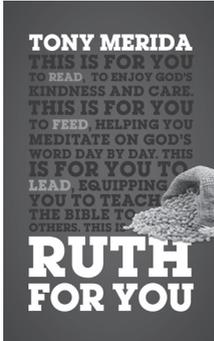




The Lord provides

RUTH

by Tony Merida



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

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The Good Book Guide to Ruth

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Series Consultants: Tim Chester, Tim Thornborough,
Anne Woodcock, Carl Laferton

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, moms and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That’s why we’ve designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let’s take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here’s the question that will do that. It’s designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. The **Leader’s Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- ⋮ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that’s not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you’ll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗣️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God’s word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader’s Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God’s 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.

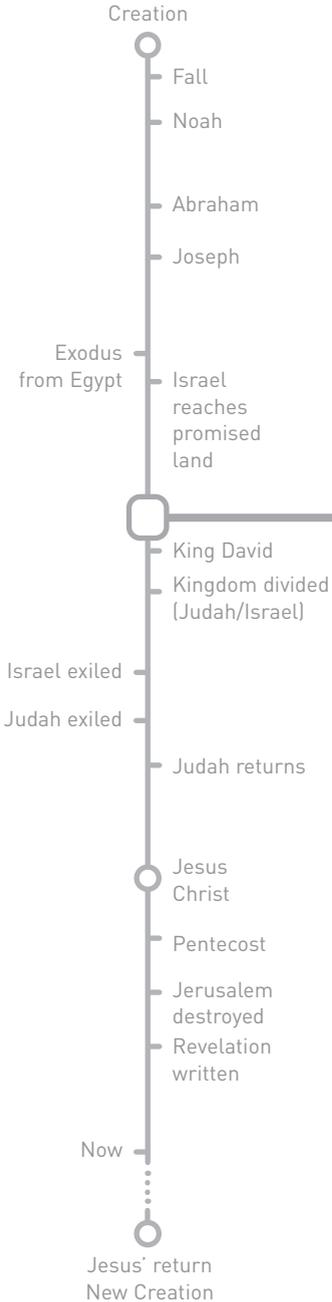
Second, *we need a greater appreciation of God's providence*. God is present in the lives of these seemingly insignificant characters, displaying his meticulous providence, just as he is at work in our own lives.

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.



BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of *Ruth* fit into the whole story of God's word?

RUTH c. 1100BC



1

Ruth 1:1-5

LEAVING GOD'S LAND



talkabout

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



investigate

▶ Read Ruth 1:1-5

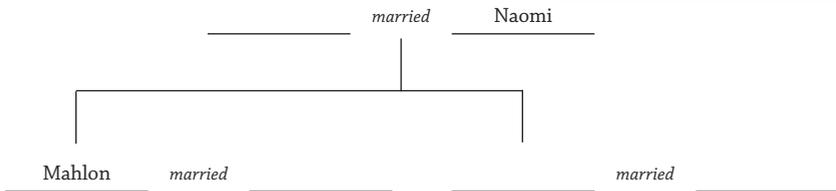
2. Use verses 2 and 4, plus 4:10, to fill in the gaps in Naomi's family tree, below.
Then cross a line through the names of those people who had died by the end of Ruth 1:5.

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.



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 (Ruth 1:1)? 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 (Deuteronomy 28:18, 38-40). How were God's people to respond (see Deuteronomy 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

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 (v 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 (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

9. We don't know how our own stories will end, but the Lord does! **Read 1 Peter 1:3-4.** What is the future inheritance for all those who are in Christ? How certain is it?

DICTIONARY

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

Undefined (v 4): clean, pure.

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





getting personal

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.



