

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

Introduction to the Book of Ruth

The first verse in this book points out that this historical story occurred during the time of the judges—a time of spiritual floundering and philandering, a time of disobedience, war, idolatry, and violence. The story of this book demonstrates for us the meaning of commitment, the necessity of a redeemer, and the significance of turning-point decisions. The book of Ruth describes God’s sovereign and providential care of seemingly unimportant people at apparently insignificant times which later prove to be crucial to accomplishing God’s will. It is a story of a few people who remained true to God even when the society around them was collapsing.

The geographical settings of the book of Ruth include Moab and Bethlehem of Judah. The Moabites originated with Moab, the son of Lot, through Lot’s daughter who got him drunk for the purpose of sleeping with him to produce offspring (Genesis 19:30-38). Bethlehem was included in the land given to the tribe of Judah; its destiny was to become the birth place of the Son of God. Israel was subject to Moab for 18 years. Judges 3:26-30 reveals a little of the relationship between these two people groups: Now Ehud (the Israelite judge raised up by God who had just killed the king of Moab) escaped while they were delaying, and he passed by the idols and escaped to Seirah. It came about when he had arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he *was* in front of them. He said to them, “Pursue *them*, for the LORD has given your enemies the Moabites into your hands.” So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross. They struck down at that time about ten thousand Moabites, all robust and valiant men; and no one escaped. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land was undisturbed for eighty years.

In this book we will get to know Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Naomi went with her husband, grieved deeply, returned to her God, loved and mentored Ruth, dared to hope, and had profound impact on Ruth’s life and therefore a profound impact for eternity. Boaz, whose name means strength, was the son of a rescued prostitute, and a type of Christ—illustrating Christ the Redeemer to the world when he became Ruth’s kinsman redeemer. Ruth had several strikes against her:

- People at that time honored women with children—she had none;
- Women were dependent on their husbands—she was a widow;
- Communities were close-knit—she was a foreigner.

“What then shall we say to these things? If **God is for us**, who is against us” (Romans 8:31)? Ruth is transformed from poverty to wealth, widow to wife, barren to fertile, and foreigner to Israelite—the behind-the-scenes work of Almighty God. Ruth means friendship and some believe she portrays the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31. Other than this book, the only other mention of Ruth in the Bible is the lineage of Christ. Ruth, the Moabitess, illustrates that God’s redemptive plan extends beyond the Jews to the Gentiles.

Redeem – providing freedom by means of paying a price. See 1 Peter 1:18-20

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

There are several Truths demonstrated in this story from God’s Word, and important principles to adopt in our lives:

- Redemption is our only way out of sin’s death penalty – Jesus the Redeemer paid the price for our freedom and took us as His own.
- The stories that begin with despair often end with glory.
- God accepts all who worship Him. No one is disqualified from receiving Christ (Acts 10:34-35).
- There is hope in the midst of despair.
- God will use anyone to achieve His purpose.

Day One: Ruth 1 – From Famine to Famine

Often our particular time of darkness can be used to draw others to the Lord. Naomi’s crisis created Ruth’s opportunity for faith in the Living God. Taking action on one little piece of good news changed Naomi and Ruth’s lives forever – the famine is over and Naomi is going home. With the Dead Sea between her and her homeland, Naomi set out with two other women on a 7-10 day journey. Our situation may seem hopeless, but our God is not.

1. When Elimelech’s family left Bethlehem, they left because of a famine in the land. What happens in Chapter 1 that causes Naomi’s famine of the soul?

2. Re-read Ruth 1:13, 20-21; was God to blame for Naomi’s troubles? James 1:2-4 offers some insight.

3. What did Naomi hear that caused her to decide to go home? Who does Naomi credit for the good news?

4. Is there a situation in your life now that wants to cause famine in your soul? What good news do you know that offers hope?

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

5. Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their mom’s house. This was a life or death decision, and apparently Ruth realized it. What sacrifice did Ruth’s vow in Ruth 1:16-17 require of her?

6. Naomi acted selflessly in encouraging her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab. Ruth returned her selflessness with selflessness. Orpah was the real loser, returning selflessness with selfishness, choosing false gods over the Living God. Do you relate more with Orpah or Ruth? Why?

Prayer: In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. Genuine love expresses itself in commitment and commitment leads to courageous, sacrificial acts of love. You may find the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 useful for a time of prayer involving confession and commitment in your love for God.

