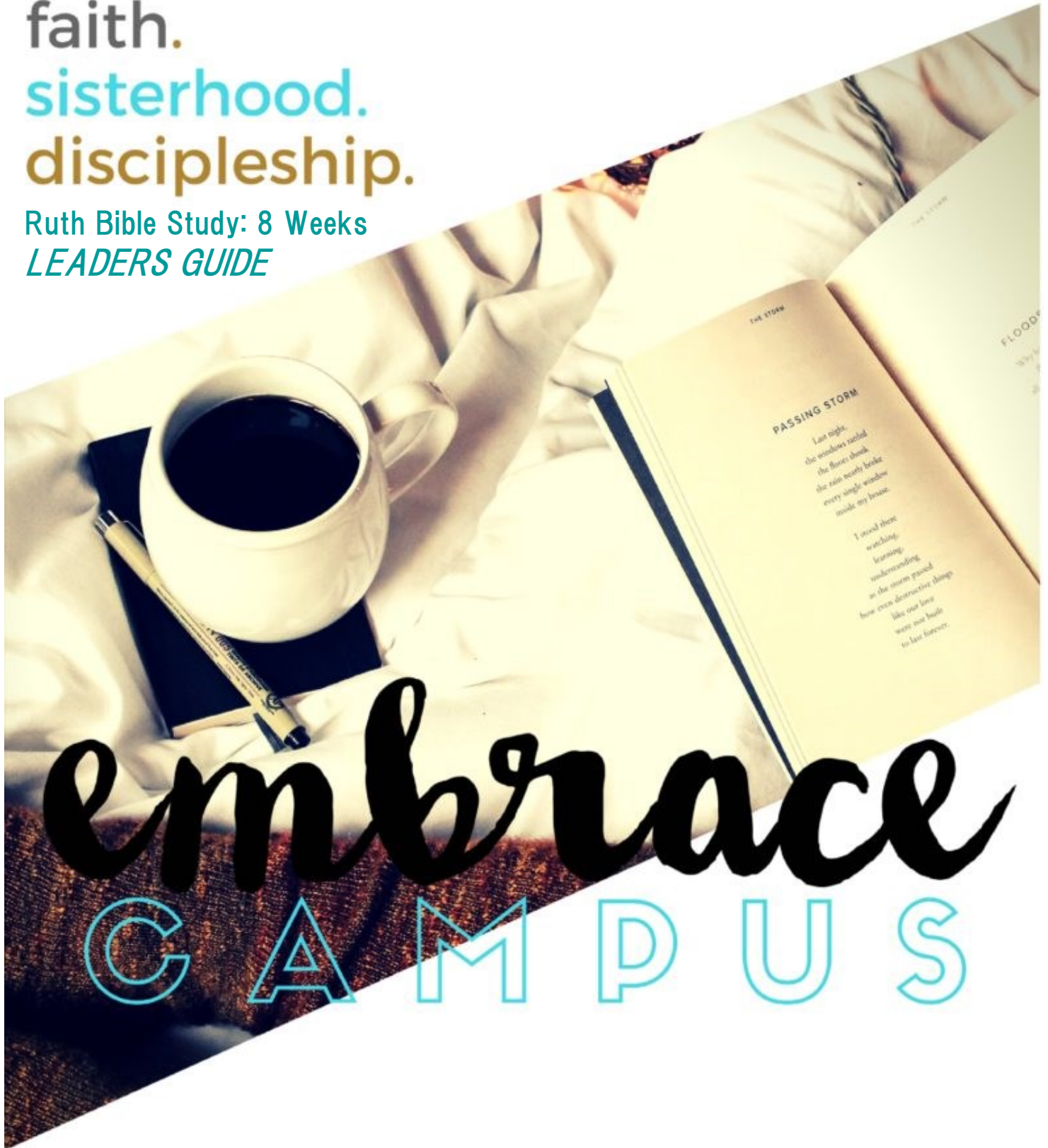


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Ruth Bible Study: 8 Weeks
LEADERS GUIDE



EMBRACE CAMPUS IS A TOOL TO CREATE A SPACE FOR YOUNG WOMEN TO
INTENTIONALLY EXPERIENCE LIFE TOGETHER OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH
WALLS. TO LEARN MORE PLEASE VISIT
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Near Leader,

First, don't be intimidated by that title. Every group has to have one, and this time it's you.

