

Small Group Guide

LOVE STORY: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

The Church at Brook Hills, Dr. David Platt

July 12, 2009

Ruth 2

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use, and there may be instances when you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience, not complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Share a personal story from your life, or enlist someone else to share from their life, where God clearly ordered your steps in making a decision. Emphasize that these events may have seemed to “just happen” at the time, but looking back, God was working on your behalf all along. Then invite volunteers to share similar stories.

Explain that today's message will look at the way God providentially ordered Ruth's steps right into Boaz's field.

Option 2

Invite learners to recall scenes from their favorite movies that seem “too good to be true” in real life. These scenes might be sappy love stories or chance meetings that lead to resolution of a conflict. Discuss these questions:

- What makes these particular events unlikely?
- Why did that story draw you in?
- How did this scene affect the outcome of the movie?

Tell learners that the message today will look at Ruth's seemingly chance encounter with Boaz and how it changed history.

Review the Message . . .

This study of Ruth is taking place over four weeks, covering one chapter per week. The first chapter set the stage for the following chapters by exposing Naomi and Ruth's predicament and how their circumstances affected their hearts. Last week we saw how in God's sovereign design, He uses sorrowful tragedy to set the stage for surprising triumph. The first chapter, leading into today's message, ended with two hopeless women with two major needs: food and family, with one glimmer of hope: “the barley harvest was beginning”.

Read through Ruth 2 by enlisting four volunteers for reading: a narrator, Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi. After the reading, continue by discussing the questions below.

The Gospel According to Boaz...

- He _____ seeks _____ the outcast as his family.
- He _____ shelters _____ the weak under his wings.
- He _____ serves _____ the hungry at his table.
- He _____ showers _____ the needy with his grace.

Discussion Questions

- How did Boaz “seek the outcast as his family”? (*Emphasize the many times the author referred to Ruth as a Moabite and how Naomi had left the covenant nation behind to go to Moab with her husband. See verses 8-9, 11-12, 14-16.*)
- How did Boaz go out of his way to “shelter the weak under his wings”? How did Boaz’s actions give Ruth security in what could have been a dangerous situation?
- Remind your group that Boaz literally “served the hungry at his table” as you refer to verse 14. Point out that Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem in need of food. When you think about how Ruth probably hadn’t had a decent meal in days, weeks, or even months, how does that further your picture of Boaz’s kindness toward her? If you were in Ruth’s place, how would you be feeling toward this man?
- Putting yourself in Naomi’s place—having sent Ruth to glean the fields, wondering if she were safe and if she would bring anything home—what would you feel when you saw Ruth coming home with 30-50 pounds of grain? How does this picture show you Boaz’s ‘showering of grace’ on those needy women? Knowing that the typical “beggar” might come home with no more than a pound of grain, what does the amount tell us about Boaz character?

Application . . .

Remind your group that God is behind the scenes in this book, and the characters are intended to reveal God’s character. As you go through the following questions, encourage as much personal disclosure of their testimonies—both past and current—as your group is comfortable sharing.

- How did God seek you as His family while you were still an outcast?
- How has God given you shelter under His wings at your weakest moments?
- When you’ve been hungry, how has God served you at His table? (*Consider this question from these perspectives: Physically, spiritually, socially, emotionally, etc.*)
- At a time in your life when you felt particularly needy, how has God showered you with His grace?

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The Gospel Applied at Brook Hills...

- We will spend our lives for the poor.
- We will rest our lives under His protection.

*“He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD,
and he will reward him for what he has done.”*

Proverbs 19:17

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”

Isaiah 58:6-11

- He has called our name.
- He has become our refuge.
- He has satisfied our longings.
- He has saved our souls.

Discussion Questions

- In what specific ways did Boaz provide protection for Ruth, who was considered poor?
- Read Deuteronomy 10:18 and Leviticus 23:22. How did Boaz’ actions reflect God’s concern for the poor?
- In response, how did Ruth experience rest?
- Read the first two points aloud, and explain that the verses that follow on the handout illustrate how those points are connected. How did God’s generosity to Boaz reflect this connection? (*God was generous to Boaz, and in turn, Boaz was generous to Ruth. As he spent his life for the poor, Boaz in turn received God’s protection. Additionally, as the recipient of Boaz’s generosity, Ruth also experienced God’s protection through Boaz.*)

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- Enlist volunteers to read the verses on the handout (Proverbs 19:17 and Isaiah 58:6-11). What do these verses teach us about the purpose of God's generosity? In the second half of the Isaiah passage, what conditions must be met for the promises to be fulfilled?
- How does Boaz exemplify the truths found in James 1:27?

Application . . .

- Why do these verses tell us that we can trust God?
- Read through the last four points and invite your group to share ways each truth increases their trust in God.
- How does/should trusting God on this basis affect the way we treat others, especially the poor?
- Read Ruth 2:8, emphasizing that Boaz told Ruth to stay in his field for her protection. How is that like our relationship with God?
- What happens when we choose not to stay in God's field? What reasons do people give for leaving the protection God offers for other fields?
- We're only free to spend our lives for the poor when we rest under God's protection and trust His provision. How does our culture tempt us to live contrary to this truth?
- How have you experienced God's protection and provision and then given of yourself in response?
- How has God provided for you as you've given yourself away for the sake of the poor?