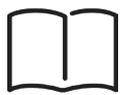


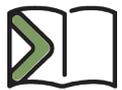
Lesson 4: Until Death Do Us Part

<p style="text-align: center;">RUTH PROFILE</p> 	<p>Genre: Narrative History</p> <p>Author: Unknown</p> <p>Passage: Ruth 1:1-16; Hebrews 13:2</p> <p>Where Is It: The eighth book of the Old Testament: Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel</p> <p>Key Characters: Naomi, Ruth, Boaz</p> <p>Main Plot: The book of Ruth reveals a light in the dark era of Judges. Ruth reveals what true faith and commitment look like to the Lord.</p>
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THE WORD

Ruth 1:1-16; Hebrews 13:2



ENGAGE THE WORD

Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

Like all of us, teenagers may find it difficult to fully understand the need to show compassion and mercy to others. However, if we teach them to think of others when they are young, we will send them out into the world to be lights for God. Our students need to learn that giving back to others and sticking by people during hard times will bring great reward and the formation of Christlike character.

In this week's lesson, we'll be studying the story of how Ruth stays with her mother-in-law, Naomi, after her husband dies. She doesn't have to, but she is loyal and compassionate toward Naomi. In this lesson, we will look at the sacrifice Ruth makes to stay with Naomi and see what that teaches us about compassion and mercy.



Wesleyan Snapshot *Poverty, Ministry to the Poor*

"The story of the rise of Methodism is laden with its ministry to and identity with the impoverished. Believing that he was simply obeying his Lord, John Wesley extensively used his somewhat privileged social status to find ways to alleviate crushing poverty. He challenged structural evils, including the alcohol industry and the devastating impact on the poor of the enclosure laws, which denied landless farmers use of traditionally accessible land."

—Gift Mtukwa, *The Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology*

Biblical Commentary

Ruth's name means *companion* or *friend*, and she exemplifies both of those words. She is loyal and true, and she teaches us a great deal about commitment. When Naomi's husband and sons die in Ruth 1, she urges Ruth and her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, to return to their homes so they may take other husbands. It was the custom during this time for the brother of the dead man to wed his widowed sister-in-law. However, in this case, both brothers were dead, leaving Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah on their own.



THE MAIN IDEA

BY STUDYING THE SACRIFICE RUTH MAKES TO STAY WITH NAOMI, WE SEE A GREAT EXAMPLE OF COMPASSION AND MERCY.



Bible Background

In the Gospel of Matthew—particularly Matthew 1:5—we discover that the story of Ruth and Boaz is part of Jesus Christ’s genealogy. Boaz and Ruth were King David’s great-grandparents. The book of Ruth should be read in this greater context of God’s redemption of the whole of human history.

Orpah, though saddened by the departure, does leave, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi. Ruth tells her, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me” (1:16-17).

When we hear Ruth speak up to Naomi in this passage, we hear the force behind her tone. She is offended that Naomi would expect her to go back on her commitment and allegiance to her. We see Ruth taking her commitment very seriously. Her loyalty to Naomi is obvious, but we also see her commitment to the LORD. She has already committed herself to the LORD, and she binds herself to Naomi out of that commitment (and her commitment to her marriage).

During Ruth’s time, women were seen mostly as a means to have children, especially sons. They needed men to survive financially. Women without fathers, husbands, or sons didn’t have access to the financial and legal structures of the day. Ruth and Naomi had no choice but to live off others’ generosity. We must ask, who in our own society is forced to survive off the generosity of others?

Love

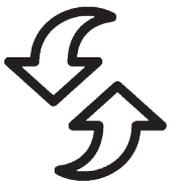
In Scripture, love is defined as faithfulness. To love the LORD God means to be faithful to him. Love is loyalty, faithfulness, allegiance, and commitment.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

Is there someone you are so loyal to that you would risk everything to stand by their side? Why do you have that commitment toward that person?

Ruth made a commitment to her husband but also to his family. She honored that commitment even after he died. Do we honor our commitments like that today? Why do you think it is so easy for us to back out of commitments?

Is it our job to care for those who are less fortunate?



REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

Do you think your students think about poverty as something they should share responsibility for?

Do you believe that adolescents have been taught what it means to honor commitments? How many times have you seen a parent or guardian let a kid off the hook for a commitment? What does this teach us about loyalty?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

LESSON OUTLINE



Main Idea: By studying the sacrifice Ruth makes to stay with Naomi, we see a great example of compassion and mercy.

Resources: Bibles, copies of handout, writing utensils

Connect to My Experience:

Welcome and Prayer

“Go and Do Likewise” Discussion

Connect to the Word:

Read and Reflect on Ruth 1:1-16

Loving Like Boaz and Ruth

Connect to My Life and the World:

Shane Claiborne Excerpt

Read Hebrews 13:2

Closing: Prayer



CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

Student Goal: Youth will begin to consider how they can meet the needs of those around them.

Welcome your students and open in prayer.

“GO AND DO LIKEWISE” DISCUSSION

Show the “Go and Do Likewise” Clip. You can find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id4pljwxSo0>.

ASK: How did it make you feel to listen to the story and see the images in the clip?

What was it like to put yourself in the story of the Good Samaritan?

Who are the people at the margins in our community?

How might we be able to meet the needs of those around us?

CREATIVE OPTION: FACES WE DON'T SEE

Show some images of the poverty that is present in the United States. You can find some images here: <http://lightbox.time.com/2011/11/17/below-the-line-portraits-of-american-poverty/#5>.

