



God Blesses Ruth

Key Theme

- God blesses faithfulness.

Key Passages

- Ruth 1–4; Deuteronomy 25:5–6; 1 Peter 3:18;
2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:6–8

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Compare Boaz’s kindness toward Ruth with Jesus’s kindness toward sinners.
- Identify Ruth’s relationship to Jesus.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will place bookmarks at Ruth 1, 2, 4; Matthew 1; Luke 3; 2 Corinthians 5; and 1 Peter 3. Students will practice the memory verse using the Memory Verse Strips.

- Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today’s study passages.
- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD–ROM for each student. Print on cardstock if possible. Put complete sets into envelopes or small plastic bags.



Studying God’s Word

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When Naomi lost her husband and both her sons in the land of Moab, she returned to her home in Bethlehem without them. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, proved her loyalty to Naomi and to the God of Israel by insisting on returning with Naomi. God rewarded Ruth’s faithfulness by providing a kinsman-redeemer—Boaz—to provide for her. Boaz’s redemption of Ruth reminds us of the compassion of another Redeemer—Jesus.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Read through the book of Ruth and the key passages above.



Activity: Ruth’s Legacy

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Students will examine the genealogies in the Bible to determine the relationship between Ruth, King David, and Jesus.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading the book of Ruth. It is a beautiful story of loving loyalty, integrity, courage, and redemption.

During the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1), Naomi and Elimelech, natives of Bethlehem in Judah, with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, moved to the country of Moab to avoid a famine. Elimelech died in the land of Moab, and afterward the two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. After about ten years, the two sons died, leaving Naomi alone with her daughters-in-law.

In that time and culture, life was very difficult for a widow. Naomi told Ruth and Orpah to return to their own people as Naomi intended to return to hers. She explained that she was too old to have more sons, and even if she did, it would take too long for the sons to grow up to be the husbands of her daughters-in-law. Both daughters-in-law protested. Orpah finally did return to her people. Ruth, in contrast, adamantly refused, declaring determined allegiance, not only to Naomi but also to her people and to her God (Ruth 1:16–17). This is to be understood as more than personal loyalty and love to Naomi. Rather, Ruth declared her intent to forsake her family and the false religion of the Moabites and to attach herself to the covenant people of the true God. In that culture, Ruth took a radical and courageous step. Certainly she must have loved Naomi, but this kind of commitment to Israel and

to God, regardless of the lack of familial connections in Israel, was a nearly certain path to poverty. Naomi may have been beloved by Ruth, but she was not in a position to do anything for her material needs. Ruth's courage is much to be admired.

When Ruth and Naomi returned to make their home in Bethlehem, they were in the position of little more than beggars. This was evidenced in the manner Ruth obtained food for them, following harvesting field workers and picking up (“gleaning”) what little they dropped as they harvested. It was customary (and commanded in Leviticus 23:22) to allow the poor to gather food this way. The owner of the field, Boaz, compassionately instructed his young men to leave more than usual for Ruth, and Boaz recognized and admired the path this young Moabite woman had followed. His blessing to her makes it clear that she had not only been loyal to Naomi but had also entrusted herself to the Lord God of Israel: “A full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge” (Ruth 2:12).

Boaz was a close relative of Naomi's, one who could be expected to take responsibility for the care of Ruth and Naomi. In chapter 3, after being instructed by Naomi, Ruth came to Boaz by night at the threshing floor in a manner intended to show that she wished to be under his care; and Boaz responded favorably, impressed with Ruth's virtue and her kindness in not pursuing younger men. Boaz was apparently much older than Ruth (Ruth 3:10–11).

