

# Ruth

## A Story of Redemption

Four Week Small Group Series on the Book of Ruth



**Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.**

**Ruth 1:16 (NIV)**



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Requests for information regarding Southland Church ministry should be addressed to:

Southland Church  
190 PTH 52 W  
Box 219 Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R5G 1M2  
204.326.9020  
info@mysouthland.com  
[www.mysouthland.com](http://www.mysouthland.com)

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## Introduction

A Bible study based on a book of the Bible is a great discipleship tool. This Bible Study has been designed to have two main components each week. We recommend that you take four weeks to complete the study (one session per week), but feel free to adapt as needed.

1. Personal Study at Home
2. Small Group Session (optional)

The Personal study at home allows the participant to reflect on the Bible passage at home and work through personal application questions on their own. Then, the person comes to the small group meeting ready to share what God has already been showing them.

The small group conversations and discussions are useful in diving deeper into the topic and seeing things from a different perspective or helping you see something that you may have missed when reading the chapter on your own.

Doing a Bible study can be very simple. Just follow the template given for each chapter and make sure that each member of your group has a copy of this booklet so they can journal their responses and come to the small group meeting ready to share. This helps the small group time stay focused and gives everyone an opportunity to think through what they would like to share, adding value to the small group time.

If you have any questions about facilitating this Bible Study, give the church office a call. Someone from Cell Ministry would be happy to speak to you.

# Session One: Ruth 1

## Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

### 2. Read: Ruth 1 and the Session 1 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

### 3. Questions to Consider

- Verse 1-5: Elimelek and his wife Naomi left Israel for Moab in order to avoid the famine. Yet it ended up that Moab wasn't an easier life. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought it was easier to run from a problem? How did that work out for you? Ask Jesus to show you if there are any problems in your life that you have been avoiding that He would like to walk with you through.
- Verses 6-7: Naomi hears that God is doing good things back in Israel and she sets out to receive it. Ask Jesus to show you how you can learn from Naomi's example in this way. What could this look like in your life?
- Verses 10-13: Naomi experienced bitter circumstances and felt that the hand of the Lord had gone out against her, yet she did not grow bitter against God. She returned to Him by going back to Israel. Are there bitter circumstances in your life? Maybe a time past or present that was tough on you? What would be a positive example of drawing closer to God through those circumstance? Pray that God would strengthen you to draw close to Him even when you face bitter circumstances.
- Verses 15-18: Ruth was willing to forsake the Moabite gods she grew up with and embrace the God of Israel. This shows that Naomi's relationship with God made an impact on Ruth. Have you ever thought that your trust in God and turning towards Him in tough times may be the thing that draws others to God? How does that idea motivate and impact you? Is there a tough time you need to surrender to God? Pray that you will be a good testimony through this tough time.
- Write down any other message you think God is trying to convey to you through the passage (e.g. correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, theme, etc.). Talk to Jesus about what He revealed to you in His Word.

### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

**6. Prayer**

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

**7. Optional:** Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read Ruth 1 out loud with your small group

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Two Ruth 2

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: Ruth 2 and the Session 2 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-3: Ruth, on her own initiative, set out to glean in the fields to support herself and her mother-in-law. What do you imagine it was like for Ruth to head out to the fields on her own? Given what you know about Ruth's status, as well as this period of Israel's history, what were the challenges she faced?
- To understand the background for Ruth's 'gleaning' of the barley fields, read Deut. 24:19 and Lev. 19:9. The law of gleaning did not require the landowner to provide food, water or protection. What are some examples of how Boaz went above and beyond these requirements in his treatment of Ruth? As you look at Boaz's character in the chapter, what do you most admire about Him?
- Verses 19-22: Naomi refers to Boaz as 'one of our kinsman-redeemers.' "The kinsman-redeemer is a male relative who, according to various laws of the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. The Hebrew term (*go el*) for kinsman-redeemer designates one who delivers or rescues (Gen. 48:16; Ex. 6:6) or redeems property or person (Lev. 27:9–25, 25:47–55)." How is Boaz's role in this story a foreshadowing of Christ the Redeemer?
- What accounts for the transformation we're beginning to see in Naomi? How has having a Redeemer transformed you?
- Write down what the passage is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (e.g. correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, theme, etc.). Talk to Jesus about what He revealed to you in His Word.

