



**A LOVING
LIFE**



INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL

BY PAUL E. MILLER

see Jesus[™]
enter His story

For John, Pam, and Jami,
As you wait to see Benjamin,
May God make your house full!

Version 2.0
2011, 2014
seeJesus Press

By Paul E. Miller

The vision of seeJesus is a transformed church that reflects the beauty of Jesus. Our mission is create high quality interactive Bible studies and training for small groups and outreach.

seeJesus
P.O. Box 197
Telford, PA 18969

Phone: 215-721-3113
Fax: 215-721-6535
info@seeJesus.net
www.seeJesus.net

Editor: Courtney Sneed and Julie Courtney
Proofreader: Lydia Leggett
Layout Design: Patricia Reinheimer
Cover Design: Seth Guge (www.sethguge.com)

© 2014 seeJesus

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission from seeJesus.

Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *ESV Bible*, (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Other Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (NIV), copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

ISBN-13: 978-1-941178-03-4

Contents

Act I: Tragedy

1.	Love Dies	3
2.	Love Breaks	15
3.	Love Responds	23
4.	Love Grieves	35

Act II: Love

5.	Love Endures	49
6.	Love Begins	59
7.	Love Deepens	67
8.	Love Overflows	75

Act III: Risk

9.	Love Risks	87
10.	Love Waits	97

Act IV: Redemption

11.	Love Triumphs	107
12.	Love Rejoices	115
13.	Love's Legacy	121

REFLECTIONS: My God Is King

14.	The Blessing of God	129
15.	The Presence of God	135
16.	The Redemption of God	141
17.	The Grace of God	147

	Acknowledgments	153
	Sources	155

ACT I
Tragedy



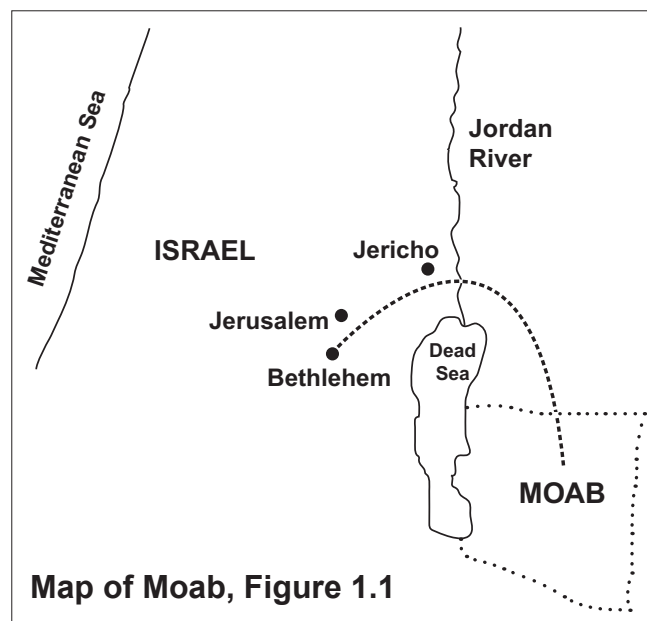
LESSON 1

Love Dies

1. Historical Background

Ruth 1:1-5

¹In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, ⁵and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.





Historical Background: Moab

Moab was the son of Lot by Lot's incestuous relationship with one of his daughters. Lot was Abraham's nephew, making Moab Jacob's second cousin (Genesis 19:30-38). The Moabites tried to prevent the Israelites from entering the land of Canaan, and when that failed Moabite women tried to seduce Israelite men.

2. Death of a Family

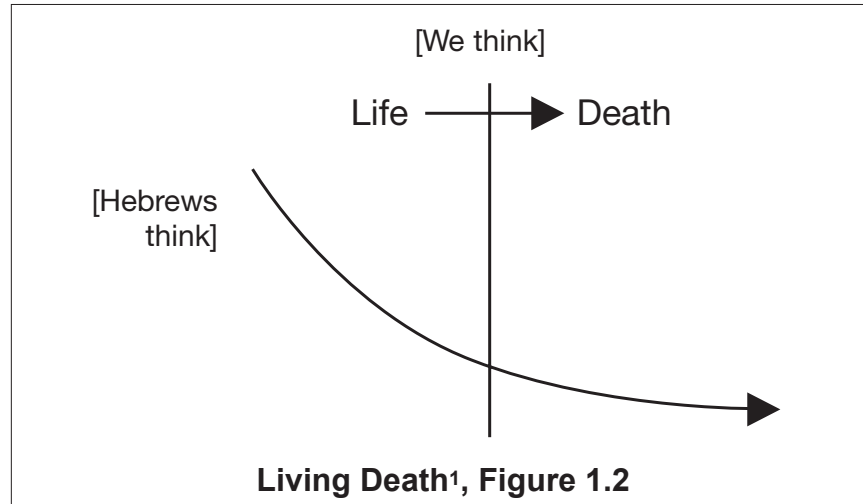
Q. Looking at verses 1-2, and 4, can you see the subtle change in how long the family intends to stay in Moab?



