



**THRU** the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

# RUTH

BIBLE COMPANION



HISTORY

# READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of Ruth heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



**Begin with prayer.** Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



**As you study, read the Bible passage first.** Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



**If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to [TTB.org/Ruth](http://TTB.org/Ruth)** (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



**After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion.** Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

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LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU  
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

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COLOSSIANS 3:16<sup>A</sup>

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## LESSON 1

# THE PRODIGAL FAMILY



Begin with prayer



Read **Ruth 1**



Listen at [TTB.org/Ruth](https://www.TTB.org/Ruth) to ***Ruth Introduction—1:9*** and ***Ruth 1:10—2:2***

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When you think of the grand and sweeping truth the Bible covers, from cover to cover, you might wonder why God devotes an entire book to the story of a young woman who came from a foreign country into the land of Israel. She left paganism and idolatry behind and met the Lord God of Israel, and as her future husband said, she found in Him safety, “*under whose wings you came to trust.*”

The book of Ruth has only four short chapters, but they contain mighty messages. First, it tells us about the family line that leads to the Lord Jesus Christ and explains how He came from the line of David. It alone connects David’s line with the tribe of Judah, links the story that begins in Genesis, and follows it to the stable in Bethlehem and to the Cross. This alone could be why the book of Ruth is included in the canon of Scripture.

But there’s another reason, and it’s wrapped up in a metaphor—a beautiful picture of redemption fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Since God is the only one who can redeem us, He needed to become a kinsman-redeemer, a mediator.

In our story, that role is played by Boaz. He acts out the role of kinsman-redeemer and pictures for us a redemption that we need to see to understand the atonement. This little book of Ruth tells the simple story of first a family, then a couple who love each other. They were ordinary, average folk, and their love story mirrors the divine love of a Savior for you and me. This wonderful love story unfolds before us.

The book of Ruth can be divided in different ways. We'll organize our study around its geography—where that part of the story took place.

- Chapter 1 is in the land of Moab.
- Chapter 2 takes place in Boaz's fields.
- Chapter 3 is on Boaz's threshing floor.
- Chapter 4 wraps it up in the heart and home of Boaz. And here's a spoiler alert—it involves a special baby.

## CHAPTER 1: THE LAND OF MOAB

***Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.*** –Ruth 1:1

The verse that opens the book of Ruth sounds like the reporting of a modern newspaper. Right away we know the time and the place. At the time when the judges ruled the land, there was a famine. A family from Bethlehem–Judah left Israel in search of food. This man, his wife, and two boys lived in Moab.

The time: “When the judges ruled.” Those were dark days, perhaps the darkest days in Israel's history. You remember that when the Israelites had been in Egyptian captivity, God had redeemed them by blood and by power and brought them through the wilderness into the Promised Land. You'd think this new generation, whose fathers had known the rigors of slavery in Egypt, would serve God in a very wonderful way. But they didn't.

The book of Judges tells a sorry and sordid story of how a people left serving the living and true God, and turned from Him to idolatry and moral corruption. Later it describes how they cried out to God when the enemy oppressed them, and how God graciously raised up judges to deliver them.

The events in the book of Ruth fit neatly into this period of the judges and are a light in this dark season of compromise, corruption, and confusion. This is the way God writes—He puts this lovely little story on the black background of sin during the time when judges ruled.

And now, the place of our story: Bethlehem–Judah. Do you recognize this town’s name? It’s a crazy thought, but Jesus Christ would never have been born in Bethlehem if the events recorded in the book of Ruth hadn’t taken place here first. Next time you sing “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” remember the Christmas story began way back in the wonderful Old Testament story of Ruth.

“Bethlehem” means “house of bread,” and “Judah” means “praise.” The story of Ruth begins and ends in the house of bread and praise.

This “certain man” lives in the house of bread and praise, but he goes to dwell in the country of Moab. There’s something in the Word of God about Moab that’s quite interesting—and almost humorous. Psalm 108:9 says, “Moab is My washpot,” which could be translated, “Moab is My garbage can.” This is what God says of Moab. The people who lived here were outcasts; they had a sordid and sorry start.

This family—a man named Elimelech, with his wife and two sons—leaves the house of bread and the house of praise and goes over to eat out of a garbage can. They are like the parable Jesus told of the prodigal son who left his father’s house where there was plenty and went to a foreign country where he eventually ate out of a pig’s trough. Like that, this is the story of a prodigal family.

