



Faith in Uncertain Times

Study Guide: Ruth

RUTH

Study Guide

Faith in Uncertain Times

4 Studies

For Individuals or Groups

By Randy Judd

CrossSites Bible Study

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{Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture verses are taken from the English Standard Version}

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Lesson one: Ruth's Radical Resolve

Bible Passage: [Ruth 1:1–22](#)

Big Idea: *God provides hope and redemption through our faithfulness to others, especially in times of hardship and loss.*

Opening Thoughts

The story of Ruth unfolds during the final years of the Judges; a period often regarded as a dark age in Israel's history. This era comes after Joshua's death, when there was no central government, and the nation was ruled by a succession of judges. During this time, the people of Israel largely chose to live in moral darkness and

embrace pagan practices. The writer of Judges described the period as “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” [Judges 21:25](#).

As you read through the book of Judges a pattern emerges. The Israelites sin and turn to paganism, God brings judgement upon the nation. This causes the people to cry out to God for relief. God raises up a judge that helps rescue the nation from the oppressors. The people rejoice and worship God. But soon the cycle repeats itself.

Although The Book of Ruth is sometimes interpreted as a love story, its deeper significance lies in the portrayal of two distinct forms of devoted family bonds. One such bond is the intergenerational commitment that develops between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law. Ruth, a young widow from Moab who had been married to an Israelite, demonstrated unwavering loyalty during her mother-in-law Naomi’s time of hardship. Through her support, Ruth not only aided Naomi’s recovery but also brought profound joy and fulfillment to Naomi’s later years. In turn, Ruth herself received unexpected blessings because of her steadfastness.

Another significant expression of familial commitment was the duty of a kinsman. Ruth is directed to the fields of Boaz, not knowing that he holds the role of her family's kinsman redeemer as set forth in the Mosaic Law. Boaz falls in love with Ruth and completes to the established procedures to redeem Naomi's property and take Ruth as his wife. Through her perseverance, Ruth receives unforeseen blessings.

Loss Leads to Hope

[Ruth 1:1–5](#)

¹ In 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. ² The 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. ³ But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, ⁵ and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

As the story of Ruth opens we see a family in disparate need. There was a great famine in the land of Israel. A famine during the period of the judges can be anticipated based on the covenant stipulations outlined in [Leviticus 26:14–20](#), wherein God declared that persistent disobedience would result in agricultural failure. Given the prevalence of Israel's transgressions during the time of the judges and the principle that God fulfills divine commitments, the occurrence of famine would have been a foreseeable consequence.

When faced with hunger, people sometimes make drastic choices. Elimelech, needing to support his wife and two sons, temporarily left Bethlehem in Judah to settle in Moab ([1:1](#)). While it’s understandable that Elimelech’s family decided to relocate in hopes of finding food, what stands out is their choice to settle in Moab—an area known for being one of Israel’s long-standing adversaries. Since the time of Israel’s exodus from Egypt ([Num. 22:1–11](#)) the Moabites posed significant threats to Israel. For an Israelite man to leave the promised land with his family and live among people who worshipped idols and held animosity toward Israelites was considered shocking. Was God displeased by this action? The Bible doesn’t directly say so, but Elimelech’s death soon after arriving in Moab—which left his wife Naomi widowed—could suggest that possibility ([1:3](#)).

Elimelech and his family fled Bethlehem to escape the famine in hopes of a better life. But he dies leaving Naomi with only her two sons. Their sons disobey the Law and marry foreign women and then they die. Naomi had no source of food, shelter, or income. With no social safety nets in Moab and no obligation for anyone to assist her,

she was left grief-stricken and destitute. We must always remember that where we are in life is a direct result of our past decisions.

Naomi has suffered a great loss – the deaths of her husband and sons. Even amid this hardship, God's redemption is already at work. Her story reminds us that our suffering fits within a greater plan, where loss is not final but part of our hope and renewal.

Loyalty in Uncertainty

[Ruth 1:6–18](#)

⁶ Then 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. ⁷ So 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. ⁸ But 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. ⁹ The 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. ¹⁰ And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹ But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, ¹³ would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." ¹⁴ Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶ But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return 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. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." ¹⁸ And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Naomi and her husband left their covenant community to settle in Moab in pursuit of improved circumstances; however, their experience was marked by hardship and loss. A decade later, Naomi found herself bereaved and accompanied only by her two foreign daughters-in-law. Upon learning that *"the Lord had visited his people and given them food."* ([1:6](#)). Naomi resolved to return to Bethlehem, likely reasoning that her prospects for survival would be greater among her own people.