As an *Embrace: Campus* leader you should be leading a group of 6-8 young women. If there are more girls than that, there should be multiple leaders. Groups should be no bigger than 8. Trust me. Be organized and prepared—but also be casual. Don't get upset if someone didn't do their study. If that happens still meet (*never cancel, even if everyone can't be there or others cancel last minute and there's only two of you—do not cancel*), and do it together, reading the scriptures out loud and answering out loud together. Let them know even if their lesson isn't done, come anyways!

Here's what to do to be a good leader:

1—**Be prepared.** If you can, pick out the twelve days you'll meet this semester ahead of time. Take into account finals, and holiday weeks. Eight of those days will be Bible Study days. Four of those days will be Embrace sessions (one every month—September, October, November, December), plan for at least two hours. Doodle.com is a great group scheduling tool to use to help find the best time to meet. Having your study done ahead of time is also necessary. You'll need to know the questions and the scripture enough to be able to come up with a few extra, supplement questions in case you need them and to feel confident as you lead.

2—**Be an equalizer.** Don't play favorites, do not show love and affection to some and not others. Create a safe environment by including all the girls in the conversation and laughter.

3—**Start the conversation.** But don't let your voice dominate the entire time together. Be open and share experiences and hard stories you've gone through. There's a good chance you'll be the one to break the ice and be the first to be vulnerable. And that's ok. Learn a few prompting methods if the girls aren't sharing much. Ones I use are:

"What did you write for number 5, Becca?"

"How about you, Jill?"

Share your answer, then ask, "What did you think about number 3, Abbi?"

Also, allow for silent moments. Don't be afraid of them. 5 seconds will feel like 5 minutes, but let it happen. If it helps, count to 10 in your head. Someone will speak!

Some of the questions in the study maybe obvious, or simply observation. Answer them that way. Some questions are very personal, answer them accordingly. Some questions are based on opinion, so take into account your interpretation.

As you go through the study read each question and narrative part out loud. As the leader you become the narrator.

4—**Pray.** Pray for the young women in your group, pray for bonding to occur in your group, pray for yourself as the leader. Pray, pray, pray.

We're praying for you too!

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The Book of Ruth: Embracing God and His Plan Wherever You Are

INTRODUCTION

“For everyone in town knows you are a virtuous woman.”

Your true character is exposed for all to see when you are in situations where hard choices need to be made. When a friendship fails, a relationship ends, when someone betrays you, when the money ran out. How you handle yourself in these moments unearths things about you, things you didn't even know existed—for good and for bad. For Ruth, losing her husband while in a land foreign to her unearthed a spirit of perseverance, loyalty & commitment. Ruth could have handled things differently. She could have turned and run home to her parents. She could have felt sorry for herself, complained and dragged her feet, but that's not who she was. Boaz and apparently the whole town (see 2:11, 3:11), noticed that Ruth was a woman of virtue. Not because she declared she was, because they saw and watched her.

In this eight session study, we'll look into the life and character of Ruth.

We'll be challenged to:

- develop self-awareness
- call on God to help us become the woman He intended us to be
- To be faithful right where He puts us
- to develop in our spiritual maturity



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Session One: When Change Comes out of Left Field

READ RUTH CHAPTER 1:1-18

Look at verses 1—5: Verse 5 says; *“both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her husband or sons.”* Her sons wives also were now alone, without husbands in a foreign land.

1) Recall a time that you felt alone. Write down the emotions that came along with feeling alone. *Leader notes: do you best to share first, leader.*

2) If applicable, what brought you out of that loneliness?
Leader notes: do you best to share first, leader.

Look at verses 6—18: As an older widow, remarrying was not an option for Naomi and she didn't know if there were still relatives to take care of her in Judah. Naomi wanted Ruth and Orpah to come with her to Israel but she knew that they would be foreigners and potentially judged for being Moabites. *(Israel had suffered under Moabite oppression and was hated by Israel.)* Naomi was trying to protect them by encouraging them to stay in Moab.

3) When has a friend or family member in your life sought to protect you?



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(Session One: When Change Comes out of Left Field)

In verse 16 Ruth responds, *"Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."*

4) Is commitment easy or hard for you? Explain.

5) Write down and share a time you let someone down because you didn't stay committed to something.

