

Book of Ruth

Lesson 1

Welcome to the study of the Book of Ruth!

This Old Testament book is a classic short story, one of the most beautiful ever written. It is the account of a disillusioned Hebrew family who moves from their home in Bethlehem to the land of Moab because of a famine during the troubled times of the judges of Israel. In this strange land, they suffer disappointment, loss and pain. While the story describes their suffering, it also depicts a stunning account of family devotion, love and loyalty.

Most likely written around 1100 to 1000 B.C., the story reveals how God sovereignly and providentially works in the lives of His people to bring about their deliverance. The theme of Ruth can best be summarized by Proverbs 3: 5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." Ultimately, Ruth and Boaz, the main characters in this book, play a significant role in God's plan of redemption for His people, for they become a part of the ancestral lineage of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man and the Son of God.

As you prepare to study, take a moment to pray and ask God for insight into this beautiful story of redemption.

Elimelech and Naomi

1. Read Ruth 1:1-2.
 - A. Who are the rulers over Israel, including Bethlehem in Judah, during the time of this story?

 - B. What is the problem for the people in the land?

 - C. At this point in the story the author introduces a family living in Bethlehem.
 - (1) List the names of the husband, his wife and their children.

 - (2) What do they decide to do?

 - (3) Do you think it was it wise to make this move? Please explain.

 - (4) Using a biblical map locate Moab. Where is Moab in relation to the Dead Sea?

Political & Cultural Condition of Israel

2. To gain some understanding of the political and cultural conditions that existed in Israel during the time of Elimelech and Naomi, read Judges 2:6-19 and Judges 21:25.
 - A. After the death of Moses, God appointed Joshua to lead his people into the promised land of Canaan (Joshua 1:1-9). After largely accomplishing this purpose, Joshua and his generation died (Judges 2:10), and a new generation grew up that was different from its predecessors.

From Judges 2:10-13, how is this new generation different regarding

- (1) its relationship with the Lord
 - (2) its religious activities, practices, and worship
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- B. Read Judges 2:14-15. By forsaking God and worshipping the gods of the people around them, this generation provoked Him to anger. What does the Lord do in response to their idolatry?

B. Compare the prevailing attitude of the people of Israel during the time of the judges with the prevailing attitude of people today. Cite specific examples from today's culture.

C. From your knowledge of Scripture and history, what courses of action might someone take to change direction personally or to help change society? (If needed, refer to Daniel 1:9-19 and Acts 2:22-39 for help developing your answer.)

- D. For personal reflection: What principles of change, personal or otherwise, have you seen bring about good? Describe the principles and the results they achieved. (If needed, consider the lives of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-19), Augustine, Martin Luther, William Wilberforce, John Newton, Martin Luther King or others.)

Elimelech's Family in the Land of Moab

6. Read Ruth 1:3-5.
- A. What happens to Elimelech? How does this affect Naomi?
- B. What do Naomi's two sons do?
- C. What are the names and the ethnicity of the women Naomi's sons marry?

D. After living about ten years in Moab, what happens to Mahlon and Kilion?

E. From Ruth 1:5, how does this affect Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth?

7. Read Ruth 1:6-7.

A. From verse six, how does the Lord providentially begin to encourage Naomi during this very painful time?

B. What do Naomi and her daughters-in-law decide to do?

C. What do you imagine that Naomi, Orpah and Ruth might have been thinking and feeling as they set out on the road to Judah?

D. Read Ruth 1:8-10.

(1) What do you find particularly poignant about Naomi's concern for the welfare of Orpah and Ruth? What words does she use to express her concern for them?

(2) How do Orpah and Ruth respond to Naomi's entreaty to leave her and return home? What does their response reveal to you about their relationship with Naomi?

(3) The conversation continues (Ruth 1:11-14).

(a) What subtle change of wording amplifies the closeness of the relationship between Naomi and Orpah and Ruth?

(b) What does Naomi add to her entreaty to Orpah and Ruth about returning to their home?

(c) From verse 14, how do Orpah and Ruth respond to Naomi's appeal to return home?

future to that of Naomi. She confessed allegiance to the people of Israel (your people) and to the God of Israel (your God). Here was a stirring example of a complete break with the past. Like Abraham, Ruth decided to leave her ancestors' idolatrous land to go to the land of promise. And Ruth did it without the encouragement of a promise. In fact, she made her decision despite Naomi's strenuous encouragement to do otherwise.