Day Two: Ruth 2 – Labor of Love

The story of Ruth continues in Bethlehem with her and her mother-in-law trying to make it through life’s challenges the best way they can. Both are still widows, and evidently hungry, when Ruth decides it’s time to do something about their immediate need for food. Ruth gleaned several months in Boaz’ field, from mid-April to mid-June. Boaz means “in him is strength.” His grandfather was Nahshon, who was the leader of the tribe of Judah when the Israelites received the Law, constructed the Tabernacle, and wandered in the wilderness (Number 2).

7. How does God honor Ruth’s faith in Him?

8. In verses 6 and 11, what do the people in Bethlehem (including Boaz) recognize about Ruth?

9. Boaz’ prayer for Ruth in verse 12 is answered in Ruth 4:9-17. Who did God use to answer this prayer? _____ In Luke 10, Jesus’ disciples become the answer to their own prayer. Have you

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

ever prayed a prayer that God later used you to answer that prayer? ____ Are you praying for something specific now that God could be planning to use you to fulfill that prayer? ____ Record your thoughts:

10. Boaz warned the men not to hurt Ruth. This could have been because she was a woman, but just as likely because she was Moabite. Remember Moab and Israel weren't the best of friends. How have you seen God protect you or someone you know when you (or they) were vulnerable?

11. Where are you vulnerable now, and how can you trust God to protect you?

The character of Ruth and Boaz stood in stark contrast to their contemporaries who were involved in idolatry, violence and disobedience. Do the lost people who know you see you as different from their unbelieving friends? Why or why not?

Five times the author of Ruth reminds us she is Moabite (2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10). Most of us have some unusual characteristic that could be used to divide us, but God's presence in a relationship overcomes differences that otherwise might cause division.

Prayer: Isaiah 56:6-8 records that the Lord says, “‘Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.’ The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, ‘Yet *others* I will gather to them, to those *already* gathered.’” All of us who are not Israelites are foreigners accepted by God. In prayer time today thank Him for accepting you and ask Him about your responses in questions 9 and 11.

Day Three: Ruth 3 – Mentored by the Mother-in-Law

Ruth stepped out in faith and risked her honor at the threshing floor of Boaz; what a picture of us coming to Christ:

- First we are aliens (Ruth was Moabite)

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

- Then, we risk it all to confess Him as Lord (Ruth risked rejection when she proposed marriage),
- Then, God saves us, forgives us, rebuilds our lives and gives us blessings that will last through eternity.

12. What did Naomi say she could not provide in Ruth 1:11? _____ What is Naomi doing in Ruth 3:1-4? _____ Describe a time in your life when you thought you could not do something, yet God made a way for you to accomplish what needed to be done.

13. What did Ruth ask Boaz to do in verse 9?

14. The word for wings can also mean corners of a garment. Boaz had already acknowledged that Ruth had taken refuge under God’s wings (Ruth 2:12). Read Psalm 36:7, 73:28 and 91:1 and 4. How can we follow Ruth’s example and take refuge under God’s wings (what does it mean to seek refuge or take refuge)?

15. In Ruth 3:15 we see that Boaz gave Ruth six measures of barley. This was a token of good faith, a deposit, a pledge to do what he promised. According to Ephesians 1:13-14, what pledge has been given to Jesus’ followers? _____ Re-write these verses in your own words.

Prayer: Confess to God an area that you are struggling to step out in obedience and pray Psalm 57:1-3 for that situation.

Day Four: Ruth 4 – Kinsman Redeemer

A kinsman-redeemer was a close, influential relative to whom members of the extended family could turn for help, usually when the family line or possessions were in danger of being lost. He was supposed to buy back family land sold during a crisis (Lev 25:25), buy back enslaved relatives (Lev 25:47-49), provide an heir for a dead brother (Deut 25:5-10), avenge the killing of a relative (Num 35:19-21), and care for relatives in difficult circumstances (Jer. 32:6-25).

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

The idea of the kinsman-redeemer is used at times to refer to God and his redemption of Israel (Ex 6:6-8, Psalms 19:14, Isaiah 43:1). In these passages, God is Israel’s nearest kinsman, stepping in to bring the nation back into His family when the people could not do it themselves. The word is also used to prophesy the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 59:20). Jesus Christ is our near kinsman who came to buy us back into God’s family. In the New Testament the concept is reflected in the various words for redeem, which suggest paying a ransom (Matthew 20:28), making a purchase (Revelation 5:9) or saving from loss (Luke 19:10). Jesus “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14).

