

Tony Merida

Ruth

The Lord Provides



 7-Session Bible Study

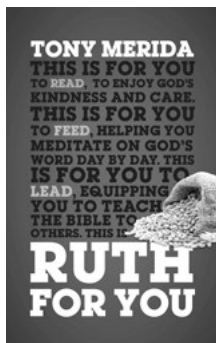
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 **7-Session Bible Study**



Ruth For You

If you are reading *Ruth For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Ruth For You*:

Study One > Ch 1 Study Five > Ch 6
Study Two > Ch 2-3 Study Six > Ch 7
Study Three > Ch 4 Study Seven > Ch 8
Study Four > Ch 5

Find out more about *Ruth For You* at:
www.thegoodbook.com/for-you

Ruth: The Lord Provides

A Good Book Guide

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Introduction

One of the Bible writers described God’s word as “a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we’ve discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They’re perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let’s take a look at what is included in each session.

Talkabout: Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

Investigate: These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

Apply: These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

Explore More: These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

Getting Personal: These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

Pray: Here, you’re invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you’ve seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven’t got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you’ll find a **Leader’s Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God’s light-giving word.

Why Study Ruth?

The book of *Ruth* is one of the best short stories ever written. We are drawn to the *characters*: grieving Naomi, loyal Ruth, and compassionate Boaz. The *setting* is also intriguing. It takes place during the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1); and the locations include Bethlehem, Moab, Boaz's field, a threshing floor, a city gate, and a bedroom. The *plot* involves a story of redemption which, as we learn, is part of the grand story of redemption (4:17-22). Naomi stands in the middle of the *conflict* of the book, as a widow with no son to carry on the family's line. At the heart of the *resolution* is Boaz, a figure who shows a lot of similarities to David's greatest son, Jesus.

As well as the fact that it's a beautifully written love story, there are many reasons to study *Ruth*.

First, *we need to see the larger story of God's redeeming grace*. The book of *Ruth* advances the story of God's redeeming grace to Adam's fallen race. It magnifies God's *hesed*—his covenantal faithfulness and unceasing kindness.

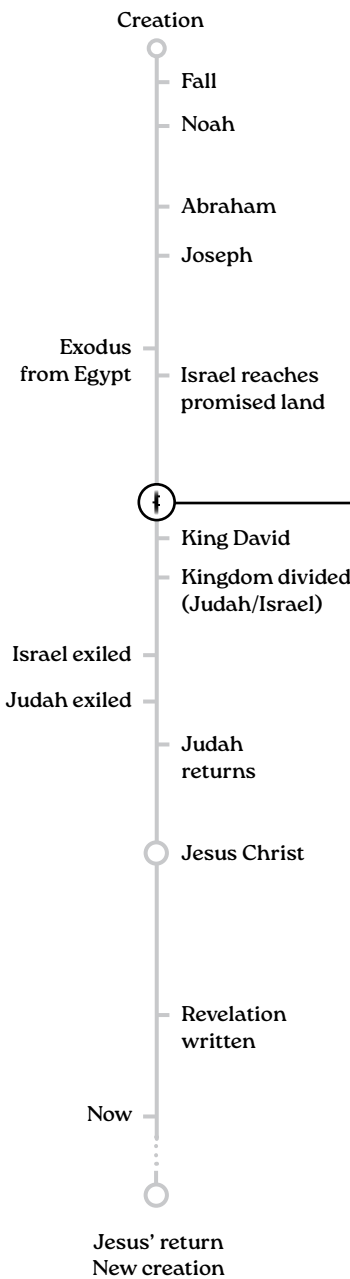
Second, *we need a greater appreciation of God's providence*. God is present in the lives of these seemingly insignificant characters, displaying his meticulous providence, just as he is at work in our own lives.

Third, *we need to remember God's global mercy*. The gospel is not for the Jew only, but for the whole world, including Moabites like Ruth.

