

# Ruth Retold

A DEVOTIONAL

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Ruth Retold: A Devotional | First Edition

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Cover Design: Beth Catron & Rachel Leona Wood  
Design & Layout: Rachel Leona Wood

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ISBN: 978-0-692-35365-3

Printed in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15

8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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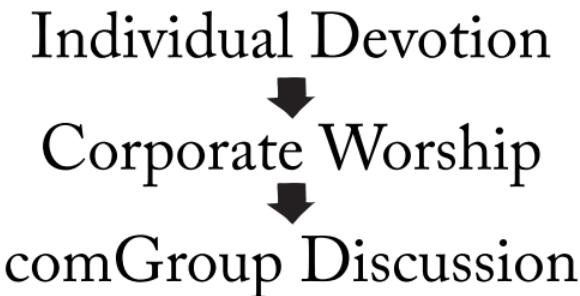
# **Prologue: How to Use This Book**

At iNVERSION, we like to say that Sundays are the church gathered to worship Jesus and comGroups are the church scattered throughout the city to make disciples of Jesus. (If you aren't a member of iNVERSION, comGroups are our small group structure; "com" stands for communion with God, community with others, and communication of the gospel in word and deed.) We scatter as comGroups because we do not wish to simply dissipate as isolated and insulated

individuals. But at the end of the day, we are still individuals, we are “selves:” we are souls. Nobody gets to stand before God on the basis of someone else’s faith (though we do stand on the basis of Someone Else’s work—we’ll get there soon); we are responsible to nourish and feed our feeble souls with God’s Word, to walk by His Spirit and not by the flesh, to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in [us] both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

That is the reason for this de-

votional in your hands. It is our hope that you would spend the week prior to Sunday spending about 10 to 15 minutes per day alone, marveling at the radiant gospel themes woven tightly throughout the tapestry of Ruth, and preparing your heart for Sunday worship. On Sunday, we will belt out the Ruth Retold song together and hear God's preached Word from Ruth. Then, you would spend one day the following week reflecting, confessing, and repenting together with your comGroup. In short, the pattern is this:



Here are the components of the book as you will find them inside and how to use them:

**Ruth at a Glance:** An infographic that entails the purpose, authorship, literary form, date, and setting of the book of Ruth. Context is crucial, and we hope this visual will help you in your study.



**Daily Readings:** Yes, this is the same text for every day of each week! Why? Well, the Bible relentlessly bangs the drum of “Remember! Remember! Remember!” for a reason. We are forgetful. In fact, if you really want to have God’s Word soak into your mind and heart and become “louder” than the tidal wave of images and information we get each day, you should probably read each book at least 20 times (yes, 20). If you complete this book, you should have

read Ruth at least seven times, and probably three times that amount if you count Sundays, comGroup and personal study, etc. If that seems exasperating, remember the words of the Psalmist: “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).

**Devotionals:** It will take 49 days (seven weeks) to get through Ruth, and you will find 40 devotionals in this book, with the final four being a little different. When it comes to devotionals, we often fall into two errors. One, we read in order to simply “do our quiet time,”

cramming the God of the universe into a box we can check off. This error seeks for some little nugget of wisdom that we can “apply” in our day to day lives. It makes God small and leads either to pride (“I always do my quiet time and apply all of the wisdom”) or despair (“I haven’t done my quiet time in weeks and even when I do it doesn’t change anything”). Second, we look for something that “applies” to us, treating God’s Word and wisdom like a horoscope. This error is a shortcut, avoiding the joyous labor involved in understanding and applying God’s Word and seek-

ing a substitute: a nice salve to soothe the nagging conscience in the morning.

Please do not approach this devotional as a checklist or a horoscope. God is not a tool to be wielded in order to feel spiritual or boost our self-esteem. He is glorious; He is an end in Himself. Approach your devotional time with expectancy, asking God: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18). Jesus said that all Scriptures point to Him, so we thought a devotional ought to do the same (Luke 24:27).

Each devotional is meant to direct your eyes to the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, that you would behold Him, and be changed (2 Corinthians 3:18-21, 4:6). His gospel is the only cure for both pride and despair, and it must not simply be known, but cherished.



**Prayer Primers:** We are a people who believe in prayer. It is the language of dependence and it is a way to express our trust in God. And He listens to us because of Jesus. These

primers are to help kick-start us to be praying together as a community. Sometimes all we need is a little spark to help us start. These will help us pray together, united, in sync, even as we are going about our lives throughout the week.



**Meditation Verses:** These are verses chosen from elsewhere in the Bible that capture the main idea of that week's reading. We don't want to simply "memorize" these verses, but

soak in them, wrestle with them, and savor them. Christian meditation isn't emptying your mind, but filling it with truth: thinking hard about what God has to say. We encourage you to read the larger passage that these verses are found in for context. And if you've meditated on a verse for five days, by day six you hopefully have it memorized! That is why we have left empty lines every Saturday for you to write in your Meditation Verse (without peeking of course).

**Sunday Notes:** Whether you are joining us on Sundays or following the series online, we

encourage you to take notes: they will come in handy for week seven!

**Ruth Retold Song:** God's people have been singing since the garden (Genesis 2:23). Why? Frankly, He is too good not to sing about! His salvation is so mighty and undeserved that He commands us to sing new songs to Him; it is not enough to rely on familiar melodies (Psalm 98:1). Furthermore, worship music is instruction through song; singing the truths of God helps drive them into our hearts in a potent and unique way. For these reasons, gifted members of our team write a new song

for each series that tie into the text.

**Glossary:** It is of the utmost importance to us that this book is “user-friendly” for people at every level of familiarity with the Bible and theology. You can find definitions that we’ve written for all words in bold throughout the devotional.

**Resources:** Take a look at who and what we have been studying. We hope you take the time to look into these and other resources as well.

# Ruth At A Glance

 **RUTH**

IN THE TIME OF THE JUDGES • 1200-1020 BC

**NAOMI ~ RUTH ~ BOAZ**

**BETHLEHEM ↗ MOAB**

**HESED = LOYAL LOVE**

**KINSMAN REDEEMER**

**1. RELATED 2. ABLE 3. WILLING**

THE PURPOSE: TO RECALL KING DAVID'S FAMILY TREE, AND TO FORECAST THE CROSS OF THE ULTIMATE KING - JESUS.

2 TYPES OF CHRIST • RUTH & BOAZ

THE HUMAN AUTHOR: **ANONYMOUS**

THE FORM: **A SHORT (LOVE) STORY**

*A ROMANCE OF REDEMPTION*

# Introduction to Ruth

Reading the Book of Ruth for the first time is something like looking at an uncut diamond. There is a sense that what you have come across is thick with value, yet concealing luminous secrets underneath its dust, raw edges, and rough details. The Book of Ruth is truly a diamond worthy of our attention. This ancient story is an acclaimed masterpiece cut out of the organic stuff of the heart—loss, love, loyalty, hunger, and hope.

With each successive reading, like with each calculated cut of

a jeweler shaping their stone, the story of Ruth bears forth more and more light. It is a multifaceted light; each way you turn the book of Ruth another grand theme sparkles to life. For easy reasons, Ruth is a perennial favorite of women's ministries. It is turned to time and time again to examine the portrait of a virtuous woman. This is wise, for sure, but in this obvious reading, Ruth has too often become *a book for women*—and it is that. But it is also a book for men. When was the last time your heard of a men's group chomping at the bit to glean from the golden fields of

its story? It is simply an injustice to narrow the book of Ruth to studies in gender, though it is fertile with wisdom of biblical femininity and revelations of biblical manhood.

We should take a much wider view of Ruth than that of mere gender studies. And that wider view is the Gospel. Gender has its pivotal place in the story, but gender (male and female made in the image of God) is given perspective and proper priority in understanding *The Image of God*—Jesus. We should revel in Ruth’s many themes that weave together the good news: God’s

sovereignty, suffering, community, the loyal love (the *hesed*) of God, prayer, and the redemptive flow of history that is propelled forward by the promises of God. After all, a diamond with only one cut side will not give up its inner brilliance like that of a fully-cut stone. Ruth is a fully-cut stone; it is a well-cut stone. We just need the eyes to see it.

## The Black Back Drop

Ruth is a gem of literary structure that sits luminously upon the black coal grit of the Book of Judges. It is from the bloody days of the judges that the love story of Ruth emerges. The

Book of Judges sits heavily in the Old Testament, brooding and crashing about from time to time, leaving a trail of carnage and confusion in its reader's wake. The period of the judges (roughly 1200-1020 BC) begins after Joshua's death many years after the Israelites arrive in the Promise Land. Judges tells the twisted tales of a fickle and faithless people, and of their faithful God who will even use the chaos of sin to orchestrate harmony.

In the time of the judges there was no human king in Israel, the Israelites were prone to wander

from God's grace-given laws, and so, judges—rulers, redeemers, or heroes, if you like—were raised up by God to deliver his people from the desolation they had heaped upon themselves by not trusting the good God who freed them from Egypt. Judges is a downward spiral. Its soundtrack is a dissonant and discordant one. In it, the once-enslaved Israelites found time and again that their desires were enslaved to a deeper slavery than an Egyptian tyranny could inflict. The book ends bleakly and dishearteningly. But out of that hopelessness of the human condition comes

the sweet story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Out of the chaos of Judges comes the perfect symmetry of Ruth. Out of the days when there was no king comes the family tree of the archetypal king: King David.