6) Why do you think Ruth was so committed to Naomi?

We know that the God of Naomi was and is the One true God. In today's culture how do you guard against the influence to worship yourself, your school major, your friends, your significant other, etc.?



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Session Two: Standing Firm, Even Amidst Pain

READ RUTH CHAPTER 1:17-22

Verse 17 says, *"I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"* So when Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her. Ruth's commitment to her husband and his family was unwavering. She was firm in her convictions.

1) In your life where do you stand firm? Where do you struggle to stand firm?

Read Acts 21:10-14: Sometimes the act of obedience that God calls us to doesn't make sense to others, especially when it leads us into difficulty. We see that with Ruth's decision to stay and in Acts 21 with Paul.

2) Is there anything you're afraid of that God would call you to do?

3) How does Paul's response in Acts 21:13 make you feel about your current approach to your faith?

4) Is it easy to talk you out of your convictions and decisions? Why or why not?



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(Session Two: Standing Firm, Even Amidst Pain)

Read Ruth 1:19-22

In verse 21 Naomi doesn't waste time putting on her brave face, she's hurting and she's not hiding it. Her pain was valid but for a moment she was losing sight and hope of God's provision.

5) When has the pain in your life caused you to say or make a kneejerk reaction or remark?

6) What is Naomi not seeing because her mental/spiritual vision is clouded by hurt, pain and suffering? Can you relate? If so how?

Leader notes: Naomi lost her hope of putting trust in God for her future.

Read Job chapter 1.

7) How does Job's response in verses 21—22 differ from Naomi's response?

Leader notes: Job immediately worships and claims his faith in God.

Do you relate with one response more than the other?



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Session Three: God's Provision—Your Action

READ RUTH CHAPTER 2:1-14

The act of gathering grain behind harvesters was a practice called gleaning. In fact, there was a law in place as an act of welfare for the poor. When grain was dropped by harvesters they were to leave it where it fell and it was the poor's right to gather it up after. It was also to prevent owners from hoarding (see Leviticus 19:9-10).

1) In Ruth 2:2-3, how would you describe Ruth and Naomi's discussion?

2) Based on verses 4 & 5 how would you describe Boaz?

Leader notes: He was kind to his workers.

3) In verse 6 & 7 we read Boaz's foreman describe Ruth and his interaction with her. What words does he use to describe her and their interaction? (If you have them, read a few different Bible translations.)

Leader notes: NIV: Moabite woman; ESV: young Moabite woman; RSV: Moabite maiden; KJV: Moabitish damsel; NLT: young woman from Moab



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(Session Three: God's Provision—Your Action)

We don't know much about the previous life of Ruth, Naomi, Orpah and their husbands. All we know is Naomi, her husband and their two sons moved to Moab for a better life. There they married Moabite women.

Maybe for a time they did indeed have a better life, but things took a turn. Things went from better to worse with the death of all the men in the family.

We don't know if manual labor like gleaning was something Ruth was accustomed to or if this was her first time. What we do know is she took initiative, she worked hard, she was grateful for the opportunity, and she displayed humility in her approach. We also know that others noticed.

4) What do you want others to notice about you?

What do you want them NOT to notice?

5) In verses 10-12 list the specific things Boaz has seen Ruth do.

Leader notes: Ruth left her father and mother; left her homeland; came to live with people she didn't know



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(Session Three: God's Provision—Your Action)

In verses 13 & 14 we see how Boaz went above and beyond for Ruth in making her feel known, safe, welcome, and cared for.

6) What makes you feel known or welcomed?

7) What makes you feel safe and cared for?

8) Do you do these things for others? Why might it be difficult?

9) What else do we learn about Boaz in verse 14? Does it remind you of any New Testament scripture or person?

Leader notes: Think Jesus—thirst being quenched: Matthew 5:6; Matthew 25:35; John 4:13; Last supper: Matthew 26:26-29. This reminds us that the Old Testament always points us to Jesus. The Old and New Testaments are connected by Jesus.



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Session Four: Obedience & Boldness

READ RUTH CHAPTER 2:15-23

In verses 15-18, God used Boaz to provide in great ways for Ruth and Naomi.

1) Describe a time that someone was used by God to provide abundantly for your needs.

2) What motivated Boaz to give so generously? List any verses that helped you form your answer.