Historical Background: Living Death¹

We think of life and death as having clear boundary lines.

¹ Doug Green, "Ruth Lectures" class notes, (Westminster Seminary), 11.



Q. Let's list Naomi's major losses in order.

Historical Background: The Shell of a Family

"Ruth, Orpah, and Naomi are headless. There are no husbands, no fathers, no sons to take a protective role."² Naomi is left with the dead shell of a family.

² Green, "Ruth Lectures", 7.

3. Where Is God?



Literary Insight: Meaning of Names

- Elimelech = _____
- Naomi = _____
- Mahlon = _____
- Chilion = _____
- Bethlehem = _____
- Moab = _____

All Exits Closed

Q. Three barriers keep Naomi from exiting this tragedy.

1.

2.

3.

Is Naomi or Elimelech at Fault?

One scholar writes, “Like Abraham’s move to Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20), the family’s move to Moab to escape the famine looks like a lapse of spiritual commitment.”³ Another scholar writes, “This is a worst-case scenario. The family is dead outside of the land of promise.”⁴

Don’t forget. The text does not condemn Naomi in any way. It just tells the story. It is a perfect example of “judge not.”

4. Traveling Home with Mother-in-Law

Ruth 1:6-10

⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. ¹⁰And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.”

³ Daniel I. Block, *The New American Commentary: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 613.

⁴ Green, “Ruth Lectures”, 13-15.



Historical Background: Mother-in-law & Daughter-in-law Relationship

In traditional eastern cultures the daughter-in-law is the servant of the mother-in-law. The daughter-in-law leaves her mother's house and lives with her husband and his parents. This can lead to a tremendous amount of abuse. In many cultures this can be the most difficult family relationship.

5. First Conversation—Naomi Cares

Q. Look carefully at Ruth 1:8-9. Each verse is summarized by a one- or two-word blessing that Naomi wants for Orpah and Ruth. What are the two words?

1.

2.

Gospel Connection: *Hesed* and the Gospel

Hesed is a word unique to Hebrew that combines two words in English: love and loyalty. Sometimes *hesed* is translated as “covenant love.” It combines commitment with sacrifice. It is one-way love. Love without an exit strategy.