## **From Empty to Overflowing**

The Book of Ruth doesn't seem to begin much better than the ravages of Judges, but the famine of the first sentence leads us to the fruitful family tree at the book's soaring finish. The parade of death in scene one is eventually reversed and a resurrection of sorts sends the book into celebration. In fact, it is the famine, the very hardship itself

that becomes the path forward to new life.

Underlying the tragedy, the beautiful resolution, and all the rural adventure in between, is the orchestrating hand of a sovereign God who leads the story like a groom leads a dance at his wedding, crafting a masterwork of redemption—and not just for aching Naomi, but for the whole world. Ruth is a short love story that has long echoed throughout history. Why has it captured so many hearts? Well, to reverse the analogy, Ruth itself is an echo—an advanced echo of the ultimate proclama-

tion of love that rings throughout the corridors of time: the good news of Jesus Christ. The book of Ruth lays bare the hopelessness of the human situation (rebellion & death), and then, by God's gracious hand, it details out the way of redemption (a related, able, and willing redeemer who purchases his bride).

As we read through the book of Ruth together, we will see the light that the jewel of this book radiates is the light of Jesus Christ. The Bible is no mere compendium of morality, no lexicon of laws (though

of course it speaks both of laws and morality). Rather, it is a history of redemption stuffed full with types, foreshadows, and sketches of how God would make right a world-gone-wrong. And these types, foreshadows, and sketches all point us to Jesus Christ. Both Boaz and Ruth are types of Christ that show us in part God's *hesed*, His loyal love, His loving kindness. Both Boaz and Ruth sacrificially love to bring about redemption. And together, as man and woman made in his image, they show us a beautiful sketch of the one that would come to live among us as Jesus

## of Nazareth.

In a world of shattered relationships, where divorce is epidemic, where hook-up culture leaves so many smoldering ruins, where commitment is avoided like it is a carrier of Ebola, Ruth challenges our self-centered hearts on every front. Ruth presents to us a picture of the wonder of loyal love. In a world of suffering, Ruth reminds us that the fury is not senseless, and history is not a tale told by an idiot. In a world that does what is right in its own eyes, a world that seems to think the king (God) is dead, Ruth makes it

clear that God is very much alive. And while many of us cry out to the sky asking for God to show up in some miraculous spectacle in order for us to believe, Ruth sweetly reminds us that he is working in the ordinary means of blood and bone, dust and mud, barley and bread, romance and marriage, children and sprawling family trees. The story of Ruth, the story of the empty being filled, the bitter becoming sweet, the outcast becoming the embraced by way of a loving redeemer, is retold ultimately in the Good News of Jesus Christ, and then again retold in our lives as Jesus

becomes our bread of life to fill our souls even while we were in the midst of the famine of our rebellion.

Yes, even through the fury of famines and the silences of death God is at work building his family through the ultimate of related redeemers—Jesus Christ: the greater son of David, who *happened* to be the son of Jesse, who *happened* to be the son of Obed, who *happened* to be the son of Boaz and a social outcast named Ruth.

*-Heath Hardesty*

## WEEK ONE

# The Darkest Hour

### Ruth 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> But Elimel-

ech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.<sup>4</sup> These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years,<sup>5</sup> and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

## WK1 | MONDAY



### Ruth 1:1-5

### Deus Ex Machina

“In those days there was no king in **Israel**. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). This is the grim reality of the culture in which the glittering narrative of Ruth unfolds, “the days when the judges ruled” (1:1). This is of course not the way God meant for His people to live. Graeme Goldsworthy defines life in God’s Kingdom as “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule and **blessing**” (Roberts 22). The book of Ruth, especially the

first chapter, is a book about the consequences of the choice to abandon God's place, His rule, and His covenant blessing. It's not a pretty picture. Unfaithful Elimelech leaves the **Promised Land** with his family for greener pastures in Moab, finding only **idolatry** and death for himself and his sons, leaving his wife and daughters-in-law impoverished. Elimelech found out in a very literal sense that "the wages of **sin** is death" (Romans 6:23).

Yet the story does not end there. Do you think yours does? Do you believe the choices you've

made are unredeemable? You are wrong. Our choices are important; and the consequences of them are real. Yet the universe is not a blind machine of cause and effect. There is a good and **sovereign** creator God who stands outside the system, the *Deus Ex Machina*, the One who is not bound by it as we are. The sovereign grace of this God redeemed and restored Elimelech's bitter and destitute wife, Naomi, and God will do the same for His bride, the church. **Redemption** is by **grace** through **faith** in Jesus, the One who stepped into the system and faced theulti-

mate consequence for our sins. Weary sinner! Quit accusing yourself, for “there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). He paid the wages of our sin by His death on the cross, that wretched, blessed instrument that forever dammed the thundering tide of consequence and retribution. The cross is a torture device that heals tortured hearts. In Christ you are redeemable. Place your faith in Him and live as His people under His rule and blessing awaiting eternity in the Promised Land of His presence.



*(Inspired by Psalm 51)*

*Father,*

*I know my transgressions; my sin is ever before me. The sins of my past haunt me, the sins of my present entangle me, and the sins of my future await me. It is too much for me to bear. How many have dealt with the consequences of my sinfulness? How many have been wounded by my sin? Yet against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast*

*love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Long before this prayer would leave my lips, you had answered it. Jesus' blood has washed me and cleansed me of every sin: past, present, and future. O God of my salvation, my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,<sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

## WK1 | TUESDAY

### Ruth 1:1-5

## My God is King

The first five verses of Ruth are rife with irony. Bethlehem, which means “House of Bread,” was a place of no bread—of “famine” (1:1). Elimelech, whose name means “My God is King,” is his own king—a stereotype of his era in which “there was no king in Israel [and] everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Yet famine, an **Old Covenant** indicator of Israel’s unfaithfulness, forced Elimelech to a fork in the road: the

narrow, rocky path of **repentance** and faith that leads to life or the wide, well-paved road of disobedience and disbelief that leads to death. Sadly, Elimel-ech's God was not King; his god was his belly (Philippians 3:19). Believing the false promise of greener grass, he chose idolatrous Moab over Israel, the land of compromise over the Promised Land. No famine should rattle a true Israelite:

*“Behold, the eye of the Lord is  
on those who fear him,  
on those who hope in his  
steadfast love [hesed],  
that he may deliver their soul”*

*from death  
and keep them alive in fam-  
ine” (Psalm 33:18-19).*

Apart from the grace of a changed heart, we Christians are just like Elimelech, making decisions aimed solely at our own comfort and security. As one author puts it, “Many bear the label ‘Christian,’ yet their Christianity has no real impact on life-defining decisions, just as Elimelech bore the name “My God is King” yet lived in a way that made it evident that God wasn’t his king at all” (Duguid 133). Said another way, our crisis reveals what our Christ

is. How can we repent of the Elimelech that lives in all of us, avoiding suffering and clinging to comfort, finding only death in our efforts to bless ourselves? Only by trusting in Jesus, the anti-Elimelech, who left the feast of heaven to die and bring blessing to our famished hearts. He is our King, born in Bethlehem, the “Bread of God” who “gives life to the world” and now lives in us (John 6:33; Colossians 1:27).



*(Inspired by Psalm 16)*

*Father,*

*Preserve me. For you are my Lord; I have no good apart from you. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply. Be always before me. If you are near me I shall not be shaken. My heart can be glad, my whole being can rejoice, I can rest securely, for you will not abandon me; you will not let me see corruption. For Jesus' has seen corruption in my place. He was abandoned that I may be*

*welcomed in. O God, your Son  
has brought me near and your  
Spirit keeps me near. In your  
presence there is joy forevermore.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



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2 Corinthians 4:17-18

## WK1 | WEDNESDAY

### Ruth 1:1-5

# The King is Dead, Long Live the King!

Yesterday, we noted the irony of the “House of Bread” (Bethlehem) being a land of famine and of “My God is King” (Elimelech) acting as his own god and king. The irony doesn’t stop there. For one, the man named “My God is king” dies! For another, Moab means “Seed of the father,” and yet by verse five **Moab** is “the scene of human barrenness”—of no seed (Hubbard 96).

There are countless moments in our lives and on the pages of history when God seems to be out of control—or maybe not there at all. The first five verses of Ruth are filled with these moments: hunger, barrenness, poverty, and death. The French author and master of irony Jules Renard potently remarked, “I don’t know if God exists, but it would be better for His reputation if He didn’t” (Bice 91). It is certainly tempting to stand in one small, dark corner of the bright and glorious tapestry of redemption that God is weaving and pout about the whole project being too bleak and

dreary.

Ruth is a short book, so let's skip ahead for a moment. Read the last word: *David*. Had "My God is King" and his son Mahlon lived, Naomi would have never returned to Bethlehem, Ruth would never have become a child of God, the child of Ruth and Boaz never would have been born, which would have meant no David, God's anointed King. Zooming out even more, no suffering for Naomi means no David and no David means no Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem for the salvation of the world about 1,200

years later.

Suffering is terrible and often appears arbitrary, and God has not called us to sit around attempting to untangle the threads of our own lives until we find something redemptive. He has called us to trust Him. Furthermore, He has not called us to plaster on plastic, pragmatic smiles when others are suffering because “Everything happens for a reason!” but to “mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). There is a “time to weep” and often-times “a sad face is good for the heart” (Ecclesiastes 3:4,

7:3 NIV). Jesus Himself wept (John 11:35). And yet, let our tears be marked with an invincible hope: the God who became King died tragically, but He rose again, ascended, and “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” as “the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (Hebrews 1:3; 1 Timothy 6:15). God works life from death and fruitfulness from barrenness. What can man do to us (Psalm 118:6; Romans 8:31)?