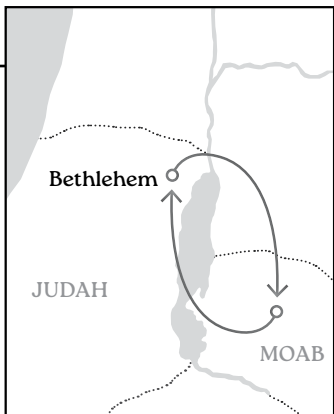
Fourth, *we need models of genuine godliness*. Ruth inspires us to be loyal, sincere, gracious, courageous, and devoted. Boaz gives us a model of manhood: justice-pursuing and not passive, compassionate and not abusive. Naomi's story engenders hope in us, as she goes from emptiness to fullness in the narrative.

Ruth is about *the coming Messiah*. We find out at the end of the book that Ruth's descendants will be kings of Israel. She is part of the royal line that eventually leads to Jesus.

NOTE: For the purposes of clarity and conciseness, in each study I have chosen to italicize "Ruth" when referring to the book of *Ruth*, as opposed to the character Ruth, whose name will remain un-italicized.



Ruth c. 1100 BC



1

Leaving God's Land

Ruth 1:1-5

Talkabout

1. Can you think of any love stories, from real life or fiction, between two unlikely people?

Investigate

 Read Ruth 1:1-5

DICTIONARY

Sojourn (v 1): stay for a while; live in a foreign country.

Ephrathites (v 2): people from Ephrathah, a small town near Jerusalem.

Moab (v 2): a neighboring kingdom. Moabites had long been enemies of God and his people.

2. Use verses 2 and 4, plus 4:10, to fill in the gaps in Naomi's family tree. Then cross a line through the names of those people who had died by the end of Ruth 1:5.



3. When and where does the book of *Ruth* start (v 1)?

- What was the immediate problem, and what did Elimelech do as a result (v 1)?
- What was Elimelech aiming to do in Moab (v 1)? What did he and his family actually do (v 2 and 4)?

4. Other Old Testament books help us to understand the background to this story. Read Judges 21:25. What were the people of Israel like at this time?

- In Deuteronomy 28, God promises blessing on his people for obedience, but warned them of curses for disobedience. Those curses included famine (v 18, 38-40). How were God's people to respond (see 30:2-3, 8-10)?
5. The Hebrew names in the book of *Ruth* have specific and relevant meanings: Bethlehem = "house of bread"; Elimelech = "my God is king"; Naomi = "sweet." At the beginning of this story, neither Bethlehem nor Elimelech live up to their names. In what way?

Explore More | OPTIONAL

Moab was a long-standing enemy of Israel. Read Genesis 19:30-38, Numbers 25:1-9 and Judges 3:12-14 to find out more about Moab.

- How did the Moabite nation begin (Genesis 19:37)?
- How did the Moabites tempt God's people to sin (Numbers 25:1-3)?
- How did Eglon, the king of Moab, treat the Israelites (Judges 3:14)?

Apply

6. Can you think of some examples of people nowadays doing what's right in their own eyes?

- When are you put under pressure to join them, rather than to live God's way?

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

When are you tempted to keep quiet when you see people in your friendship groups, or in the news, living their own way rather than God's way? Pray for an opportunity in the coming week to speak up when you see people "doing what is right in their own eyes."

Investigate

 Read Ruth 1:6 and 4:17

DICTIONARY

LORD (1:6): the way most English Bibles translate "Yahweh": the

personal name of God. (See Exodus 3:13-15.)

7. Up to this point, Naomi's story is one of tragedy and suffering. What hint of a better future did Naomi hear (Ruth 1:6)?

- How did she respond?

8. Naomi didn't know how her story would end, but the Lord did. Who was going to be born into Naomi's family (4:17)? And who else (see Matthew 1:1)?

Apply

We don't know how our own stories will end, but the Lord does!

 **Read 1 Peter 1:3-4**

DICTIONARY

Imperishable (v 4): unable to rot or die.

Unfiled (v 4): clean, pure.

9. What is the future inheritance for all those who are in Christ? How certain is it?

10. How does this make a difference to how you see the coming week, month, and year?

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

When is it hardest for you to trust God's plan for your life? What will you do to remind yourself this week that he is sovereign over all things?

Pray

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his works in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.*

(William Cowper, 1731-1800)

Take some of the lines in this hymn and turn them into prayer.