When famine came to Elimelech’s land, he got frightened and left. The same was true for their father Abraham who got frightened when a famine came to that land during his lifetime, and he ran off to Egypt. Now here’s another famine—one of 13 mentioned in the Bible and, every time, it’s a judgment from God. They didn’t believe God could take care of them in the house of bread and praise, so they ran off to the land of Moab and God judged them.

Let’s get acquainted with this prodigal family. Elimelech’s name means “my God is King.” Just think of the testimony he gave where he worked; every time someone called his name, they didn’t say, “Elimelech.” In English, they said, “My God is King.” What a great name to have! However, it’s mighty bad to have that name and run off to Moab. He doesn’t act as if God is his King.

Naomi is his wife. Her name means “pleasant.” She’s a wonderful person with a happy outlook upon life. She’s the type that sees the bright side of circumstances and lives above the clouds. Other people complain and find fault, but not Naomi.

Elimelech and Naomi have two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, whose names mean “unhealthy” and “puny.” Two sickly boys.

We’re told that this prodigal family not only went to Moab, but they also made their home there. They stayed too long. Do you know what always happens to a Christian family—or to someone who is God’s child—that runs off to the far country? They always get a whipping there.

You know, that father who received back his prodigal son could have said to the servant, “Go get me my razor strap. I’m going to whip this boy within an inch of his life. He ran off and spent my money and disgraced my name. I’ll teach him.” But he didn’t do that. He threw his arms around the boy. He told the servant to go kill the fatted calf and bring the best robe for his son. You see, many Christians today think God is a very stern, harsh Father and that if you come back to Him, He won’t receive you, but He’ll punish you. He won’t whip you, friend. You’ll get your whipping in the far country. That’s where the prodigal son got his, and I’ll tell you, he got a good one. And this family here is going to be taken to the woodshed. They’re going to get a whipping in the far country.

Elimelech’s family is a fine family who made a mistake. They go to the land of Moab—they go to eat out of the garbage can and they continue living there. Notice what happens: “Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.” When you get away from God, that’s when trouble comes.

When Elimelech died, the sons married two women of Moab, Orpah and Ruth, and they lived there ten years. That said, the very minute the sons married women from outside of the land of Israel, they broke the Mosaic Law. They had gotten out of fellowship with God by going to that far country, and the next step is always apostasy, to continue on in sin and even multiply it. And that’s exactly what happened.

The first of the wives, Orpah’s name means “deer” or “fawn.” After Orpah, we meet the one we’re really interested in: Ruth, who married Mahlon. The many different meanings for the name Ruth all come down to something like “beauty” and “personality plus.” In the purest sense, she’s glamorous.

(Why she ever married this sickly boy is difficult to understand at first, but more on that later.) Ruth is a remarkable person. Everyone who meets her falls in love with her because she happens to be one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ. In His humanity, Jesus had Ruth's blood flowing through His veins.

Trouble has come to this prodigal family in the far country, and more trouble is coming to Naomi. She lost her husband, her two sons married Moabite women, and then her sons died. Her entire family gone, all she has left are two daughters-in-law, foreign girls.

Naomi then hears that the famine is over back in the Promised Land. There was bread and praise again in Bethlehem, and she wants to go home. She wasn't supposed to live apart from her homeland, and she won't be happy again until she returns.

Naomi's two daughters-in-law wanted to go with her back to Israel. But the Moabites and the Israelites just didn't have anything to do with each other. If they wanted to return with her, Naomi let them know what it would cost them. First, they'd never be able to marry again. As young women, this was a hard blow. It would also mean poverty for them. Ruth had lost all of her property and wealth. She didn't know how she would even support herself.

Naomi blessed her daughters-in-law and told them to go back to their childhood homes. She blessed them by saying, *"May the Lord be as kind to you as you were to me and our loved ones who have died."* They'd been good daughters-in-law, and she wanted the best for them. *"May God give each of you a new home and a new husband in your own land!"* Naomi knew it would be better for them to stay in Moab, since they wouldn't have a chance at a happy life in Israel. She kissed them and they all cried openly. Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah—three widows standing at a crossroads in the land of Moab.

At first, Ruth and Orpah said, *"We will go with you!"* But Naomi shook her head and said, *"Why? Will I have more sons to be your husbands?"* The Mosaic Law said that when a man died, the nearest of kin, usually his brother, was to marry his wife. This was a very strange law—a law about the kinsman-redeemer.

So Naomi made it clear they should stay in Moab. She said it grieved her that God's hand had dealt her a hard blow. God had judged Naomi's family, and she didn't want them to suffer with her. When they heard that, they cried again.



If we saw three women weeping, we may not think anything of great importance was happening, but their decision that day determined whether or not Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem. If the right decision is not made, you might as well send word to the wise men not to come, because Jesus won't be born there. This was a tremendous decision being made.