*(Inspired by Psalm 118)*

*Father,*

*You are good. Your steadfast love endures forever. Out of my distress I called on you; you answered me and set me free. You are on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? You are my helper. You are my strength and my song; you have become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are sung by those whom you have made righteous. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter*

*through them and give thanks.  
You, O Lord, are God. You have  
made your light shine upon us.  
You are my God, and I will give  
thanks to you; you are my God; I  
will extol you. I will give thanks  
to the Lord for you are good; your  
steadfast love endures forever.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,<sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

**WK1 | THURSDAY**

 Ruth 1:1-5

## **Promise & Compromise**

Both sojourning and settling can be faithful or sinful, depending on the context. Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, do a bit of both while also doing neither. The Hebrew deliberately avoids the words for “sojourning” and “settling” in verse 2, and literally reads, “They went to the fields of Moab, and they were there.” Faithful Abraham sojourned in the land of Canaan, living purposefully as a foreigner whose citizenship was in heaven (Hebrews 11:8-10).

These two, on the other hand, don't quite make it into the hall of faith. They simply drift into idolatry, wandering to Moab with the intent to stay "for a while" (v.1, NIV). How often are we the same? As the saying goes, "nobody drifts into faithfulness." Part of the paradox of Christianity is that it takes blood, sweat, and tears to rest in Christ. Obedience is never an accident.

One would think that the death of her husband might have been enough to waken Naomi from her spiritual sleepwalking. Instead, she settled. She remained

in Moab and watched her sons take Moabite wives. This is no trifling matter, Deuteronomy 23:3-6 taught plainly that the offspring of an Israelite and a Moabite were not allowed into the assembly of the Lord for ten generations, or 400 years. Moab himself had been a result of Lot's incestuous relationship with his own daughter. Sin is easy, but its consequences are hard. How often have you allowed convenience to allow you to slide into sin? Do you currently believe that if "x" happened, you would certainly return at once to God? Don't be deceived, not even a mira-

cle will soften a hardened heart (Luke 16:31).

Jesus Christ was a drifter, one with “no place to lay his head,” and yet He never truly *drifted* a day in His life (Matthew 8:21). This Sojourner from heaven exiled Himself, set his face like flint to die on a cross, only to be raised from the dead to settle the right hand of God physically and in our hearts Spiritually (Luke 9:51). Though not an idolater like Mahlon (“Weakling” or “Sickly One”) and Chilion (“Pining” or “Annihilation”), Jesus too won the heart of an idolatrous, foreign

bride. Yet He leaves His church not as a widow, but is present with her now and will return to redeem and restore her. Jesus, the Prize of Heaven, is worth being “sojourners and exiles” for here on earth (1 Peter 2:11). As a sojourning member of her, settle down with the flawed Bride of Christ.



*(Inspired by Psalm 62)*

*Father,*

*For you alone my soul waits. All my hope is from you. You alone are my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. My salvation and my glory rest on you. May I trust in you at all times and pour my heart out before you, for you are my refuge. If I live with little, I live with you. If I live with much, I live with you. May I live faithfully for the short time I have in the world. To you, O Lord, belong all*

*power and steadfast love.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,<sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

**WK1 | FRIDAY**

 **Ruth 1:1-5**

## **A Remnant of One**

Naomi is not what you would call a pleasant person. Yet it can be too easy to be too hard on her. When is the last time that you were driven by famine from your homeland only to lose your spouse, your children, and your welfare in just over a decade? On top of that, nobody had yet invented homeless shelters and food stamps in the ancient Near East. Naomi was abandoned, penniless, and ashamed. However, our author uses an interesting He-

brew word when he says that Naomi was “left” that brings to mind the **theologically** loaded concept of “remnant” (1:5). Throughout biblical history, there was never a generation of Israel, God’s covenant people, who had been wholly faithful to Him. In fact, most had been hypocritical, idolatrous, grumbling malcontents! As the apostle Paul famously said, “Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (Romans 9:6). Yet God always promised that He would preserve a faithful remnant of Israel, the righteous who would serve God (Genesis 45:7; 2 Kings 19:30; Ezra 9:8;

Isaiah 10:20, Micah 2:12; Malachi 3:18, etc.).

Naomi was a remnant, but she seemed to be anything but faithful. She had survived the judgment of God on her husband and sons, but it appears to have left her bitter and resentful rather than thankful and repentant (1:20). Why had God been so harsh with her? Why had He so ruthlessly (no pun intended) stripped every good thing away from her? Has your life been decimated like Naomi's? Or perhaps you live in terror that God is one day going to punish you for your un-

faithfulness? The truth is that God loved Naomi ferociously, which is why He took everything away from her.

You see, God knows exactly what it is like to have all of His possessions stripped away, to abandon all comfort and to be left alone to the scorn of mockers. The faithful Israelite Jesus Christ, the Remnant of One, bore our shame as he hung naked on the cross. And yet God preserved His Remnant and raised Him up on the third day. When God's children are blinded by the world's goods, God lovingly removes them so

we can learn to cling to Him. That is why Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” for it is only when we come to God as spiritually destitute that He can He fill us full of His love and life (Matthew 5:3). God dealt kindly with Naomi in causing her to suffer that she might have fellowship with her Suffering Savior. If you are of the spiritually proud type, may He graciously do the same with you. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.” (Psalm 119:67)



*(Inspired by Psalm 71)*

*Father,*

*In you I take refuge. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock of refuge to which I may continually come. You, O Lord, are my hope. May my mouth be filled with your glory and your praise all the day. O God, be not far from me. Though I am overwhelmed, I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. Your*

*righteousness, O God, reaches to  
the heavens. You have done great  
things, O God, who is like you?  
You who have made me see many  
troubles and calamities will  
revive me again; from the depths  
of the earth you will bring me up  
again.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,<sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

**WK1 | SATURDAY**

 **Ruth 1:1-5**

## **Seeds In the Famine**

The fury of suffering unleashed in the first five verses of Ruth is hard to fathom. Don't let the economy of words fool you. In these tightly composed sentences lie coiled a world of hurt.

First, it is the time of judges in the nation of Israel. Simply by being born into such a time was to know extravagant suffering—something like being born in a rowboat at the height of a hurricane. It's a tough go by circumstances alone. Civil

unrest, ever-looming disaster, perverse priests, spiritual dry rot, and ever-erupting bloodshed marked this 200-year-or-so period. Then comes a bitter famine to empty the bellies of men, women and children. Then comes a move away from one's once fertile home (Bethlehem was quite literally the bread basket of Israel. Bethlehem means *house of bread*). Then a husband dies. Then the loss of two children. How much can a woman take? In five sentences Naomi's life unravels, and the story teller has us exactly where they want us—feeling Naomi's hurt and wondering that ra-

zor-edged question: *Why?*

Why is God allowing this famine to dry up his Promise Land? Why is this family experiencing so much pain? For Naomi, the hour is now the darkest. Her lover is buried. The children of her womb now lie in their graves. She is getting on in years and there is no prospect for future children, so the family name will fade away into the dust of history. This is the worst of fates for an Israelite. *Why, God?*

We may not live in the time of judges, but we do live in a time

when people do “what is right in their own eyes.” We may not be mired in despair in the hills of Moab, but most of us have experienced some degree of Naomi’s anguish. *Why, God? Why another miscarriage? Why, God? Why the accident? He was so young! Why, God? Why the ravenous cancer? She was a model of health! Why, God? Should a parent have to bury their child?* The list of *why*’s is raw and relentless. Each of us has experienced some form of famine, some variant of death. And if you have not, well, you will. That is bad news, I know, but rejoice—there is good news!

The Book of Ruth does not leave us in this misery; from the pain of these first verses will eventually come the birth of joy. And, ironically, it is by way of the famine, by way of loss that the unexpected joy arrives through Ruth and Boaz. No famine, then there is no flight to Moab for food. No loss of her loved ones, then no return to Bethlehem with Ruth. No Ruth, then no baby Obed with daddy Boaz. No Obed, then no Jesse and no King David. And no King David is a big problem!

The Book of Ruth does not an-

swer all the *why's* of our aching hearts. But it does show us that there is no such thing as *a darkest hour* that cannot break open into glowing daylight; there is no such thing as a famine that cannot burst forth into harvest when God puts His healing hand to the field. Naomi fell on dark days that spiraled into the darkest of hours. But there was an even darker time, even blacker hours. God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to His very own people to lavish them with His love, and He was rejected. He was mocked, ostracized, beaten, abused, tortured, then thick nails were driven through

his skin to hold Him to a Roman cross. And as He died upon that cross the sky went dark and the bedrock beneath groaned (Luke 23:44-46). Here are the bitterest hours the earth has known—the perfectly pure Son of God dying on a torture device in our place. What good can come from this injustice? The greatest good the world has known—humanity saved and the glory of God displayed! See, if there were no cross then there would be no resurrection. No resurrection, no salvation from our sin and therefore no new life in union with God. There is no Good

News on Sunday if there was no bloody and bleak Friday.

Famines will still come. We will continue to lose loved ones. It will all still hurt like mad. Tears will still fall for a time. But if there really is resurrection hidden in even the darkest hours of humanity up on Mount Calvary, well, then there are seeds of hope waiting for harvest in the most trying of our famines and losses.

A fury of suffering may have been unleashed in your life and the *why* remains a terrible mystery. But know that the ultimate

*who and what* are clear: God is working His fields to care for his family: “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purposes*” (Romans 8:28). And until He comes back with His crown and makes all things new, the cross and the empty tomb remind us time and again that there is no trauma beyond His healing reach. There is no disaster that the suffering Savior cannot deliver us from. There are seeds of hope even amidst the slow-burn of the famine.



