

UNDER HIS WINGS

GOD'S GRACE IN THE LIFE OF RUTH

HOT

SHOTS

Under His Wings: God's Grace in the Life of Ruth

Written by Jeff Diedrich

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The refining process for gold has changed greatly over the years. Refiners once considered 99%-pure gold a finished product, but today, the furnace is just the beginning. Refiners can only produce the highest quality gold—rated 999.99 parts pure per one thousand—by putting the metal through the Wohlwill process.

Here a semi-refined gold bar is suspended in one end of a crucible filled with chloroauric acid. On the other end, refiners hang a strip of pure gold. When an electric charge is applied to the system, ions flow from the impure gold—which acts as the anode—to the pure gold cathode.

Over a few days, the impure gold dissolves into the acid, slowly reforming around the pure gold model. The impurities fall away, and a perfect mass of gold emerges from the crucible.

Our character works much the same way. God uses a furnace of circumstances to drive out those flaws which hinder our walk with Him. We cannot be pure until we draw closer to Him—until we allow Him to break us down and rebuild us around His perfect model, Jesus Christ.

The story of Ruth contains great testing but also fantastic grace. It begins with incredible loss, but it ends with incredible gain. By seeing Ruth weather the death of her husband, move from her homeland, and face the challenges of her new life in Bethlehem, we catch a glimpse of a strength that could only come through the grace of God.

Under His Wings is a study of God's work in the life of Ruth—how He demonstrated His care and love through her and the people she knew.

Lesson Format

Hot Shots are written with a firm belief that the Word of God is the primary life-changing element that the Holy Spirit uses to do His work. You can be assured that we will not depend upon psychology, values clarification, touchy-feely questions, or humanistic methods. Instead, we will allow Scripture to reveal God's character to the teens, thereby exposing them to His life-changing power. We stand unashamedly upon the Word of God, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

While the writing staff at Positive Action For Christ understands that all our lessons must be centered in the Bible, we also see the need for helping the teacher by including creative teaching ideas. These creative ideas are simply sermon illustrations taken one step further. Instead of talking about opening a window in an illustration, we ask you to open it. Instead of imagining how destructive the tongue can be, you should present an object lesson to show them. These ideas can enhance your lesson and help teens grasp the truth of God's Word.

Our belief is that through object lessons and illustrations we are better able to imitate the teaching of Jesus Christ. He depended wholly upon

the Scriptures for the content of His lessons, but He also used coins, trees, water, and more to illustrate His teaching.

Each Hotshot follows the same lesson format throughout the study.



The Warm Up opens the door of the student's mind to the main lesson. This may include handouts, object lessons, or stimulating questions.



The Bridge transitions the teen from the warm-up into the main text of Scripture that you will be teaching.



The Content is the main body of the lesson, focusing on Bible exposition and application.



The Closing summarizes the lesson and calls for a commitment to the truth.

In this Hot Shot you will find Scripture memory verses that complement the lessons. We believe that Scripture memorization is an excellent tool which the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify and guide Christians today.

Before you start the study...

Read the Introduction, Course Objectives and Overview. It is important that you understand the scope of this study before you teach it.



Before each lesson...

1. Read through the lesson and take note of the Lesson Aim, Objectives, and the materials needed for creative teaching segments.
2. Plan ahead to modify the lesson if necessary. Your facilities or equipment may limit you. Substitute your own ideas if necessary.
3. Each lesson can be taught in 20–30 minutes, but preparation can let you shorten or lengthen the lesson as needed.
4. Use excitement when you teach! An excited teacher produces students who are excited about learning. If you don't feel that one of our teaching ideas or warm ups will excite your teens, spend some time and develop one that will work.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will:

- Appreciate the sovereignty of God in Ruth's life
- Understand the importance of courage and faith
- Recognize the qualities of a godly woman
- Recognize the qualities of a godly man
- Know the characteristics of true love

Overview

Lesson 1: God's Providential Care

- **Lesson Aim:** To recognize the providence of God in Ruth's life
- **Text:** The book of Ruth

Lesson 2: Courage Rewarded

- **Lesson Aim:** To understand the risks and rewards of courageous faith
- **Text:** Ruth 1:7–16; 4:10, 13

Lesson 3: A Woman of Virtue

- **Lesson Aim:** To emphasize the importance of virtue
- **Text:** Proverbs 31:10–31; Ruth 2–3

Lesson 4: A Man of Character

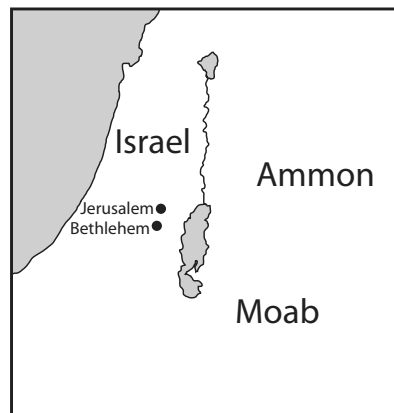
- **Lesson Aim:** To learn how a godly man treats a woman
- **Text:** Ruth 2:11–3:12

