

**LOVE STORY**  
Studies in the  
Old Testament Book of  
Ruth

**~February 11-17, 2007~**  
**“When Life Tastes Bitter”**  
Ruth 1



Life Groups

**Welcome** to UPC's study of the story of Ruth entitled "Love Story." Each week this discussion guide will help you reflect upon the Sunday sermon and apply its content to your life. Whether you work through these lessons on your own, with a friend, or in your family or LIFE Group, we believe they will help you become better acquainted with the God who, as in the case of Ruth, takes empty things and makes them full. If you ever miss a sermon, you can always listen to it online at [www.upc-orlando.com](http://www.upc-orlando.com).

**LISTEN**

*Record your insights and observations from this week's sermon:*

## Introduction to Ruth

The book of Ruth is a story of romance and redemption that takes place in the period of the Judges in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. *Historically*, the book describes the experiences of an Israelite family of Bethlehem during a time of apostasy and unrest. *Symbolically*, it portrays a redeemer (Boaz) coming for his bride (Ruth), providing a beautiful picture of Christ's love for His church. *Theologically*, it reveals the character of God in His gracious and sovereign dealings with His people. *Genealogically*, it explains how a non-Israelite (Ruth the Moabitess) became a member of the royal line of Christ.

## SHARE

a) Describe the last time you felt "empty." What was going on?

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b) What did you do with that empty feeling? Did you take it to God, or move away from Him? What did you learn through the experience?

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## REFLECT

a) Why did Elimelech and Naomi leave Bethlehem? (verse 1)

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b) Read Deuteronomy 23:3-6. In light of that passage of Scripture, what do you think of Elimelech's decision to take his family to Moab?

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c) In light of Deuteronomy 7:1-4 and Ezra 10:10, how would you evaluate Mahlon and Kilion's decision to marry Moabite women (verse 4)?

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d) After reading this chapter, what is your general impression of Naomi? of Orpah? of Ruth?

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e) Which one of the three women mentioned above do you identify with the most? Why?

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**APPLY**

a) It seems that Naomi could have been a difficult person to live with. From Ruth's example in verses 16-18, what do you learn that might help you in a relationship with a difficult person?

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b) How is God at work behind the tragic circumstances described in Ruth 1?

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c) In verses 20-21, Naomi is quite open about what she's struggling with. Follow her example for a moment. Describe in some detail a situation that you're struggling with or that seems hopeless to you (it could be personal, relational, or even national):

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d) Now look beyond that situation for a minute. Do you believe God is still at work? If so, what might He be trying to teach you or others through that situation?

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- e) Fortunately, Naomi did not have to carry her burden all by herself. Naomi's friends back home in Bethlehem, as well as Ruth, were there to share it with her. What can you do to improve your ability and availability to help lighten the load of someone going through a time of trial?

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- f) Read the excerpt in the box below. What does this mean for you?

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“Community is the place where our limitations, our fears and our egoism are revealed to us. While we are alone, we could believe we loved everyone. Now that we are with others, living with them all the time, we realize how incapable we are of loving, how much we deny to others, how closed in on ourselves we are.” (Jean Vanier, quoted in *Everybody's Normal 'Till You Get To Know Them*, by John Ortberg, pg. 56)