*(Inspired by Psalm 121)*

*Father,*

*I lift my eyes up to you. You are my help and my salvation. You are my help in times of trouble, my comfort in times of suffering.*

*You do not sleep; you do not slumber. You will not let me fall. You are my keeper. You will not abandon me. You will not let me go. I cry out to you and you answer me. I call to you and you respond. Why should I have access to you? Why should I be able to call on the name of the*

*Lord? Jesus has given me the right to call upon you. Because I come to you in the name of Jesus I know that you hear me. In my distress I will cry out to you, confident that you will hear me. Though I suffer, I will trust in you and rejoice. For Christ has taken my ultimate suffering upon Himself and given me life everlasting. You are good beyond measure, gracious beyond understanding.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



YOUR TURN: Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

## **WEEK TWO**

# **A Loyal Love**

*Ruth 1:1-22*

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>But Elimelech,

the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.<sup>4</sup> These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years,<sup>5</sup> and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> And they said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.”<sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> 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.” <sup>14</sup> Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

<sup>15</sup> And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.” <sup>18</sup> And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

<sup>19</sup> 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?” <sup>20</sup> She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. <sup>21</sup> 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?”

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who re-

turned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

## **WK2 | MONDAY**

### Ruth 1:1-22

## **There is Bread!**

In the most disastrous circumstance, God did not believe it was too late for Naomi. It is never too late for God's children to repent. *"And when... you...return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered*

*you...And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it.”* (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, 5a). In this wonderful promise of God to respond in grace to repentance, the word for return is the Hebrew word *shub*. This theologically loaded term sounds a bit like a broken record in chapter one, appearing ten times in 1:6-22 alone! The author is laying on the horn, trying to get our attention: this is repentance, this is conversion. Naomi is returning to the Lord! Many disagree because of Naomi’s wallowing in bitterness. Either way, is it not

often the case that holy character takes many years to develop after one initially turns to the Lord? That should greatly encourage many of us. Beware of affording yourself more patience than others.

Naomi returned because a messenger brought her glad tidings of food in Jerusalem. God's people had repented and the Lord had fulfilled His promise and visited the "House of Bread," Bethlehem, and gave them food, literally "bread" (1:6). God's judgment for sin had fallen on His covenant people in the form of a fam-

ine, his blessing for faith now showered His people in the form of feasting. Grace *always* involves a turn, repentance, a *shub*. To deny that would be to promote “Cheap grace, [which] is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance” (Bonhoeffer 43). And yet, we do not simply *earn* grace from stingy old God by repenting, but rather, “God’s kindness is meant to lead [us] to repentance” (Romans 2:4). John Calvin powerfully defines faith as “A firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, found upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ,

both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Calvin 551). Like Naomi, we respond to the “good news” of messengers about bread in Jerusalem, the free grace of salvation in Jesus Christ, just as the prodigal son returned because there is “more than enough bread” at his father’s house (Luke 15:17). Whoever comes to the Bread of Life “shall never hunger,” for Christ is the true treasure, infinite in both measure and value (John 6:35).

Martin Luther wrote that Jesus Christ “called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance” (Luther 1). Yet somewhere down the line do we not start to believe that it is guilt and shame rather than grace and conviction that spur believers to repentance? No, for “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is [His] faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23). The gospel of God’s grace in Christ toward sinners both makes and matures His children.



*(Inspired by Psalm 116)*

*Father,*

*I love you, for you have heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. You have inclined your ear to me, may I call on your name as long as I live. I was dead in my sin, in the depths of hell, I called on you to deliver my soul. You are gracious, righteous, and merciful.*

*When I was dead, you saved me. You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; may I walk before you in the land of*

*the living. What could I give to you in return? I will lift high the salvation I have received, I will call upon your name; I will praise you alongside your people. O Lord, I am your servant. You have loosed my bonds; you have rescued me from death. I am Yours.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died  
for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will  
scarcely die for a righteous  
person—though perhaps for  
a good person one would dare  
even to die—<sup>8</sup> but God shows  
his love for us in that while we  
were still sinners, Christ died  
for us.

Romans 5:6-8

**WK2 | TUESDAY**

 Ruth 1:1-22

## The Wisdom of Orpah

Cain and Abel. Isaac and Ishmael. Esau and Jacob. Saul and David. The thieves on the cross. The prodigal son and his older brother. Ruth and Orpah? The Bible is filled with these character contrasts. Time after time, the obvious choice—the wealthy landowner, the first-born, the moral one, the fearless leader, the Pharisee—is excluded and humbled, while the one we would typically ignore—the humble shepherd, the last born, the prostitute, the tax collec-

tor—is embraced and exalted. Why? The apostle Paul makes the answer abundantly clear in his letter to the Corinthians: “*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). As John Piper says, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him” as opposed to our abilities and accomplishments (Piper 10). This is why it is the

smart, the rich, the successful, and the beautiful people of the world that seem to have the hardest time finding, following, and enjoying God.

Common sense dictates that Orpah made the smart decision. She listened to the “wisdom” of bitter Naomi. Following Naomi was a rocky path leading into the fog, being forever identified with Naomi as a foreigner and widower. And yet, Orpah was still following after Naomi in a different sense, choosing comfort, security, and significance in Moab over faithfulness in Israel, just

as Naomi had done over a decade before. Silly Ruth, on the other hand, ran headlong into the fog, clinging to Naomi despite her flaws. And yet who would we count more significant today?

Obedience to God is always wise, but in a broken world it often looks weak and foolish. Are you currently rationalizing disobedient decisions due to their “wisdom,” because they lead to more comfort, security, and significance in the world? It’s frightfully easy to do. Our only hope is to find our comfort, our security, and our significance in

Jesus Christ, the One who ultimately won through weakness. The “darling of heaven” left the glorious refuge of heaven to become a lowly peasant with “no form of majesty that we should desire him,” only to die alone and disgraced (Isaiah 53:2). Following Him might cause us to be friendless (Matthew 19:29) and homeless (Matthew 8:20), but only in Him who has called us His friends do we have an eternal shelter.



*(Inspired by Psalm 1)*

*Father,*

*You say “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord , and on his law he meditates day and night.” Give me faith to trust you, wisdom and strength to obey you. All your ways are good; following you leads to life, departing from you to death. You know the way of the righteous,*

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*but the way of the wicked will  
perish.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died  
for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will  
scarcely die for a righteous  
person—though perhaps for  
a good person one would dare  
even to die—<sup>8</sup> but God shows  
his love for us in that while we  
were still sinners, Christ died  
for us.

Romans 5:6-8

## **WK2 | WEDNESDAY**

### **Ruth 1:1-22**

## **The Clingy God**

Barging into the cast of miserable characters that we've met thus far is Ruth, a blinding light of faithfulness that dazzles our feeble eyes. There is a reason that Ruth 1:16-17 is famous for being read at weddings with a frequency second only to 1 Corinthians 13. Ruth essentially marries herself ("clung," Genesis 2:24) to both Naomi: her apparently selfish, bitter mother-in-law, and to Naomi's God. It is not as though Naomi was a picture of evangelistic

zeal, and yet here is this pagan, foreign widow making a covenantal **oath of self-malediction** (“May the Lord do so to me...”) and the ultimate commitment: pledging to be buried in Israel. In the ancient Near East, there was a connection between land and deity (e.g., Joseph in Genesis 50:24-25; Hebrews 11:22). Ruth was giving up not only her life, but her afterlife as well out of love for Naomi. It is the kind of love that makes our modern hearts both melt and squirm, a “love as strong as death” (Song of Solomon 8:6).

Maybe Ruth’s commitment is

spurring you to renew yours. Perhaps the early flame of faith has been reduced to a heap of ash by the world. Is the frenzied, self-forgetting beauty of Ruth's oath stirring your heart? Consider first a more dazzling commitment. In Genesis 15, God invites Naomi's ancient ancestor, Abraham, to make a covenant with Him. The ceremony begins: Abraham cuts a bloody path of animals to symbolize an oath of self-malediction. If Abraham or His offspring should break the covenant, let them be like these animals—cursed. As Abraham prepares to make his solemn

trek, the unthinkable happens: God Himself passes through the pieces. What could it mean? Generation after generation of unfaithful, covenant-breaking Israelites could not untangle that mystery. And yet, after thousands of years, barging into this miserable cast of unfaithful characters is faithful Jesus Christ, God in flesh, the Covenant Lord and **Covenant Servant** in one man. On the cross, He bears the curse of the covenant that we might experience its blessings through faith in Jesus. Commit yourself to Him today but take heart: He is more committed to you than

you ever could be to Him. He has clung to us and won't let go, so not even death can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39).



*(Inspired by Psalm 22)*

*Father,*

*For my sake Christ was forsaken.  
His blood was poured out; His  
bones set out of joint, His heart,  
like wax, melted within His  
chest; His strength was dried  
up; His mouth dry from thirst,  
He was laid down in the dust  
of death. In my place Jesus died.*

*From His suffering all those  
who were afflicted shall eat and  
be satisfied; those who seek Him  
shall praise you. May all the  
ends of the earth remember and*

*turn to you, and all its families  
worship before you. For kingship  
belongs to the Lord and He rules  
over the nations.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died  
for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will  
scarcely die for a righteous  
person—though perhaps for  
a good person one would dare  
even to die—<sup>8</sup> but God shows  
his love for us in that while we  
were still sinners, Christ died  
for us.

