

Small Group Guide THE STORY OF REDEMPTION

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

July 26, 2009

Ruth 4

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 where 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 to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

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

Option 1

Whether you are an avid reader or movie-watcher, you probably look forward to surprise endings. Often these endings will make or break a story. The story of Ruth has a "twist" at the end that leaves readers holding their breath followed by a surprise ending – Ruth, this supposedly pagan Moabite woman and a lowly barren widow would be the grandmother of Israel's greatest king and thereby part of the lineage of the Greatest Ruler in history, the King of All Nations – Jesus Christ!

Share your favorite "surprise ending" from a movie or book. Make sure you don't ruin any endings for anyone!

- What reactions and/or emotions did you experience?
- Why are people often drawn to unexpected resolutions to a story?

What about the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz is most compelling to you?

Option 2

Several years ago many grocery stores installed motion activated coupon dispensers down every isles. All one has to do is take the coupon and buy the item. Redemption is easy. There are other opportunities where redemption is not so easy. Many college scholarships are offered to students who are willing to put forth the effort to compose an essay. Often these scholarships are guaranteed for certain students if they just put forth the effort. In this case, redemption is not as easy.

In both cases, individuals almost always have the right to redeem and they have the resources to redeem, but actual redemption comes down to having the proper resolve. Using coupons does not take the same level of resolve as writing an essay to secure a scholarship. Redemption in terms of "setting someone free" takes an even greater resolve.

Think of some other examples where redemption is easy and some where redemption is harder. What are the usual connections between the value of what is redeemed, the cost of redemption, and the resolve it takes to redeem something?

Explain that in this discussion, we will look at a timeless example of hard redemption in the story of Ruth that should remind us of our own redemption through Jesus Christ.

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Review the Message . . .

Remind learners that the story of Ruth depicts God’s character throughout. Explain that His character is not depicted in just one character but is seen throughout the various actions of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

Enlist one or two learners to read Ruth 4. Pay attention to the shrewdness of Boaz in leading the “competing” redeemer to deny his right of redemption. Notice Boaz’ strict adherence to Jewish custom and law and his willingness to perpetuate and honor a dead man’s lineage despite the cost it will bring him. Take note also of the tone of the text. It is one of blessing rather than curse; of joy instead of bitterness.

Remember that the word “redeem” means “to buy or purchase” or “to set free by paying a price”. The term “Redemptive History” refers to the overall story of how God is setting His people free from sin and the consequences of sin.

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Boaz in Redemptive History...

- One must have the right to redeem.
- One must have the resources to redeem.
- One must have the resolve to redeem.

Discussion...

- How does Boaz’ help us to understand the concept of redemption in Ruth 4? How does he help us to understand God’s redemption of His people through Christ?
- What seems to be the reason the other man – “Mr. So and So” – did not want to redeem the land after he found out Ruth would come with it?
- For Boaz, which of the three elements necessary to redeem Ruth is questioned? How does his resolve gain him the right to redeem?

Application...

- In what way does the very personal and particular redemptive work of Christ on the Cross apply to your current life situation today (family, work, school, calling, etc.)?
- What rights, resources, and resolve has God given you personally that He wants to use for His glory and the advancement of His redemptive story here on earth?

Obed in Redemptive History...

- God brings His people from death to life.
- God brings His people from curse to blessing.
- God brings His people from bitterness to happiness.

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- God brings His people from emptiness to fullness .
- God brings His people from despair to hope .

Discussion...

- The writer's focus at the end of chapter 4 (vv. 14-17) is on Naomi and Obed. Compare these verses with Ruth 1:1-5. Discuss how Obed's birth brought about each of the changes listed above.
- Why are people apart from Christ, like Naomi in Ruth 1, considered dead, cursed, bitter, empty, and despairing (Romans 3:11-18)?
- God radically changed Naomi's physical situation. How does God radically change a person's spiritual situation? (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3)?

Application...

- How does Christ bring about each of the changes listed above in our lives?
- Why do you personally need to understand how you once were apart from Christ and how people are apart from Christ?
 - How does this change the way you live on a daily basis?
 - How does this change the way you think about people in general?
 - How should this effect the way you talk with and interact with people?
- Has God brought about this change in your own heart? If so, how do you know (2 Peter 1:10 and the context vs. 5-11)?

Christ in Redemptive History...

- Jesus alone is able to pay the price for our salvation.
- Jesus alone is able to guarantee the promise of our restoration.

Discussion...

- Why is Jesus Christ our "kinsman redeemer" - the only one who could pay the price for and set us free from our sins? How does this set biblical Christianity apart from all other religions?
- On what basis can God guarantee that we will be restored? How can we know His promise is sure (compare the story of Ruth and Matthew 1:1-17, esp. vv. 5-6 & 16)?
- Jesus proved His resolve to save those who would trust in Him by being obedient to death on the cross. How else was Jesus' resolve proven?

Application...

- Boaz was attracted to Ruth's beauty and to her character. She performed certain actions that caught Boaz' attention and eventually his heart. With this in mind, how is the redemption that we sinners receive from Christ different from the redemption that Ruth received from Boaz?
- Do you think that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation?
- Who or what have you looked to in the past to save you from sin and its effects? Whose promises have you trusted in at some point in the past (other than God's)?

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The Church in Redemptive History...

- God is committed to sovereignly _____ providing _____ for His people.
 - We can _____ trust _____ Him in the worst of times.
- God is committed to radically _____ pursuing _____ all peoples.
 - God is using _____ ordinary _____ people to accomplish an _____ extraordinary purpose.

Discussion...

- In what way do you see God's providence for His people in the story of Ruth?
- In what way do you see God's love for all peoples in the story of Ruth?
- Why do people so often think God only uses the "best of the best" to accomplish His plans and purposes?

Application...

- In what way do you see God's providence in your own life in bringing you to where you are today?
- In what way do you see God's love for you personally (in light of your past sin) in the story of Ruth?
- Naomi and Ruth's story ended beautifully, but not all stories end that way. To what reality must we cling when our stories do not end well or like we want them to end?
- Are you open to the possibility that God is planning to use you to bless someone, a Naomi or Ruth, on the other side of the street or the world? In what ordinary ways has God blessed, gifted, and shaped you to be a part of His extraordinary plans in all nations?

Conclusion...

The story of Ruth is not ultimately about Naomi, Ruth, or Boaz. This book is about Jesus Christ! You have a life story also. Is your story about you, or is your story about Jesus Christ? *HISstory* is why you were made and your heart will be restless until you find your rest in Him.