Ruth's decision was so strong that it included reference to death and burial. She would stay with Naomi to death and beyond. To seal the quality of her decision, Ruth invoked judgment from Israel's God if she were to break her commitment of loyalty to her mother-in-law. Ruth's conversion was complete. The events that followed show that her life matched her confession. (John W. Reed, The Bible Knowledge Commentary edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck)

D. Read Genesis 1:1-2, 12:1-3, 15:6, 17:1; Exodus 3:13-15; Psalm 51:1, 11, 17; Isaiah 9:6, 37:15-16, 44: 6; Matthew 28:18-19; John 8:31-58, 14:8-11 and 26, 20:24-30; Ephesians 4:30; and Galatians 3:6-9.

(1) From these verses, describe the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Naomi, Ruth, David, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Matthew, Philip, Thomas, John and Paul.

(2) From Ruth 1:16-17 and the above verses, how might someone who desires to know God apply these truths?

E. From Ruth 1:18, how does Naomi respond to Ruth's determination to go with her?

Naomi and Ruth Arrive in Bethlehem

9. Read Ruth 1:19-22.

A. How do the townspeople, especially the women of Bethlehem, react to the arrival of Naomi and Ruth?

B. From Ruth 1:20-21, what is Naomi's response to the women?

- C. How might the truths of Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9-10 and 5:10 apply to your life during times of personal difficulty, emptiness and affliction?

Book of Ruth

Lesson 2

The story begins during the time of the judges with a man named Elimelech, who along with his wife Naomi and their sons Mahlon and Kilion, move to the land of Moab from Bethlehem in Judah because of a famine there. Naomi's husband dies in Moab. Her sons marry Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After about ten years, Naomi's sons also die, leaving her alone with her daughters-in-law.

Hearing that the famine in the land of Judah has finally ended, Naomi decides to return home alone and urges Orpah and Ruth to remain in their own land, but the young women refuse to desert her and say they will go back with her. As Naomi tearfully entreats them again, Orpah decides to return to her people and gods, but Ruth steadfastly refuses. She pleads, "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).

So begins the opening chapter of this marvelous story of a family beset with hardship and loss, yet comforted by personal devotion, loyalty and even a glimmer of hope that the God of Naomi and her forefathers will ultimately meet their needs.

As you prepare to begin this lesson, take a moment to pray and ask God for insight into this beautiful story of redemption.

Ruth Meets Boaz

1. Read Ruth 2:1.
 - A. What is the name of Elimelech's relative?

 - B. Describe his character.

 - C. What is his relationship to Naomi?

 - D. What is his relationship to Ruth?

2. Read Ruth 2:2-4.
 - A. Refer to Genesis 19:30-38 and Deuteronomy 23:3-6. Why do you think the author emphasizes again that Ruth is a Moabitess, since she has already confessed to Naomi that "your people will be my people and your God my God"?

- B. Ruth, a gentile, is now in Israel (a metaphor for the land of promise for God's people) by the providence of God. Do you think she is there by merit, by good works or by grace? Please explain.
- C. From Ruth 2:2, how does Ruth exhibit faith in God and initiative as she seeks to provide for Naomi and herself?
- D. How does Naomi encourage Ruth? How does her response indicate faith in God's providence?
- E. Neither Naomi nor Ruth are yet aware of God's providential care, but He has been arranging circumstances in their favor. What has God done? How does this encourage you?

- F. From verse four, how do Boaz and the harvesters greet one another? What do these greetings reveal about their relationship with God and one another?

Boaz Notices Ruth

- 3. Read Ruth 2:5-17.
 - A. What does Boaz ask the foreman of the harvesters?

 - B. How does the foreman answer Boaz? What does this answer reveal about Ruth's character?

 - C. In verses 8 and 9, Boaz speaks directly to Ruth. How does he show respect and concern for her? What instructions does he give to protect and provide for her?

- D. From verse 10, how does Ruth respond to Boaz's kindness?
What does Ruth say about herself?
- E. From verses 11 and 12, what does Boaz say to encourage Ruth
and to assure her that she is no longer a foreigner?
- F. Read Genesis 12:1-4, Ruth 1:16, Galatians 3:6-9 and James
2:14-26.
- (1) How do Abraham and Ruth respond similarly to God's
call?
- (2) What evidence of belief and action (deed) do you observe
in Abraham and Ruth?

- (3) Abraham, Ruth and Rahab are examples of faith. Cite some specific ways you can apply their example in your own life.

- G. From Ruth 2:13, how does Ruth exhibit a humble spirit in thanking Boaz for his concern and provision?

Boaz Provides Further Encouragement

4. Read Ruth 2:14-16.

- A. How is Ruth further encouraged by Boaz at mealtime?

- B. What instructions does Boaz give his men as Ruth begins to glean again? How do his instructions reveal his understanding of Ruth?

