

## 08 - Ruth

1:1 - 4:22

Key Verse:

### INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

The book of Ruth is like a jewel sparkling brightly against dark velvet. The time of the judges was marked by violence. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes "because there was no king in Israel." There seemed to be no faith and no faithfulness left in Israel. At this time of moral anarchy, God's eyes turned toward a Gentile woman, Ruth. God was not bound by Jewish nationalism--even though he chose Israel as his covenant people. God looks for men and women of faith in every age and in every nation. Ruth is one of the 5 women whom Matthew includes in Jesus' genealogy.

The book opens with Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, being emptied of all human joy and hope (1:21), and it ends with Naomi being filled with joy and hope--because of Ruth. It begins with Ruth's decision to give up her people, her marriage, her gods and her future to commit herself to her sorrowful mother-in-law and to the people of God. It ends Naomi holding a baby in her arms--her joy and Israel's hope.

The book of Ruth is also the story of redemptive love. Boaz falls in love with Ruth and accepts the roll of kinsman-redeemer. Boaz reflects God's redemptive love for Israel and for all humanity. God sets the stage for King David and Jesus.

### NAOMI AND RUTH

Ruth 1:1-22

Key Verse: 1:16

#### 1. Tragedy strikes an immigrant family (1-7)

The book of Ruth opens with a tragic story. In the days of the judges, Israel was spiritually and morally bankrupt. Bethlehem, the house of bread, was empty because of a famine. Elimelech took his wife Naomi and his two sons and moved to Moab. Then Elimelech died. The two boys grew up and married Moabite girls. Then, Mahlon and Kilion died, leaving no children--only three sorrowful widows.

#### 2. Orpah and Ruth (8-22)

Naomi's husband and sons were dead. Her life was empty. She heard that the famine in Israel had abated, so she decided to go home to Bethlehem. She advised her two daughters-in-law to go back to their own families to solve their marriage problems. Orpah accepted Naomi's advice, kissed her good-bye and left. But Ruth made a decision to give up her own marriage and her

future and go with her mother-in-law back to Israel. She would be faithful to Naomi, to Naomi's people and to Naomi's God.

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to be faithful to you, regardless of human loss.

One Word: A decision of faith

## RUTH MEETS BOAZ

Ruth 2:1-16

Key Verse: 2:12

### 1. Gleaning in the barley fields (1-3)

Ruth had given no thought to her own future when she followed her widowed mother-in-law. They returned to Bethlehem, and Ruth went to work to support herself and Naomi. She gleaned grain in the barley fields, and unknowingly, she gleaned in the field of Boaz, a wealthy relative of her dead husband.

### 2. Under the wings of the God of Israel (4-16)

Boaz noticed Ruth. He had heard of her decision of faith to take care of her mother-in-law and to leave her own land to come and live with God's people. He was moved by her faith and by her beauty. He told her to glean only in his field, and he instructed his men to protect her. When she thanked him, he prayed that God might bless her richly for taking refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. She responded with gracious humility. Then he invited her to lunch. He instructed his harvesters to leave grain behind for her to glean.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Ruth's example of unselfish commitment and faith. Help me to be faithful and hardworking.

One Word: Refuge under the wings of God

## HE SHOWS KINDNESS TO THE LIVING AND DEAD

Ruth 2:17-23

Key Verse: 2:20

### 1. Blessed be the man who took notice (17-19)

Ruth worked hard all day, and in the evening when she returned home to Naomi, she brought almost a bushel of grain. This was an extraordinary amount of grain for a gleaner to bring. Also, she brought a "doggie bag" of left-overs from lunch! So Naomi knew that someone had been especially kind to Ruth. She said, "Blessed be the man who took notice of you."

## 2. He is one of our kinsman-redeemers (20-23)

When Ruth told Naomi that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz, a new hope came into Naomi's heart, for Boaz was her dead husband's relative. According to the levirate law, Boaz was one who could possibly redeem the family and property of Elimelech. God had not forgotten her family. He was still showing his kindness to the dead and to the living. Ruth confided in Naomi that Boaz had urged her to glean only in his field until the harvest ended.

Prayer: Lord, give us eyes to see your hand working in our lives, and a heart to thank and praise you.

One Word: God shows kindness

## RUTH'S OBEDIENCE

Ruth 3:1-18

Key Verse: 3:5

### 1. I will do whatever you say (1-8)

Naomi decided that the time had come for action. Ruth had been very circumspect in her relationship with Boaz. Now, Naomi gave her a task that required courage. She was to go to Boaz at night, while he slept on the threshing floor after a hard day's work and a good meal, and ask him, as a kinsman-redeemer, to marry her and redeem her husband's name and property. Suppose he rejected her? Suppose he took advantage of her? Ruth didn't calculate. She carefully followed Naomi's instructions.

### 2. Don't go back empty-handed (9-18)

Boaz did not misunderstand Ruth or despise her. He was grateful. His first words were, "The Lord bless you." He knew her noble character (11). He knew that Naomi had sent her (15). He had already investigated the possibilities of redeeming her. He was ready to act. God was opening a way for two women of faith.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my pride; help me to learn the obedience that comes from faith.

