

What My Grandmothers Taught Me

Lesson 4: Ruth Handout

Opening Prayer, page 37

So far, we have studied the following women in Jesus' genealogy: Tamar, a woman who seduced her father-in-law, and Rahab, a prostitute. The next woman in Jesus' genealogy is an immigrant.

Living where we do near the border of Mexico, we deal with immigrants, legal and illegal. Sometimes "travelers" stop by our church. How do you feel about having an immigrant in Jesus' genealogy? Does it impact your attitude towards today's immigrants?

Scripture Study

Read Ruth 1

Naomi says to her daughter-in-laws, "May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me." Here is the word *Hesed* translated as "kindly." *Hesed* is a Hebrew word (usually associated with God) that means loyal love and commitment. Our author says on page 40, "Naomi's affirmation of the love within the family brings God onto the stage by implication – here are people who have been treating each other in a godly manner." Where do you experience *hesed*, or loyal love and commitment in your everyday relationships?

Ruth's words to her mother-in-law are famous: Where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people. And your God my God. Have you made promises similar to Ruth's either formally or informally, at any time of your life? What were those promises?

Ruth left all that was familiar: her god, her people, her customs and culture, her family and property. When have you willingly left what was most familiar to you? Under what circumstances would you again choose to set out on a new journey and leave behind all that is now familiar to you?

Read Ruth 2

As widows, Ruth and Naomi were very poor. Ruth was forced to glean from fields. In the Old Testament, farmers were asked to leave grain at the edges of their fields for the poor to pick up, or glean. How in our world today do we apply the concept of gleaning?

As Ruth gleans, she attracts the attention of the owner of the field (Boaz). He acknowledges she is a hard worker. Our author states she hears people say about immigrants, "At least they do work hard, don't they?" The comment both praises and underlines 'otherness.' Have you heard yourself make similar comments that are really a caricature of people? Have you heard such comments directed towards you? How has the story of Ruth caused you to question your first impressions regarding immigrants, refugees and other 'outsiders'?

At the end of chapter 2, things are looking better for Naomi and Ruth. Where have seeds of hope been brought into your darker moments? Who brought those seeds? Did you recognize them at the time, or only in looking back?

Close with the prayer on page 42