Orpah made the decision to go back home, back to idolatry, back to her family. She kissed Naomi and walked off the page of Scripture into silence and oblivion. We never hear of her again.

But Ruth, she clung to Naomi. Naomi wanted to test her to see if she was genuine or not. She told her to go back to her gods, to go back with her sister-in-law. But Ruth chose Naomi—and with Naomi, she chose God. She made a decision to trust Him for time and eternity. Ruth is mentioned in the very first chapter of the New Testament in the genealogy that led to Christ.

She made a sevenfold decision in that moment, and it's a *real* decision for God that she followed through with.

1. Ruth said first, "For wherever you go, I will go." She's saying to Naomi, *"I made a decision to go with you, and I'm going. I'm not using this as a passport just to get into Palestine."*
2. "And wherever you lodge, I will lodge." She would not only go with Naomi, she'd identify herself with her. It's like she said, *"I accept your poverty."*
3. "Your people shall be my people." She said, *"I'm forsaking my people, idolators, and I'm identifying myself with God's people."*
4. "Your God [will be] my God." Perhaps the reason Ruth married that "puny" guy was because Ruth had heard for the first time about the living and true God. She married into that family because she had come to know the living and true God.
5. "Where you die, will I die."
6. "And there will I be buried." That is more meaningful to Ruth than it sounds like to us today. Ruth is saying, *"The hope of Israel is my hope."* The people of Israel believed they would be raised from the dead to live in that land. They were seeking a "city ... whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10), which will be a reality on this earth someday. That's the Old Testament hope.
7. And finally, *"I make this decision for time and for eternity."*

Naomi knew that when this girl made a decision, it was a real decision, it would stick. So, she didn't need to say anything else to Ruth.

And so we follow them—all the way back to Bethlehem. When the people saw Naomi, they hardly recognized her. Naomi said, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” *“The Lord has brought me home empty.”*

This is a good time to arrive in Bethlehem; it's barley harvest time.

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**NEXT: Go into Boaz's fields.**

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## LESSON 1

# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What does it mean that God ordained a book of the Bible to be about a relatively obscure young girl from a culture outside of Israel? What makes this book special?
  
2. Do you find the word study on people's names interesting? Do you know what your name means? If you could choose a name for yourself that reflects what you'd like to be known for, what would that name be?
  
3. What lessons come to mind about how Elimelech's family searched for provision outside of the land God had given them?

WE HAVE A KINSMAN,  
ONE WHO WAS MADE LIKE  
WE ARE, YET SINLESSS—

*"holy, harmless, undefiled,  
separate from sinners."*

HE IS THE ONE WHO  
IS ABLE TO SAVE US TO  
THE UTMOST.



THRU the BIBLE

## LESSON 2

# LOVE IS IN THE AIR



Begin with prayer



Read **Ruth 2**



Listen at [TTB.org/Ruth](https://www.TTB.org/Ruth) to **Ruth 2:3-13** and **Ruth 2:14-23**

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In every generation, in every culture, there are people who need the help of a community to survive. When God wrote the Law of Moses, He made provision for these poor and the strangers in the land. The Law says that when you gather up the harvest of your field, you should leave the corners. Let the poor and the needy glean—pick up what was left behind. (See Leviticus 19:9 and 23:22.) This one law saved many lives.

When Ruth and Naomi set up house in Bethlehem, each day Ruth would go glean in the fields and bring home enough for them to eat. This alone proved how poor these ladies were. Now it just so happened that Ruth gleaned in the field that belonged to Boaz.

Boaz is Elimelech's kinsman (Naomi's husband), likely his cousin. He's the actual hero of our story. Boaz's name means "strength," and he was called a "mighty man of wealth" or "of the Law." He's also called "a mighty man of war." Likely when Ruth and Naomi first returned, Boaz was away at war in one of the many campaigns carried out during the times of the judges.

Upon his return, one morning, Boaz went out to inspect his field. He said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you,” and they responded, “The LORD bless you.” (What a great capital/labor relationship existed there in Boaz’s fields!) Then Boaz sees Ruth in the field gleaning and thinks, *“Where in the world has she been all my life?”* He asks his foreman about Ruth.

*“This Moabite woman asked to glean, and I couldn’t turn her down. After all, the Mosaic system permits her to come in here and glean since she’s poor and a stranger.”* But he doesn’t need to be apologetic, because I believe Boaz has fallen in love with this girl at first sight.