Naomi and her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, prepared for their journey back to Judah. As they began their journey Naomi made the decision to encouraged her daughters-in-law to return to their respective fathers' homes, providing several rationales for this suggestion. She explained that, according to Mosaic Law, the brother of a deceased man was expected to marry the widow. However, given Naomi's advanced age and having no sons, it would be impractical for her daughters-in-law to await the possibility of her having additional sons who could fulfill this obligation. Furthermore, Naomi noted that by returning to their father's households, they would have the opportunity to remarry, thereby gaining the stability and security inherent in family life.

Orpah decided to return to her father's home. Compared to her sister-in-law, she chose not to continue on to Bethlehem with Naomi. Although Orpah began the journey, expressed her farewells, and was visibly emotional, she ultimately opted not to remain with her mother-in-law. Her choice indicates a preference for returning to her previous life and the possibility of remarriage. After this event, Orpah is no longer referenced in the Scriptures.

Ruth demonstrated profound loyalty toward her mother-in-law, Naomi. Despite Naomi's encouragement for Ruth to return to her own family, Ruth voiced her resolve to remain with Naomi. Ruth's words in [Ruth 1:16–17](#) are among the most powerful declarations in the Bible. She first expresses her deep love for Naomi and her commitment to remain with her mother-in-law for life. Ruth also openly declares her faith in the one true God and her choice to worship only Him. She is prepared to leave behind her family (as noted in [2:11](#)) so she can stay with Naomi and follow Naomi's God. Ruth shows unwavering determination to go with Naomi (see [1:18](#)) and settle in Bethlehem among God's people.

Ruth's unwavering loyalty, dedication, and selflessness offer valuable lessons to everyone. Her resolve to stand by Naomi leads her to adopt a new nationality and faith, actions through which she ultimately receives significant rewards from God.

Jesus encourages us to be steadfast and loyal in our commitment to Him. When we follow Him, our spiritual identity transforms as we become part of God's community. We must remain determined, avoid retreating, and keep moving ahead. By choosing unwavering devotion and perseverance in our hearts, we will ultimately receive rewards.

Bitterness Meets Grace

[Ruth 1:19–22](#)

¹⁹ So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" ²⁰ She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" ²² So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

During the time of the judges, two unmarried women journeyed down a lonely, unpatrolled country road—a situation that was dangerous and could easily have led to trouble. Yet, thanks to God's grace, they were able to reach Bethlehem safely. Naomi had spent about ten difficult years in Moab, which likely altered her appearance so much that the women she'd grown up with hardly recognized her. She also arrived back to Bethlehem with not a daughter but a Moabite woman.

Naomi and her family had departed from Bethlehem feeling content but returned with a sense of emptiness. Consequently, she requested that her name be changed from Naomi, meaning "My Pleasantness," to Mara, which translates to "Bitter." This change reflected her belief that God had allowed adversity into her life, resulting in bitterness rather than resilience from her challenges. Naomi's decision to change her name was not an act of complaint, but rather an acknowledgment of divine discipline. She recognized that their move to Moab had been outside the will of God.

While we may not have control over life's circumstances, we can choose our responses to such situations. Faith involves trusting that beneficial outcomes are being realized even when there is no immediate evidence. The

instruction to *"give thanks in everything"* ([1 Thes. 5:18](#)) can be challenging to follow; however, adhering to this guidance is an effective measure against developing bitterness or a critical attitude.

The two widows arrived in Bethlehem during the barley harvest, a season when the community celebrated and offered thanks to God for His blessings. It was springtime—a period symbolizing renewal and fresh starts. Naomi stood on the threshold of a fresh start. She was about to discover that with God, it's never too late for a new beginning.