C. How can you specifically use Boaz's example in your relationships?

5. Read Ruth 2:17. How late in the day does Ruth continue to glean?

6. Read Ruth 2:18 and 19.

A. When Ruth returns from the fields to Naomi, what does Naomi see first? What does Ruth show and give to Naomi?

B. Sensing a flicker of hope, Naomi questions Ruth. What does she ask?

C. How do these questions reveal Naomi's awakening awareness that the Lord has not abandoned them?

D. From Ruth 2:19, how does Naomi express this hope?

E. How does Ruth answer Naomi?

Boaz
A Temporary-Earthly
Kinsman-Redeemer

7. Read Ruth 2:20-23.

A. From verse 20, describe how Naomi responds to Ruth's report. What emotions do you think she feels? What words conclude her praise? What is significant about them?

B. Using a dictionary (Bible or secular), define the following words:

(1) kinsman

(2) redeemer

- C. Naomi makes two interesting statements: (1) God has not stopped showing kindness to the living and the dead, and (2) Boaz is a close relative, one of our kinsman redeemers. What do you think she has in mind? Refer to Leviticus 25:25, Deuteronomy 25:5-10, and Jeremiah 32:6-7 for additional insight.
- D. What else does Ruth tell Naomi that Boaz has said? How does Naomi respond?

**Jesus of Nazareth
The Eternal-Heavenly
Kinsman-Redeemer**

8. Read Hebrews 2:5-18. How is Jesus our kinsman?

9. Read Job 19:25-27, John 17:1-5, Romans 5:8-11, Galatians 1:3-5, Hebrews 9:27–10:22, 1 Peter 1:18-19, and Revelation 1:4-6 and 1:17-18. How is Jesus our eternal heavenly Redeemer?

Book of Ruth

Lesson 3

Naomi has returned to her home in the promised land of Israel without her husband and two sons, who died during their sojourn in the land of Moab. She considers her life “empty” because of the loss of her family, even though her daughter-in-law Ruth has returned with Naomi and pledged allegiance to her and Naomi’s God (Ruth 1:16).

Soon after their return to Bethlehem, Ruth asks permission to pick up leftover grain in the fields behind anyone who might show her favor (Ruth 2:2). With permission to go, Ruth providentially finds herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, a man of good standing in the community and a clansman of Naomi’s husband Elimelech. Boaz notices Ruth, advises her to stay with the servant girls in his field to avoid unwanted advances from harvesters in other fields, and makes sure she has extra grain for herself and Naomi.

When Ruth returns home, she tells Naomi that she worked in a field owned by Boaz. Naomi is amazed. She knows that Boaz is close relative, a kinsman-redeemer, who has shown great kindness to them (Ruth 2:20) and their clan. For the first time since the story began, Naomi and Ruth have a glimmer of hope as they realize that God is watching over them and providing for their needs through Boaz.

As you prepare to study, take a moment to pray and ask God for insight into this beautiful story of redemption.

A Plan for Redemption

While Ruth and Naomi are encouraged by the kindness shown by Boaz, they know that the harvest season will soon end. What will happen to them then?

1. Read Ruth 3:1-5.

A. Naomi has a plan. What two questions does she ask Ruth?

B. What might be the purpose behind Naomi's rhetorical questions?

C. What instructions does Naomi give to Ruth?

D. How does Ruth respond to the questions and instructions?
What does the dialogue between the two women suggest about their relationship?

A Claim for Redemption

2. Read Ruth 3:6-9.

A. From verses 6 and 7, what does Ruth do?

B. From verse 8, what happens to Boaz in the middle of the night?

C. From verse 9

(1) What question does Boaz ask?

(2) What is Ruth's response?

(3) How does Ruth's reply to Boaz reflect an attitude of humility as well as a righteous appeal to his honor, according to the instructions in Deuteronomy 25:5-10?

- (4) Boaz had revealed earlier to Ruth that he was told what she had done for Naomi since the death of her own husband—how she had left her parents and homeland to live with a people she did not know. Boaz then adds a blessing: “May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge” (Ruth 2:11-12).

The Hebrew word for “corner” in Ruth 3:9 is translated “wings” in Ruth 2:12. How has God providentially provided Boaz the opportunity to be a central figure in His plan to bless Ruth and Naomi through Boaz’s own blessing of Ruth?

3. Personal reflection: Has God ever providentially given you the opportunity to bless someone by extending grace or kindness to meet a need? If so, what were the circumstances, and what was the outcome?

4. Personal reflection: Refer to John 3:16 and 11:25-26. Have you ever turned to God with a personal request for redemption through Jesus Christ? If so, what were the circumstances, and what was the outcome? If you have not, is there some issue holding you back? Share with others if you are comfortable in doing so.