One Word: I will do whatever you say

## KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Ruth 4:1-12

Key Verse: 4:10

### 1. You redeem it yourself. I cannot (1-6)

According to the levirate law, the brother or the nearest kinsman should marry the widow of the deceased and raise up children in his name. Ruth's invitation to Boaz (3:9) was based on this law. There was, however, a nearer kinsman than Boaz who had the first right of redemption. When Boaz told him about Elimelech's property, he wanted to redeem it. But when he learned that he must marry the widow of a dead relative, he backed out. He didn't want to risk anything. Boaz counted the cost and became the kinsman-redeemer. His redemptive act reminds us of God's grace.

## 2. Like Rachel and Leah, Judah and Tamar (7-12)

The elders blessed their marriage. Rachel and Leah, wives of Jacob, struggled with each other, but they built up Israel (Ge 29-30). Tamar, like Ruth, did a hard thing to preserve Judah's family (38). The marriage of Boaz and Ruth was set on the foundation of God's history.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for redeeming me by the costly grace of your Son, Jesus Christ.

One Word: Redemption is costly

## GOD BLESSES AND USES RUTH'S FAMILY

Ruth 4:13-22

Key Verse: 4:17

### 1. Naomi's son (13-17)

The book of Ruth began with the story of Naomi's tragedy. She returned to Bethlehem such an empty, sorrowful woman that she changed her name to "Mara" (bitter). But now her sorrow turned to joy. She was full. Ruth was better than seven sons, and God gave Ruth and Boaz a son. His name was Obed. He was called Naomi's son. Ruth, a Gentile woman who lived by faith, became a source of blessing to her mother-in-law and to the nation.

### 2. Israel's king (18-22)

Ruth's son became the grandfather of David, the great king who unified Israel and extended her borders and brought in her golden age. David was greatly loved. He was called a man after God's own heart. He was the man to whom God promised the Messiah. It is amazing grace and a sign of God's redemptive purpose for all people of the world that he chose a Gentile woman to be the direct ancestress of Jesus (Mt 1:4,6).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for blessing the faith and faithfulness of one woman. Help me to learn Ruth's faithfulness.

One Word: God blesses faithfulness

## Study Questions

### NAOMI AND RUTH

Ruth 1:1-22

Key Verse: 1:16

1. Read verses 1-2. What do these verses teach about the family of Elimelech? Why did the family go to Moab? (Historically, why should Israelites have nothing to do with Moabites? (See Dt 23:3; Nu 25:1)
2. Read verses 3-5. How did this family fare in Moab? What was Naomi's sorrowful situation after 10 years?
3. Read verses 6-13. Why did Naomi decide to return to Bethlehem in Judah? What direction did she give her two widowed daughter-in-laws? What shows her good relationship with and good influence on her daughter-in-laws? Why did she insist that they go home?
4. Read verses 14-18. What did the two girls do? What did Ruth say? What does this show about her faith and her humanity?
5. Read verses 19-22. How was Naomi welcomed? How does she express her sorrow and despair and fatalistic view of life? What was the one bright spot in her life?

### RUTH MEETS BOAZ

Ruth 2:1-23

Key Verse: 2:12

1. Read verses 1-3. How does the writer introduce Boaz? How did Ruth propose to support herself and her mother-in-law? How did this lead her to meet Boaz?
2. Read verses 4-10. How did Boaz first take notice of Ruth? How did he show kindness to her? Read verses 11-12. What impressed him about Ruth? How did he bless her?
3. Read verses 13-18. How else did Boaz show her hospitality and how did he protect Ruth? What did she bring to her mother-in-law? How does this reveal her thoughtfulness and love?
4. Read verses 19-23. from the conversation between Naomi and Ruth what can we tell about their relationship? What further information can we learn about Boaz? What hope seems to have

crept into Naomi's heart? What did Ruth do after this?

## RUTH'S OBEDIENCE

Ruth 3:1-18

Key Verse: 3:5

1. Read verses 1-6. What decision did Naomi make and what plan of action did she suggest to Ruth? How did Ruth respond? Why might obedience have been difficult?
2. Read verses 7-9. What did Boaz say when he discovered Ruth? What does his reaction show about his character? How did Ruth explain her presence?
3. Read verses 10-14. How did Boaz respond to Ruth's implicit proposal of marriage? What shows that he had already thought about it? What problem remained? How did he further protect and care for Ruth?
4. Read verses 15-18. How did Boaz communicate with Naomi? How did Naomi interpret Boaz' actions? What can we learn about obedience from this chapter?

## KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Ruth 4:1-22

Key Verse: 4:14

1. Read verses 1-10. Explain the concept of kinsman-redeemer. How did Boaz clear up the matter of there being another man who was more qualified to be kinsman-redeemer?
2. Read verses 11-12. How did the elders of the city bless Boaz? Why did they mention Rachel and Leah, Perez, Tamar and Judah?
3. Read verses 13-23. What can we learn about God who changes sorrow into joy, fatalism into hope? What was the historical significance of the son of Boaz and Ruth? What can we learn about God who works in simple people of faith to accomplish his history?