The story culminates in chapter 4 when Boaz con-

fronted another, closer relative of Naomi's with the opportunity he had to "redeem"—to buy back into the close family—the land that had belonged to Naomi's husband. The redemption of the land included, by custom in Israel, the responsibility to care for the widow of Elimelech (Naomi). The care also included Ruth since she was part of the family and, because she was a young woman, involved marriage to her for the continuation of the family name (Ruth 4:5). Naomi's closer relative was unwilling to get involved, since it would affect the inheritance in his own family. Boaz was willing—and apparently a good deal more than willing—to marry Ruth. His redemption and marriage to Ruth led to her occupying a place in David's, and eventually Jesus's, ancestry as the great-grandmother of King David.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The redemption of Ruth by Boaz is a touching story of commitment and compassion, but it is much more than that. As Ruth's close relative ("kinsman-redeemer" in the NIV), Boaz is certainly a type of Christ, our Redeemer. While it was costly for Boaz to redeem Ruth, Jesus Christ paid so much more for His bride. He set aside the privileges of His Godhood for our benefit (Philippians 2:5–11). For our sakes, He who was rich became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He who was without sin became sin for us so "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"

(2 Corinthians 5:21). Boaz went beyond the call of duty to show his love and concern for Ruth, and Jesus more so.

It is also significant in this account that Ruth was a Gentile (a non-Israelite). The picture of her being drawn into covenant in the nation of Israel recalls God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:4 that he would be the father of many nations. It also foreshadows God's promise that His Messiah, Jesus, would be a "light to bring revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Merciful Lord, I praise you because you have compassion on sinners and have provided a way for me to know you. Thank you for recording these events in the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Ruth's faithfulness spurs me on to be more faithful to you. Boaz's compassion encourages me to look to Jesus, remember the compassion he had on me, and share that compassion with others in my life. Help me to share your truths with my students in an accurate, clear, and fun way. My heart yearns for them to know you, love you, and live for you alone. Draw them to you, Lord.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Students will place a bookmark at Ruth 1, 2, 4; Matthew 1; Luke 3; 2 Corinthians 5; and 1 Peter 3.
- Students will practice the memory verse using the Memory Verse Strips. Allow students to work individually or in groups of 2–3.



Review

Last week we took a bit of a detour from our chronological study of the Bible to look at the ideas of moral relativism—when everybody does what is right in his or her own eyes and thinks that nobody is wrong.

? Did anyone encounter any examples of relativistic thinking this past week? *Discuss a few examples.*

That type of thinking is becoming more and more popular in our culture. Christianity and biblical morality once played a dominant role in shaping the behavior of Americans and other Western cultures, but that time is long gone in Europe and

Australia, and it is quickly vanishing in Canada and the U.S. Each of us needs to make sure that we are firmly grounded in the truths of God’s Word so that we can rightly divide truth from error and honor the God who has saved us.

? Did anyone have an opportunity to use the four questions this past week? *Discuss a few examples.*

Today we are going to continue our chronological tour through the Bible. We are going to look at the account of Ruth, so open your Bibles there.





Studying God's Word

► Write on the board, "How is Ruth related to Jesus?"

READ THE WORD

If time allows, read through the entire text of Ruth during this lesson. This should take about 4 minutes for chapter 1 and 12 minutes for chapters 2–4. Or, consider using an audio recording as the students follow along.

Let's read Ruth 1 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud. You can break the passage up and allow several students to read.*

Ruth 1

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **At what point in history is this account happening?** *All we know is it was during the period of the judges. The only other clue we have is the timing of the genealogies given later. Bishop Ussher placed the events at 1140 BC as noted on the History of Israel poster.*
- ? **What drove Elimelech and his family away from Israel?** *They left because of a famine.*
- ? **What events happened while they were in Moab?** *Both of the sons married Moabite women, Elimelech died, and then both of the sons died.*
- ? **What happened when Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem?** *Orpah stayed in Moab, but Ruth went with Naomi.*
- ? **Why did Ruth want to follow Naomi back to Bethlehem?** *She wanted to be loyal to her mother-in-law and she had come to trust in God.*
- ? **How does Naomi respond to the Israelites as she returns to Bethlehem?** *She laments that God has taken everything from her and wishes to be called Mara—which means bitter. In her mind, she had left full and come back home empty.*

Discover the Truth

- ? **Does anyone know the origin of the Moabites?** *They came from the son produced in the incestuous rape of Lot by his oldest daughter (Genesis 19:37). The Israelites had taken their land as they moved into the Promised Land and the Moabites were constant enemies of the Israelites. Moab was the land to the east of the Dead Sea.*

Despite her heritage, Ruth turned from the Moabite god, Chemosh, to the true God. She had come to know God through the interactions she had with Elimelech's family and had decided to trust in Him. Her trust was so strong that she was willing to leave her home and follow a widow.