ASK: How do you feel when you see these images?

Does it hit close to home, or do you think poverty is somewhere else?



CONNECT TO THE WORD

Student Goal: Youth will learn to act compassionately toward those on the margins through the story of Ruth.

READ Ruth 1:1-16.

SAY: In this story, we see Ruth tying herself to her mother-in-law, promising to stay with her forever. When she does this, Ruth becomes a foreigner. She leaves her home to stay with Naomi.

ASK: Can we compare Ruth's story to someone in our modern culture?

Who are the people like Ruth who are forced to leave their lives behind and become foreigners in a strange land?

Do you think we have a responsibility to those people? Why or why not?

SAY: During Ruth's time, women were mostly seen as a means to have children, especially sons. Women needed men in order to survive financially. Women without fathers, husbands, or sons didn't have a way to make money.

ASK: Do you know any people who cannot make money on their own? Have you ever wondered why?

Why do you think it is hard for someone who is unemployed or homeless to find work?

SAY: Boaz was impressed that Ruth pledged her loyalty to Naomi and chose a life of poverty. In some of the verses about Ruth, we learn that she was of a different ethnicity from Boaz. And yet, he didn't see her as inferior. He was impressed by her and saw her as a person.

ASK: How can we change the way we view those who are less fortunate than us?

LOVING LIKE BOAZ AND RUTH

Divide the students into a few small groups. Read the following three scenarios aloud one at a time. Ask them to brainstorm solutions based on the way Boaz treated Ruth. Discuss as a larger group after the small groups have a few minutes to talk through their ideas.

SCENARIO ONE: It's lunch period at school. You are sitting with your friends. You all begin to unpack your lunches, filled with sandwiches, chips, drinks, candy, and fruit. When all the bags are unloaded, you have what looks like a feast on the cafeteria table. You are horsing around with your friends, messing with their food. You look up and see a classmate who is sitting all by himself. He doesn't have any food in

Further Explanation

These scenarios are practical ways to relate to your students. We likely still remember the students who were left out, who wore the same clothes to school or didn't eat much at lunch. Teach your students to love them like Jesus would.



Facilitator Note:

Shane Claiborne has influenced a great number of Christians throughout the U.S. He is known for his radical (read: returning to primitive Christianity) view of Christianity. His commitment to the poor and marginalized is hard to ignore, and he forces us to wrestle with our calling as Christians. Christ calls us to take up our cross and die to ourselves, and to feed those the world overlooks and leaves behind. Claiborne reflects the radical nature of the gospel, and this makes us uncomfortable.

front of him; he is just reading a book. He is kind of thin and is sitting alone. You don't know him, but you have passed him a few times in the halls, and he is almost always wearing the same shirt.

SCENARIO TWO: When you come home from school one day, your parents are watching the news. You watch a story about a single mom whose home just burned down. She has two children and recently lost her job. They have a place to stay, but they need clothes, and the mom needs a job. The news network asks you to go to their website if you have anything you can donate.

SCENARIO THREE: Your best friend's dad just lost his job because his company laid off a lot of people. You don't know much about finances, but your friend said they don't have much in the bank because their car broke down last month and they used a lot of their savings to fix it. A week after your friend's dad lost his job, they found out his mom is going to need surgery. They no longer have medical insurance.



CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE WORLD

Student Goal: Youth will engage with multiple texts to widen their worldview and consider members of their community with whom they can engage.

Author and Christian activist Shane Claiborne wrote a book called *The Irresistible Revolution*. Listen to what he writes in one section:

In college I got involved in every club and student group, from the clown troupe to the gospel choir. But I just didn't meet God in the halls of the Christian college like I had expected I would. One night, I was hanging with two buddies who told me they were going down to the city to hang out with their "homeless friends." I was a little startled. First, I couldn't believe that there were people living on the streets of Philly through the winter. (Keep in mind, I'm from Tennessee.) And second, I was puzzled that my college buddies Chris and Scott, who sat around listening to death metal and talking like Beavis and Butthead, had become friends with them....

One night, my friend Chris said to me, "I've been reading Mother Teresa." I knew we were in trouble then. He continued, "She says that we can't understand the poor until we begin to understand what poverty is like. So tonight we are going to sleep out on the street."

My jaw dropped. I asked him not to mention this to my mom, and we headed out for the streets. Night after night, we would head down. The Bible came to life for us there. When we read the Bible on the streets of Philly, it was like watching one of those old-school 3-D movies with the red glasses. Before, we had never put the glasses on (so it just looked weird). But now the words jumped off the pages.

ASK: What does this have to do with the story of Ruth?

How can you live this out?

READ Hebrews 13:2.

SAY: This verse is instructing us to sit with members of the community we do not presently know.

ASK: Who in your community fits this description? Can you think of one person you could reach out to this week?

How does Ruth's story and what we read from Shane Claiborne change the way you might think of that person?

Distribute this week's student handout. If you have time, ask the students to spend some time reflecting on the lesson. Give them five to ten minutes to fill in their answers before you close. If you don't have time, ask them to take the handout home with them and spend some time in reflection this week.

CREATIVE OPTION: LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

Research some local soup kitchens or homeless shelters. Call and see if they allow teenagers to volunteer and take a day to go serve. If teens are not allowed to volunteer, host a food or clothing drive at your church to raise awareness of homelessness.



CLOSING

In closing, pray that God will help us remember who we are in Christ. May we be the hands of Jesus this week in tangible ways as we seek to truly love those around us.

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one."

—Mother Teresa