**The Book of Ruth – Bible Study Notes and Questions**

**Chapter 1**

*The book of Ruth begins with a series of small ironies. Famine covers the area known as the “House of Bread” (Bethlehem). Members of a clan named “Fruitfulness” move to Moab in order to live, but end up dying one after another, leaving no “fruit” (children) behind them.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**Which character do you relate to in this story? Why?**

This story of inclusiveness of the foreigner from Moab is held in tension with the commands and attitudes expressed toward foreigners from Moab in other books of the Bible (Numbers, Ezra & Nehemiah).

**When scripture presents two opposing viewpoints for how we should relate to others; how do you determine which applies to you?**

In 1:8 the Hebrew word for kindly/kindness is ds,x,ê Hesed.

*Hesed is considered an essential part of the nature of God and is frequently used to describe God’s acts of unmerited grace and mercy. But (as v.8 implies), human beings are also able to do or show hesed to one another. To do or to show hesed means to demonstrate loving kindness and loyalty that extends far beyond what the law requires beyond anything the recipient expects or deserves.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**How have you experienced giving or receiving Hesed in your life?**

In 1:18 Naomi is silent (says no more). **What does this silence mean? Anger or Acceptance?** **How does Naomi treat Ruth in the rest of the story?**

**In 1:20 Naomi renames herself “Bitterness”.**

*The narrative we call the story of Ruth will eventually tell us how Naomi is persuaded to let go of her bitterness, how her emptiness is filled with new life, how her redemption becomes the first step in the redemption of the people of God.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**Consider your own life of faith – where is there bitterness? - Is new life possible?**

**Chapter 2**

This chapter looks at the relationships between the established and the foreign. **We might consider our own context: How does an outsider become an insider?**

**Which tribe is Boaz from? How is he related to/connected to Naomi & Ruth?**

**(How does the story refer to Ruth? Is she part of the clan yet?)**

Look at the interaction in 2:8-13:

**Why does Boaz “bless” Ruth?**

**What is Ruth’s response to the blessing?**

*Ruth’s reply, (2:13) “May I continue to find favor in your sight”, reminds Boaz that she and her mother-in-law also need earthly, physical help, which he is in a position to supply. Ruth even has to hint to Boaz that he might help make his pious wish come true by accepting her as a member of his extended family.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

*Providence, like beauty is in the eye of the beholder.* – New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**How is God at work in this story so far?**

**Chapter 3**

*In this chapter, the narrator’s penchant for puns develops into a mischievous us of words and phrases that may be understood to have either innocent or sexually suggestive meanings. In other Old Testament texts “to know” and “to lie down” are each used as euphemisms for sexual inter course. When a woman asks a man to “take her under his wing” the metaphor assumes sexual overtones. The word “feet” is a common euphemism for the genitals; “uncover” is frequently found in texts prohibiting sexual relationships between close relatives; and “threshing floors” were traditionally associated with sex for hire.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**What is Boaz’s responsibility?**

**How do you interpret Ruth’s actions?**

**What is our role in making the blessing of others a reality? (When we pray for the poor, or the sick, or the lonely what role do we have in meeting their needs?)**

In verse 10 the word kindness/loyalty is again the Hebrew word Hesed.

**What does Boaz mean by using this phrase?**

**Chapter 4**

The trap is baited and set…

*It is highly unlikely that a piece of good land would have been left unclaimed and unused during the ten or more years that Elimelech and is family stayed in Moab. So it is conceivable that the task of buying or redeeming the land would include regaining control of it from someone who had held it in Naomi’s absence. It may be the case that the kinsman had already claimed and used the land and that Boaz would be suggesting in v.4 that the kinsman should pay Naomi for the land he has been using since Naomi and her family left for Moab.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**How is God caring & providing for each of the main characters in this story?**

*In the culture Tamar, Rachel, and Leah are all remembered as tricksters whose deceptions had reproductive consequences. All three are part of Boaz’s family tree.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

**Do you think the town’s people knew of the clandestine activity on the threshing room floor?**

*In 4:13 the narrator tells us that the Lord made Ruth conceive. This assertion stands out as the only place in the book in which the narrator makes a statement about God’s actions.*

– New Interpreters Bible Commentary.

God is hidden throughout the story and yet through the eyes of faith God’s hand has brought about all that has come into being.