Application

Life consists of a series of choices, both good and bad. At times, poor decisions can distance us from God's blessings, as happened with Naomi and her husband. The way we address those wrong choices matters greatly. Naomi realized they had chosen poorly, yet she is going to discover that God never abandons His children. When God's children turn back to follow Him, he will bring others into their lives to offer encouragement and support. It's essential for us to remain open to God's guidance. Trust that, like Ruth, stepping into the unknown can lead to unexpected blessings if you faithfully pursue God's guidance. Be open to the paths He sets before you.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Elimelech take his family to Moab? Was this an act of wisdom and obedience or a demonstration of a weak faith? Why?
2. What are some of the most painful choices you've made in your life? What specifically made the choices so difficult?
3. Why did Naomi call herself Mara? ([1:20–21](#))
4. What experiences have you had of bitter trials preparing the way for the Lord's kindness?
5. How could you develop or reaffirm your devotion to God this week?

Lesson Two: Ruth's Relentless Reaping

Bible Passage: [Ruth 2:1–23](#)

Big Idea: God's unseen hand is at work in our lives, guiding us and weaving together our stories in ways that often exceed our understanding; our faithfulness in the little things opens doors to divine blessings.

Opening Thoughts

The gleaning laws of the Old Testament aimed to help vulnerable people while preserving their dignity. Landowners were not allowed to harvest every part of their fields or completely strip their vineyards; instead, they had to leave whatever remained for the poor and foreigners living among them ([Lev 19:9–10](#)). If a sheaf was accidentally left behind during the harvest, it could not be collected by the owner but was set aside for sojourners, orphans, and widows ([Deut 24:19–21](#)). This guideline also applied to olive trees and vineyards—landowners couldn't return for a second harvest, ensuring that what remained was available to those in need ([Deut 24:19–21](#)).

Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest. Demonstrating her commitment to Naomi, Ruth requested permission to glean in the fields. She resolved to provide for both her and Naomi through diligent labor. Ruth was providentially guided, by God, to the field of Boaz, a close relative and potential redeemer. A study of chapter two reveals that, even during challenging periods, God is faithful and has a purpose for our lives.

Ruth's Resilient Faithfulness

[Ruth 2:1–7](#)

¹ Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." ³ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. ⁴ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you." ⁵ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" ⁶ And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷ She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

Ruth was resolved to provide for herself and Naomi through the hard work of gleaning. Ruth went out hoping to find someone who would show her grace—unearned and undeserved favor. God guided Ruth to the field of her close relative and redeemer, orchestrating events to fulfill His providential plan and ensure Ruth and Naomi were cared for.

Ruth demonstrates diligence as she works consistently in the fields. Boaz, showing commitment to his business, visited the field to supervise its management. He acknowledged the efforts of his harvesters and blessed them for their hard work ([Ruth 2:4](#)). When Boaz noticed someone new among the workers, he asked about her. The field supervisor explained that the woman gathering leftover grain was *"the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi."*

This is here that Boaz enters the story.... His name means *"in him is strength."* Boaz was a relative of Naomi's husband. He was a kinsman whose land Ruth unknowingly chose to glean.

The Hebrew word *"goel,"* translated as *"kinsman,"* actually means *"Redeemer."* Its meaning is rooted in Numbers and Leviticus, where God established guidelines to keep unchecked capitalism in balance. Every fifty years, during the Year of Jubilee, any property bought by wealthy individuals because of someone's bankruptcy would return to its original owner. All debts were also forgiven at this time. This system was designed by God as a safeguard against greed and to reduce the gap between the rich and poor.

Although the Year of Jubilee was generous, fifty years is a long time for someone—especially a farmer—to be separated from their land. For this reason, God created an additional option: at any point, a close relative could purchase back property that had been lost due to bankruptcy, poor decisions, or mismanagement. This is why the term *goel* is translated as both *"kinsman"* and *"redeemer."* Boaz would become Naomi and Ruth's kinsman/redeemer.

When individuals dedicate their lives to the Lord, events in their lives occur by His design rather than by chance. Although Ruth remained a widow and a foreigner, because of her faithfulness, circumstances were about to change as God established a new relationship that would significantly impact her situation.

Boaz's Bountiful Grace

[Ruth 2:8–16](#)

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn." ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" ¹¹ But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹² The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" ¹³ Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants." ¹⁴ And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. ¹⁵ When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. ¹⁶ And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

As the story unfolds, Boaz demonstrates considerable kindness toward Ruth. He approaches her directly and assures her of safety as she gathers grain ([Ruth 2:9](#)). Additionally, Boaz instructs his workers not to touch her and to intentionally leave behind some extra stalks for her benefit. Above all, Boaz urges Ruth to continue gleaning exclusively in his field.