If we look back and recall Ruth's behavior, all the way from chapter one, we see that she was a woman of conviction, loyalty, humility and hard work. She felt so strongly about staying with her mother-in-law in chapter 1:17 she said, *"May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"*

She trusted God enough to leave her family, enter an unknown land with no hope or promise of marriage or children—and she did it anyway.

She acted in obedience and God provided.



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(Session Four: Obedience & Boldness)

In verses 19 & 20 we see Naomi recognizing God's provision, love and kindness.

3) When things in life swing back towards goodness, how do you typically respond?

In Ruth 2:21 we see a promising provision from God. A provision that brings hope for the future. Read Hebrews 11.

4) What are your observations Hebrews 11?

Read Hebrews 11:35b—40 again. Even though the people described in this chapter were called “faithful”, they did not have it easy and many didn’t experience what we think of as earthly blessings (see verse 39).

There is a danger in believing that because you are faithful to God, you should be rewarded. We can’t earn God’s love or blessings by doing good things or even remaining faithful our entire lives.

Leaders note: Following God’s will doesn’t always mean it will be easy and full of earthly rewards. Jesus reminds us in John 16:33, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Jesus doesn’t promise a trouble-free life...But He does promise that He will be with us every step of the way!



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(Session Four: Obedience & Boldness)

5) How does knowing that your faithfulness to God doesn't equal rewards here on earth affect you and the way you view God? (rewards like: marriage, children, happiness, money, long life of those you love etc.)

6) Read Ruth 2:22—23. What are some words or phrases you would use to describe Ruth and Naomi's relationship? Would you describe your relationship with your mother or parent similar? Explain.

7) The second part of verse 23 says, *"And all the while she lived with her mother-in-law."* Why do you think it was significant and important to communicate this fact?
Leader notes: to help establish that Ruth remained virtuous.

In chapter two, we have seen Ruth be bold, courageous, and proactive in a place she didn't know. Living here on campus, I'm sure you can relate to being in a new place. Consider ways you can be brave and take initiative this week at work, at school, at church, or in your family.



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Session Five: Overflow of Hope

READ RUTH CHAPTER 3:1-9

One of the things that I love about the Bible that confirms in my heart and mind that it's all true, real, and genuine is that the Bible doesn't leave out the weird stuff. The questionable decisions individuals make or odd scenarios are all in there.

If this manuscript was man –inspired and intended to fool people I would think they'd leave out the odd and awkward stuff. But there it is, all the situations and moments that make you shake your head.

Chapter 3 of the book of Ruth is one of those moments for me. Where I say to myself, "What is happening here? Is this a good idea? Ruth, this looks weird. Naomi, really?" But God put it there for a reason, let's find out why.

1) Let's look at Naomi so far. In the following verses, what emotions do you see Naomi going through? 1:20-21; 2:19-20; 3:1-2.

2) What happens that gives Naomi a new hope?

Leader notes: Naomi sees that Boaz has taken notice of Ruth: a potential husband for Ruth.

People who feel like victims usually don't form strategies and plans. Naomi had a new sense of hope, therefore she starts to plan for Ruth. Strategies can be an overflow of hope. Naomi's turning point from victim back to hope was in chapter 2:19-20.



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(Session Five: Overflow of Hope)

- 3) Describe a turning point moment you've had, from victim back to hope.
- 4) Look at verse 4. Being truthful, what were your initial thoughts about the meaning of this verse?
- This suggestive scene seems set for a moral failure. But all we have seen of Boaz is an upright and Godly man. And all we have seen from Ruth is a loyal, committed, obedient and faithful woman. Can godly people fail? Of course. But the meaning behind this scene may be more subtle than what it looks like on the outside.
- 5) Look up these cross references. What are the common themes and words used?
Ruth 2:12; 3:9; Ezekiel 16:8 *Leader notes: wing, cover, protection*
- 6) What do you think this theme, phrase, imagery means for Ruth and Boaz?



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(Session Five: Overflow of Hope)

Read verses 5—9

7) Describe Ruth's response to her mother-in-law's instruction. What would your response have been? If different, why?

8) Do you find it hard to obey instructions you don't understand? What do you typically do? Discuss with your group.



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Session Six: For Everyone in Town Knows You are a Virtuous Woman

READ RUTH CHAPTER 3:10-18

Boaz makes some observations of Ruth in verses 10-11.