Lesson 5: Facets of Love

- **Lesson Aim:** To understand the characteristics of godly love
- **Texts:** Ruth 1

Background Information

The Geography:



The Characters:

- Elimelech—husband of Naomi and father of two sons, his name means “my God, my king”
- Naomi—wife of Elimelech, her name means “pleasant”
- Mahlon—eldest son of Elimelech and Naomi, his name means “sick” or “puny”
- Chilion—the second son, his name means “weakening”
- Ruth—a Moabite, married Mahlon, widowed, then married Boaz
- Orpah—a Moabite, married Chilion, then widowed
- Boaz—redeemer and husband of Ruth, his name means “by strength”
- Obed—first son of Ruth and Boaz, he was the grandfather of King David
- Mahlon’s closest male relative—unnamed in the book
- Ten elders—city leaders of Bethlehem, also unnamed

What You Need

Nine volunteers,

Two signs marked
“Bethlehem” and “Moab”

The History:

The story of Ruth takes place approximately 1050 BC in Palestine. It’s the time of the judges, and understanding this period will help you appreciate the context for this dramatic narrative.

This is a time of tremendous upheaval for the tribes of Israel, brought on by their periodic rejection of God’s covenant. In His grace, God uses judges like Gideon, Deborah, and Samson to deliver His people.

Moab was no friend of Israel during this period. After a sinful intermingling with the population of Moab (Num. 25:1–3), the tribes of Israel and this Canaanite nation have been in an intermittent state of conflict. The judge Ehud kills the Moabite king Eglon (Judg. 3:12–30). Relations always remain tense, occasionally sparking into open war (2 Kings 3:4–27).

The Story:

Before teaching Lesson 1, it may be helpful to review the events in the story of Ruth. You could better visualize the story by using a handful of volunteers to act out the narrative included at the end of this section. Involve as many students as you can in the review process. Otherwise, give an overview of the plot yourself, or ask a few questions to ensure each student is generally familiar with the book’s content.

If you choose to act out the narrative, you can prepare by doing the following:

- Set up two signs on opposite ends of the classroom. One could say “Bethlehem,” and the other, “Moab.”
- Find nine volunteers—three girls, six boys—to represent the main characters of the story: Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, Chilion, Ruth, Orpah, Boaz, a kinsman, and Obed.

Instruct the volunteers to follow your directions as you read through the narrative:

Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion stand next to the “Bethlehem” sign. All other actors are seated.

“Elimelech and Naomi live in Bethlehem with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. One day, famine strikes the land, and Elimelech decides to take his family to Moab.”

Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion walk to the “Moab” sign.

“They live in Moab for some time, but Elimelech dies.”

Elimelech falls over, dead.

“Naomi is left alone with her two sons, who eventually marry two Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth.”

Orpah and Ruth come to stand beside Chilion and Mahlon.

“But Mahlon and Chilion both die as well, leaving all three women widowed.”

Mahlon and Chilion fall over, dead.

“Naomi hears that there is food again in Israel, so she travels back to Bethlehem. Ruth follows her, but Orpah stays behind in Moab.”

Naomi and Ruth walk to the “Bethlehem” sign. Orpah sits down.

“To provide for her mother-in-law, Ruth gathers grain from the fields of Boaz, a relative of Elimelech. Boaz notices her and asks about her.”

Boaz stands up, and Ruth moves next to him.

“He eats with her in the field and instructs his workers to leave behind grain for her.”

Ruth moves back beside Naomi.

“Ruth tells Naomi what happened. Naomi tells her to ask Boaz to redeem her and Elimelech’s old property. Ruth does as she’s instructed and lies at Boaz’s feet while he’s sleeping on the threshing floor.”

Ruth sits down next to Boaz.

“Boaz recognizes the meaning of the gesture and promises to help Ruth. He meets with Elimelech’s closest relative, asking if he’ll redeem Elimelech’s property and buy it.”

The kinsman comes to stand next to Boaz.

“The kinsman says yes, but when he finds out that he would need to marry Ruth as well, he refuses to help. Boaz is now able to redeem Ruth in the kinsman’s stead. The kinsman gives Boaz his shoe to mark his forfeiture of the property and Ruth.”

The kinsman gives Boaz a shoe and walks away.

“Boaz marries Ruth, and they have a son, Obed.”

Obed comes to stand next to Ruth and Boaz.

“Obed is the grandfather of King David, just one link in the long lineage of Christ.”