A Pledge of Redemption

5. Read Ruth 3:10-15.
 - A. How does Boaz's response to Ruth's appeal reflect
 - (1) Respect for her
 - (2) Humility
 - (3) His honorable character

(4) His concern and provision for Ruth

B. To this point in the story, what appeals to you about the character traits of

(1) Naomi

(2) Ruth

(3) Boaz

The Anticipation of Redemption

6. Read Ruth 3:16-18.
 - A. What does Naomi ask when Ruth returns from the threshing floor?
 - B. How does Ruth's answer encourage both Naomi and Ruth?
 - C. How does Naomi reveal her astute understanding of the matter at hand? How do Naomi's remarks provide insight into Boaz's character?

7. What do the following verses reveal about the Lord Jesus Christ, our kinsman-redeemer?
 - A. Psalm 27:1, 13-14
 - B. Psalm 31:24

C. Psalm 34:22

D. Psalm 37

(1) Verse 3

(2) Verse 4

(3) Verses 5-6

(4) Verses 7 and 34

(5) Verses 39-40

Book of Ruth

Lesson 4

Naomi proposes a bold idea to Ruth, who agrees to do what Naomi has suggested. Following Naomi's plan, Ruth goes to the threshing floor to claim redemption by Boaz at the appropriate time. After Boaz has fallen asleep, Ruth stealthily uncovers his feet and lies down nearby. When Boaz wakes in the night, he is startled to find a woman lying at his feet and asks who she is. Ruth reveals her identity and asks Boaz to extend his protection to her and Naomi.

Overwhelmed by her request, Boaz responds with humility and kindness, and blesses Ruth for having asked him to redeem her. After assuring her that he is ready and eager to fulfill the responsibilities of kinsman-redeemer, Boaz cautions that there is a complication, for there is a man more closely related to Naomi and Ruth with the right to redeem. Boaz sends Ruth home with a gift of grain and a promise that he will certainly redeem if the closer relative chooses not to do so.

Ruth returns to Naomi with news of all that has happened and the gift Boaz has given. Naomi tells Ruth that Boaz will not rest until the matter is settled that very day.

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Redemption's Rewards

In the concluding chapter of the Book of Ruth, we shall see that both the kinsman-redeemer and the redeemed participate in and share the joy of redemption. We shall also observe the loss of blessing for the kinsman who refused the opportunity to redeem when it was offered to him.

Redemption Refused

1. Read Ruth 4:1-6.
 - A. From the initial part of verse one, what does Boaz do first?

 - B. Refer to a biblical footnote or commentary to discover the significance of the town or city gate. What is typically accomplished there?

 - C. From verse one, who comes along after Boaz?

 - D. Why do you think the author of the story does not identify the relative by name?

 - E. What does Boaz ask of his relative?

2. Read Ruth 4:2. Why do you think Boaz asks ten elders of the town to join them at the gate?

3. Read Ruth 4:3-4.
 - A. What does Boaz propose to his relative within the hearing of the town elders?

 - B. How does the relative reply to Boaz's proposal?

4. Read Ruth 4:5-8.
 - A. Upon his relative's answer, what other stipulations does Boaz add to guarantee that the relative fulfills all his responsibilities as kinsman-redeemer?

 - B. What decision does the relative make after considering these additional obligations?

- C. Do you think Boaz's relative made a wise decision by turning down the opportunity to purchase Elimelech's land and by refusing to redeem Naomi and Ruth? Why or why not?

Redemption Proclaimed

5. Read Ruth 4:9-12.

- A. Describe the nature of Boaz's announcement to the elders and townspeople upon the relative's decision not to exercise his right to redeem.

- B. Following his declaration, what does Boaz ask the elders and townspeople to do to ensure that the transaction is legally binding?

B. Ruth as redeemed

C. Naomi as redeemed

7. What do you view as the relational blessings and benefits experienced by

A. Boaz as kinsman-redeemer

B. Ruth and Naomi as the redeemed

8. Read Ephesians 1:3-8 and Colossians 1:9-14. From these references, consider how these blessings and benefits might be pleasing to

A. God as our Redeemer

B. us as the redeemed of God in Christ

9. For application: In our relationships with others, why are we to extend “redemption” when we can?

10. What blessings and benefits does the relative of Boaz forfeit because he declines to become a kinsman-redeemer?

11. Reflect upon your study of the Book of Ruth. What are some personal takeaways that you have gleaned from the main characters?

A. Naomi

B. Ruth

C. Boaz

D. God

Jesus Our Kinsman-Redeemer

In many ways, Boaz foreshadows Jesus the Christ. Boaz was an honorable yet humble man who loved and worshiped God, respected others, helped the poor, and in the case of Naomi and Ruth, protected and provided for them as kinsman-redeemer.

12. Read John 6:35, 8:12, 10:14-15 and 27-30, 11:25-26, 14:1-3, and Luke 23:40-43. What assurances are given to those who bow at the feet of Jesus and worship Him as their eternal Kinsman-Redeemer?