This scene reveals something of Ruth’s attractiveness, too. Her name means “beauty, personality;” she’s a true glamour girl. What all the other girls and beauties of Bethlehem had not been able to accomplish (get Boaz’s attention), this girl did without even trying.

Boaz turns to her and says, *“From now on, don’t go to anyone else’s field. I want you always to glean in my field.”* Then, he not only invites her to stay in the field, but he promises to protect her. He orders all his workers to guard her and keep her from harm. In that day it was dangerous to be a woman in Ruth’s position—a widow, a woman from Moab. She was a target of insults and injury. Recognizing that, Boaz immediately puts his cloak of protection around her.

When Ruth hears Boaz make this generous and noble gesture, she falls on her face and bows to the ground and says, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” Remember Ruth came with Naomi from Moab, fully expecting to be poverty-stricken and a widow the rest of her life. She expected the Jews to turn their backs on her because they hated the Moabites. Even the Mosaic Law shut a Moabite out from the congregation of the Lord (because they had had a very rough beginning). Realizing all of that, she still came.

But did you notice how this little book of Ruth reveals something about God? Racial barriers *were* broken down, and God is concerned and loves even those who carry a stigma and a judgment.

Such is the picture of us today. “... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). A love like that isn’t easy to find in any day. Only God has a real concern for people. The love He shows for sinners is unheard of—yet here it is. Ruth asks Boaz why he’s showing her grace. She’s absolutely startled. She can’t understand why he’s breaking a racial barrier.

Bethlehem was evidently given over to gossip, as most places are, and they were gossiping about this foreign girl. But what they were saying was good. They were amazed at her. They said, *“Wow. This young foreign girl has come back with her mother-in-law. She takes care of her. She’s a wonderful person.”* In addition to all the good Boaz hears about Ruth’s character, he couldn’t believe that she is also so attractive. All these qualities are wrapped up in one person. He acknowledges the tremendous sacrifice Ruth has made. He says, *“I’ve heard all about you—heard about the way you treated your mother-in-law after the death of her husband, and how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and have come to live among strangers. May God reward you well for what you’ve done.”*

Ruth had come to trust the Lord God. This is why she left Moab and made that radical decision. She had turned from idolatry to trust the living and true God. She brought this wonderful testimony to Israel. Boaz says she needs to be applauded for this sacrifice and if he has anything to do with it, he’s going to see that she gets a full reward. He’s in love with her and he wants to redeem her.

So, he begins by asking her to lunch—that same day! She joins his staff at the table, and he made sure that Ruth ate all she wanted. In a day when almost everyone was hungry and hardly ever full, this was a thoughtful, lavish gesture on Boaz’s part.

Is Boaz interested in her? You bet. As an aside, he tells his workmen to let Ruth glean up with the reapers (getting the first pass at the harvest). Usually the gleaners were made to walk far behind, picking up leftovers. The workers were also instructed to drop handfuls of grain on purpose to make it easy for Ruth. *“Show her every consideration and courtesy.”* That first day she gleaned more than a bushel of barley—a good day’s wage for a regular worker and an amazing haul for a gleaner.

When Ruth gets home with this tremendous amount of grain, Naomi said she had never seen anything like it! *“Someone must really like you!”* And so Ruth tells her the whole story. To this point, Ruth still doesn’t know who Boaz is, but Naomi does. She knows Boaz is their nearest kinsman.

As a sidenote to our story, see Boaz as a picture and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. It can be said of us that we have a kinsman also, one who was made like we are, yet sinless—“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26). He is the one who is able to save us to the uttermost.

In our story of Ruth, we see the law of the kinsman-redeemer (*goel*, explained in Leviticus 25) apply to the land, to individuals, and to widows. It's amazing. We don't have anything like it today. This was God's provision for taking care of His people, like the first law of mandatory gleaning rights for the poor. God gave the law for a land and for a people. Here in the book of Ruth we see the law of the kinsman-redeemer in operation.

God gave His children the Promised Land; it was theirs. But they occupied it only as they were faithful to Him. When they were unfaithful, God put them out of the land. God gave them title to the land (and they still have title to it to this day). He distributed the land according to tribes—a certain tribe had a certain section of the land. (Many Bibles have maps in the back which show the division of the land among the tribes of Israel.) The law made provision for the lean times or famine (often because of unfaithfulness to God). If the land didn't produce, a poor man could sell his mortgage to a rich neighbor—but only for 50 years. At the Year of Jubilee, celebrated every 50 years, all debts were canceled, and the land reverted back to the original family. If, however, a rich uncle came along and paid back the debt early, the land could be returned to the owner. That was God's method. It's wonderful to have a rich uncle. Uncle Redeemer.

