

Family study of the book of *Ruth*

Parent Background: Throughout, background information will be highlighted in purple for parents. Depending on the age of your child you can omit this information, modify, or share in its entirety.

Possible Answers: Possible answers to questions are in blue. Allow your children time to think and formulate answers before giving guidance.

Ruth, Chapter 1: Day 1

Famine: As the book of Ruth opens a family from Bethlehem is living in Moab due to a famine. Ensure your kids know what a famine is and why a famine would be particularly hard in an agricultural society.

Moab: During the Exodus, Moab did not allow the Israelites passage. They became an enemy to Israel. As Ruth opens, Elimelech chooses to move his family out of Bethlehem to Moab due to the famine. The famine must have been bad if he was moving his family into enemy territory.

Read Ruth 1: 1 – 5

How would you feel if you were Naomi?

Sad, scared

Being a widow was difficult during this time. Women had no ownership of property, no means of income, and if no relative took them in they became vulnerable and homeless.

Are there any positives on which Naomi can focus?

She still has her two daughter-in-laws

She has God and her faith

She can go home to Bethlehem and her family

Read Ruth 1: 6-14

Why did Naomi choose to send Ruth and Orpah home?

She loved them and gave them permission to return to their families and remarry amongst their people in Moab. Point out this was a selfless act for her. This would make her life harder as she would now travel to Bethlehem alone.



Read Ruth 1: 15 – 22

What do you think of Ruth's choice to remain with Naomi?

Hard – she won't be welcome in Moab

Loyal – she is showing loyalty to her mother-in-law

Faithful – she commits to worshiping and trusting Naomi's God

Why does Naomi change her name to Mara?

Naomi = pleasant / Mara = bitter in Hebrew

She is sad, angry, worried

This is a great time to discuss the question: Is it okay to feel sad, angry, worried? Is it okay to feel confused or angry at God over what is happening in our lives? Assure kids that God is okay with our emotions. He made them! It is okay to ask why, God? Yes. He tells us to turn to Him in prayer and He will give us peace. He does hear us, and He does answer us. As we pray over these emotions we must also focus on our blessings, so we don't get stuck in our bitterness.

Activity: Turn this discussion into action.

Grab a notebook, post – its (or scraps of paper), a jar (or bowl), and a pen to leave at the dinner table. Start a prayer list writing down individual concerns from a child's hurt toe, to a sick family member, to global concerns. Close in prayer over them. As you see these prayers answered, allow kids to cross the concern off the prayer list, write the answered prayer on a post-it, and put it in the jar. Kids can decorate the jar for another activity! We have this scripture on ours, *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."* - 1 Peter 3:15

This activity is ongoing, but it allows your children to see that God does listen and He does answer prayers. If it would help for each member of the family to jump-start the jar by putting in an answered prayer they remember, go for it!

Common concerns:

What if someone we have been praying for dies? In our home we have had this happen. We discuss how God answers our prayers, but not always in the way we desire as humans. God heals through miracle, divine intervention and medicine, and he heals through death. It is an



opportunity to remind our children that while death is hard for us here on Earth, to be with God is indeed an answer to prayer. What if a prayer my child places on the list does not get answered in a timely fashion? Not one of us is unfamiliar with this. This is a great opportunity to remind our children that God's timing does not always fit ours, but His promise remains. He will answer, he will heal, and he will work all things for good. – *Romans 8:28*

Ruth, Chapter 2: Day 2

Read Ruth 2: 1 – 18

Gleaning: Old Testament law provided for the hungry by allowing them to glean in wheat and barley fields. The corners of a farmer's fields were to be left to the poor as was any grain dropped.

Why was Boaz so kind to Ruth?

He saw she was faithful to Naomi
He saw how hard working she was

What kind of person was Boaz?

Kind, protective, observant, generous

This is a great time to discuss character. Your character says a lot about you to others. It affects the way people treat you, it drives the course of your life, and it can affect generations to come.

Read Ruth 2: 19 – 23

Kinsman-Redeemer: A relative who would care for / marry a woman whose husband had died.

Do you think it was coincidence that Ruth ended up working in the field of Boaz, a kinsman-redeemer?

Accept any answers here. This will be revisited at the close of the study.