Ruth responded to Boaz with humility and gratitude, recognizing her own unworthiness and accepting his gracious assistance. She acknowledged his assurances and expressed trust in his commitments. Given Boaz's resources and standing, Ruth understood that he was capable of supporting both her and Naomi. Her confidence was based on his explicit promise and his demonstrated reliability.

Ruth chose not to dwell on her difficult past or reflect on her unfortunate circumstances. Instead, she demonstrated humility and dedication by presenting herself before Boaz. She shifted her focus from her own hardships to his resources, setting aside her worries and trusting in his assurances. This approach serves as a noteworthy model for individuals seeking guidance today.

I find that many believers struggle with unhappiness because they do not follow the instruction in [Hebrews 12:2](#): “fixing our eyes on Jesus.” Rather than focusing on their Master as Ruth did, they spend too much time thinking about themselves, their situation, and other people. They concentrate on their own flaws instead of resting in His perfection, and notice their spiritual poverty rather than appreciating His abundance. Some attend church seeking to satisfy their needs, instead of coming to worship God, who is greater than any need. Listening to worldly voices brings discouragement, but listening to God's voice through His Word fills the heart with encouragement. When we dedicate our lives to the Lord, events that occur are regarded as heavenly appointments rather than random occurrences

Provision Through Providence

[Ruth 2:17–23](#)

¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. ¹⁹ And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.” ²⁰ And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.” ²¹ And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’ ” ²² And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.” ²³ So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Throughout the day, Ruth worked diligently, uplifted by hope and happiness. She was free from concerns about being harassed or disrupted by other workers. Whenever she felt hungry, food was available; when she was thirsty, she had something to drink; and when tired, she found a place to rest. In the evening, she returned home carrying an ephah—about six quarts—of barley along with the remains of her lunch.

Ruth informs Naomi about Boaz's kindness. Naomi acknowledges that Boaz is a close relative and, notably, one of their potential redeemers. For the first time since returning to Bethlehem, Naomi exhibits hope as she begins to recognize the providential care extended to her and Ruth. Ruth continues to glean in Boaz's fields until the end of barley harvest.

God's love and faithfulness are constant. Like Naomi, we might go through moments when we struggle to notice His actions, yet He remains with us whether we face challenges or victories. Any sense of distance comes from our perception, not from God withdrawing. We can trust that His loyal love never abandons His children. Remember God's steadfastness during difficulties, remember the times when His plans have unfolded in your life.

Boaz, as Naomi's kinsman redeemer and Ruth's encounter with his fields, illustrates God's providence working in the everyday moments of our lives. When we strive to be obedient and faithful to God's calling, He will

orchestrate events to ensure our needs are met. Understanding God's providence brings us hope, confidence, and joyful assurance in His promises.

Application

In [Ruth 2](#), Ruth bravely chooses to glean in the fields, showing humility and faith. If you feel stuck spiritually and are waiting for new opportunities, consider following Ruth's example by volunteering for a ministry at your church. Serving not only strengthens your faith but also helps you build supportive relationships. Getting involved can help you overcome spiritual stagnation and open the door to new blessings.

Discussion Questions

1. In what situation did Naomi and Ruth find themselves? ([2:1-2](#))
2. What sacrifices had Ruth made to stay with her mother-in-law? ([2:11](#))
3. What are some of the specific acts of kindness that Boaz performed toward Ruth?
4. The narrator describes Ruth's arrival at Boaz's field as happening "by chance." Naomi later attributes this "chance" encounter to God's provision. How do you look at the circumstances of your own life?
5. List one or two things you could start doing or stop doing today to become a more faithful person.

Lesson Three: Ruth's Risky Request

Bible Passage: [Ruth 3:1–18](#)

Big Idea: *Every faithful choice we make, even in unexpected circumstances, can lead to greater purposes and redemptive outcomes, reflecting God's sovereignty over our lives.*

Opening Thoughts

It has been said that our present lives are a result of past decisions. If any of us truly take an honest look at our past, we will see the decisions that we made and how they impact our lives today. Either for the good or for the bad. And the decisions we make today will impact our futures and leave a legacy for future generations.