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

**6. Prayer**

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

**7. Optional:** Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read Ruth 2 out loud with your small group

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Three: Ruth 3

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: Ruth 3 and the Session 3 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- Ruth went alone at night to the threshing floor, a place where women would not be. How do you think she was feeling when she did this? What does this chapter show you about Ruth's obedience and boldness?
- Boaz twice refers to Ruth as "my daughter" and blesses her for not choosing to marry a young man. He says this act shows even stronger family loyalty to Naomi. Given what you know about kinsmen-redeemers, why do you think he says this? What does it say about Boaz that he, knowing laws about kinsmen-redeemers, chose to wait for Ruth to come to him before acting upon it?
- Reread verses 3-4. To lie down at someone's feet would be to take the position of a servant, waiting for the command of the master (something Ruth references later). Ruth also waits for Boaz to tell her what to do. She could demand his protection under the law, but instead comes in a posture of humility and servanthood. What do you learn about both Boaz's and Ruth's character from this interaction?
- Ruth showed obedience, boldness, and humility in her actions, and was praised by Boaz for her virtue. What qualities of Ruth do you most see in yourself?
- Boaz agreed to be the guardian-redeemer but wanted to make sure he did it legally. Are there times you want something to happen, and work to make it happen even if that means someone else deserving is passed over? What can you learn from Boaz's example?
- Write down what the passage is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (e.g. correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, theme, etc.). Talk to Jesus about what He revealed to you in His Word.

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

**6. Prayer**

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

**7. Optional:** Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read Ruth 3 out loud with your small group

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Session Four: Ruth 4

### Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

#### 1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

#### 2. Read: Ruth 4 and the Session 4 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

#### 3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-8: What character traits does Boaz exhibit in these verses? We've read what he says and does. What do you think Boaz is feeling as he sits down at the gate and waits for the decision concerning being the kinsman redeemer?
- How did Ruth and Boaz's marriage affect Naomi? Remember what Naomi thought God was doing in her life when she was empty of wealth, family, and status? How did God provide in filling her emptiness?
- Read 4:18-22. Who is Boaz and Ruth's great-grandson? Read Matthew 1:1-16 (note vs. 5-6). Who does this genealogy end with (vs. 16)?
- Read Psalm 37:5-6. Who did this in the book of Ruth? How so? How is this an encouragement to you?
- Just as God brought fullness and hope to Naomi through the selfless work of Boaz expressed in his willingness to assume the role of family-redeemer, so also we are brought to fullness and hope through our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. How has Jesus worked in your life in a similar way? Are there areas to continue to bring to him in prayerful expectation with hope?
- Write down what the passage is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (e.g. correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, theme, etc.). Talk to Jesus about what He revealed to you in His Word.

#### 4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

#### 5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

#### 6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.

- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

**7. Optional:** Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

## Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

### 1. Open in Prayer

### 2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

### 3. Scripture

- Read Ruth 4 out loud with your small group

### 4. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

### 5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
  - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
  - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

### 6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

## Appendix – Study Notes

### Study Notes – Introduction to the Book of Ruth

#### Background

- The story is set in the time of the judges, a time characterized in the book of Judges as a period of religious and moral degeneracy, national disunity and frequent foreign oppression.
- The book of Ruth reflects a time of peace between Israel and Moab.
- It also presents a delightful account of the remnant of true faith and piety in the period of the judges, relieving an otherwise wholly dark picture of that era.

#### Author and Date of Writing

- The story of Ruth takes place in the time of the judges after the conquest of Canaan and before the time of David.
- No author is named, but the mention of David and his genealogy (4:17–22) places the writing sometime after David became king (2 Samuel 2).

#### Timeline



#### The Setting of Ruth

- A famine in Judah forces Naomi and her husband to leave Israel and move to Moab, where their sons marry Moabite women.
- When Naomi's husband and sons die, she decides to return to her home in Israel, and her daughter-in-law Ruth chooses to go with her.