Romans 5:6-8

**WK2 | THURSDAY**

 **Ruth 1:1-22**

## **The Forgetfulness of Bitterness**

Hebrews 12:15 warns us not to let a “root of bitterness” cause anyone to “fail to obtain the grace of God.” Harry Emerson Fosdick put the idea into poetry: “Bitterness imprisons life; love releases it. Bitterness paralyzes life; love empowers it. Bitterness sours life; love heals it. Bitterness blinds life; love anoints its eye” (Fosdick). Blindness is a powerful metaphor for bitterness. Tied to idolatry (Deuteronomy 29:18),

bitterness fails to trust God. Bitterness is a posture of entitlement; it locks our eyes on ourselves and our misery and functionally blinds us both to God's grace and the love and needs of others. Bitterness is forgetful.

We seem to see the ugliness of bitterness on full display in poor Naomi. Mired in misery and loss after years of steeping in Moabite idolatry, Naomi is blind. She can barely see the grace of God leading her back to Bethlehem, or the beauty of Ruth's love. Verse 18 literally says that "When Naomi

saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped talking to her.” Naomi is like a woman with a winning lottery ticket in his pocket, sitting on a bus with her arms crossed and seething about missing a promotion at work. She laments to women in Bethlehem, “Don’t call me Naomi (“Pleasant”); call me Mara (“Bitter”), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (1:20).

It is doubtful that Naomi realized the irony of her words. In her day, it was not so long ago that the Lord had rescued His people from slavery in Egypt

through miraculous means. Yet just three days after Israel had sung to the Lord in exultant joy for His deliverance, they grumbled bitterly because of their thirst at Marah. Yet what was God's response to this underserving group? He made the bitter water pleasant, even sweet, to show them that He was “the Lord their healer” (Exodus 15:22-26). We are far too often spiritual amnesiacs like Naomi and the grumbling Israelites before her. Today, let the love of Christ heal your bitter heart and make it sweet, let it anoint your blind eyes. In Christ, God is not out to get

you, for Jesus drained the bitter cup of God's wrath to the dregs.



*(Inspired by Psalm 23)*

*Father,*

*You are my shepherd, I shall not want. You make me lie down in green pastures. You lead me beside still waters. You restore my soul. You lead me in paths of righteousness for your name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies; you*

*anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell with you forever.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died  
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were still sinners, Christ died  
for us.

Romans 5:6-8

**WK2 | FRIDAY**

 **Ruth 1:1-22**

## **Mission Trip to Moab**

Some careful readers see chapter one in quite a different light. In their view, it is not only Naomi's return to Israel that demonstrates newfound repentance and faith; it is her dealings with both her daughters-in-law and the women of Bethlehem. First of all, is there not a similarity between Naomi's admonition to Ruth and Orpah to return to their households and their gods and Jesus' apparent rebuke to those who might follow after him (Mat-

thew 8:18-21)? Jesus spoke far more often of the cost of discipleship than He did of the perks (Luke 18:25-33). Similar to the rich young ruler in Luke 18, though Orpah desired to follow Naomi, her heart's true idols were exposed as she went away sad. When she realized that having God meant renouncing everything else that would give her significance in this world, she went with everything else. Orpah saved her life and lost it, Ruth lost her life and found it (Mark 8:35). “Jesus plus nothing equals everything” (Tchividjian 24).

Furthermore, it is possible that Naomi's desire to be called Mara ("bitter") did not stem from her own bitterness, but from her understanding that God had dealt bitterly with her in His grace, that she might return to Him from her wandering. Perhaps this name change was her act of faith that God would again turn bitter water into sweet through His divine sovereignty. In the words of William Cowper:

*His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter  
taste,*

*But sweet will be the flower.*  
(Cowper)

Regardless, much can be gleaned from this amazing passage. God's saving kindness extends beyond His chosen people (e.g. Ruth), but always through His chosen people (e.g. Naomi). May God's church never be a cul-de-sac of blessing! And yet it was not through a mission trip to Moab that Ruth was brought into the fold of grace, but through Naomi's suffering. Two things we must then repent of assuming: that all suffering is merely God's punishment for sin, and

that anyone is beyond God's power to save. Though much of Naomi's suffering was a result of her own unfaithfulness, God was working new life out of so much death. This is the pattern of his work: life from death. We see this ultimately in Jesus, the "grain of wheat" that was buried so that new life would spring up from the ground and bear fruit (John 12:24). We are that new life, "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" and dying in Christ only to rise to eternal life (Colossians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 15:36). Second, notice that even after her conversion, Ruth is still called

“the Moabite.” Who has God placed in your life that you have labeled and written-off? The gossip? The cheater? The alcoholic? That family member? If God saved a Moabite widow, God can save them, for redemption is full and free. He even saved us who were once “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). May we like Christ embrace both suffering and those who suffer.



*(Inspired by Psalm 38)*

*Father,*

*Rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath! For you arrows have sunk into me and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation.*

*There is no health in my bones because of my sin. My iniquities have gone over my head and I am crushed. All my longing is before you. My heart throbs; my strength fails me. But for you, for you, O Lord, I wait. For I*

*am ready to fall, and my pain  
is ever before me. I confess my  
iniquity, I am sorry for my sin.  
I know that you will not forsake  
me. Christ has borne the weight  
of your wrath; He has carried the  
burden of my sin. My iniquities  
have all been laid on Him and  
he was crushed. Comfort me in  
my suffering, O my God, be not  
far from me. You, O Lord are my  
salvation.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak,  
at the right time Christ died  
for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will  
scarcely die for a righteous  
person—though perhaps for  
a good person one would dare  
even to die—<sup>8</sup> but God shows  
his love for us in that while we  
were still sinners, Christ died  
for us.

Romans 5:6-8

**WK2 | SATURDAY**

 **Ruth 1:1-22**

## **Sweet Loyalty**

I love this passage of Scripture. In it is an ironclad loyalty that is the stuff heroism is made of. Ruth's speech to Naomi is simply inspiring, which is why this passage is one of the most quoted Scriptures in wedding ceremonies (including my own wedding). But there is another reason why I love this passage: in it we see a foreshadow, a sketch of Christ and His selfless love reaching out to save others. Ruth is a **type** of Christ—one who points us to

Jesus.

How is this the case? Recall what is happening. Naomi has buried her husband, her sons, and is about to bury all her dreams as there seems to be no way for Elimelech's family line to carry on. She has heard news that the famine in Bethlehem has ended, and she is going to go back home an empty and sour woman. In what seems to be a mixed bag of motives, Naomi pushes away her daughters-in-law that they might find new husbands and new lives for themselves, as well as to separate herself from the

living reminders of her dead sons. Orpah listens to so-called common sense and turns back to the gods of Moab. Ruth, on the other hand, is not so common. Ruth has become captivated with Naomi's God and pledges her loyalty to Him and to Naomi.

Now, here is the Christ-like moment to catch. What is Ruth saying when she says that she will go with Naomi and die where she dies and will be buried where she is buried (2:17)? Ruth is giving up her life to see an impossible redemption arise in the life of Naomi. For Ruth

to leave Moab and cling to Naomi is to give up all her prospects at marriage and therefore all possibilities of children. She is young enough to be remarried and young enough to bear children. And regarding life in a new town, it is beyond a long shot that she would find a husband in kosher Bethlehem—Ruth is a Moabitess—a gentile outcast! In short, Ruth is handing over her life that she might care for cantankerous old Naomi. This is no mere move to another country or a flare of sentimentality. This is a conscious laying down of her entire life for the good of one

she loves. This is a beautiful sketch of Christ who willingly laid down His life for a bitter and ungrateful people—us!

But this parallel comes even more alive. This living death of clinging to bitter Naomi will not end in despair, but will bring a miraculous redemption! The impossible happens and it transforms a community and affects all of history. What looks like Ruth going even farther into a marriage-less and barren life is what actually brings her into union with Boaz, the one who will marry her and be the father of their

son, Obed. Ruth embraces the bitterness of Naomi and a barren future only to rise to acclaim as the one who bore a son that brought sweetness to everyone involved. Ruth exhibits *hesed*: loyal love.

This *hesed* love that we see in Ruth is magnetic. It is attractive. It makes us want to be like her, to love like her—to be bold like her. But her *loyal love* is just a small percentage of the 100° proof *hesed* of Jesus. In Jesus, God's loyal love reaches its ultimate expression. In Jesus all of God's promises are realized: “For all the promises of God

find their yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter amen to God for his glory” (2 Cor. 1:20). God is faithful.

Let’s look to Ruth and honor her *hesed*-ness; but let Ruth turn our eyes to the loyal love of Jesus. Ruth is an *example* of a sacrificial and loyal love, but only Jesus can *empower* us to love loyally through His Spirit.

So, I wonder, what does laying your life down for the good of another look like? Ruth clung to bitter Naomi; what bitterness will you die for to see that bit-

terness become sweet? Such daily dying is of the essence of the Christian faith. As you go through your day pondering what bitterness you might play a part in making sweet, remember these words of Jesus: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39).



*(Inspired by Psalm 30)*

*Father,*

*I will praise you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up. You have not let me sink under the weight of my sin; you have redeemed me.*

*I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you brought my soul up from the pit.*

*I will sing praises to you and give thanks to your name. Your anger and your wrath have been poured out on Christ in my place, that I may experience your joy and favor all the days of my life.*

*You have turned my mourning  
into dancing; you have put an  
end to my bitterness and clothed  
me with gladness, that I may  
sing your praise and not be  
silent. O Lord my God, I will  
give thanks to you forever!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



YOUR TURN: Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

## WEEK THREE

# The Kind Redeemer

## Ruth 2:1-23

<sup>1</sup> Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimel-ech, whose name was Boaz.<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered, “The Lord bless you.”<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.”

