

# Talk It Over 45: Bible Study Edition

Teaching Series: *The Story*

Message: The Faith of a Foreign Woman (*Chapter 9*) – Patti Miller

Passages: Ruth

Date: November 18 and 19, 2017

## How to use Talk It Over

This version of Talk It Over is designed for groups whose primary focus is studying the Word of God. There is lots of depth in information and questions about the principle passage of the weekend message. This study is designed to be done in 30 to 60 minutes. To take full advantage of the TiO created for our exploration of *The Story* it is recommended that you do the following (in this order): 1) Read the associated chapter in *The Story*; 2) Watch the sermon for the chapter; 3) Gather as a small group and talk together using this document as your guide. Because each chapter in *The Story* contains only pieces of the books of the Bible, please check out page 494-495 to see what parts of the Bible are actually being referenced.

## The Main Idea

Regular people. Living regular lives. Wondering if God is even noticing them. The story of Ruth is a story of two women ... and a God who has not forgotten them.

## Warm Up Questions: (Choose 1 or 2)

**Q1: Have you ever lived somewhere temporarily, that is, an extended time somewhere that was not a holiday? Tell that story.**

**Q2: Have you ever visited a country or city where the predominant language is one that you do not speak? How did you feel in that circumstance?**

**Q3: Have you ever been told that Winnipeggers have unusual cultural customs? Name some practices that Winnipeggers have that you believe (or have been told) are unusual.**

## Dig a Little Deeper

The story of Ruth is an anomaly in the Old Testament. It while the story states that it is set in the time of the judges it is almost entirely without context. We know very little of what is going on in the rest of the world or in the life of the people of Israel with the exception of a small collection of people, focussed on Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

### **Act 1: The Preamble (pp. 121-123)**

“Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons .... After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.”

Naomi and Elimelek, Jews from Bethlehem, moved to Moab along with their sons, Mahlon and Kilion. The sons married women from Moab, one of these being Ruth. However, within ten years of moving all three of the men were dead and the family of women, none of whom had any children, was left without any support: no income, no family, nothing that was familiar. So, Naomi, the now-head of the family, decided to move back to Bethlehem. Because the widows of her sons were from Moab, Naomi released them from any obligation to her and encouraged them to go back to their homes and remarry. Ruth refused to leave and so ended up in Bethlehem with Naomi.

### **Act 2: Ruth Meets Boaz (pp. 123-124)**

“Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.”

In order to support herself and Naomi, Ruth gleanes in the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi’s husband. To allow the poor to be cared for, God had decreed that harvesters in grain fields should leave some grain behind for the poor to gather for themselves. In the midst of this, Naomi has an idea: Ruth should marry Boaz.

### **Act 3: Ruth Marries Boaz (pp. 124-127)**

“Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, ‘Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion, and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife ....’”

Through a strange courting ritual, which involved Ruth sleeping at the feet of Boaz, a meeting at the city gates, and the exchange of sandals, Boaz and Ruth get personally connected and they eventually marry.

### **Act 4: The Descendants of Ruth and Boaz (pp. 127)**

“Then Naomi took the child [of Ruth and Boaz] in her arms and cared for him ... And they named him Obed He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

Because the sons of Naomi were dead, and because Boaz had purchased the property of Elimelek from Naomi, his first son became the heir to the line of Elimelek—remember, of course, that this culture was patriarchal and so all families were defined by the men. This made Obed the “son” of Naomi and an ancestor of David, the King, and Joseph, the human father of Jesus.

**Looking back at the story of Ruth**, we can see primarily two themes:

**1) The extraordinary nature of the ordinary:** Throughout her sermon, Patti talked about “ordinary people living ordinary lives.” In the story of Ruth there is nothing extraordinary, except, perhaps, the level of tragedy experienced in the family of Naomi. But yet, this story has been preserved in Scripture and demonstrates clearly the blessing that God brings to people who live upright lives.

**Q1: While ordinary at the time, there are a lot of cultural practices that are spoken of, or implied, in the story of Ruth. Identify as many of these practices as you can and talk about them.**

**Q2: Ruth is identified as a Moabite. We’ve encountered Moabites recently in *The Story*. What story did we find them in (hint: check chapter 8)?**

**2) The plan of God is often unknown to ordinary people:** While this is an ordinary story, we see the extraordinary place that it holds in the history of the people of Israel and in *The Story* of our salvation. The story of Ruth shows us that the extraordinary plan of God is often composed of smaller ordinary stories of the faithfulness of his people.

**Q3: How important is the narrative of Ruth in the larger context of the story of our salvation? Discuss this.**

## Next Steps

Most of us see our lives as ordinary. Even those who do extraordinary things often see those things as being exceptional within their own lives: and so they should. For most of our lives are spent at the mundane things: sleeping and eating and passing the salt to each other. So It Is easy to convince ourselves that we do not matter In the larger scheme of things. But all of the really extraordinary things that God has accomplished and will accomplish In the world has come through the work of people who are being faithful followers of Jesus.

In the book *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence Is described In this way:

“That he was pleased when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of GOD, seeking Him only, and nothing else ....”

That describes the love of the ordinary as a love for God. And, when done for the love of God, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

**Q1: Do you ever feel like you are far too ordinary to be of use to the Kingdom of God? Does the story of Ruth change that perspective in any way?**

**Q2: What place does “faithful in the ordinary” hold in the life of the follower of Jesus? What ordinary ways are you (can you) contribute to the Kingdom of God?**

Pray that you would find ordinary ways to be used by God to spread the gospel of Jesus.