



7. With the death of Naomi's husband and sons she is desperate. Naomi has her hope in God, and that intensifies her grief. Can you understand this? And can you relate to a time when your love was intensified through suffering? What was that all about?
  
8. Disney is *groundless human optimism*. The gospel is *real divine hope*. What does resurrection have to do with our understanding of love?
  - a. What is the dictionary definition of "resurrect". How does that apply to the store of Naomi and Ruth and also apply to you?

## *A Loving Life*

### *Discussion Questions for Chapters 2 and 3*

1. Read Ruth 1 how have these chapters of *A Loving Life* illuminated Ruth's story for you?
2. *Hessed* is translated as "love" and 'loyalty' or steadfast love. What makes that different from society's version of love?
3. The author's father said, "It is like people don't have any skin. They are nerve endings. "What role do our feelings play in the way we relate to others when we are treated without love?
4. *Hessed* love narrows and burdens the life of the giver. The author says that when we embrace the death that comes with *hessed* love, a tiny resurrection begins in our hearts. Have you experienced this in your life?

5. The love that Naomi has for these girls is an example of Christ's love for us. We didn't do anything to deserve Christ's love yet he sacrificially love us so much he was a substitution for our sin. Naomi would have suffered greatly if Ruth had done what Naomi had asked. Instead out of Naomi's pain, Ruth loved Naomi, and probably even more that she did before all the tragedy had fallen on them.. Ruth's love is God's response to Naomi's lament. Have you ever experienced God's love through another person in a time of pain?
  
6. Our culture has been taught to believe that showing emotion is a sign of immaturity or weakness, and so we do not lament. Instead, we hide from our pain rather than engaging with it. We are very good at denial. But a lament is a prayer, a plea for help. Lamenting is how we open our hearts to God's work in our pain.
  - a. Read Psalm 10:1
  - b. Read Psalm 22;1
  - c. Do you think lamenting before God is weak? Or do you think/believe that lamenting drives you closer to your relationship with God? Which one and why?
  
  - d. How does knowing this change the way you will approach God in prayer?
  
7. We don't have to act on our feelings, and our behavior doesn't have to define us or categorize us. How does this liberate you?

Next Level Women

A Loving Life 2& 3



## *A Loving Life*

1. What difficult things is Ruth inviting into her life because of what she does (love –without-an-exit)?
2. Ruth is dealing with a woman struggling with bitterness. How do we usually relate to people who are overcome with bitterness?
3. What are some of our good responses or counseling response to someone who is bitter?
4. How is Ruth's responses strikingly different?
5. What does Naomi gain?
6. How is Ruth's God's answer to Naomi's lament?
7. What made Ruth's argument so powerful?

## *A Loving Life*

Please read Ruth 1:18-21

1. How does Naomi enter the city? How does this way of coming in fit with Naomi's struggle? Why might she have a hard time introducing herself?
2. What images or pictures does Naomi use to describe her anguish?
3. Then in the next breath, Naomi explains why she is so bitter. She left full and God brought her back empty. Who is the cause of Naomi's suffering? Is it proper for Naomi to address God this way?
4. How good are you at hearing laments from people close to you?
5. How does God respond to Naomi's bitterness?
6. Why do you think Naomi doesn't see Ruth? Does suffering have to narrow our lives?
7. In this scene describing their entrance to Bethlehem, what is the cost of love, of *hesed*, for Ruth? How is she described?
8. What is the risk for Ruth? How is Ruth likely feeling? How would you be feeling?