## Theme & Theology

- God welcomes non-Israelites into his covenant. From the outset of the book, the author makes clear that Ruth is a Moabite (1:4). She is referred to as “the Moabite” throughout (2:2, 6, 21, etc.). God is not anti-Gentile. So long as the non-Israelite is devoted to Yahweh, he welcomes them into the covenant. God does this with Rahab in Joshua and with the Ninevites in Jonah.
- God works through ordinary means. There is not one mention of a miracle or vision or angels in Ruth. Rather, God works through the everyday means of ancient Israelite culture. Naomi sends Ruth to Boaz’s field and Ruth “happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz” (2:3). God also directs events from behind the scenes through Naomi’s plan for Ruth to seek out Boaz on the threshing floor (3:1-5).
- God graciously guides a particular family’s life. Naomi was all but hopeless after her husband and sons died, as she may not have an heir to continue her line. Boaz, too, did not have an heir of his own. Yet by the end of the book, after Boaz and Ruth marry, Naomi is redeemed and Ruth’s son becomes Naomi’s heir (4:13). In this way too, Boaz is given a child. Naomi’s friends give God all the glory (4:14-15).
- God sovereignly works out his redemptive plan. Boaz and Ruth’s son is not merely an heir of Naomi. The son, Obed, becomes the father of Jesse, who is the father of David (4:17). Thus Obed begins the Davidic line, which will eventually bring David to the throne. More than that, God works in the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz so that David’s greater Son, Jesus Christ, would become the Redeemer of all God’s people.

## Literary Features

- The book of Ruth is a Hebrew short story.
- Among historical narratives in Scripture it is unexcelled in its compactness, vividness, warmth, beauty and dramatic effectiveness—a jewel of Hebrew narrative art.
- Marvelously symmetrical throughout, the action moves from a briefly sketched account of distress through four episodes to a concluding account of relief and hope that is drawn with equal brevity.
- The crucial turning point occurs exactly midway.
- The opening line of each of the four episodes signals its main development (1:6, the return; 2:1, the meeting with Boaz; 3:1, finding a home for Ruth; 4:1, the decisive event at the gate), while the closing line of each episode facilitates transition to what follows (1:22; 2:23; 3:18; 4:12).
- Contrast is also used to good effect: pleasant (the meaning of “Naomi”) and bitter (1:20), full and empty (1:21), and the living and the dead (2:20).
- Most striking is the contrast between two of the main characters, Ruth and Boaz: The one is a young, alien, destitute widow, while the other is a middle-aged, well-to-do Israelite securely established in his home community.

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## Study Notes for Ruth Chapter One

- This account begins in the days of the Judges (vs. 1), a 400-year period of general oppression when the Israelites were not ruled by kings but by periodic deliverers who God raised up when the nation sought Him.
- These were dark days for Israel characterized by “everyone did what was right in his own eyes”.
- In these days Elimelek, his wife Naomi, and two sons left the land of Israel to sojourn in the country of Moab (vs. 1) because of the famine in Israel.
- Bethlehem was a rich agricultural area but times were tough, so he went to a pagan land. This was a departure from the Promised Land and return to the wilderness which God had saved the Israelites from.
- God had promised that there would be plenty in the land if the people would be obedient therefore a famine meant that Israel had not been obedient as a nation. (see Deut. 11:13-17).
- Sojourners went to another country with the intent of returning. But during their time in Moab this family experienced tragedy – Elimelek died, and Naomi was left a widow with two sons (vs. 3).
- Naomi’s sons took wives among the Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth (vs. 4).
- This was not in obedience to God as it was clearly commanded that Israelites were to not marry among the pagan nations surrounding them.
- As time went on (about 10 years) both sons also died and now there were three widows – Naomi, and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth (vs. 5).
- To be a childless widow was to be among the lowest, most disadvantaged classes in the ancient world. There was no one to support you, and you had to live on the generosity of strangers. Naomi had no family in Moab, and no one else to help her. It was a desperate situation.
- From distant Moab, Naomi heard that God was doing good things back in Israel (vs. 6).
- Orpah and Ruth had stronger family ties in Moab than they did with Naomi, so it made sense for Naomi to encourage them to stay in Moab instead of going to a new land (Israel) with her (vs. 8).
- Naomi wished that they would remarry in Moab (vs. 9).
- She kissed them goodbye (vs. 9) and wept showing the real relationship of love between her and her daughters in law.
- The daughters show a willingness to go with Naomi to Israel (vs. 10) but Naomi pleads with them to stay in Moab (vs. 11-13).
- According to the laws of ancient Israel, if a young woman was left widowed, without having had a son, then one of her deceased husband's brothers was responsible for being a "surrogate father" and providing her with a son. Naomi here says that she has no other sons to give either Orpah or Ruth.
- Verse 13 – “the Lord’s hand has turned against me”: This obviously weighed heavily on Naomi's heart and mind. She felt that the calamity which came upon her family came because they were disobedient, probably in leaving the Promised Land of Israel and marrying their sons to Moabite women.
- Naomi is going back to Israel – back to her God. Though she felt that the Lord had turned against her she did not grow bitter against God. She returned to Him in repentance by returning to Israel.
- Both Orpah and Ruth felt deeply, both loved Naomi, both were anxious about the future. Both had a choice to be made. Orpah chose to stay in Moab, while Ruth clung to Naomi (vs. 14-15).

