

DISCUSSION GUIDE

PINELAKE CHURCH

LOVE STORY

MAKE SURE YOU ARE PREPARED FOR MARRIAGE (RUTH 4:1-12)

JUNE 8, 2014



PREPARATION

- > **Spend the week studying Ruth 4:1-12.** Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.
- > **Determine** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > **Pray** for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their receptivity to God's Word.
- > **Focus on the Main Point.** The Book of Ruth is a love story about Ruth and Boaz, but it's also a love story about God's love for Ruth and ultimately for us. This week, by seeing how Boaz was prepared for marriage, those who are married will be challenged to embrace the God-given responsibilities of marriage and those who are single will be challenged to consider whether they are prepared for marriage.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Those of you who are married, if you could give a young couple considering marriage one piece of advice what would it be?

In what ways is marriage difficult? In what ways is marriage a blessing?

What challenges have you faced in your marriage that you did not expect?

Marriage is not easy. It is a lifelong commitment entered into by two sinners. When a man and a woman get married, they must accept each other's burdens, sorrows, and sins. Thus, whether you are seeking to honor God in your marriage or considering whether you should pursue marriage with someone of the opposite sex, you must consider the responsibilities that marriage entails.

LEARN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:1-10.**

What responsibilities does marriage entail?

What responsibilities did Boaz have to consider as he prepared to marry Ruth?

Read 1 Timothy 5:8. Why do you think Paul speaks so harshly of men who neglect the God-given responsibilities of marriage?

As we saw two weeks ago in Ephesians 5:25-33, God designed marriage to be a picture of Christ's relationship with the church. Thus when a man neglects to take seriously His responsibilities in marriage, He is not only neglecting His family but also the gospel. By marrying Ruth, Boaz agreed to take responsibility for her financially, to provide her with children, and to purchase her family's land. This was not a decision Boaz made lightly, he considered the responsibility this marriage would entail and sought to honor God in it.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:11-12.

Who gave their blessing to Ruth and Boaz? Why was this blessing important to them?

What role should the local church play in encouraging and building up the marriages of its members?

If you are single, how might our church help you prepare for marriage? How might the body at Pinelake encourage you in your singleness (see 1 Corinthians 7:6-9)?

All the people and the elders pronounced blessings on Boaz and Ruth. By blessing them, they were promising to support them and pray for them. Whether married or single, we all need the blessing of our church family. Single people need the church to hold them accountable to remaining pure before marriage and to finding contentment in the Lord. Married couples need the church's encouragement to fulfill their God-given responsibilities and to demonstrate the gospel through their commitment to their spouses.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 2:18-25.

What does this passage tell us about God's purpose for marriage?

Creation was incomplete. The man was alone, which was not good. He needed someone to whom he could relate and with whom he could fulfill God's will, so God created the woman as a helper—someone who supplies what another lacks. The woman's strengths complemented the man's and allowed them together to accomplish God's commands.

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 when teaching on marriage (Eph. 5:31). How do those who marry "become one flesh"? Why is it important that we understand marriage as a "one flesh" relationship? What does that entail?

How does zealously clinging to each other strengthen a marriage?

What basic aspects of marriage are noted in verse 24? Why is each one important??

Genesis 2:24 expresses God's original intention for marriage: spouses rely on each other to meet their needs. To become "one flesh" literally means that the husband and wife become one person. This doesn't mean that partners lack personal autonomy, but rather that they now share everything and every decision one partner makes affects the other. The one-flesh relationship involves all areas of life: physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional. The mystery of how two individuals join together to fulfill their roles in marriage parallels the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:25-33).

LIVE

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives. Create some talking points for the group by looking at the practical implications of the study. Get group members to talk about the real-life implications of the passage. Look at what can be applied specifically to Pinelake.

How might failing to recognize the "one flesh" nature of marriage cause your marriage to suffer?

Why is it important for single people to be mindful the God-given responsibilities of marriage?

Of the responsibilities of marriage we discussed, which is most difficult for you? What is one step you could take this week to work at faithfully fulfilling that responsibility?

LEAD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage impact the way you lead at Pinelake and interact with people outside of Pinelake.

How does a biblical view of the responsibilities of marriage affect our relationship with God? How does it affect the lives of those of us who are single?

If you are married, how might you point others to Christ by the way you conduct yourself in marriage? If you are single, how might you use your singleness to glorify God?