1) In verse 10, Boaz says, *"You have made this last kindness greater than the first."*
What do you think he is referring to? *Leader notes: look at chapter 1, chapter 2:11-12*

2) What do these verses tell us about Ruth?

Verse 11 ends with Boaz calling Ruth a virtuous woman.

3) Name a few instances that have occurred that make Ruth a virtuous woman.

4) Boaz describes Ruth with this admirable adjective, virtuous. What are some positive adjectives others would use to describe you?

Consider some ways you can continue to display these characteristics in your everyday life. Share with the group.



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(Session Six: For Everyone Knows You are a Virtuous Woman)

Read verses 10-13, and look back at verse 3. Naomi said, *"He will tell you what to do."*

5) Describe Boaz's attitude regarding this proposition. *Leader notes: eager, joyous*

6) What does verse 13 tell us about Boaz.

We're not totally sure why Naomi arranged this proposal in such a way but she did and we are challenged to see what we can learn from it.

7) In verses 14-15 what else do we learn about Boaz in these verses?

Leader notes: cautious, provider

8) In verses 16-18, what do these verses say about Ruth and Naomi's relationship?

(Focus on verses 16-17) *Leader notes: she kept nothing from her mother-in-law*



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Session Seven: God Redeems

READ RUTH CHAPTER 4:1–12

Being a person of integrity means you don't take shortcuts and you do the right thing even when it's hard or when things might not work out in your favor. Cutting corners will never feel right in your soul. In the last chapter of Ruth we see Boaz continue to prove his integrity and honor through respecting the family redeemer protocol.

Read 4:1-10

1) Verse 1 reads differently in other translations: NLT says, *"Just then."* NASB, *"and behold."*, NIV *"came along."* What is the meaning behind these phrasings?

Leader notes: it was set up by God, Boaz taking seat implies that he didn't know when he'd see the relative. The phrasing indicates God was orchestrating the meeting.

2) What stands out to you about Boaz's approach to handling this situation in these verses? List verses.

3) What's so different about this event verses the event (the threshing floor) in chapter three?



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(Session Seven: God Redeems)

4) It appears Boaz put a lot of thought into arranging this meeting. Why was this so important to him?

Read verses 11—12. It was uncommon for families during this time not to have children, and Ruth and Mahlon were married for ten years before his death. This implies that they may have struggled with infertility.

5) Look up Genesis 30:22-24 and compare that with Ruth 1:3-5 and 4:11. What do you think is the similarity between Ruth and Rachel and Leah?

6) What else do these ladies have in common?

Leader notes: Line of David, to Jesus

Ruth was trusting in God throughout this time, she never seemed to doubt, but preserved and kept moving forward and acting in obedience.

7) Have you experience something like that before? A time of uncertainty, an opportunity for obedience—then what happened? Share with your group.



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Session Eight: Reflections

READ RUTH CHAPTER 4:13-22

1) Who speaks truth into your life? How well do you receive hard truths?

2) Contrast Ruth 1:20—21 and Ruth 4:16—17.

Leader notes: empty vs. full

3) Use this space to summarize the book of Ruth. What key words come to mind?

4) What does it teach you about yourself? What does it teach you about God?



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(Session Eight: Reflections)

In chapter four we see a focus on Naomi. The story isn't just about Ruth being redeemed but Naomi as well. Naomi experiences transformation from hopeless to confidently hopeful.

Read verses 13-15.

5) What do we see the Lord doing/granting in verse 13?

6) What does this moment of timing and God's love for us teach you about something you're waiting on right now?

7) The women mentioned in verse 14, where have we seen them in this story before? *Leader notes: Chapter 1:19*

8) Based on their last interaction with Naomi, how are they speaking truth to her now?



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(Session Eight: Reflections)

What is your biggest take away from the book of Ruth? Use this space to write your feelings, prayers, praises, things God has revealed to you through this study.



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(Session Eight: Reflections)

In a life that can be ever changing, commit to what doesn't change. GOD. God doesn't change. Your relationship with Him will change—hopefully, it will grow!

Friends, classes, jobs, apartments—will all come and go. Your faith in God should be the constant of your life. Commit to knowing Him, loving Him and growing in Him.

How will this change the way you approach life next semester?

Things I want to commit to:

Ways I can nurture my relationship with God:



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