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> 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?”<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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!”<sup>13</sup> 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.”

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. <sup>16</sup> And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”

<sup>17</sup> So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.”<sup>20</sup> 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.”<sup>21</sup> 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.’”<sup>22</sup> 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.”<sup>23</sup> So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, glean-

ing until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

**WK3 | MONDAY**

 Ruth 2:1-23

## Our Lavish God

If you don't know *hesed*, you don't know the God of the Bible. The word appears around 250 times in the **Old Testament**. When God reveals Himself to Moses, the first thing He tells him is that He is full of *hesed* (Exodus 34:6). The lone pin-prick of starlight in the dark sky of Lamentations is that God's *hesed* never ceases (3:22). Adulterous David cried out for mercy by appealing to God's *hesed* (Psalm 51:1). What then is *hesed*? It is God's loyal love,

His kindness, His covenant grace, His unshakable fidelity, His unwavering commitment to bless His people at whatever personal cost. The book of Ruth is about *hesed*.

In Ruth 1:8, Naomi prays for this covenant blessing for her daughters-in-law: “May the Lord deal kindly [*hesed*] with you...” Orpah forsook that blessing for the fields of Moab, while Ruth clung to the Lord’s *hesed*. And right away, chapter two begins to show God’s response to Ruth’s faith through the work of Boaz. Boaz not only allows her to glean in his

field and orders her protection, but gives this starving, striving woman a break from the hot sun complete with bread dipped in wine, roasted grain, and leftovers to take home! Naomi lamented in 1:21 that she went away in unfaithfulness “full, and the Lord [had] brought [her] back empty.” Now picture Ruth, who went away in faithfulness empty, waddling back home through the city streets with 30 pounds (an ephah) of barley and a doggy bag from lunch! Naomi’s response is of course deep wonder and gratitude toward both God and Boaz (2:20). Her advice is

obvious: *don't go gleaning in any other field!* What other response could she have to such wonderful grace and kindness?

Yet how often do God's people, like Elimelech, Naomi, and Orpah in chapter one, go gleaning in other fields? How quickly do we grow bored of the lavish grace of God, or mistrustful that He will indeed provide for us? God has shown *hesed* to us foreigners at far greater cost to Himself than an ephah of barley. It cost God His own Son to bless us. How can we doubt His love? Is he not infinitely more lavish than Boaz? Our God is

not stingy. Go to Him empty. Come away full. “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap” (Luke 6:38). Let these verses wash over you today: “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

(Romans 8:32). “Blessed be the God...who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3).



*(Inspired by Psalm 111)*

*Father,*

*I will give thanks to you  
with my whole heart. Full of  
splendor and majesty are your  
works, and your righteousness  
endures forever. You have caused  
your wondrous works to be  
remembered; you are gracious  
and merciful. You provide food  
for those who fear you; you  
remember your covenant forever.  
You have shown your people  
the power of your works by  
giving us the inheritance of the*

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*nations. The works of your hands  
are faithful and just; all your  
precepts are trustworthy; they  
are established forever and ever,  
to be performed with faithfulness  
and uprightness. You sent  
redemption to your people; Holy  
and awesome is your name! May  
your praise endure forever!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>24</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 12:24-25

**WK3 | TUESDAY**

 **Ruth 2:1-23**

**Mr. Perfect**

If the renowned men of the famous Old Testament stories have one thing in common, it is that they are deeply flawed. Boaz is rare among them, taking his place alongside a select few such as Abel and Daniel, as a figure who has no glaring moral blemishes. In relation to women, Boaz immediately shows himself to be respectful (2:8), protective (2:9), and a willing provider (2:8-17). Among his employees, his godly character clearly commands respect

(2:4). Among the poor and marginalized, he shows himself to be a cheerful and abundantly generous benefactor (2:17). Later, in chapter four, we will see how Boaz is viewed by his neighbors: lawful, honest, and esteemed (4:11). Read Psalm 1 or Proverbs 3 and compare Boaz. Whose delight is in the law of the Lord? Who prospers in all that he does? Who is marked by steadfast love and faithfulness? Who could never imagine saying to their neighbor in need: “I promise I’ll have it for you tomorrow” when he has it today (Proverbs 3:28)? Boaz. A man is not measured

by the size of his bank account but by the size of his heart.

Though Boaz was honored in Bethlehem, there must have been grumbling. His absurd generosity to foreigners (2:17, 3:15), his “The Lord be with you!” greeting to his employees (2:4), his observance of the minute details of the law (3:12), and his sexual purity (3:10) would surely have irritated people. Why? Because his lavish generosity revealed their stinginess, because his pure speech revealed their corrupt talk, because his obedience revealed their transgressions, and be-

cause his purity revealed their defilement. Friends, this is why Jesus Christ was crucified! He was too good and we could not stand it. He was Love and Life in a world of hatred and death. The darkness had to crush the light (John 1:4-5). Yet in the end, as faithful Sam realizes in *The Lord of the Rings*, “the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach” (Tolkien 199). The Light of the World has risen and the darkness is retreating.

Let us not be too quick to label those whose righteousness

makes us uncomfortable as “**legalists**.” God’s will is not for us to use our freedom in Christ to walk in slavery to sin. “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people” (1 Peter 2:15). As we follow the Crucified One in doing good, we can expect sneers and jeers. But rest assured, the reward of Christ is worth the reproach of Christ (Hebrews 11:26, 12:13).



*(Inspired by Psalm 25)*

*Father,*

*To you I lift up my soul. Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O*

*Lord. You are good and upright;  
therefore you instruct sinners.  
You lead the humble in what is  
right. All your paths are steadfast  
love and faithfulness. For your  
name's sake, O Lord, you have  
pardoned my great guilt. Now  
lead me and instruct me in all of  
your ways; teach me to follow you  
in faithfulness and uprightness.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>24</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 12:24-25

**WK3 | WEDNESDAY**

 Ruth 2:1-23

## Just Following Orders

There are precious few characters in the book of Ruth, so we know none of them appear by accident. What do we make of Boaz's foreman? To this hardworking Israelite, Ruth is nameless, merely "the young Moabite woman" (2:6). He is perhaps too quick to point out that she is a poor sojourner, therefore he *had no choice* but to allow her to glean the edges of the field, as the law demands (Leviticus 19:9-10). And yet, as a law-abiding, hard-working

foreman, he notices her hard work (2:7). The foreman has done his duty.

On the other hand, Boaz does far more than his duty for Ruth, blessing her, offering her protection, feeding her an extravagant (to Ruth, at least) lunch, and sending her away with a several weeks' worth of food. Of course, later in the story, he becomes her **kinsman redeemer** even though the law did not require that of him. See, the foreman obeyed the *letter* of the law, Boaz obeyed the *spirit*. Boaz understood that “love is the fulfillment of the law” because “all

the law and the prophets” depend on loving God and loving our neighbor (Romans 13:10; Matthew 26:37-40). This redeemer obeyed the commandment of The Redeemer: “Love one another” (John 13:34, et al.).

What a mockery we make of God’s intention in giving the law! May we not be like the foreman and the Pharisees, tithing from our spice rack while rejecting the “weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23). These people seek to **justify** themselves according

to the law and find in the end only “a ministry of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7). These leverage the law to avoid the inconvenience of loving their neighbor, whereas Boaz leveraged the law to shower love upon his neighbor, even a lowly Moabite widow. The loving-kindness of God overflowed in Boaz to others. Still, others see the law as a bunch of graceless do’s and don’ts meant to make a grumpy God happy with us. Not true believers. God redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt, God sent His Son to die, “while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8). God then gives His law

to protect and provide for His beloved. To the new heart, the law tree has roots of grace and fruits of grace because Christ was crucified on it. May we walk in a hate-filled world as beacons of the love of Christ. And ultimately, “when [we] have done all that [we] were commanded, [let us] say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’” (Luke 17:10).



*(Inspired by Psalm 119)*

*Father,*

*Let your steadfast love come to me, your salvation according to your promise. My hope is in your rules. May I keep your law continually, forever and ever. May I find my delight in your commandments, may I love them. I will lift up my hands toward your commandments; I will meditate on your statutes.*

*Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! I have chosen the way*

*of faithfulness; I will set your rules before me. I will cling to your testimonies, O Lord; I will run in the way of your commandments. Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, that I may keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>24</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 12:24-25

**WK3 | THURSDAY**

 Ruth 2:1-23

## Opposed to Earning

Dallas Willard said that “Grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning. Earning is an attitude, effort is action” (Willard). Isn’t that profound? Too many of us (perhaps even Naomi herself, sitting around waiting for Ruth) have bought into the “Let go and let God” philosophy of life, which is deeply misleading. This saying imagines that “He must increase, but I must decrease” means that we should cease all activity so that God can go to work (John

3:30). More “*Hakuna Matata*;” less “The Way.” However, God did not save us to *inactivity* any more than he saved us by *our* activity! Ruth understands this. In the beginning of the chapter, this brand new disciple of God says to Naomi “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor (*hesed*)” (2:2). Ruth stepped out into the hard, dangerous world of gleaning, trusting that somehow God would provide for her because of His covenant loyalty. And then? Did she wait around not gleaning until favor magically plopped down

on her head? No, “she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest,” says Boaz’s foreman (2:7). Ruth trusted so strongly in the promise of grace, of divine favor, that she earnestly sought it. Grace motivated Ruth to seek grace! Though this should challenge those of us with a pathetic work ethic, there is a deeper lesson to be gleaned here.