16. What did Naomi risk losing by giving Ruth to a new husband, a kinsman redeemer?

17. What did she risk losing if she neglected giving Ruth to a new husband, a kinsman redeemer?

18. What was the cost to the redeemer?

19. Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth not only did what was right, they did it the right way—and great was their reward. Great is your reward too, if you have accepted Jesus as your Redeemer (Luke 6:35). Briefly tell about the day you became His.

20. Ruth’s faithfulness had finally paid off. In addition to a wealthy, honorable husband, she now had a son and two mother-in-laws. How could Rahab, Ruth’s new mother-in-law, encourage Ruth in ways that Naomi could not? (Rahab’s story is told in Joshua 2 and 6.)

21. What unlikely person has God sent into your life that is an encouragement to you?

_____ Who has God placed in your life that He wants you to encourage?

_____ What will you do this week to be an encouragement to that person?

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

Prayer: Consider kneeling before the Lord your Redeemer and thanking Him for the day you became His, and the sacrifice He made to give you that opportunity.

Day Five: Ruth 4:17-22 – Significance of the Everyday Stuff

Naomi, Ruth and Boaz never knew what their faith and perseverance accomplished while on earth. God’s bigger purpose included not only the gift of a husband but the foundation of a dynasty.

Naomi thought by going back to Bethlehem she was just reaching for the only hope she had. However, the move back to Bethlehem led to fulfillment of Scripture—David born in Bethlehem.

Whatever Ruth was asked to do, even the menial task of gleaning through the fields for food, she did it heartily as unto the Lord. That faithfulness caught the eye of a kinsman-redeemer and resulted in her being recorded in the genealogical record of the Messiah, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Boaz went above and beyond the law in his kindness and generosity. He paid the price and took on the responsibility of two widow women, as well as the scorn of being married to a foreigner. He was probably accustomed to scorn as the son of a foreign former prostitute. Yet, one of the pillars of the temple built by King Solomon was named Boaz, and Boaz is in the genealogical record of The Redeemer.

The way we conduct ourselves in ordinary, everyday activities can have breathtaking eternal results. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz’ daily faithfulness in famine, marriage, childbirth, parenting—resulted in eternal blessings. Their faithfulness was the real standout occurrence in their story. Romans 8:28 is portrayed in living color through the pages of Ruth. “We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

22. Dare to dream! As you think about the circumstances of your life, what could God plan to accomplish in your lifetime?

23. As you think about the circumstances of your life, what could God plan to accomplish in the generations yet to come?

Week 28

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 (NASB) But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God.

24. In your most pressing current circumstance, what would God have you do to help accomplish His plan?

25. In that same circumstance, what would God have you to resist doing, and simply wait for Him?

We may not still be walking this earth when Christ returns in all His glory, but like Ruth and all the other faithful followers of Jesus, we can do our part now and return with Jesus to serve forever under our Redeemer, the King of kings.

Prayer: Spend some time in prayer asking God the questions in today’s lesson.

Additional food for thought:

- Ruth showed kindness to Naomi; Boaz showed kindness to Ruth. We eventually reap what we sow.
- Maybe Ruth’s name is where we get the word “ruthless.”
- God had forbid intermarriage, why was this marriage OK? Ruth 1:16-17, Ruth served the same God, she was not pagan.
- Virtuous Ruth (Ruth 3:11) and virtuous wife (Proverbs 31:10) are the same Hebrew word. Even though true commitment is required to reach that status, Ruth is our example that it can be achieved and it is a worthy goal.
- The genealogy in Ruth 4:18 starts with Perez—interesting that it does not go back one more generation to pick up Judah who had one son whose life was taken by God for refusing to be a kinsman redeemer and another son who Judah refused to give as a kinsman redeemer (Genesis 38).
- The nearest relative mentioned in Ruth 4:4-6 had his own needs/wants in mind, not his responsibility or obligation. When it looked like serving as the redeemer would cost too much, he bailed. By acting to preserve his own name, the nearest relative became the unnamed who refused to help his close relative.
- Naomi moved from emptiness (1:21) to fullness (3:17); and from destitution (1:1-5) to security and hope (4:13-17).

Romans 12:1-2 “Therefore I urge you, brethren (sisters), by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”