



A Love Story

A Six Session Bible Study

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LEADER'S GUIDE

Table of Contents

TO THE LEADER/TEACHER.....	2
Session One	5
Session Two	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Session Three	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Session Four	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Session Five	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Session Six.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

TO THE LEADER/TEACHER

This is an undated elective Bible study. It can be used at any time and in a variety of educational settings. It has been used in church school classes and morning Bible studies with adults and youth. I have also used it for VBS. Many persons like the idea of a short term Bible study that has a definite beginning and ending.

Planning. You will need to publicize that you are beginning a study called, "Ruth: A Love Story," based on the Book of Ruth in the Bible, opening it to anyone who may come. Have a sign up sheet with a limited number of persons, say 12. Promote it by saying that the group/study is limited to the first 12 who sign up. If there are more than 12, the class will be offered again.

You may also have a class/group already established for which you can use it.

Here's another idea. I used it once to begin a new group for young couples. It really helped get that class off to a good start. They are still together and growing. So it can be used to help your church grow. Because this study address issues of love, marriage, it really relates well to engaged and/or married persons. But it also can easily be used with teens as it helps them understand what real love means and looks like.

I also, on the Sunday we began the class, used it as the basis for a sermon. But you could do that a few weeks before the class starts as a way of getting more people interested. You might also consider a short series of sermons about the same time on Ruth. There's a great deal there that "will

preach.”

You will also have to set the *date, times and places* for the sessions.

Student Handouts or Book. You have these for each session. Feel free to make copies and give them out *before* each session. Note that the student handouts have questions and other activities for them to do on their own before each session. Encourage them to prepare for each session as this will make it a more meaningful study for everyone. There is a method to these questions. They start off very simply. Anyone can read the texts and then answer them. But you will notice that they get deeper and more personal or reflective. I have found that getting persons to answer or respond to simple surface questions helps “thaw them out” for more personal sharing. So these questions may seem simple but they led to more in depth sharing as the session progresses.

Leader’s Guide. This will give you answers to the questions asked on the student handouts and comments for further discussion and sharing. You will also note specific teaching suggestions offered. You are by no means limited to these questions, comments, and teaching suggestions. They are given to stimulate your own creativity. Adapt them. Use your own. After all, you know the persons in your group and it’s up to you to make it relevant to their needs, concerns, and questions. You will notice that the teaching suggestions given aim at getting group interaction and discussion. You may not be comfortable with this. But try it anyway. Just follow the suggestions and you will be surprised at how the group opens up and begins to share. Through that you all learn more about

the Bible and each other, as well as getting closer to one another. Teaching is not just one way- - from teacher to students. It's best, I think, when it's from teacher to student, student to teacher, and student to student all at once.

Ruth: A Love Story

Leader's Guide

Session One

What You Will Need for This Session:

- ___ chalkboard or newsprint
- ___ a biblical map showing the location of Bethlehem and Moab
- ___ copies of session 2 handouts for the students
- ___ a book of baby names with the meaning of common names (optional)

An Ice Breaker

If your group is new or one with people who may not know each other well, use the following ice breaker to help thaw them out and help get them to know one another. You may wish to use it even if they do know one another. For we can always learn new things about each other.

Divided them into groups of no more than four persons in each group. If you have 12, then that's three groups. You can simply have them count 1-2-3- and repeat, remembering their number. All the 1's will be in one group, the 2's another, etc. This is good for it mixes persons up, helping persons get some time to talk with other people they may seldom get to talk with or meet. Also, people tend to be cliquish, gathering only with people they already know. This helps prevent that.

Ask them to do the following in their group:

Take turns asking and sharing these questions...(which you can already have listed on a chalkboard or piece of newsprint for them to as they talk in their group)

1. Your name and what you do or did for a profession
2. Something about you few people know
3. Your favorite love story, song, or movie is...

Give them about 10 minutes to do this. Then call time.

Build on what they have just done to introduce this study, in other words, it is a love story too. (Here you may wish to refer to the material in the Introduction of the first student handout which presents Ruth as a love story).

(Optional method) Hopefully they all have read the story of Ruth beforehand as

was suggested. At this point ask them to share one word or phrase to describe how they felt after reading it. You can list these on the board if you wish.

Read Ruth 1:1 to the class. Ask and let them answer the questions whenever they can. Note that you have answers and comments below to lead the discussion.

1. During what period in the history of Israel is this story set?

ANSWER: During the time of the Judges, that is, between 1200 to 1000 B.C. (You may wish to write this kind of information on the board)

COMMENTS: No specific date is given for the story of Ruth. This is often the case in the Bible. Not only this, we do not even know who wrote this story. No author is identified. Tradition attributes it to the prophet/priest Samuel. Even though we may not know the exact background or the author, we do have the story itself and it's message still comes loud and clear to us over the centuries.

The Judges were spirit-filled leaders during this period between Joshua and David, that is, when they were more tribes than one nation. The Judges were individuals who God raised up and empowered at critical times to provide leadership in the face of a crisis (usually a threat from an enemy). So this period was one of times of peace sandwiched between times of great upheaval. From the nature of the story of Ruth it must have taken place during one of the quieter times during this period.

2. If you wanted to know more about this period, what book of the Bible would you read?

ANSWER: The Book of Judges! (trick question)

3. How many of the Judges can you name?

ANSWER: (You may wish to list these on a piece of newsprint as they answer and/or use the information below - though it is optional if you wish to say very much about each judge).

A. *Othniel* (OATH nee ale) Judges 3:7-11 who was related to Caleb (maybe his younger brother) and was chosen to deliver the people from the king of Mesopotamia.

B. *Ehud* (EE hud) Judges 3:12-30 was the great grandson of Benjamin and delivered the people from Moabite oppression (obviously our story did not take place during this time!)

C. *Shamgar* (SHAM garr) Judges 3:31 was one of the "minor" judges