This law of redemption also applied to people. Often because of debt, people were sold into slavery. If one day a rich uncle comes down the road taking out his wallet, he can pay off his relative's debt. He has redeemed him, and the man can go free.

The kinsman-redeemer is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He paid our debt and sets us free. Some talk about Jesus' death as atonement—it covers up our sin. But redemption is used in the New Testament rather than atonement because Jesus' death paid a price so that the one who is redeemed may go free.

Did you know that Jesus Christ not only died to redeem us, but also to redeem this earth? Someday the earth will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. That is part of His redemption.

The only example we have in the Bible of a kinsman-redeemer is Boaz, and his story reveals the love side of redemption. Boaz, likely a cousin to Naomi's husband, Elimelech, and therefore a cousin to Ruth's first husband, is the



widow's next kinsmen. Boaz isn't required to act as the redeemer. In fact, another kinsman, a nearer relative than Boaz, didn't care for Ruth and turned down the opportunity. But Boaz loved Ruth. That made the difference.

God doesn't have to redeem us. We are lost *sinner*s. If He doesn't redeem us, He is still a just and holy God. But He loves us. Salvation by redemption is a love story told here in simple language about an immigrant girl from Moab and kind and loving bachelor in the land of Israel, but it's really the story of a loving God and a Savior who will pay the price.

Is Boaz interested in Ruth? Yes, he is. He is a beautiful picture of a Savior who loves us, who came 2000 years ago so He might redeem us.

So, back to our story. For every afternoon for the next six weeks, Ruth and Boaz walk home from the field together. Boaz is in love with Ruth and the little town of Bethlehem is stirring with the news, "*Our most eligible bachelor has fallen.*" Naomi likely looked out the window, saw them coming, and knew Ruth needed to do something.

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**NEXT: We'll see how Boaz makes every effort to make Ruth his wife. But there is one big hurdle in the way ...**

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## LESSON 2



### FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What is it about Ruth's character and personality that make her so attractive?
2. What does this book say about what God thinks about racial tensions and care for the poor?
3. What does it mean "to redeem"? Put it in context with "redeeming a coupon" or "redeeming a bad situation." How will Boaz redeem Ruth, Naomi, and their future?

## LESSON 3

# IT'S RUTH'S MOVE



Begin with prayer



Read **Ruth 3**



Listen at [TTB.org/Ruth](https://www.TTB.org/Ruth) to **Ruth 3:1-3** and **Ruth 3:4-18**

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So far in this little love story, we've learned about two laws unique to the culture that seem a little strange to us. Now we'll hear of a third.

When a man dies without children, his widow is responsible to marry one of his brothers or a near relative. This is their duty to her dead husband, and it keeps families together. This also was God's provision for the widow. It puts her in a unique position in the family—every brother has a personal interest in his brother's choice of a wife, since he might one day have to marry her himself! This law also keeps family land in the family. A family could lose their land out of debt, but in the Year of Jubilee it would automatically return to the original owner. However, a widow might marry a stranger who would gain ownership to the property. This is how God protected the land for the family.

As an immigrant to Israel, Ruth likely didn't know about her right as a widow, so Naomi takes over as a matchmaker. She knows Boaz is a near kinsman. And she guessed by his actions that Boaz has his eye on Ruth. The truth is Boaz is sweating it out. His hands are tied. He can't claim Ruth for his wife, since it's Ruth's move to claim him as her husband. Ruth actually has a choice, since there was another kinsman who was nearer than Boaz, and Ruth could claim *him* if she wanted to. Boaz doesn't know who she'll pick, so he's waiting for Ruth to make the move. And that's when Naomi nudges Ruth.

Now, let's understand the setting. Although the story of Ruth also takes place during the time of the judges, apparently it was at a season when Israel walked with the Lord. A famine had just ended, along with God's judgment. The land was at peace.

It's harvest time, and our story now moves to Boaz's farm's threshing floor. Usually a threshing floor was located on top of a hill to catch any blowing wind to harvest the grain. (In contrast, a winepress was located at the bottom of a hill, because it was easier to carry the grapes downhill.)

Every harvest after the grain was cut, it was taken to the threshing floor. In the late afternoon a breeze would come up and blow into the night. As long as the breeze blew, they would thresh. Sheaves of grain were spread on the floor and trampled by oxen drawing a sled. Then the people took a flail and threw the grain high into the air so that the chaff would blow away and the good grain would come down on the threshing floor.