Naomi and Ruth's journey exemplifies resilience and mutual support. Upon their return to Bethlehem as widows, Ruth assumed responsibility for Naomi's well-being, actively seeking means of subsistence by gathering leftover grain in local fields. She ultimately worked in the field of Boaz, a near relative of Naomi. Boaz's involvement marked a pivotal change for Naomi, redirecting her concerns from personal loss to supporting Ruth's future. Ruth's decisions—to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem and to glean in Boaz's field—left a lasting legacy, as both Ruth and Boaz are included in the genealogy of Jesus ([Matt 1:5](#)).

Naomi's Nurturing Wisdom

[Ruth 3:1–5](#)

¹ Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

When we prioritize the needs of others, it often leads to genuine happiness and satisfaction within ourselves. Naomi has undergone a noticeable transformation since Boaz became part of Ruth's life; she is less absorbed in her own grief and instead turns her attention toward supporting Ruth and considering her prospects.

According to Jewish law, a widow was expected to marry her late husband's brother or a close relative. Since Naomi had no other sons, Ruth needed to find a near relative to marry. Under Mosaic Law, Ruth not only could, but also had the right to ask Boaz, as her kinsman-redeemer, to marry her—though it was her responsibility to make this request. As an outsider in Israel, Ruth might not have been aware of her rights as a widow, but Naomi understood them well. Naomi realized that Boaz was a close relative and noticed his interest in Ruth.

Naomi developed a discreet approach to convey Ruth's potential interest in marriage to Boaz, aiming to preserve the dignity of all individuals involved in the event that Boaz chose not to pursue the proposal.

Naomi instructed Ruth on how to prepare for her meeting with Boaz. Ruth was advised to bathe, following traditional Jewish customs for special occasions. Additionally, she was to anoint herself with fragrant oils to ensure a pleasant presence before Boaz. Finally, Ruth was directed to wear her finest clothing.

Naomi provided Ruth with clear instructions regarding her actions upon arriving at the threshing floor. Ruth was advised not to reveal herself to Boaz until he had finished eating and had retired for the evening. Her task was

to discreetly approach Boaz after he had lain down, communicate her needs to him, and allow him to assume responsibility by guiding her on the appropriate course of action.

Naomi devises a clever and resourceful plan to ensure a secure future for her daughter Ruth. This story shows how God's actions can work together with human choices—God works through Naomi's decisions. Instead of waiting passively for God's will saying *"I'm just waiting for God's will to be done"*, we should take advantage of opportunities that come our way. When God opens a door, it's up to us to step through it.

Ruth's Bold Pursuit

[Ruth 3:6–13](#)

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷ And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." ¹⁰ And he said, "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. ¹² And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. ¹³ Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."

During harvest time, workers used the night breezes to help winnow the grain. They tossed the grain into the air, allowing the wind to carry away the chaff—the unwanted parts—while the barley kernels dropped back down to be collected. After finishing their work each night, they would celebrate by eating and drinking together. To safeguard the harvested grain, they slept right on the threshing floor.

After Boaz completed his meal and was resting, Ruth discreetly approached, uncovered his feet, and lay near him. These actions were not inappropriate or improper; rather, Ruth was respectfully indicating her wish for Boaz to serve as her protector.

Ruth discreetly entered the threshing floor and lay down at Boaz's feet ([Ruth 3:7](#)), intending not to disturb him but to remain nearby until he awakened. During the night, Boaz awoke and was surprised to find a woman at his feet. When he inquired about her identity, Ruth replied, *"I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."* ([Ruth 3:10](#)) In Jewish tradition, to spread one's mantle over another person signified a claim of protection or marriage (see [Ezek. 16:8](#); [1 Kings 19:19](#)). By making this request, Ruth was taking a courageous step in asking Boaz to fulfill the role of redeemer through marriage.

Boaz expressed appreciation that Ruth selected him over younger men of her own age. He recognized that Ruth was assuming some risk by approaching him to request his role as family redeemer. Boaz offered her reassurance, advising her not to be apprehensive, and confirmed his intention to fulfill his duty as her redeemer. Additionally, he referred to Ruth as his daughter—a term signifying respect and inclusion—indicating that he already regarded her as part of his family. The term *daughter* reflected warmth, connection, and acceptance.