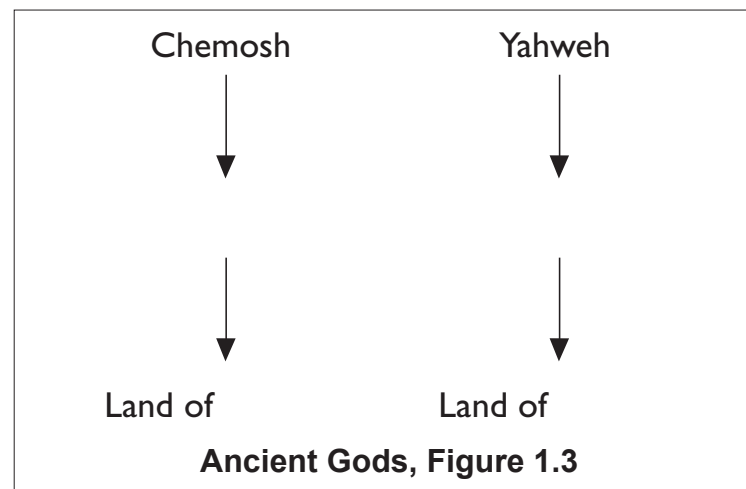


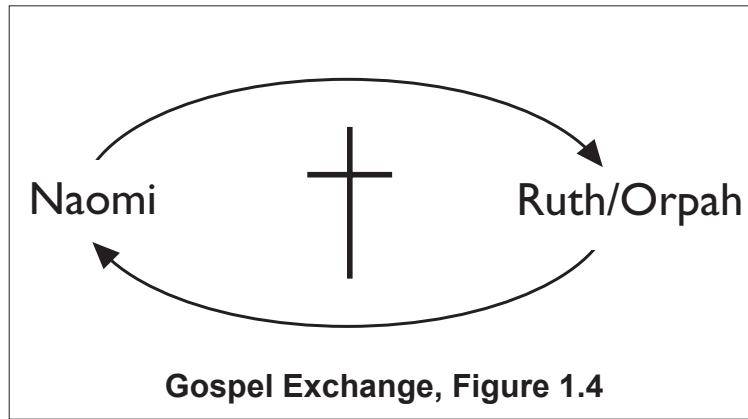
Literary Insight: Rest (Manoah)

In the second blessing, Naomi asks that God would give them **rest**. The Hebrew word *manoah* is related to *Noah*, which means rest (Genesis 5:29). It means “a place of settled security” that in their world suggested finding a husband who could provide them with food and protection.



Historical Background: How Religion was Organized





 **Gospel Connection: The Structure of Love**

6. Application



Personal Connection: Endurance

The book of Ruth is about *hesed*, about a covenant love that endures through hardship. It begins with a familiar scene of a couple who appear to not endure under hardship, who leave the Promised Land when things get tough.

Remember, God is not a Grinch. We are not to seek suffering. That is called asceticism. He often gives us a way out from suffering. We can leave our jobs. Sometimes we have to move. God wants shalom to be the pattern of your life. Nevertheless, he often calls us to the hard work of enduring.

Q. How have you seen God let you endure through hardship?

Q. How have you seen others endure through hardship?

Q. Is there a relationship or situation in your life where God is calling you to endure?



Personal Connection: Suffering

We don't know for sure if Naomi's suffering was self-inflicted (she and Elimelech lost faith and left Bethlehem), inflicted by someone else (her husband Elimelech lost faith), or whether it just happened. The book doesn't give a hint either way. That is a very helpful look at suffering. No matter what the source of the suffering, God uses it to bring us home, to shape us into the image of his Son.

Q. Can you think of a time when God used personal suffering in your life to bring you home to himself? Is God doing that now in your life? If so, how?



Personal Connection: Mothers-in-Law/Difficult Family Relationship

Q. Do you have a difficult family relationship? Perhaps it is a spouse, parent, sibling, or in-law. Describe it. As you go through this study, be reflecting on that relationship and how God might be prompting you to love.

Q. When you think of *hesed*, of a love without an exit strategy, how might that affect this difficult relationship?




Personal Connection: *Hesed*


Q. Describe a relationship in your life where God is calling you to or you have committed yourself to *hesed*.

Q. What has (or will) doing *hesed* cost in this relationship?





A loving life is what we all want.



But loving people is hard.

This 17-lesson seeJesus interactive Bible study will help you share Ruth's amazing biblical portrait of love with a small group or Sunday School class.

Here is the help we all need to embrace relationship, endure rejection, cultivate community, and reach out to even the most unlovable as we discover the power to live a loving life.

“The word ‘love’ is most often either a vague sentiment or just another four-letter word.

But in Paul Miller's interactive Bible study, the quiet, compelling reality emerges.

You will witness how love is thoughtful, principled, enduring, and wise.”

– DAVID POWLISON, *Executive Director, Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation*

“Once again Paul Miller uses his gifts to draw us into the middle of a Bible story. We feel as if we are walking right beside Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Paul uses modern day examples to help us grasp the characters' situations, pressures, anguish, hope and despair, and he helps us see how their hearts—and our own—respond to such stresses and to the Lord's gracious, patient, redeeming love at work. BEWARE! This study will call you to deep-hearted worship, costly surrender, and extravagant love.”

– ELIZABETH GROVES, *Lecturer in Old Testament, Westminster Theological Seminary*

Comments about the book *A Loving Life*:

“Paul Miller beautifully retells the story of Ruth in terms of the gospel, revealing a path of love more dear and deep than our cultural icons and distractions can create, and more precious than any pursuit of self can dream.”

– DR. BRYAN CHAPPELL, *President Emeritus, Covenant Theological Seminary;
Senior Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, IL*

“Through the biblical story of Ruth, Paul gives us hope not hype—the freedom to suffer well, stay present, and live expectantly, in all of our relationships.”

– SCOTTY SMITH, *Teacher-in-Residence, West End Community Church, Nashville, TN*

seeJesus™

ISBN 978-1-941178-03-4



9 781941 178034