LESSON 1

God's Providential Care

Frank Hamrick, the founder of Positive Action For Christ, has defined providence as “every event and circumstance in our lives, designed and controlled by God, for His glory and our good.” The book of Ruth is full of God’s providential working. Some events in the narrative appear to happen by chance, but a closer look reveals that God is behind every one.

As we compare the circumstances in Ruth’s life with those in our own, we can develop an eye for God’s hand moving around us. His grace assures us that whatever the challenges we face, He is still seeking the good of those who love and trust Him.



To recognize the providence of God in Ruth's life



Students will:

- Learn the definition of providence
- Identify specific ways that God provided for Ruth
- Understand how God can use a variety of circumstances to draw us to Him
- Learn to appreciate God’s providence in our lives.



The book of Ruth

This lesson will survey the entire text of Ruth, touching on a few points in the narrative where God’s providential working is evident. Ruth’s life is a fantastic demonstration of God’s ability to use any circumstance for good.

The Lesson



Read to the students the definition of providence given in the introduction of this lesson. If possible, copy the definition on the board. The students can refer to this when completing the “History Re-Examined” handout. Give them a few minutes to write out their answers, and then discuss their thoughts on each example.



Just as God’s hand was at work during these times in history, so too was He directing the events of the book of Ruth.

Visual Aid: Place a transparency of the “Providence” handout on an overhead projector, or duplicate the contents on a chalkboard/whiteboard. Distribute copies of the “Providence” handout to the students. Complete the “Ruth’s Life” column with them as you teach the lesson. Each section title below corresponds with one of the words on the handout. Students will fill out the “My Life” column at the end of the lesson.

God uses a variety of circumstances to work in our lives. His providence takes many forms, but ultimately it will serve to glorify Him and—if we yield to His working—draw us closer to Him. Consider God’s providence in the life of Ruth

A Famine Struck Israel

Ruth 1:1



Famines in this day were horrific. During the time of the judges, the tribes of Israel were almost completely dependent on the crops they grew each year. If famine wiped out their agricultural base, then many families—rich and poor alike—would teeter on the brink of starvation.

God likely used this disaster to gain His people’s attention, as He had done many times before. Another result was one family’s move to an enemy nation, a place so hostile to Israelites that only starvation could make it look attractive. There Elimelech’s family met someone special—a girl that God had big plans for.

Elimelech Moved His Family to Moab

Ruth 1:1

God had forbidden any association with the Moabites (Deut. 23:3–6), yet Elimelech chose to leave the land of Israel and settle his family in Moab, where his sons took Moabite wives.

We cannot know the mind of Elimelech, but it seems clear that he sinned by failing to trust God to provide for his family in the land of Israel. His wife, too, only decided to return to Israel because she heard that there was food again in the land (Ruth 1:6).

What You Need

Chalkboard or whiteboard

Copies of “History Re-Examined”

Pens or pencils

What You Need

Overhead or whiteboard

Copies of “Providence”

Pens or pencils

But even through this lack of trust, God providentially reached out to Ruth, whose faith is now an example for anyone.

Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion Die

Ruth 1:3, 5

God removed all support for Naomi outside of the land of Israel. With the death of her husband and two sons, she had nothing to tie her to Moab. Naomi's need and her daughter-in-law's faithfulness led them both back to Israel, where Ruth would find new husband, one who would bring her into the lineage of Christ.

God worked through the deaths of these three men to prepare Naomi and Ruth for future providential blessings.

Ruth Goes with Naomi

Ruth 1:16

We can also see God's providence in Ruth's decision to leave Moab with Naomi. The choice must have been difficult—leaving her parents (Ruth 2:11) and facing an entirely new culture couldn't have been easy. She could have stayed back like Orpah, going on with her old family and former religion. But while Ruth may have had only a little knowledge of God's teaching, she expressed a simple faith in Him, as well as a determination to follow Naomi (Ruth 1:16–17). God's providence is clear in this unlikely choice by a Moabite girl.

They Returned at the Beginning of Harvest

Ruth 1:22

God used the timing of Naomi and Ruth's return to provide for them, as well. Arriving at the beginning of the barley harvest, they had the chance to take advantage of a provision in Old Testament law that allowed the poor to reap whatever grain was left in the corners of a landowner's field (Lev. 19:9–10).

Ruth Chose Boaz's Field

Ruth 2:1–3

Committed to caring for her mother-in-law, Ruth soon went out to the fields. She only hoped to find a place where someone would be kind enough to let her gather grain in peace (Ruth 2:2). Ignorant of Boaz's relationship to Naomi, she just happened (Ruth 2:3) to choose the field of the man God was preparing to take care of her. Sheer chance? Not hardly—and it was no coincidence that Boaz came out that day to see his reapers, either (Ruth 2:4–5).