This was a great season of the year. They feasted and sang psalms and hymns and thanked God for an abundant harvest. Several of the feast days of Israel—the Feast of Firstfruits and even Pentecost—were identified with that threshing floor. Every night the families came up and camped around the threshing floor, and they would eat a big meal together. After the feast was over, the men would sleep around the grain to protect it from looters or thieves who might break through the circle and steal their harvest.

All during this harvest season Naomi had been watching Ruth and Boaz come home from the fields into Bethlehem. Now the barley was gathered, the wheat was gathered, and Naomi notices that Ruth is modest and not making any claim upon this man. She also notices the obvious, that Boaz is in love with her. And so Naomi asks Ruth if she should seek “rest” for her. This is her way of asking Ruth if she should seek a marriage for them. She explains to Ruth that she has a right to claim Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer. In fact, she must do it to honor their family. The best time was coming, when the feast days are over.

Naomi gives Ruth some very definite instructions. She tells her to do four things: Go clean up, put on some perfume, a pretty dress, and then get in front of that man and tell him you choose him to be your kinsman-redeemer. The specifics of what Naomi told her to do was in harmony with Israel's laws and social conventions. She didn't suggest anything improper, much less immoral (as some tell this story). Naomi tells her to remove the throw

blanket that covered Boaz's legs and feet while he slept at the threshing floor and ask him to cover her with it. This historical custom was a symbolic way of requesting Boaz's protection as her husband.

Under the Mosaic Law, Ruth is not only entitled to and has a right to claim Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer, but she *must* claim him. And not only that, it's obvious that Boaz wants to be her kinsman-redeemer. This girl is going to obey her mother-in-law, who tells Ruth to claim this blessing God has provided. The incident that is taking place makes possible the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth, for these events before us in the book of Ruth are taking place in the town where Jesus will be born.

So, after dinner when Boaz was happy and full, he lay down at the far end of the grain heap. Then Ruth crept up quietly, uncovered his legs, and lay down beside him. In the middle of the night, Boaz got cold because the blanket had been pulled off him. He sat up, reached down, and a woman was there! *"Who are you?"* he asked. *"I am Ruth, your maidservant,"* she replied. *"Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer."*

What a lovely picture. Ruth is saying, *"I want you as my husband, my kinsman-redeemer."* That really ignited Boaz's thinking. He realized Ruth hadn't come to Israel to find a husband; she had taken a very quiet, retired place. And now she is claiming Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer, and he is more than willing to do the job. She's doing this legal formality in such a lovely fashion. She could have taken him into court. She could have called the elders of the city together and told Boaz outright, *"I claim you as my kinsman-redeemer,"* but Naomi suggested this more gracious way.

Boaz has been waiting to hear this from Ruth and now he is free to act. Ruth's good reputation with the people of Bethlehem made it easy for him to make plans. Under ordinary circumstances, Ruth would have been an outcast, but the people loved her.

Boaz had looked into Ruth's situation and realized there was another relative closer than him who deserved first opportunity. Possibly this other kinsman was richer than Boaz. The choice was up to Ruth. Now the minute she lets him know, he tells her about the other kinsman who has priority. Perhaps this other kinsman was Elimelech's brother, an uncle of Ruth's first husband, whereas Boaz was likely a cousin. Boaz tells her, *"I want to be your kinsman-redeemer, but first I'll have to see about this other man's decision."*

Boaz promises that in the morning, he will investigate what the other man wants to do. If he wants to act as Ruth's kinsman, Boaz has a plan to change his mind. Until then, Boaz says Ruth should stay through the night; she shouldn't return to Bethlehem in the dark when the roads were unsafe. Even in this decision, he was protecting her.

In the morning before dawn, Boaz measures out a generous portion of grain as a gift and sends her home. Naomi welcomes her with a matchmaker's glint in her eyes. Perhaps Ruth had been reluctant to go. But Naomi recognized love when she saw it, and she asks Ruth now if she had been right. *"Yes? Are you Mrs. Boaz?"*

From here on Boaz will be the man of action and Ruth will wait expectantly on him. And so Ruth 3 concludes with Naomi saying to Ruth, "The man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day." And she said to Ruth, "Sit still, my daughter. *There's nothing more for you to do. When you claimed him as your redeemer, that's all he asked you to do. The work of redemption is his work.*"

Like Boaz to Ruth, Jesus Christ loves us and gave Himself for us in order that He might redeem us. It's His work to do. What a wonderful, warm experience it is to know that we have a Savior who died for us, who loves us, and lives for us today.

