

Questions after Ruth I

1. Was it a new idea to you – that the story of Ruth is first of all about the mission of God to the nations?
2. Does it surprise you to learn that the Scripture uses the language of God's call of Abraham and Sarah to describe the coming of Ruth to be one of his people? Does it encourage you?
3. How have you found Boaz' words to be true in your life, that God is a faithful and sheltering God under whose wings you have taken refuge (2:12)?
4. Have you ever had to make choices like Ruth's, that is, to choose one family over another, one people over another, one land over another, one road to travel over another, one God over another? What were the deciding issues for you, the issues that helped you to make your choice?
5. Does it disturb you that Naomi talked so openly about her bitterness? (It is clear that she expressed this to God, as well as to other people.) If you find her words difficult to accept as appropriate, then perhaps you should read Lamentations chapter 3. Are you able to weep freely and even be angry or pour out the bitterness of your heart when trouble comes into your life? Have you felt free to express your distress to the LORD, and to others, when tragedy strikes, or have you kept your feelings bottled up inside you, or even believed that it would be unspiritual to be so honest about what you feel?
6. Clearly God had a big surprise in store for Naomi – to show her that he had not forsaken her. Have there been times when you have thought that the Lord had forsaken you, only to discover later that he still desired to care for you and bless you?
7. Ruth swore a solemn oath when she made her promise to go with Naomi. Have you ever sworn a solemn oath or made a vow in God's name (the same thing)? Most of us make such vows when we get married or when we are set aside to ministry. Some of us have made such oaths privately, just between ourselves and the Lord. Did you understand just how serious an undertaking you

were making, how serious it is to take an oath or make a solemn promise to the Lord, and/or to another person?

Questions after Ruth II

8. Does it trouble you that the Book of Ruth uses the language of chance: 'It happened' that Ruth went to glean in Boaz' field?

9. One of the wonderful things about the book of Ruth is the weaving together in history of human choice and the sovereign plans and providence of God. Where do you see this in the story of Ruth?

10. Where do you see in your own personal or family history the weaving together of the sovereign plans and providence of God and your human choices?

11. Boaz is a man who lives out the Spirit of the Law and not simply the letter; who sees the floor of the Law and then delights in building a beautiful house of love, or a rich treasury on that floor. What do you find most beautiful about this story of his kindness to Ruth? Do you know of similar examples today of this same kind of obedience to the spirit of the Law by Christian believers – obedience that creates a miniature to set against the patterns of the culture in which we live?

12. How might you apply the gleaning laws in our very different cultural setting? Try to think of the family in which you were raised, the work your parents did, or in which you have been, or are at present, engaged, and how these laws might be lived out in your own life, home and business, or your family's home, life and business.

13. What do you think might be some contemporary equivalents of the gleaning laws? Obviously not all of us are farmers, but these laws apply to us whatever job we have, whatever business we own. In addition to reflecting about this for your own life (as Q 12 asks you to do) how do you think Christians generally could do something similar in caring for the poor, for widows, for orphans and for aliens?

14. It is fairly easy to apply such laws as the gleaning laws to our personal lives - how might we take such laws and apply them to our wider society, and even to the laws of our land; and would it be appropriate to even try to do this?
15. Were you already familiar with the work of Amy Carmichael? What do you admire about what you have heard concerning her life and ministry?
16. What is your reaction to my story of 'Joan'?

Questions after Ruth III

17. How many people are in your family or household? How many would there be if you regarded your extended family as family, e.g. brothers and sisters and their families, aunts and uncles and their families? What sense of responsibility do you have towards them? After hearing about the laws of 'levir' and 'goel' (kinsman redeemer) do you think that you ought to have a greater sense of responsibility towards your relatives?
18. Scripture teaches us that what we possess belongs first to the Lord and that we are his tenants. What difference would this make to the way you think about your home, possessions and money?
19. Scripture teaches also that as the Lord's tenants what we possess belongs to us in trust for our children and the future generations of our descendants and not to us personally (in addition to our reflections from the story of Ruth and the Old Testament laws about this - see the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:14). What difference might this view make to the way you save for, and pass on, an inheritance to your children?
20. What are some of the ways in which Boaz is a picture of Christ?
21. Who are some other Old Testament believers whose lives are portraits in history of Christ's work?

22. Do you have redeemers among your relatives, people who have been a kinsman redeemer to you?
23. Do you see ways in which you might be a kinsman redeemer for a relative of yours?
24. What would laws, like the Jubilee laws, mean for our economic and financial system?

Questions after Study on the Law and Our Renewal in the Image of God

25. Which parts of the outline of how we are to understand the Law were of particular help to you?
26. Have you thought of Law and grace as being in opposition to each other?
27. Do you find Gordon Wenham's idea of the floor of the Law helpful?
28. Do you know of examples of believers who have taken a part of God's Law, just as my father-in-law did, and then sought to live in obedience to the principles made known in the Law?
29. There are many parts of the Old Testament laws about agriculture, or business practice, or ceremonies (or a combination of ceremony and agricultural practice – like the service of firstfruits) where it would be appropriate to think about the spiritual principles involved. Are there parts of the Law that you would particularly like to study and meditate on for yourself, so that you might understand the intent of the Law and how you might apply it today?
30. This story of Dad is very moving - just as with the story of Ruth and Boaz. Think about why such a story is moving and inspiring. Why does a story have such power to impact people?
31. How might you adapt Dad's service of first-fruits to your own life - either in your home or your workplace? What elements would you need to include in such a ceremony?
32. Have you thought of mercy, kindness and generosity to others as being so central to the Old Testament Law? Had you noticed how the laws about generosity and mercy are constantly related back to the mercy of God? What difference should this make for you as you think about

ways to bring your life more fully under God's Law and more fully in line with his mercy to you?

33. As you look at your own life, and the life of your family and of your close friends, what do you see to be the areas in which you think you most need the Lord's instruction so that you might walk in his ways?