- Naomi tried to discourage Ruth from coming back with her to Israel. It wasn't that Naomi didn't want Ruth to come.
- Ruth then eloquently states her commitment to Naomi: "wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God, will be my God" (vs. 16).
- Ruth was willing to forsake the Moabite gods she grew up with and embrace the God of Israel. She was deciding to follow the Lord.
- Naomi's relationship with God had made an impact on Ruth. This is striking, because Naomi did not have an easy life. She had been widowed, had lost both her sons, and may have believed that she had caused each calamity by her disobedience. Yet she still honored and loved the LORD.
- It was a long walk from Moab to Bethlehem (vs. 19) and upon their arrival the entire city was excited because of them. Everyone in the village would have known everyone else and remembered those who had left years ago.
- Naomi, whose name means pleasant, asked for them to call her Mara, which means bitter (vs. 20).
- Her time away from Israel had not been pleasant. Naomi wasn't a phony, she wasn't pretending everything was fine, she was honest and tells them her life had been bitter.
- Naomi was not afraid to see the hand of God in her calamity (vs. 21). Naomi knew that the tragedy that came into her life was not because of fate, chance, or blind fortune. She felt the tragedies were an example of God's affliction because she could not see the end of His plan. But she knew there was a sovereign God of heaven and didn't think she had just run into a string of "bad luck."
- Naomi was humbled by her trials, yet she was not bitter against the Lord but rather repentant and honest. She felt the Lord had afflicted her but in the next chapters we will see that the Almighty will bless her.
- She did not return with nothing, she returned with a daughter-in-law, and God was going to bring unbelievable blessing into her life through this woman.

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## Study Notes for Ruth Chapter Two

- Naomi's deceased husband had a wealthy relative named Boaz (vs. 1). We don't know exactly how they were related but they were.
- Boaz was a "kinsman" which means more than just being a relative. It says that he was a special family representative. He was a chieftain in the family.
- Lev. 19:9-10 commanded farmers in Israel that they should not completely harvest their fields. They were commanded to "cut corners" in harvesting, and always leave some behind and if they happened to drop a bundle of grain, they were to leave it on the ground for the gleaners. This was one of the social assistance programs in Israel. Farmers were not to completely harvest their fields, so the poor and needy could come and glean the remains for themselves. This is a wonderful way of helping the poor. It commanded the farmers to have a generous heart, and it commanded the poor to be active and work for their food - and a way for them to provide for their own needs with dignity.
- So, Ruth, on her own initiative, set out to glean in the fields to support her and her mother-in-law.
- As it turned out, Ruth was gleaning one of Boaz's fields (vs. 3).
- Boaz arrives from Bethlehem and greets the harvesters (vs. 4), who respond cheerfully. He then inquired about Ruth (vs. 5). She wouldn't have been a familiar face as she was new in town.
- The supervisor reported to Boaz of her hard work (vs. 7) and how she kindly asked to gather in his field. He was impressed by her work ethic which made a good impression on Boaz.
- Boaz responds kindly to Ruth and suggested that she stay near his female field workers so she would be protected and taken care of (vs. 8-9).
- Ruth thanks Boaz for his kindness, wondering how she as a foreigner could find such favour (vs. 10).
- Boaz replies that he had heard about their misfortune and her relationship with Naomi (vs. 11) and states that she should be repaid for what she has done (vs. 12).
- Boaz had heard of Ruth's commitment to the God of Israel. This was his way of showing kindness and encouragement to a young believer in the LORD.
- Ruth politely says thankyou when she says, "may I continue to find favour in your eyes" (vs. 13).
- Boaz continues to show great favour to Ruth at mealtime by inviting her to share fully in the meal, even the privileged dipping (vs. 14).
- Boaz then allows Ruth to take some from among the already gathered sheaves of grain (vs. 15-16). He was blessing Ruth, but he didn't want to dishonor her by making her a charity case, so he allowed some grain to fall, supposedly on accident, so she could pick it up.
- Once the day was over, Ruth threshed the barley and went home (vs. 17), reporting all the day's events to Naomi.
- Naomi praises God for His goodness to her and Ruth in providing for them. The women who had come into town saying "call me Mara...God has dealt bitterly with me" is now praising God!
- Naomi encouraged Ruth to continue harvesting in Boaz's fields and so Ruth stayed close by the young women of Boaz until the harvest was complete (vs. 23).