Boaz Was Kind to Ruth

Ruth 2:5–16

God providentially prepared Boaz for Ruth. A kind, godly relative of Elimelech's, he was also single and apparently older (Ruth 3:10). God allowed him to hear about this Moabite girl who had remained faithful to her mother-in-law, and he was impressed with her trust in God (Ruth 2:11–12).

When Ruth came to Boaz, asking for redemption, God used his kindness, generosity, and concern for Elimelech's family to provide for her and Naomi. It is a testament to God's grace that this man was willing to go to great lengths, possibly even endangering his own reputation, to marry and care for a girl from an enemy nation.

The Other Kinsman-Redeemer Refused to Marry Ruth

Ruth 4:4–10

But Boaz was not the man with the first right to redeem Elimelech's property and Ruth. Yet even here God used the nearest relative's selfishness to open the door for a better blessing. The kinsman, fearful of how a marriage to a Moabite girl might affect his inheritance, refused his obligation, and Boaz was able to redeem Ruth (Ruth 4:6).

Boaz and Ruth Married

Ruth 4:13

God providentially directed the love of Boaz—shown in this intentional redemption and marriage—to bring Ruth into the family of Israel, and to continue a line that would eventually lead to Christ. Obed was born, and Naomi, who once claimed that God had dealt harshly with her (Ruth 1:20), was now confronted by His clear provision and grace (Ruth 4:14–16). Boaz's love for Ruth, as well as Ruth's love for Naomi, were just tools of God in a plan to better reveal His love to all of them—and to us.

Discussion: What can we learn about the character of God through His providential actions in the story of Ruth? What qualities does he show by His provision for Ruth, a girl from Moab? What else did God accomplish—through David? the kings of Judah? the line of Christ?



Give the teens some time to complete the "My Life" column on the "Providence" handout as much as they can. Ask for a few volunteers to share how God has worked providentially in their lives. Afterward, ask the teens to write down a few areas in their lives where God may be working through difficult circumstances. Encourage them to pray about these on their own sometime soon, asking God for wisdom and patience to see His providence and trust in His plan. Close in prayer.

What You Need

Copies of "Providence"

Pens or pencils

History re-examined

Consider the situation below in light of God’s providence, and then write your thoughts. The story is written from a human perspective, so you’ll need to fill in some blanks: how might God have been moving through these events? What did He accomplish through “chance” misfortune? How did He turn bad circumstances to good?

Joseph was the favored son of Jacob, a man with multiple wives and a severely dysfunctional family. Though Joseph was only the second youngest of twelve sons, he was born from Jacob’s favorite wife and therefore received special gifts and privileges. The object of bitter jealousy, he didn’t help things by telling his brothers about his dreams—in which he saw his entire family bowing down to him.

So Joseph’s ten older brothers decided to get rid of him. One day they threw him in a well, hauling him back up a little later only to sell him to passing slave traders. Afterward, they dipped Joseph’s old coat in blood, convincing Jacob that wild animals had killed his cherished son.

The slave traders took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to a man named Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. Joseph did well there—at first, anyway. He worked hard, succeeding in whatever he did, and Potiphar eventually put Joseph in charge of his entire household. But soon the handsome Hebrew slave caught the eye of his master’s wife.

Attracted to Joseph, Potiphar’s wife repeatedly tried to seduce him. He refused her advances, but one day she cornered him in the house alone, grabbing him by his coat, which he left behind in his hurry to flee. Angered, Potiphar’s

wife showed her husband the garment and convinced him that Joseph had tried to rape her.

Potiphar threw Joseph into the Pharaoh’s personal dungeon, but the slave-turned-convict soon gained the trust of the prison’s keeper. Joseph again worked hard and succeeded in all his efforts, and the keeper eventually put him in charge of the dungeon.

Finally, thanks to a chance encounter with a disgraced royal cupbearer, Joseph was released from prison and given the chance to interpret a dream of the Pharaoh. Joseph explained its meaning—that there would be a widespread famine in just a few years—and Pharaoh placed him in charge of efforts to stave off disaster.

As the second-in-command of Egypt, Joseph had nearly limitless power. He managed to bring the entire economy under Pharaoh’s personal control, and he got an opportunity to help his family, as well. After discovering his brothers trying to buy food during the famine, Joseph allowed all of Jacob’s clan to settle in a fertile region of the country. He reunited with his family and forgave them for what they had done.

Joseph married a girl named Asenath, had two sons, and finally died at the age of 110.

PROVIDENCE

As your teacher goes through the lesson, write down how God used different kinds of events to providentially care for Ruth. How have circumstances like these affected your life in the past?

	Ruth's Life	My Life
Disaster		
Sin		
Death		
Difficult Choices		
Timing		
Sheer Chance		
Kindness		
Selfishness		
Love		

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