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**NEXT: Boaz takes Ruth as his wife, a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ coming to take the church as His bride.**

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## LESSON 3



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. The story of Ruth takes place at an important holiday called Firstfruits, one of the seven feasts of Israel, that occurs just after Passover at the beginning of the barley harvest. The concept of “first things belong to God” is pictured in this holiday, as Israel offered the first fruit of the harvest to God in thanksgiving. How can holidays like this more fully picture your thanksgiving to God for what He’s done for us (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc.)?
  
2. This book is about how God redeemed Ruth—but really it also shows us how Naomi was redeemed, too. Consider the path of her story. What do we see about God’s love for us in her story?
  
3. We’re not told much about what Ruth was thinking about in Naomi’s strategy. Consider the path of Ruth’s story—from widowhood, to faith in God, to moving to Israel, to caring for Naomi, to meeting Boaz—and now to this possibility. Read chapter 3 and consider what might Ruth be thinking. How does her life picture mercy and grace?

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THRU the BIBLE



## LESSON 4

# WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN A WIFE



Begin with prayer



Read **Ruth 4**



Listen at [TTB.org/Ruth](https://www.TTB.org/Ruth) to **Ruth 3:18–4:22**

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Ruth has come all the way from the land of Moab into Boaz's heart and home. And we who were at one time strangers, far from God, without hope in the world, now have been made near by the blood of Christ (see Ephesians 2:12, 13). Ruth's story is our story, too. Today we are in the family of God; we are in His heart. One day soon we will be with Him, in His home. This is all possible through Jesus Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer.

In this final chapter of the book of Ruth, we get a picture of what Jesus did for us through the life of Boaz and what Boaz did to win Ruth as his wife.

Up until now in our story, Boaz has had to wait for Ruth to claim him as her kinsman-redeemer. Now he is free to move. And Ruth must wait and let him be the one to make all the arrangements. Boaz will now step out into the open and redeem her, but in so doing, he is jeopardizing everything he has and everything that he is. But he wants to do this because he loves her. This is the great message of this book: Redemption is a romance; because God loves us, He redeemed us.

The first thing Boaz does is call a meeting at the city gate. In that day, the gate served as the courthouse. The gate was the place where everybody came in or went out. So Boaz went to the gate, sat down, and waited to find

the man that was a nearer kinsman to Ruth. This nearer relative had the first right of refusal, so to speak, on redeeming Ruth. When Boaz sees him, he tells him he has something important to discuss.

Boaz then called ten men, acting as elders or judges, to hear Boaz's case with his relative. Boaz's strategy is quite remarkable. He begins his case with the issue of property. Boaz reminds "the court" that Naomi, recently returned from Moab, previously owned land with her husband, their brother Elimelech. Likely when Elimelech and Naomi fell on hard times during the famine, they sold their property. Naomi returned to Israel, but had nothing with which to buy it back. As specified by the law of the Year of Jubilee, she would have received their property back after 50 years, but that was still a long way off.

Boaz asked the court, *"What will happen now to Naomi? Will a kinsman-redeemer come forward?"* Boaz calls this other kinsman's attention, not to Ruth, but to the property that belonged to Elimelech. He wants to know whether this other kinsman will redeem it. A logical step; property had to be redeemed before a person could be redeemed.

Boaz then willingly says, as the nearest kinsman, this man has the right to redeem it. But if he won't, then Boaz will. So, does he want to be the redeemer? Will he redeem this property in order that it might be given to Naomi before the Year of Jubilee?

The other kinsman responds, *"Yes, I will redeem it."* Apparently he was a generous man, and he was willing to play his part. Likely this was also a matter of honor. If he refused to be a kinsman, he would have been criticized and seen as a disgrace.

When this man agreed to redeem the property, Boaz's heart must have gone down into his socks. But he wouldn't give up. He had prepared for this turn, and he was now ready to reveal his hand and show that there was more to this case than just a piece of property.

Then Boaz said, *"Oh, I forgot to tell you that there's another matter connected to this property—a woman named, Ruth. She's a Moabitess. She married Elimelech's son, Mahlon. Now that both he and Elimelech are dead, she'll be the one to inherit this land. So the day that you redeem this property, you've also got to redeem this woman; that is, you'll have to marry Ruth."*

Boaz made the situation very clear. Notice he let the man know the nationality of the woman involved. “She is a *Moabitess*.” Mosaic Law says very specifically in Deuteronomy 23:3 that if this man brought Ruth into the congregation of the Lord, it would jeopardize his own property. Boaz doesn’t mind that risk; in fact, he’s delighted to do that because he loves her and is willing to make whatever necessary sacrifice. This other man doesn’t even know Ruth. All he knows is that she is a woman of Moab. Regardless of what he may have heard about her, he makes it clear he’s not interested in marrying her. Likely he’s already married with grown children. His property would already be an allotted inheritance to his children. To marry this woman of Moab would jeopardize everything he owned. Very candidly, she just isn’t worth it to him, so he tells Boaz in effect, *“You go ahead and take my right of redemption to yourself if this is what you want to do.”*