Activity: Character Matters

What makes a good friend? Have kids discuss the qualities of a good friend. What would you want your friends to say most about your character? How do you feel you display this?

Pass a sheet of paper to each member of the family. Have each member put their name at the top of their paper. Pass the papers around the table and write something you admire about each person's character on their sheet. When papers return to their owner, feel free to have each family member read aloud; celebrate their character!

Ruth, Chapter 3: Day 3

Read Ruth 3: 1 – 5

How would you feel about Naomi's plan if you were Ruth?

Confused at Naomi's request? Hopeful Boaz would marry you and save you and Naomi?

Explain that while Naomi's request was odd, it was custom at the time. It was Israel custom for a servant to lie at the feet of a master and share his covering. She would be conveying to Boaz the hope he would become her kinsman-redeemer. Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law.

Read Ruth 3: 6-18

What else do we learn about Boaz's character here?

He is kind, generous, a man of good character, and a man of his word according to Naomi.

Clarify if needed that Boaz is actually not the closest relative. In order to become her kinsman-redeemer he must seek out the one who is. That man can accept or refuse. If he refuses, Boaz can marry Ruth.

Activity: Being a Woman/Man of Your Word

Discuss what it means to be a woman/man of your word. Where in life had you had the opportunity to demonstrate this?



One opportunity we have as Christians to be women / men of our word is in telling people we will pray for them. Who is someone on your new prayer list you are praying for? If you haven't already, tell them you are praying for them. Pray for them. Later in the week, send them a card, a text, or call to check in and remind them you have been praying. As you come back together as a family, discuss this experience of being a woman/man of your word and praying for someone in need.

Ruth, Chapter 4: Day 4

Read Ruth 4: 1-12

Boaz cleverly offers the land first to the kinsman-redeemer. He accepts. However, when he realizes the land comes with marriage to Ruth, he backs down. They seal the negotiation in front of witnesses with a sandal exchange. The townspeople offer a blessing over Boaz.

Why do you think the townspeople offer Boaz a blessing over his future?

He is a well-respected member of the village. Because of this, the townspeople want the best for him.

Read Ruth 4: 13-22

Ruth and Boaz marry and have a son, Obed. At first glance this seems like a tale of sorrow and faithfulness redeemed with a happy ending. It is so much more than this. There are two beautiful lessons buried in this story. Unpack them together.

Lesson 1: God's Divine Providence Throughout the book of Ruth we see God at work even when the characters do not.

Do you believe in coincidence? Do you think Ruth coincidentally gleaned in the field of a possible kinsman-redeemer?

This was not a coincidence; this was Divine Providence. The story allows us to see a larger picture of how God works. He is in control and is always working in our lives for good according to His purpose.

Is this not true of our own lives? We can often look back and see where God was working even when we thought all was lost. In turn, like Ruth, we cannot see the bigger picture. God alone can see the beginning, the middle and the end of His story. "And we know that in all things God works



for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

Lesson 2: Character. While God is doing His part, we must do ours. Throughout the book of Ruth, the character of Ruth and Boaz stands out. Your character says a lot about you to others. It affects the way people treat you, it drives the course of your life and your choices, and it can affect generations to come.

How did the character of Ruth and Boaz affect generations to come according to Ruth 4:16?

Their son Obed would become the grandfather of King David. Jesus, the Messiah is from the line of David as prophesized. Ruth and Boaz helped to fulfill God's plan.

Together with God, Ruth and Boaz paved the way for the birth of our Messiah. We are all a part of a much bigger story than we give ourselves credit for. Our character matters, as does our faith in the Providence and Sovereignty of a good Father. Life will be hard, as it was for Ruth and Naomi, but we must trust in a God who sees the whole story and that He is working in our lives, always for good.

Close in prayer:

Heavenly Father, Thank you for the story of Ruth and this time together studying your Word. Please help us to remember that each of us is an important part of your story. You created each member of this family and you have a purpose for each of us. Our character matters; lead us in choices that honor you and your will for our lives. Help us to remember that you are good, Father. When life gets hard, help us to trust in you and to trust that you are at work in our lives, always. Amen

Source:

Life Application Bible: New International Version. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1991. Print.

