A STUDY IN RUTH

Session 6: Putting It All Together

Objective: Internalize and synthesize the contents of the book of Ruth and understand what it is trying to communicate

Step 1: Look back over the book of Ruth and identify any major sections that you now see in the book.

From the perspective of the entire story, it is clear to see that God orchestrated the whole thing. At every opportunity, every action was ultimately God's action. Looking through the lens of God's action, at Naomi's situation we see several themes emerge:

Every action is God's action:

- There was a famine (1:1)
- Naomi left her home to go to Moab (1:1)
- Naomi's Husband Died (1:3)
- Naomi's sons died (1:5)
- Orpah left Naomi to return to her family (1:14)
- Ruth declared she would go with Naomi (1:16)
- Naomi made a splash in Bethlehem for all the wrong reasons (1:19)
- Naomi's Reaction: the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me (1:22)

Did God really have it in for Naomi? No. Even though these were terrible events to experience, this was the beginning of His plan (although Naomi couldn't see it). Unless these things happened, the happy ending in Chapter 4 couldn't happen.

Every action is God's action:

- Ruth "happened" to come to Boaz's field (2:3)
- Boaz had heard of Ruth's story with Naomi (2:11)
- Boaz began to see to Ruth and Naomi's needs (2:14-16)
- Naomi's Reaction: God has not forgotten the family of Elimelech and is showing kindness (2:20)

Did God change? Did His plan change? No. God was on the same plan. Only now Naomi could start to see some more of the details and could begin to imagine what He might have in store for her.

Every action is God's action:

- Naomi tells Ruth how to approach Boaz (3:1-4)
- Boaz agrees to intervene (3:13)
- Boaz provided for Ruth and Naomi's Needs (3:15)
- Boaz redeems Naomi (4:9)

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- Boaz marries Ruth (4:10)
- Boaz and Ruth have a son (4:13)
- The Reaction of the women of Bethlehem to Naomi: He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age (4:15)

Did God Change? Did His plan change? NO! Only now can we (and Naomi) see the full scope of what He had planned (especially as we see the lineage of David).

Step 2: Look back through your overview of the book as well as each of the deep dives into the individual chapters and summarize what the book has to say.

This book seems to have 4 threads, based on the 4 main characters.

God

We see God's sovereignty on display. He takes and He gives according to His own purposes and is not accountable to anyone for the effects or the decision.

The book of Ruth teaches us that God's purposes are greater than human understanding and that the best way to relate to God's actions is through faith that "all things work together for good" – even if we can't see it now.

Naomi

Of special interest is her changing perspective on God. As He takes from her in the beginning of the story, she turns against Him and says that God is "picking on her". As events seem to turn around, she attributes more positive views to God.

Naomi's circumstances neatly portray the person who needs redemption. Chapter 1 creates the need, and the rest of the book shows the journey to redemption.

Naomi offers us a cautionary tale against quick reactions against God. While her circumstances were difficult, her relationship with God did not sustain her or give her hope and confidence through them.

Ruth

She begins as an outsider but ends as an insider. She becomes a widow, then becomes a wife. In chapter 1 she is a daughter-in-law but by chapter 4 she is a mother.

Much changed in Ruth's life through the book, but throughout she is obedient, faithful and action oriented.

Ruth shows us the beauty of a life of obedience and how God uses this obedience in His grand plans, even if we do not understand at the time.

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Boaz

He begins tending to his own concerns in the harvest, but by the end is entirely concerned with the concerns of Naomi and Ruth. Through this transition, he is the perfect picture of the kinsman redeemer and gives us a clear view of how that process works.

Boaz creates the picture of Jesus as our Redeemer. He lays out the framework in earthy terms that Jesus fulfilled in eternal and spiritual terms. By understanding Boaz, we are able to understand Jesus even more intimately.

Step 3: Identify a single verse which provides the key to the book. This could be the key truth or could be a verse that provides a summary of the book.

For a narrative book I can't find 1 sentence. But I did find a sentence for each of the 3 main human characters:

Naomi: 4:14, 15 – The end of the story, Naomi is affirmed as blessed by her community.

Ruth: 2:12 – Ruth's life is complimented, and her future is said to be in the hands of God.

Boaz: 3:13 – Boaz's great statement of intent to redeem. His word is as good as his action.

Step 4: Write a single sentence that summarizes the theme or purpose of the book.

God redeems that which was lost when it seems there is no way to restore it to proper relationship.

Step 5: Considering the way you've mapped the audience, what's one application that comes out of the book of Ruth?

I continue to return to Naomi's whiplash view of God. I am personally challenged to trust God in ALL His actions, not just the immediate actions that I can see.

Step Six: Compare your conclusions