

# DISABLE THE LABEL

AND ACCEPT THE ONE GOD GIVES YOU

## A **MOST UNLIKELY PEOPLE** BIBLE STUDY

to help you rediscover your view of  
the world, life, and God.

Based on the Book of Ruth

With companion reader: *Less Than a Widow*

by Kathleen S. Evenhouse



GOD CHOOSES THE MOST UNLIKELY PEOPLE

PELLA, IA 50219

*Disable the Label: and accept the one God gave you.*

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Companion Reader: *Less Than a Widow*

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# DEDICATION

To all the loved children of God.

May His praises be ever

on our lips,

in our minds, and

overflowing our hearts.

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# SUGGESTIONS FOR USE: A MOST UNLIKELY PEOPLE BIBLE STUDY

**W**e are made in God's image, and God is community—the Trinity. He is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our culture stresses the opposite of unity or community—a malady of self preoccupation that we are bombarded with today, even in our churches. This attitude fights with the way God made us. Because we are made in God's image, we long to have a dynamic relationship with God and his people. This study helps us to see the truth of God's Word as it influences our relationship with others.

## BUILD COMMUNITY

**C**ommunity is more than sitting in one building and singing the same songs on Sunday. It's relationships that develop and grow as we live our lives together—the good, the bad, and the ugly. We all need people in our lives that we trust enough to show them our feelings.

This study is designed to help grow community as we celebrate others and are celebrated, as we give love and receive it, and as we serve others as they serve us.

## PREPARE

- There are three resources for this study: the Bible, this study guide, and an historical novel drawn from the Book of Ruth, *Less Than a Widow*.
- The first lesson can either be individually read before the first class or participants can go through it together in class.
- Begin your preparation time with prayer. Ask God to guide you to the words he has for you today.

- At the end of each chapter are two helpful sections:
  - > **WRAP-UP** gives the main thrust of the lesson in simple terms.
  - > **FOR NEXT SESSION** suggests optimal preparation for the next session.
- Some of you will want to read *Less Than a Widow* straight through. Feel free to do so. The suggested chapters are just that—suggestions to help you ensure that you read enough to understand concepts and participate in discussion.
- Although all the questions are formulated for discussion, it may be helpful to jot notes in the margins as you prepare. This will help you participate more fully in the discussions and personalize the learning.

## PARTICIPATION

This study is designed for discussion between participants, rather than being taught and orchestrated by a leader. Plan to share what God brought to you during your preparation time. Listen attentively, affirm others, and lovingly encourage the participation of hesitant members of the group. Respect each other’s vulnerability and privacy.

## HISTORICAL TIDBITS

Scattered throughout the chapters you will find pictures and explanations of the time in which the Book of Ruth took place. These are included to give further familiarity with the life and times of the central characters. As Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi become more familiar to us, we will begin to see that we are much the same—a “most unlikely people” chosen by God to be heroes of faith.

# INTRODUCTION

**D**espite media claims of unbiased reporting, to truly achieve zero bias is impossible. Every thought we've ever had carries the chemicals of emotion. Every experience, picture, sound, texture—anything that enters us through our five senses—is stored in our brain and gives a flavor, a bias, to our thoughts, words, and actions. Although we may try to present all sides equally, our preconceptions will make themselves known, however subtly they do so. Everything we think, say, or do travels through our personal bias.

I write historical fiction. In order to do so I read history, culture, theology, geography, and social and physical archaeology. In these fields experts fervently assert a plethora of versions and viewpoints. As I learn, study, and write, everything flows in and out through my primary filter—"Jesus loves me, this I know"—and through my belief that nobody deserves his love and yet anyone can claim it.

“Most of us spend too much time on the last twenty four hours and too little on the last six thousand years.”

~ Will Durant ~  
historian, philosopher, and author

Where did I gain my primary filter? Through God's words in the Bible, through praise and prayer, through listening for God's voice and digging deeper into the stories I have read since childhood, and through being an active part of a broad community of believers. It was in that community that a friend challenged me to reexamine the story of Ruth to see what God had to say to me today in a story that I thought I already knew. Simultaneously, a verse that I had read many times grabbed my attention:

***For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.***

~Romans 15:4 (NLT)

Jesus used parables—stories—to teach, to present ideas in ways that are real and relevant to us. If we can relate to historical characters and experience life through their eyes, we develop a deeper understanding of the times they lived in—and the life lessons they learned are passed on to us through osmosis.

This is the context in which I rewrote the story of Ruth as historical fiction in *Less Than a Widow*. Ruth ran into dead-ends, was caught up in impossible situations, was afraid, felt hopeless, and wondered where she would find the strength to continue. Even though we live in a world thousands of years after Ruth, the truths of humanity haven't changed.

Ruth developed a relationship with God who equipped her with perseverance and endurance to look beyond her circumstances, beyond her LOSER label, and survive extreme loneliness. We can be encouraged by her tight grip on hope because that very same hope is available to each one of us today.

In this study we will read God's words "written in the past to teach us," read *Less Than a Widow* to better understand the history and culture, and together learn to disable any negative labels attached to us that hold us back from the true label God has for us—LOVED CHILD OF GOD.

*I'm thrilled to be your sister in Christ's family.*

Kathleen Evenhouse