- ? **What did Naomi have to offer Ruth?** *Nothing! In fact, she had no livelihood and would have to rely on the support of others.*

Ruth had chosen to follow God despite the hardship that was sure to come in Bethlehem. She would be a foreigner in Israel and dependent on the mercy of others.



READ THE WORD

Now that Ruth and Naomi are back in Bethlehem, let's read the rest of the book to understand what happened to the two women. *Have several students read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **How did Ruth seek to meet the needs of their household?** *She went out to glean among the fields during the barley harvest.*
- ? **How did Boaz respond to Ruth's presence in his fields?** *He was very gracious to her and told her to stay in his fields and drink and rest with his workers. He even offered a meal to her while they were working and instructed his men to look after her while she was with them.*
- ? **What was Ruth's response to Boaz's kindness?** *She acknowledged that she was a foreigner and did not deserve his favor.*
- ? **In verses 2:11-12, what reason does Boaz give for his kindness?** *He had heard all that Ruth had done for Naomi and that she had trusted in God by coming into Israel as a follower of God.*
- ? **What was Naomi's response when Ruth returned home with the fruits of her labor?** *She was joyful and praised God for the blessing.*
- ? **What did Naomi reveal to Ruth about Boaz?** *He was a close relative of Elimelech, though this was known to the reader in verse 2:3.*
- ? **How long did Ruth continue gleaning in the fields?** *She gleaned until the end of the wheat and barley harvests. This means that she was working in Boaz's fields for about two months.*
- ? **In chapter 3, what did Naomi tell Ruth to do?** *Ruth was to clean herself up and go to Boaz at the threshing floor. When he fell asleep, she was to lie at his feet and await his response.*
- ? **How did Boaz respond to Ruth's request?** *He blessed Ruth and said that he would redeem her if another closer relative would not.*
- ? **What happened early the next morning?** *As Ruth left, Boaz sent her away with a load of grain.*
- ? **What happened as Boaz met with the close relative?** *The close relative did not want to marry Ruth, so he allowed Boaz to buy Elimelech's land and marry Ruth.*
- ? **How did Boaz seal the deal with the other man?** *He took off his sandal and gave it to the other man in the presence of the elders of the city.*
- ? **In verse 4:10, what reason is given for taking Ruth as his wife?** *He intends to carry on the name of Mahlon, Elimelech's son, so that his name would not be cut off from Israel.*

Discover the Truth

Let's think about the picture of Christ that we see in the actions of Boaz. To make these connections, we need to understand a little more about the odd cultural practices we have just read about. This is part of the interpretation process of studying the Bible. We have to understand the cultural and historical context of a passage to draw out the full meaning and then bring it to application for our time. After all, today we don't swap sandals to seal a contract.

Let's think about the idea of a close relative redeeming a married woman—the practice of levirate marriage. This was a practice that God gave the Israelites while they were in the wilderness. Listen as I read Deuteronomy 25:5–6. *Read the passage aloud.*

Deuteronomy 25:5–6

So, a brother or another close relative was to take a widow and father a child with her so that the property of the brother would remain in the family and he would have an heir to carry on his name. There were other restrictions that are clear from other passages, but Boaz was apparently unmarried (possibly as a widower since he is old according to Ruth 3:10) and willing to take Ruth. As such, Naomi would also come under his care. This was no light responsibility and surely cost Boaz much. The other relative was willing to redeem the land, but he was not willing to take on the burden of two widows.

This idea is often referred to as the kinsman-redeemer and is variously translated as “kinsman,” “redeemer,” “kinsman-redeemer,” and “family redeemer.” Boaz had bought or redeemed Ruth and Naomi out of their desperate situation at his own expense, taking Ruth to be his own bride, paying off any debts the family may have had, and providing for the women. Here, we surely see the gospel played out in Boaz's kindness.