Boaz, known for his integrity, promptly recognized a potential obstacle to their plan. While he was a relative of Naomi's late husband (and therefore also Ruth's late husband), Boaz was aware that another kinsman was more closely related. The word *closer* referred to relationship, not location. Boaz assured Ruth he would immediately

speak with this nearer relative to find out his intentions. If the man wished to be the redeemer, that would settle the matter; but if he declined, Boaz himself would take on the role of redeemer.

There are circumstances in which believers are called to exercise patience as they await divine intervention to overcome challenges, and other instances when they are encouraged to, with the Holy Spirit guidance, actively address such challenges. Both approaches are rooted in the conviction that God orchestrates all things for the benefit of those who love Him and remains attentive to the specific details of their lives. In Ruth's case she was willing to take a risk to her safety and reputation to seek the redemption that Boaz could provide.

Boaz's Benevolent Response

[Ruth 3:14–18](#)

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." ¹⁵ And he said, "Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. ¹⁶ And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did you fare, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷ saying, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, 'You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.' " ¹⁸ She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

Boaz assured Ruth that he would approach the other kinsman-redeemer to fulfil his commitment. His intention was to redeem and marry Ruth. Following their discreet meeting, Ruth departed before sunrise so that her presence at the threshing floor would go unnoticed. Before she left, Boaz his promise and provided her with a generous portion of barley for Naomi. Upon returning home, Ruth was advised to wait patiently for the outcome of Boaz's discussion with the other kinsman.

Sometimes, as believers we are called to wait patiently for obstacles to be resolved; at other times, we must actively confront those obstacles. In both situations, we trust that God cares about every aspect of our lives and works everything out for the good of those who love Him.

Boaz took on the responsibility of pursuing the role of Ruth's kinsman-redeemer. His careful attention to Ruth's well-being sets a powerful example for how to support our loved ones. Boaz's actions encourage us to show moral dedication by taking on responsibilities that help provide for both the physical and spiritual needs of our families.

Applications

You might be feeling stuck in your current circumstances and unsure of how to move forward in your life or relationships. Just as Ruth took a bold step of faith by approaching Boaz, you too can take a step toward clarity in a challenging situation. This week, identify one area in your life where you feel stuck—be it your career, relationships, or spiritual growth—and commit to pray about it for the next seven days. Then, seek wise counsel from a trusted friend or mentor who can help provide insight and guidance.

Discussion Questions

1. Name three things Naomi instructed Ruth to do before she presented herself to Boaz.

2. Judging from this passage, what does God want you to do when you cannot see the solution to a problem in your life?
3. When have you ever found yourself in an “impossible” situation like Ruth?
4. How can Ruth's willingness to take a risk by approaching Boaz inspire us to act with faith in our own lives?
5. In what ways does this passage illustrate the provision and faithfulness of God in the lives of His followers?

Lesson Four: Ruth's Redemptive Reward

Bible Passage: Ruth 4

Big Idea: *God's redemptive plan transcends barriers, inviting the marginalized into His family and calling us to live out that faith in profound love and service.*

Opening Thoughts

The story of Ruth begins with loss—three funerals—but concludes with joy, as it ends with a marriage and the birth of a child. While not every life story has such a happy ending, this small book from the Bible reassures believers that God oversees all things. It encourages readers not to fear what lies ahead because God ultimately shapes our destinies.

In [Ruth 4](#) the focus turns to three persons: a bridegroom, a bride and a baby. We see how God's providential hand orchestrates the redemption of Ruth through Boaz, highlighting themes of loyalty, community ethics, and God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. The chapter concludes with a detailed genealogy that connects Ruth, a Moabite, to King David, illustrating how God gracefully includes outsiders into His family.

Boaz: Boldly Bridging Barriers

[Ruth 4:1–8](#)

¹ Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. ² And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. ³ Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." ⁵ Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." ⁶ Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it." ⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal.

In accordance with his promise to Ruth, Boaz proceeded to the city gate that day and took a seat. In ancient walled cities, the gate functioned as a substantial, fortified entrance through which residents and visitors passed. Immediately inside was a spacious area that acted as the hub for the community's social, economic, and governmental activities. This location served as the meeting place for the town's elders, who addressed legal and political matters as required. Boaz selected this venue purposefully, knowing it increased the likelihood of encountering the individual he was seeking.

Boaz took charge and assembled everyone needed for the unfolding events: the kinsman-redeemer and ten of the town's elders, each trusting Boaz enough to set aside their morning duties. Curious onlookers, realizing something significant was happening, gathered as impromptu "*witnesses*" to observe what would transpire.

