    - The first kindness: staying with Naomi and caring for her (temporary)
    - The last kindness: choosing to redeem the family by marrying an older man rather than pleasing herself with a handsome young man (permanent)
- Boaz agrees to the request, but identifies the barrier ("there is another redeemer nearer than I")

Boaz re-verifies his concern for Ruth and Naomi

- He keeps her visit a secret, away from gossiping tongues
- He gives her grain as a token of his generosity and intended action on her behalf
- Naomi counsels patience and displays confidence in Boaz ("for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today")

Step Five part 1: Map the Audience (review & revise)
(how much and in what ways is the audience like us today?)

Throughout the story, Boaz has represented "the redeemer" and that really ramps up here. From my perspective, this is Jesus.

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Throughout the story, Ruth has represented the person of faith. She continually moves forward into faith, relying on God to work out the details around her.

Throughout the story, Naomi has represented the person in need of redemption. Her situation goes bad in chapter 1 and doesn't really change up through this chapter. No redeemer, no future, no hope.

Of the 2 I can relate to both Ruth and Naomi.

- Ruth because she moves in faith. I think that is close to me today. As I rely upon God, I am very like Ruth.
- Naomi because she is helpless to do anything about her situation. In my humanity, I am the same as her, hopeless with no future.

Boaz represents a picture of Jesus. In this chapter it's the promise of what he will do.

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

- What commands must I obey?
    - No commands are listed in this chapter
- What truth must I hold dear?
    - Interacting with the Redeemer is a one-on-one moment. No one else can interfere.
    - Potential and inference is nice, but until I ask, it doesn't matter.
- What error must I flee?
    - No error is refuted in this chapter
- How is God revealed?
    - God is revealed as the good redeemer through Boaz. In this chapter I start to get a good picture of Jesus in Boaz as he consents to redeem Ruth
- How is the gospel made clear?
    - We see the need for redemption, the request for redemption and an agreement to redeem. We're left waiting to see the rest of the redemption played out.

- What actions can I take in the next 7 days that will demonstrate what I said above is real?
    - Meditate on my need for redemption and how that is an ongoing process in my life. While I might be redeemed positionally, I still need the redeeming blood of Christ in my life daily.

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.