Have we settled into comfortable presumption upon a trite and flimsy grace? If the thought of God’s grace does not rattle you to your core and make you thirsty for more, perhaps it

is because you believe you are really quite deserving of grace, thank you very much. Perhaps you imagine that if you were God, you'd probably choose you too! After all, aren't you really quite the catch? Ruth entertains no such notions when she encounters the grace of her redeemer: "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner" (2:10)?

Presuming upon God's grace is what happens when we separate grace and God. "Grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system" is cheap grace (Bonhoeuf-

fer 44). When grace is a system, we cease seeking it and only assent to it. What is the alternative? Grace as a person. Grace is a Person, not some paltry principle. Grace is Jesus Christ, the supreme gift of God to be sought again and again and again through daily repentance and faith. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). What is the “it” that we are seeking? Jesus? Grace? Heaven and earth itself? Yes.

For the meek (like Ruth) seek Him and they shall inherit it all (Matthew 5:5). “All things are yours” in Him (1 Corinthians 3:21). Seek Him.



*(Inspired by Psalm 143)*

*Father,*

*Hear my prayer; give ear to my pleas for mercy! Answer me in your faithfulness and righteousness. When the enemy pursues my soul, when he crushes my life to the ground, when he throws me into darkness like those long dead, I will remember you. I will meditate on all that you have done; I will ponder at the works of your hands. You have saved me. Jesus' blood has covered my sin and washed*

*away my transgressions. He has  
lifted my spirit. This free gift of  
salvation! I stretch out my hands  
to you; my soul thirsts for you.  
Let me hear in the morning of  
your steadfast love, for in you I  
trust. Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God! Let your  
good Spirit lead me on level  
ground.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>24</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 12:24-25

**WK3 | FRIDAY**

 **Ruth 2:1-23**

## **The First Fruits**

Ruth 2 ends with a cliffhanger, a to-be-continued. Boaz has blessed Ruth beyond reasonable expectation, but there is a portion of Naomi's prayer for Ruth in 1:9 left unanswered: Ruth remains husbandless, she still "lived with her mother-in-law" (2:23). It is revealed through Naomi's not-so-subtle realization (scheme?) that Boaz is a potential redeemer for them. Would he actually redeem a foreigner? Could a woman like Naomi, who has been hurt so

deeply, bear to have such high hopes dashed once again?

To a seasoned saint, the Scriptures are like the face of one's beloved. Every detail is precious and can be pored over for hours without boredom. One such detail is the amount of time that passes during chapter two of Ruth. Naomi and her daughter-in-law arrive in Bethlehem from the fields of pagan Moab "at the beginning of barley harvest" (Ruth 1:22). This means that they were pulled out of a foreign country to go to the Promised Land during the feast of **Passover** (Deuterono-

my 16:9). Even more striking, seven weeks pass before the end of chapter two, “the end of the barley and wheat harvests,” just in time for the festival of first fruits, part of the feast of weeks, or **Pentecost** (2:23). So, the Israelite Naomi and the **Gentile** Ruth taste the first fruits of God’s grace in the grain from Boaz as the Israelites had tasted the cluster of grapes in the wilderness (Numbers 13:23). But they had yet to taste of the fullness of their deliverance. Pentecost was coming.

What profound foreshadowing! After Jesus fulfilled the Passover in His **Last Supper** with His disciples and His subsequent death and resurrection, seven weeks later God poured out His Spirit on both Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem, making them one people in Christ (Acts 2:1-39; Ephesians 3:14-16). Iain Duguid writes, “Ruth’s incorporation by faith into God’s people was a foreshadowing of the much greater harvest that God would one day reap among the Gentiles as His grace extended more fully to the nations” (Duiguid 165). In an even grander sense, we

live in between the Red Sea and the Conquest, between Passover and Pentecost, between betrothal and consummation. We are the bride sojourning in the wilderness, having received the first fruits of the Spirit but eagerly awaiting the fullness of adoption and redemption (Romans 8:23). Through this swirling sea of metaphors we can barely catch a glimpse of the glory in store for us, glory which our present sufferings aren't even worth comparing

to (Romans 8:18). Set your hope not on the trinkets of this world, but on our “inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Peter 3:4).



*(Inspired by Psalm 103)*

*Father,*

*May all that is within me bless  
your holy name. May I never  
forget all that you have done; you  
have forgiven all my iniquity;  
you have redeemed my life from  
the pit; you have crowned me  
with steadfast love and mercy;  
you have satisfied me. You work  
righteousness and justice for  
those who are oppressed. You  
are merciful and gracious, slow  
to anger and abounding in  
steadfast love. You do not deal*

*with me according to my sin, nor do you repay me according to my iniquities. Christ has been dealt with on my behalf, he has paid the price. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is your steadfast love toward me. You know my frame; you know that I am dust. My days are like grass, like a flower of the field; the wind passes over it and it is gone. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>24</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 12:24-25

**WK3 | SATURDAY**

 Ruth 2:1-23

## The Security of Vulnerability

With dirt under her fingernails and sweat bathing her brow, Ruth met Mr. Right. Reaping barley by hand is a tough job, but Ruth rolled up her sleeves without ever knowing the good news of whose field she was **gleaning** in. She very well could have been working in the field of an abusive creep (keep in mind that it is still the time of the judges and *abusive creep* was the norm). But our author tells us straight away what

kind of man Boaz is: *worthy, a man of substance*. Boaz is an upstanding man, a man of godly character, and we see this in his first words to his workers, “The LORD be with you” (2:4). His first thought is of God and God’s presence among his people.

This upright Boaz comes into the story and provides the sharpest contrast possible to the ending of the Book of Judges. In chapter 19 of Judges a man treats a woman in the most horrific of ways. This man, a supposed *priest*, embodies all the social and moral corruption

of Israel at the time. His evil is seen in his self-preservation at the cost of the brutal death of an abused woman. Like light blazing through long-shuttered windows, Boaz steps on the scene and exhibits the very opposite of Judges 19—Boaz makes himself vulnerable to protect this foreign woman he just met. Boaz, a man of *hesed*, of loyal love, seeks to protect Ruth. Love protects. Love safeguards others at one's own expense.

Take a look at these verses and how love protects: “*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. Let your eyes be on the field you 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”* (2:8-9). Boaz has just put a protective barrier around Ruth through these seven commands. These commands are not tyranny, but tender, protective love.

Boaz knows Ruth is vulnerable. He knows the jealousy of women and the hormones of

men. His loving kindness senses Ruth's need for protection, so he tells her to stay where another land owner won't take advantage of her; he gives her permission and authority to be among his workers to protect her from undue worry; he sets the precedent for his female workers to treat Ruth with respect and not shame; he tells the men not to lay a finger on her if they value their jobs (and their necks); and to top it all off, he resources her with all the water she needs. He sets her up for success.

Now, all this protection comes

at a cost—financial and social. Boaz sets up the situation so that Ruth will walk away with as much grain as possible (and grain equals money in an agrarian society). In essence, he is asking the other women leave cut stalks behind so Ruth can take more bread home. He is “cutting profits” on this pariah from Moab. There is also a social cost. Boaz’ special treatment of this young stranger could look like he is smitten with this social outcast. *Is he after sex? What is he playing at?* No doubt, rumors would fly like chaff after his kind protection of Ruth. Boaz’ reputation

was on the line.

Boaz became vulnerable to protect an outsider. How Christ-like is Boaz? In the greatest act of vulnerability ever, Christ walked willingly to his cross where he would hang naked, overexposed and slathered with shame in order to protect humanity from the consequences of our sin. Love protects, and all those who trust in Christ are protected as they find shelter in the shadow of his wings—in the shadow of the cross.

Love is intimacy, and intimacy is born of vulnerability. Christ made himself vulnerable to protect us and bring us into God's family. Let us remember that it is the good news of Jesus that frees us from self to be truly vulnerable and willing to protect another instead of being self-protecting. Let us remember that we can be truly vulnerable only because we have security in his love. Christ-like vulnerability produces the greatest of all harvests—an invincible love.



*(Inspired by Psalm 28)*

*Father,*

*You are my strength and my shield; in you my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart praises you. I will sing and give thanks to you, the God of my salvation. You are the strength of your people; you are the saving refuge of your chosen ones. You have saved your people and blessed your heritage. You are our Shepherd; you carry us forever!*

*In Jesus' name,  
Amen.*

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**YOUR TURN:** Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

# **WEEK FOUR**

# **Six Measures of Barley**

*Ruth 3:1-18*

<sup>1</sup> 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? <sup>2</sup> Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> And she replied, “All that you say I will do.”

<sup>6</sup> So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet!<sup>9</sup> He said, “Who

are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. <sup>13</sup> 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.”

<sup>14</sup> 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.” <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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,<sup>17</sup> 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.’”<sup>18</sup> 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.”

## **WK4 | MONDAY**

### **Ruth 3:1-18**

## **The Proverbs 31 Woman**

Do you know what book comes just before Ruth in the ordering of the Hebrew Bible? Proverbs 31. If you aren't familiar with the famous chapter, read it now and note the way that it ends: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Proverbs 31:30-31). *In the gates* is an idiom that essentially means "everyone in town." Boaz's ex-

pression, “all my fellow towns-men know that you are a worthy woman” literally reads “all the gate of my people knows...” (3:11). We are given a not-so-subtle nudge: *Here is a woman of worth...Ruth the Moabitess!* Who would have thought? So what does this book teach us about godly character in women?