The closest relative arrives at the gate, where Boaz invites him to sit down for a discussion. Boaz explains that there is a financial obligation that needs to be fulfilled on behalf of Naomi, the widow of Elimelech. As the nearest kinsman, this man is responsible for redeeming the property. According to the Law of Moses, a family

redeemer had both the right and an implied moral duty to restore the property of a family member who had fallen into hardship ([Lev. 25:25](#)).

At first, the kinsman indicated his willingness to purchase the property, operating under the assumption that he could maintain ownership given Naomi's lack of a male heir. However, after Boaz clarified that acquiring the property also required marrying Ruth the Moabitess and raising an heir for Elimelech—who would inherit the estate—the kinsman reconsidered and declined the opportunity ([4:5-6](#)). The reason for his rejection was the impairment of his own inheritance. As was customary in legal agreements at that time in Israel, he removed his sandal as a public testament to the assembly and formally authorized Boaz to proceed with the purchase.

Boaz serves as a representation of Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer, and this moment reflects that connection. Just as Boaz was not worried about risking his own inheritance, Jesus chose to include us in His inheritance ([Eph. 1:11, 18](#)).

Ruth: Redeemed and Rejoiced

[Ruth 4:9–17](#)

⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." ¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman." ¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

After Boaz reached an agreement with the other kinsman, he formally announced his intention to redeem the property and marry Ruth. The town elders affirmed their role as witnesses to this transaction. They prayed blessings upon Ruth, referencing Rachel and Leah, who were pivotal in establishing many of the tribes of Israel ([4:11](#)). Additionally, they expressed hopes that Boaz's reputation and household would achieve prominence in Israel through the descendants provided by the Lord via Ruth ([Ruth 4:11–12](#)). Unbeknownst to them at the time, Boaz's legacy and lineage would attain considerable renown (see [Matt 1:5–17](#)).

Boaz and Ruth were married, and they had a son named Obed. The local women expressed their happiness for Naomi and offered praise for the Lord's provision during her recent hardships. They remarked that Ruth had been more valuable to Naomi than seven sons—a notable compliment, as seven is the biblical number of perfection or completion, and having seven sons was considered an exceptional blessing. Through divine favour, Ruth demonstrated qualities that were seen as an even greater gift, reflecting high esteem for her character.

Ruth experienced a notable benefit when the closest kinsman rejected her; this decision enabled her to marry the man she desired. Similarly, The experience of rejection was not unfamiliar to Jesus; according to the Gospels,

he was frequently unpopular, and at one point, only the twelve apostles remained after a sermon. Jesus did not receive recognition from his contemporaries, and religious authorities such as the Pharisees and Sadducees who often dismissed him. Despite this, Jesus's influence has been profound among those who choose to follow him throughout history.

Baby: Legacy of Love

[Ruth 4:18–22](#)

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

The book's closing verses present a genealogy that starts with Perez, son of Judah, and concludes with David. This passage reveals that Ruth and Boaz's son, Obed, would become the grandfather of David, Israel's greatest king. When reading the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew, both Boaz and Ruth are mentioned. Although Boaz and Ruth did not know it at the time, their choices and lives played a role in God's plan for His kingdom and the redemption of man. When you follow God's guidance, you allow yourself to be part of his larger purposes—something that may bring blessings not only to you but also to future generations.

Application

As you reflect on [Ruth 4](#), consider the challenge of feeling inadequate in your current situation—perhaps in your job or family life. You might be wondering how to move forward when faced with barriers. This week, take time to reach out to someone who can offer guidance or mentorship. Just as Boaz acted as a redeemer for Ruth, seek out relationships in your church community that can uplift and support you. Share your struggles and ask for prayer; remember, God often provides help through the people around us.

Discussion Questions

1. What strategy did Boaz use with the kinsman-redeemer, and what effect did it have? ([4:4–7](#))
2. What extra blessing did the Lord give to Ruth? ([4:13](#))
3. Why did the women of Bethlehem say Ruth was “better ... than seven sons” to Naomi? ([4:15](#))
4. In what way could the child Obed renew Naomi's life and sustain her in her old age? ([4:15](#))
5. How have you seen evidence of God's work in your life? How can you be quick to praise Him for this?

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