PRAY

Lead your group in prayer, asking God to strengthen both those who are married and those who are single in their pursuit of Christ. Pray that marriages at Pinelake would point people to Christ and those who are single would glorify God in their singleness.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - **How has your perspective on marriage changed since we started this study on Ruth?**
 - **Who do you know who might need encouragement in their marriage? Or conversely, who do you know who might need encouragement in their singleness? How might you reach out to them this week?**
- The challenge to memorize Genesis 2:24.

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GENESIS 2:18-25

2:18. The theme of God providing for Adam's needs (see note at v. 8) is picked up again here, as God declared that Adam's being alone is **not good**. God created the man with a need to relate to one as his complement, and now God will meet that need.

2:19. Like man, animals were formed out of the ground, but they did not receive the breath of life from God (v. 7) nor the image of God. By giving names to the animals, Adam showed that he ruled the animals and that he perceived the nature of each animal (see note at 1:5).

2:20. Adam's understanding of the nature of the animals he named only highlighted the differences that existed between him and the rest of God's creatures: **no helper was found** as his complement.

2:21. At what must have been a moment of loneliness in Adam's life, God stepped in to create one who would perfectly meet Adam's need. Because God took one of his ribs to use as His raw material, the woman would correspond perfectly—though not identically—to Adam. Like Adam, the woman possessed God's image. The fact that she was not taken either from the man's head or his foot may suggest that the woman was not to rule over the man (1Co 11:3), nor the man to oppress the woman (1Pe 3:7).

2:23. Adam's first recorded words express his delight with God's handiwork and his recognition of the unique suitability of God's last recorded creation in the creation accounts. As with no other piece of divine craftsmanship, this one was singularly suited for the man, being bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Adam expresses dominion by choosing a name for God's final created being, but the name he chose suggests that he viewed her as his equal. The Hebrew term *'ishshah*, **woman**, identifies her as the feminine complement to *'ish*, the man.

2:24. God's timeless design for marriage is declared here. The one flesh relationship certainly involves sexual union, but also includes a husband and wife coming together in spiritual, mental, and emotional harmony.

2:25. Because the devastating effects of sin had not yet ravaged nature or humanity, there was no need for clothing. Adam and Eve could live without the barriers needed to shield them from their environment and each other without a sense of shame. Later, in the time of the patriarchs and kings, clothing was associated with dignity. Accordingly, prisoners of war were not permitted to wear any clothing, slaves wore very little clothing, and higher social classes wore more clothing than anyone else in society.

RUTH 4:1-12

4:1-2. Boaz immediately went to the gate of the town, the place where important legal and social matters were transacted in the presence of the town elders. When Boaz summoned the other redeemer, he literally said, Come over here (Hb) *poloni 'almoni*, a rhyming phrase equivalent to our "Mr. So-and-So." Boaz gathered a quorum of 10 elders as official witnesses.

4:3-4. As a widow Naomi could not sell Elimelech's land; however, she could assign someone else the right to use that land until the next Jubilee Year. Rather than have control over the land go (or remain) outside the family, Boaz requested an intervention in the spirit of the family redeemer laws to buy... back the use of the land. Since "Mr. So-and-So" was the primary relative entitled to redeem that property, Boaz was bringing the matter to his attention. If he did not redeem the property, Boaz himself was willing to act.

4:5-8. Along with the financial cost of redeeming the land, there was a social cost. The transaction also included a commitment to marry Ruth the Moabitess and thereby to seek to perpetuate the dead man's name on his property. This is a reference back to the practice of levirate marriage in Dt 25:5-10, by

which the brother of a man who died without male offspring was required to marry his widow and raise up a family in the name of the dead man. In this case, there was no legal obligation on either “Mr. So-and-So” or on Boaz, yet Boaz asserted a moral obligation to do so. At this, “Mr. So-and-So” backed away from his earlier enthusiasm. Ironically, his concern to protect his own name rather than committing to raise up heirs to the name of Elimelech led to him being left nameless. In seeking to serve self first, he inadvertently undermined his best interests. It is instead Boaz whose name would become famous (Ru 4:11) in Bethlehem. His decision was confirmed by a legal gesture that was archaic even at the time of the writing of the book—the removal of a sandal, which was given to the other party.

4:9-12. By receiving the sandal, Boaz committed himself to redeem Naomi’s property, to marry Ruth, and to perpetuate the names of Elimelech and Mahlon on their patrimony. The blessing of the elders (vv. 11-12) may simply have been conventional for married couples in Bethlehem, but it had a greater significance for Boaz and Ruth. Through Ruth, Boaz would indeed become famous and have his name remembered in Bethlehem. The link with Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, invites a comparison and contrast between Ruth and Tamar, two foreign women who became part of Judah’s genealogy through very different means.