The kinsman-redeemer is one of the most marvelous pictures we have of our Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed us. But this other kinsman also pictures another spiritual principle. He represents the Law. It was *impossible* for the Law to redeem us. That’s made very clear in the New Testament (Romans 3:2;, 2 Corinthians 3:7-9). The Law was given to reveal our true condition and never to be a redeemer. The Law condemned us rather than saved us. It was given as an attempt to control the old nature. No one is ever saved by keeping the Law or living a good life. This is why the great Day of Atonement was so important. It covered the sins of ignorance for everyone in Israel. On that day they were reminded they needed a Savior, even to deliver them from the Law.

Many people foolishly say they live by the Law, they keep the Ten Commandments or live by the Sermon on the Mount. But really, do they? They might say, *“Well, I’m trying really hard to.”* But God doesn’t say, *try hard*. He says, *“Do these things.”* You can’t come halfway. You must have somebody who will love you, somebody who will pay the penalty of your sins. That’s the only way you’ll ever get saved. You can’t ever measure up to God’s standard or be good enough. We fall short every time. We need a Kinsman-Redeemer today who loves us and who was not only willing to risk everything, but who actually gave His life. When He took our place, He paid an awful penalty. He died upon the cross for our sins.

Back at the city gate, now that Boaz knows his path is clear to redeem Ruth, he follows through as dictated by Deuteronomy 25. Through this whole transaction, Boaz acts on Ruth’s place. On her behalf and in front of all the judges and witnesses, he takes off the shoe of the other man, and now this

girl can become his wife. (Another strange practice that fit in the cultural laws of the day.) He says, *“You are witnesses today that I have bought from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon—I’ll take Ruth as my wife and keep the name and the memory and the reputation of the deceased alive along with his inheritance.”*

And everyone in Bethlehem were happy in this because Ruth, though an outsider, has made a wonderful name for herself among them. She, as a Moabite, had made a tremendous sacrifice to trust God as her Savior.

As a man chooses a woman for his bride, and as Boaz claimed Ruth, so Christ came to this earth for His bride. He is the One who demonstrated His love by dying for us. And we are to respond to His love. We are to receive Him as Savior, then come to know Him. Oh, friend, that should be the ambition of every Christian—to *know* Him (see Philippians 3:10). Oh, that we might know Him, our Kinsman-Redeemer, and love Him because He first loved us.

We have a Kinsman today, and that’s wonderful news. Look at this poor, sin-stained world; it’s confused, not knowing where to turn. Look at people’s faces. Their lives seem almost aimless, without hope, without God in the world. They need a Kinsman. It’s tragic to see people celebrate Christmas or Easter or anything that relates to Christ without knowing He is their Kinsman and without having received Him as their Redeemer.

To wrap up Naomi’s story, take a look now into her home. There she is, with her grandson on her knee. How precious he is to her. Although he was of no blood kin to Naomi, this little boy, Obed, was legally her grandson. Undoubtedly, he became a little servant to Naomi in her old age and took the place left vacant by the death of her husband and two sons. Her estate, of course, would go to this son of Boaz and Ruth.

Next we’re told of Obed’s genealogy. Obed is the father of Jesse, who is the father of David. In one sense this genealogy that concludes the book of Ruth is just about as important as any portion of the Old Testament because it alone connects David’s family with the tribe of Judah. This little book of Ruth has a beautiful place, a crown jewel, in God’s plan.

## LESSON 4




## **FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. In your own words, describe what a kinsman-redeemer is and why it's important. How does this picture describe what Jesus has done for us?
  
2. As a kinsman-redeemer, name some ways Boaz acted like Jesus.  
How do you understand what Jesus did for us a little better because of Boaz's example?
  
3. What do you like about this story of Ruth?



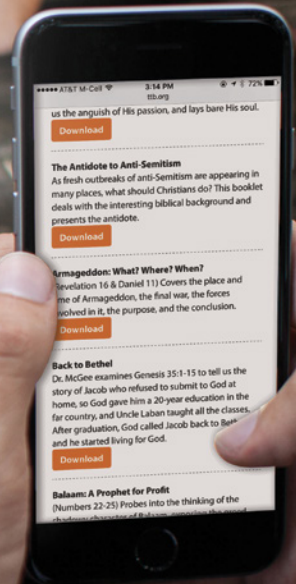
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