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## Study Notes for Ruth Chapter Three

- The time of the harvest was over, and certainly Ruth and Boaz had been around each other much in the weeks covering the barley and the wheat harvest (Ruth 2:23). They had much opportunity to get to know each other.
- Naomi knew that Ruth could best be taken care of if she was married, so she suggested that she appeal to Boaz for marriage.
- One might easily think that this was inappropriately forward of Naomi to suggest this to Ruth. It is possible to think that Naomi plotted with Ruth to make her a man-trap, to go out and hunt down a reluctant Boaz for marriage. Not at all; Naomi's suggestion to Ruth was rooted in a peculiar custom in ancient Israel - the meaning behind the Hebrew word for Kinsmen Redeemer.
- A Kinsmen Redeemer had a specifically defined role in Israel's family life to safeguard the people, property and future of a family:
  - Responsibility to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Lev. 25:48).
  - Responsibility to be the "avenger of blood" to make sure the murderer of a family member answered for the crime (Num. 35:19).
  - Responsibility to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Lev. 25:25).
  - Responsibility to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Deut. 25:5-10).
- Boaz was a recognized kinsmen redeemer for the family of Elimelech - the deceased husband of Naomi and father-in-law of Ruth therefore Ruth could appeal to him to safeguard the future of Elimelech's family and take her in marriage. It may seem forward to us, but it was regarded as proper in that day.
- Ruth would not have known the Jewish customs as a foreigner, but Naomi knew them, so she suggested them to Ruth, instructing her on how to petition Boaz to exercise his responsibilities as her kinsmen redeemer.
- She instructs Ruth to bathe and make herself beautiful and at the appropriate time to uncover his feet and lie down (vs. 4).
- Some might think this was a provocative gesture, as if Ruth was told to daringly offer herself sexually to Boaz. This was not how this gesture was understood in that day. In the culture of that day, this was understood as an act of total submission. Ruth was taking the role of a servant who would lay at her master's feet and be ready for any command of the master.
- Ruth was coming to Boaz to claim a right. Boaz was her kinsman redeemer and she had the right to expect him to marry her and raise up a family to perpetuate the name of Elimelech. But Naomi wisely counseled Ruth to not come as a victim demanding her rights, but as a humble servant, trusting in the goodness of her kinsman-redeemer.
- Ruth understands and did exactly as Naomi suggested (vs. 5-7).
- Boaz slept on the threshing floor to protect the crop from thieves. During the night as he was sleeping, Ruth gently approached him, uncovered his feet and lay down (vs. 7).
- Something startled Boaz and he awoke, questioning who was there (vs. 8).
- Ruth identified herself and made a simple request "take your maidservant" showing great humility and submission, presenting herself as Boaz's servant (vs. 9).
- "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsmen redeemer of our family" – here Ruth boldly asks Boaz to take her in marriage. This was a culturally relevant way to say, "I am a widow, take me as your wife."

- Boaz responds to Ruth saying that he will do all that she had requested (vs. 11).
- As the kinsmen redeemer Boaz could have forced Ruth to marry him, but instead he waited for her to request it, showing respect towards her.
- There was only one potential problem, there was a nearer kinsman (vs. 12).
- Apparently, though Boaz was a recognized kinsman towards Ruth, there was another kinsman closer in relation to her deceased father-in-law Elimelech. So, Boaz could not exercise his right as kinsman-redeemer unless this closer kinsman-redeemer relinquished his rights towards Ruth (vs. 13).
- They waited until morning and then Boaz sent Ruth home. They were careful to hide what had happened so that Boaz could deal with the nearer kinsmen personally without rumors getting out.
- When Ruth got home to her mother-in-law, she told Naomi all that had happened (vs. 16-18).
- This was a time of considerable anxiety for Ruth. She had claimed her right to marriage and would be married. The only question was to whom would she be married? Would it be to Boaz, or to the nearer kinsman? The issue would be decided that very day (vs. 18).