9. What does Naomi appear to have forgotten about Ruth's own suffering? What has Ruth lost?

10. Is there any part of your life where you feel lonely because of love? Describe briefly.

11. Why is it encouraging to know that love can be lonely?

12. What keeps love from not being lonely?

## *A Loving Life*

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1. Read Ruth 1:22 A lapse of spiritual commitment was when Naomi's husband Elimelech made what decision for his family?
  - a. How is this similar to Lot's decision for his family?
  - b. What consequences do you see in both of these families?
  - c. How does this explain Naomi's "return", translated in Hebrew to what word?
2. God is true to His promises and grace. Naomi showed her love for God with true repentance by moving back home. What huge promise came from Naomi's and Ruth's return to Bethlehem?
3. God's love for us and our reciprocal love for Him, through ALL circumstances especially the tough dry season disciplines us. This is completely opposite of our cultures "if it feels good – do it" (pg. 60) How would you explain the difference?

A Loving Life 8 & 9

4. Chapter 1 closes with hope – the beginning of the barley harvest. Read 2:1. Boaz is introduced.

God permits our lives to become overwhelming, putting us on the downward slope of the J-Curve, so we \_\_\_\_\_

(pg. 69)

5. How does this explain us having to die to our dreams, give up our rights, and stop demanding?

**“A Loving Life” – Chapters 10 and 11 - Read Ruth 2:2-10**

1. What are the characteristics of hesed illustrated by Ruth in this passage?
2. What were your impressions of “Love Protests” (chapter 11) – any major themes?
3. How does this display of protection from Boaz as explained in this chapter contradict how the world views love? (see page 82)

What challenges you most about hesed and how can you pray for grace to meet those challenges?

## *A Loving Life*

Please read Ruth 2; 11-14

1. What did you learn from the author's discussion of 'reaping and sowing'? (See page 87)
2. What is your definition of a 'blessing'? How does the author define a blessing, what are the significant elements? (see page 89)
3. What fundamental truth does Proverbs 22;9 give about blessings?
4. What do you have to believe in order to truly bless someone?
5. What are the benefits of humility?
6. "what is our greatest fear about humility and how does Boaz's example reveal Gpd's character?(page96)

Please read Ruth 2:15-16

- What do you think Boaz was so generous, in his protection of Ruth, in his money and his time? (See page 97)
  
- How did Jesus first miracle, turning water into wine, represent Hased love? (page 99)
  
- Hased love is contagious. Our expression of love to others is the most powerful argument for our faith.  
What are ways we are (or could) show that kind of love to our community? (Think of Boaz and Jesus's examples)
  - What does loving an unlovable person have to do with Hased love? Remember an unlovable person can work with you, share your bed, be your BFF – at any time someone you know and have made a part of your life can easily slip into your category of “unloved!”
  
- Read Ruth 2:17-22 What do you see God doing for sad depressed Naomi?

Loving Life Chapters 14 & 15

- How do you explain what cathartic blasting (page 108)
  - Do you do this by overlooking what people may really want for you and instead jump to the worse possible scenario?
  - What does this all have to do with self pity and self righteousness?
- What does the author say is the root cause of this cathartic blasting and all it's accompanying feelings: (page 110)
- What is the cure?



Please read Ruth 3:1-5

- After Naomi realizes that Boaz is indeed their kinsman Redeemer, Naomi is planning. How can she make a strong and effective situation or scenario where marriage can be discussed. There is no elder, brother, to approach Boaz. The ladies had to work this out themselves.

Are you thinking that Naomi was manipulating Boaz?

- How does the world, Disney, movies, etc portray falling in love?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Is there another way to look at this plan?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- When you are led by emotions, in the area of love, do you think there are consequences, and what would they be?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How do you react to planning and thinking before allowing a love relationship to happen? Do you think what the world tells us about falling in love compares or differs from what God tells us?



Please read Ruth 3:10-15

- Ruth had just laid down at Boaz's feet and had ordered him to marry her, thereby redeeming Naomi. She is really vulnerable. How does Boaz react?
  - What does Boaz's use of the word kindness suggest?

Naomi's plan worked. But only because both Ruth and Boaz live out true Heseid love. If one of them were suspicious, arrogant, prideful, etc, then the union of these two would have fallen apart.