- ? Who can think of some parallels between what Jesus did for us and what Boaz did for Ruth? *Discuss various answers, citing specific references of Scripture that state the ideas. Specifically, 1 Peter 3:18, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 5:6–8, and other passages that speak of our redemption found in Christ.*

1 Peter 3:18;
2 Corinthians 5:21;
Romans 5:6–8

Even when we had nothing to offer God, Jesus was willing to take our sin debt upon Himself and to make us His bride. He cares for us and meets our needs and has guaranteed us an inheritance. That is something that we can all praise God for.





Ruth's Legacy

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

If time is short, you can walk through this activity quickly with the students.

Use the passages of Scripture listed in your Student Guide to examine the genealogy of Jesus. Answer the questions to understand the connection between the people mentioned. We will discuss the answers in a few minutes.
Ruth 4:13–22; Luke 3:31–34; Matthew 1:1–6

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

1. Sketch out a rough outline of the genealogy from Salmon to King David using the three genealogies. *Salmon (by Rahab) Boaz (by Ruth) Obed Jesse David*
2. What women are mentioned in these genealogies? Write their names in the genealogy above where they fit. *Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth are mentioned. It is uncharacteristic to mention women in genealogies.*

3. What is Ruth's relationship to King David?
Ruth would have been David's great grandmother.

4. What is the connection between Ruth and Jesus?
Jesus was a descendant of Ruth.

Knowing that both Rahab and Ruth are in the line of Jesus, what does that tell us about who was considered to be a Jew in the Old Covenant?
Since Rahab was a Canaanite and Ruth was a Moabite, anyone who was willing to submit to the one true God was considered a Jew.

It is important for us to remember that God was always interested in the salvation of Gentiles. Israel was supposed to be proclaiming the truths of God's salvation from sin, but few are recorded as turning to God through faith. Ruth was one who trusted God for her salvation and God blessed her and even brought her Redeemer from her own descendants. As we move forward, we will see the connection to the city of Bethlehem—the City of David where the Messiah would be born. That thread of history begins right here with Ruth.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The account of Ruth gives us a clear example of how God blessed the faithfulness of one of His children. As Ruth sought to follow God and honor Him with her life, God blessed her with a husband and a child whose grandson would become the king of Israel. Now, we can't just say that anyone who is faithful to God will be blessed in the exact same way—there are plenty of examples where that is not the case. However, it is clear that God was pleased to bless Ruth for her acts of faith in Him.

It is also amazing to think that God was pleased to bring this Gentile woman into His chosen nation and redeem her as His own child. The events in this account are a beautiful picture of the redemption that we have in Christ and a testament to God's immeasurable grace. Just as Boaz chose to redeem Ruth from her miserable condition, so Jesus chose to redeem us. The Redeemer—Jesus Christ—would then come from the line of Boaz and Ruth. This is another picture of how God takes sinful people who are far from Him and brings them near through the work of Christ (Ephesians 3) and then puts them into His service.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? How has this lesson helped you understand God's grace toward sinful people? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? In what ways did Ruth demonstrate her faith in God, and what can we learn from these acts? *She followed Naomi and committed herself to serve her and God; she went to Boaz to ask him to redeem her; she lived a virtuous life in the community.*
- ? How could you use this account with an unbelieving friend to explain the gospel? *Using the passages discussed above, the idea of redemption can be connected to God's redemption of sinners through Christ.*
- ? What does Ruth's nationality tell us about the nature of the gospel? *Salvation is available to all people, regardless of their nationality. This was true in the Old Testament and continues to hold true today.*
- ? Knowing that the events that begin in this account in Bethlehem will lead to the birth of the Messiah, what do we learn about God? *God is orchestrating the events of history in a miraculous way and the scarlet thread of redemption is woven throughout the ages and leading to Christ. Refer to the Scarlet Thread poster.*



MEMORY VERSE

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for His grace in redeeming sinful people.
- Thank God for the redemption available through Christ.
- Ask for wisdom in proclaiming redemption to people in slavery to sin.