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## Study Notes for Ruth Chapter Four

- Boaz went up to the city gate, the place where judicial matters were resolved by the elders and those who had earned the confidence and respect of the people.
- The nearer kinsman came along (vs. 1) and they sat together.
- Boaz begins by discussing a land matter. Naomi was selling a piece of land that was owned by her late husband. And if the nearer kinsman wouldn't buy it (as was his duty) then Boaz was more than willing to buy that land (vs. 2-4). The kinsmen agreed to buy the land.
- But there was a catch, in buying the land the kinsman would also acquire Ruth (vs. 5).
- Boaz explained what everyone knew - that this was a package deal. If someone was going to exercise the right of kinsman-redeemer towards the deceased Elimelech, he had to fulfill the duty in regard to both the property and the family future.
- Because of Boaz's wise (perhaps shrewd) way of framing the occasion, this was the first time the nearer kinsman considered this, and it was a pretty big question to take in all at once. When it was just a matter of property, it was easy to decide on; but if he must take Ruth as a wife, that was another matter.
- Though it would be great to receive the property associated with Ruth, the nearer kinsman knew that taking her into his home and raising up her children would ruin his own estate (vs. 6). Any male children that he would father by Ruth would legally be considered the sons of Ruth's first husband. Therefore, the land would never pass into his own family's possession, and he would reduce his estate by spending it to purchase the land. He would also need to assume financial responsibility for supporting Ruth, any children Ruth would bear, and Naomi.
- More than likely the man already had sons of his own who would inherit his land, and bringing home another wife who would bear more children was not something he was interested in.
- As was Jewish custom, there was a sandal transaction to make the transaction legal (vs. 7-8).
- Boaz announces that he has bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech and that he had also acquired Ruth as his wife in the transaction (vs. 9-10).
- Back in chapter one, Ruth seemed to be giving up on her best chance of marriage by leaving her native land of Moab and giving her heart and life to the God of Israel. But as Ruth put God first, He brought her together in a relationship greater than she could have imagined.
- No doubt the crowd cheered and blessed them (vs. 11-12).
- Boaz and Ruth were soon married and they had their first child together, a son (vs. 13).
- The gift of children was never taken for granted in Israel. The fact that Boaz and Ruth were able to raise up a son to the deceased Elimelech was evidence of God's blessing.
- The women of the town responded saying Blessed be the LORD! Look at blessed Naomi! She now had a grandson; she was now famous in Israel; and she got to be a nurse to her own grandson.
- It was fitting that these blessings in the life of Naomi be given so much attention at the end of the book. Naomi was the one whose original returning to the LORD began all this great work of God. If Naomi had not decided to go back to Bethlehem, the land of Israel, and the God of Israel, none of this would have happened.
- It is also fitting because Naomi was the one who said in chapter one, "the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me ... the LORD has brought me home again empty ... the LORD has testified against me" (Ruth 1:20-21). If only Naomi could have seen then how greatly the LORD would bless her at the end!

- Verse 17 – “they named him Obed, he was the father of Jesse, the father of David”. And David had a descendent named Jesus!
- Naomi's return to Bethlehem and the roots of David in Bethlehem going back to Ruth and Boaz are why Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census of Augustus (Luke 2:1-5). Ruth and Boaz are the reason why Jesus was born in Bethlehem!
- In conclusion, the book of Ruth tells how Naomi moves from *emptiness* at the beginning of the story to *fullness* at the end of the story, from *poverty* and *sorrow* to *security* and *joy*. The story is structured around her choice to find hope through *the kind, selfless and God-blessed acts of Ruth and Boaz*. The last verses of our story show that God's plan extended beyond Naomi's personal problems. God used Ruth and Boaz to produce Israel's greatest king. Their great-grandson turned out to be David. And many centuries later they also became the ancestor of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem.

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