But now Boaz is faced with an order of law, another relative can step in front of Boaz's claim to marry Ruth.

- What do you see Boaz do that lets us know whether or not he has made his love for Ruth an idol?
- Who and what does Boaz worship?
- How does surrender play a role in Heseid love?

Loving Life Chapters 18 & 19

- The author describes Gods presence in the shadows of our lives, versus dramatic self-disclosure. What do you see as the benefits of Gods presence in the shadows? (page 134)
  - We can misinterrupt the shadows/gaps/ spaces in our lives. When we feel there is too much space, what emotions bubble up?
  - Can you grow closer to Jesus in the spaces? How?

Please read Ruth 4:1- 10

- Boaz needs a plan to marry Ruth despite the other relatives claim. Boaz knows the other relative is greedy and impulsive and cares nothing for Ruth. So Boaz goes to the city gate. Read Proverbs 31:23. What does this say about Boaz's character and appeal as a husband?
  
- Boaz was obedient to Jewish law and offered the land to the man. And as expected the relative did not want Ruth with the bargain, so he passed. How did discussing all this at the gate help Boaz?
  - By following Gods rules and being obedient, Boaz was able to not allow his love for Ruth become a barrier between himself and God. How is that? How was Boaz's willingness to walk away an example of Hesed love?
  
- The love Boaz and Ruth had for each other was not governed by emotion. Boaz does the what is logical, now what is loving. God asks us to be "prudent" and wise. How do you see these virtues in both of them?

Loving Life Chapters 20 & 21

- Read 4:11- 14

In these verses we read that Tamar was mentioned. There are similarities between Tamar and Ruth. Can you identify them?

Additionally neither Tamar or Ruth were condemned or judged by God. They both provided the lineage for our Savior and they were two women strangers in Israel, didn't fit in, both were deeply hurt and had to fight for themselves with daring plan

- In what book are both Tamar and Ruth mentioned and why?



## Loving Life Chapters 22 & 23

Please read Ruth 4:13-17

- Naomi never received the "why" from God, for all the trouble and sadness she went through. But her faith brought her many things – can you identify some?
  
- Read 17-22 One such blessing for Naomi is that her daughter in law turns out to be the great grandmother of Israel's greatest King – King David.  
Ruth's story follows a typical story found in the Bible. It is a story about a person/women who God picks up from \_\_\_\_\_ and moves her to \_\_\_\_\_

The story of Naomi tells us that we always free to love no matter how someone treat us or what our circumstances do to us.

Lets look at Ruth and why Tamar was written about here.

Do you think Ruth and also Tamar were devious and went outside the bounds of God's intentions?

Why should David come from such a family tree? Neither Ruth or Tamar were Israelites. They were Gentiles and both were seeking the "redeemer" for a Jewish marriage. These two women acted out with determination to decide their own futures and their family's destiny. From a Biblical perspective, I can see that the Messiah is to redeem the whole world, not only Jews. And I can see that non Jews must enter David's line and contribute to the line of Messiah. It would not be an easy meet and greet and get married scenario for any Gentile woman to marry a Jew. It had to play out with determination and some well thought plans that could involve trickery in order to have non Jewish woman in the lineage of Jesus.

And I would also propose that the story of Ruth and Tamar do show an end f (as our reading of the Eden story says) Messiah is to end to the subjugation of women. These women are free and self-determining and strong and as smart as any man could be.

### Loving Life Chapters 22 & 23

The bottom line is these women are divine examples of God's sovereign power and all-wise and loving purposes being accomplished through obedient servants. When His children go their own way, God's infinite power is channeled through unwilling, disobedient men and women, who, in spite of themselves, achieve God's plans. Which they do unknowingly and rather unpleasantly.

Would you ever imagine that part of the messianic would be non Jews, a schemer, a prostitute, who would just have well been a part of a pagan religious cult. Who but God could have brought such a thing to pass.

Any thoughts or concerns or insight