Book Study - A Bible Study Template

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 4

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.

Boaz forces the issue

- He waits at the gate for the nearer redeemer to appear
- He presents the offer to the nearer redeemer

The redeemer agrees to redeem

- The redeemer is willing to redeem
- Apparently, he knew of the situation of Naomi and understood what the redemption would be about – he was a near relative of Elimelech

The redeemer recants his decision

- Boaz informs the nearer redeemer that he would also have to marry Ruth and continue the line of Elimelech
- The nearer redeemer backs out because he has an inheritance to protect and taking on Ruth and Elimelech's inheritance would mess up his own

The deal is sealed

- Boaz steps up and agrees to redeem Naomi and marry Ruth
- The redeemer gives up his sandal as evidence of passing the right to redeem

God gives Ruth a child

- In due course, Boaz and Ruth are blessed with a child

The women of Bethlehem bless Naomi

- In sharp contrast to gossiping about Naomi's poor fortune when she returned from Moab, now the women of Bethlehem praise God and bless the fortune Naomi now enjoys with an heir that will carry on her name and a family who will care for her in her old age

Genealogy of David

- The author makes sure we see the connection with redemption leading to Israel's greatest king, and the greater plan of God for a greater redemption of all people.

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 is the significance of going to the gate of the city?

- [Halley's Bible Handbook] In ancient cities, the gate served the same purpose as the forum did later in Roman cities and public squares did in European cities. Here people met, the king held audience, and business was transacted.

Why did Boaz say Naomi was selling the land? If she had the land, why did she need to sell it?

- [ESV Study Bible] The footnotes suggest that the land could have been sold prior to the famine to raise cash for the trip to Moab, or she could have still had control over the land – but it was not in productive use.
  I tend to think the former is the case.
- [BLB] The verb "to sell" in this verse has an active, perfect tense. This signifies a direct action taken by the subject (Naomi), but which was completed in the past. Therefore, we could think of it as "Naomi has sold". This is consistent with the first option from the ESV Study Bible. Naomi sold the land previously (and no longer has control or possession of it).

Why did redeeming the land also mean marrying Ruth?

- [ESV Study Bible] The statement about marrying Ruth has a cross reference to Deuteronomy 25:5, 6. This is the passage that discusses "Levirate Marriage" – which from Latin means "brother-in-law marriage". If man marries a woman and dies before having children, then his brother has the obligation to marry the widow and "stand in" for the dead brother to father a child and ensure that the dead brother's name and family live on posthumously.
- In the case of Ruth, it appears the nearer redeemer was worried that by marrying Ruth, it would interfere with his inheritance, which he wanted to pass on to his children. Perhaps he was Boaz's older brother and was passing on their father's inheritance. We don't know the specifics, only that he voiced a concern and used that to pass.

What is the meaning of hoping Ruth is like Rachel and Leah?

- [ESV Study Bible] The footnotes comment that Rachel and Leah were the mothers of the nation of Israel. They also were barren early on and only later were able to bear children themselves.

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

Boaz's commitment to redeem Naomi and marry Ruth initiates the discussion at the gate

- Apart from Boaz forcing the issue, it was a non-issue in the community
- Despite Naomi and Ruth living in town throughout the harvest, the nearer redeemer hadn't developed any relationship (that we see) or shown any inclination to exercise his right of redemption
- Boaz went to him and made him decide

Boaz demonstrated the required characteristics of the kinsman redeemer

- He was a close relative
- He was able to pay the price of redemption
- He was willing to pay the price of redemption

God gave Ruth a son (Naomi's grandson)

- She did not conceive while married to Mahlon
- Boaz was older
- God is identified as the giver of the child

The women of Bethlehem gather around Naomi to praise God

- God gave Naomi a redeemer (after taking everything away)
- God would give back her life and nourish her through her old age
- Her daughter in law was worthy (worth seven sons who could provide for her)
- "A son has been born to Naomi" – she has been made complete

The grand Plan revealed

- In the lineage of King David, we see God's purpose in arranging events with Naomi
- This story was part of David's family heritage
- This story was part of Jesus' family heritage

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 pays off in this chapter.

Throughout the story, Ruth has represented the person of faith. In this chapter she becomes the wife of the Redeemer. In her I see all the redeemed who are joined in the family of faith.

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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. But here that need for redemption is completely satisfied, as expressed by the women of Bethlehem.

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

- Ruth because she becomes the bride of the redeemer – just like the church is the bride of Jesus the redeemer.
- Naomi because her transformation is complete, from hopeless to fulfilled, outcast to part of the household.

Boaz represents a picture of Jesus. In this chapter he delivers on the redemptive promise and makes complete what was broken and separated.

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

- What commands must I obey?
    - No commands here.
- What truth must I hold dear?
    - The redeemer must pay the price. Only then can he be the redeemer. Whether by the price tag or the implications, he must accept them all.
    - This brings spotlight focus on the transformation experienced by the redeemed. Too often I gloss over the full impact of redemption, but in Naomi, I connect with what happened.
- What error must I flee?
    - No error is refuted in this chapter.
- How is God revealed?
    - We have in intimate foreshadowing of Jesus as the redeemer. Boaz paints a very real picture of the redeemer and what He must do. His example brings focus to my understanding of what Jesus would have to do (for me).
- How is the gospel made clear?
    - The gospel is the good news of the redemption. In Ruth 4 we see the redeemer and the redeemed and gain an emotional understanding of effect and the impact of redemption.

- What actions can I take in the next 7 days that will demonstrate what I said above is real?
    - Remember how I was also redeemed. I was lost and hopeless like Naomi before Jesus. Only through Him can my story have a happy ending.

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.