Many of us recoil when we hear the expression “biblical womanhood” or even “Proverbs 31 Woman.” So often, expressions like this have done little more than reinforce old cultural stereotypes, bringing to mind a

slavish, unquestioning woman toiling away at home, cooking for her husband and homeschooling her children. We often take Peter's requirement of a "gentle and quiet spirit" as supporting this stereotype, forgetting that gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit and that the meek shall inherit the earth (1 Peter 3:4)! The polar opposite error is that of our secular culture, cutting off the branch it sits on by trying to demolish gender distinctions altogether. As the Bible always does, Ruth challenges both liberal and conservative sensibilities about gender.

Namoi's first words upon Ruth's return, asking how she fared, are actually the *exact same words* that Boaz spoke upon waking up: "Who are you [my daughter]?" Who in the world is this Moabitess, having left empty and returned full—more than full—with eighty (eighty!) pounds of barley and what amounted to an engagement ring? Ruth cannot be put in a box: she follows her mother-in-law's instructions faithfully into great danger, but then at the zenith of the story's tension, she strays from Naomi's instructions to wait and essentially proposes to Boaz—a

man, her elder, and her boss (most commentators believe that spreading the corner of a garment over a woman was a symbolic gesture of proposal, see Ezekiel 16:8)! This woman defies simple categorization. In her care for Naomi (3:9) and her restraint (3:10), she has gained a reputation (3:11) for possessing the crown jewel of virtue: faithfulness toward her God and love toward her neighbor.

We must be careful not to judge others’ “worthiness” with the standards of our culture, or to define biblical words by our own contexts. Those who walk

with God will always walk against the grain of the world. Jesus Christ is our righteousness, not our ability to fit a mold, and He is conforming us by His Spirit, male and female, into His image (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 3:18-21).



*(Inspired by Psalm 73)*

*Father,*

*You are good to your people. You hold my hand; you guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but you are the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful. But it is good for me*

*to be near you. You, O Lord, are  
my refuge, that I may tell of all  
your works.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Exodus 6:6

**WK4 | TUESDAY**

 **Ruth 3:1-18**

## **He Won't Rest**

God has been abundantly faithful to our two widows, and yet one part of Naomi's prayer in chapter one remains unanswered: Ruth is still unmarried, which means that Naomi still has no land, no children, and no inheritance. In the world of the Old Testament, this meant no rest, no blessing, no *shalom* (Deuteronomy 6:1-3). Have you ever gotten lost while on vacation? With blinding speed, the restful bliss we seek is replaced with dreadful panic.

This must have been how Naomi felt as a stranger in her own homeland. This explains Naomi's hypothetical question to Ruth: "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" (3:1). Naomi's plan is possibly self-interested, and probably morally dubious, but pragmatically, it works. Hours later, Boaz promises Ruth: "...as the Lord lives, I will redeem you" (3:13). By the end of the chapter, it is early the next morning and we are on pins and needles to see how the drama will unfold. Naomi is sure: "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns

out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today” (3:18). Naomi has learned to trust her redeemer.

We are made for rest. In fact, entire industries are dedicated to it: resorts, spas, luxurious homes, feather mattresses, sleep specialists, hypnotists, the list goes on. Yet all seem to fall short. We need vacations after our vacations. While these placebos may address the body’s need for rest, and even the mind’s, they can never put the heart at rest. Our souls remain in a state of panic, like a burglar startling at small noises. Why?

C.S. Lewis says that our hearts retain “echoes of Eden,” a *selige sensucht* (blessed longing) in the words of Goethe (Barrs; Keller 134). Augustine famously penned in his *Confessions* that “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee” (Augustine 3). There is a fierce homesickness, a sort of crushing nostalgia that gets pricked in our hearts when we encounter beauty. We miss the garden. Deep down, we know we need more than circumstantial rest, more rest than even the Promised Land and the Mosaic Law can give us (Hebrews 10:4). It is telling that it was during the

golden age of peace in Israel that the melancholy book of Ecclesiastes was written.

God knew that if He was going to restore us to *shalom*, “a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells,” He must first confront the problem that ruined the *first* heaven and earth: our sin (2 Peter 3:13). True soul rest demands **redemption** from our sins. Jesus Christ, the “Lord of Rest”, labored in agony on the cross that we might have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Matthew 12:8; Ephesians

1:7). Even more glorious, we don't earn this righteousness, this rest; it is a gift of grace! (Romans 5:17).

And yet even this is incomplete. God has given us only six measures of barley, not seven, the number of rest and completion (Ruth 3:15; Genesis 1:31-2:2). The whole creation groans in the pains of labor, says Paul, awaiting the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:22-23). And yet “we wait with patience,” like Ruth and Naomi (Romans 8:25). This hope can give us a true rest, even in the midst of calamitous circumstances, as

we trust in our great Redeemer that He “will not rest [until He settles] the matter” (3:18). Are you restless? Trade in your substitutes for the real thing. The promise of entering his rest still stands (Hebrews 4:1). So please, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:7) Flee to Christ. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, in Him you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28-30).



*(Inspired by Psalm 33)*

*Father,*

*Your Word says “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” Because of Jesus I am one against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. My sin is covered! My transgressions are forgiven! Your Spirit moved in me and I acknowledged my sin to you; I confessed my transgressions and*

*you forgave the iniquity of my sin. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me in times of trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Exodus 6:6

**WK4 | WEDNESDAY**

 Ruth 3:1-18

## It's Complicated

Do you want to know how to write a best seller? Write a book that promises to hold the secret to unlocking “God’s will for your life.” If you really want it to fly off the shelves, claim that God’s will is family and material wealth. Naomi certainly seems the type to buy that book. Our meddling mother-in-law has connected the dots of God’s providence: Ruth just *happened* to glean in the fields of Boaz, who just *happened* to be one of their relatives that

could redeem them, and who just *happened* to take notice of Ruth. We can understand her temptation to take matters into her own hands. The early bird gets the worm, right?

What is more difficult to swallow is the method to Naomi’s madness. Her brilliant plan to woo virtuous Boaz is to have Ruth bathe, get dressed up, spray on some perfume, find Boaz when he is asleep, full of food and wine, uncover his feet (some translations say “legs”) and lie next to him...in the middle of the night! Blushing commentators have taken great

pains to remove all hints of sexual tension out of this passage, but we must let the story be the story: this is a dangerous situation! Of course, Ruth is a picture of obedience, boldness, and kindness in the midnight encounter. Yet how can we be so sure Boaz won't have a weak moment?

Thomas Watson said that “Providence is a Christian’s diary, not his Bible.” In other words, God is certainly to be given credit for the events in our life that “*just happen*;” and yet we do not interpret God’s character and will from such

events. Only the Scriptures reveal *who* God is and *what* His ultimate intentions are. Naomi seems to get this backwards; interpreting God's will by recent coincidences and bending clear commands of Scripture achiever her (*ahem*, God's) purposes. Though Boaz wants the same thing as Naomi (it's hard not to see how enamored he is with Ruth), He trusts God with the outcome. He obeys both the spirit of the law in caring for Ruth and Naomi and the letter of the law in giving the “nearer” redeemer the opportunity to marry Ruth (3:12). As painful as that must have been for

him, his faithfulness seems to have had a great effect on Naomi, who goes from scheming in the beginning of the chapter to waiting upon God in faith at the end (3:1-4, 18).

And yet, Naomi's plan worked! In truth, the text never explicitly condemns her actions. How magnificent and mysterious is the providence of our God! We ought to be like Paul, who cried out in worship as he reached the outer limits of his ability to understand God's will: "Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments

and how inscrutable his ways” (Romans 11:33). May the fourth verse of Psalm 37 gives us encouragement in God’s will for us today: “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” If God is our delight, our desire, then He will most certainly give us exactly what we want: *Himself.*



*(Inspired by Psalm 37)*

*Father,*

*You say “Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourselves in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” O God, Remind me of this truth every day. May I delight in you and you alone. Help me to*

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*trust you and walk in obedience  
to you. Remind me that I can  
always depend on you. The  
salvation of the righteous is from  
the Lord; He is their stronghold  
in times of trouble. The Lord  
helps them and delivers them; He  
delivers them from the wicked  
and saves them, because they take  
refuge in Him.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Exodus 6:6

## **WK4 | THURSDAY**

### **Ruth 3:1-18**

## **Marriage Drama**

The book of Ruth has been widely considered one of the greatest short stories ever composed, but interpreters are divided as to whether to call it a “love story.” It certainly doesn’t fit our typical, western, *Romeo and Juliette* meets *The Notebook* type of love stories where boy meets girl and their unbridled passion (“love”) holds up against all odds. And yet Ruth is a love story. The reason we do not recognize it is because its roots spread much deeper than

Shakespeare and its branches extend far beyond our horizons, to the end of time as we know it.

Before divorce, adultery, and death, before even one lovesick heart was broken, there was only one thing in all of creation that wasn't good: Adam was alone. The Lord, taking pity on the crown of his creation, caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. As he slept, the Lord removed a rib from his body and somehow made it into a woman! The man awoke to find Eve, and he was so smitten that he broke into song:

“This is at last bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23)! This was the first love story, before spiritual darkness had descended upon the earth and thorns had sprung up from the ground. Though Eve was to be Adam’s helper in filling the earth with image bearers of God to exercise dominion over His good creation, all seemed ruined upon their rebellion.

The book of Ruth is a glimmer of hope in the dark world of the Old Testament that God won’t let His love story end in death as all of ours do (with perhaps the exception of a few brave

fairy tales). Faithful Boaz, all alone, awakens from his slumber to find his own Eve, a helper finally suitable for him, a woman full of *hesed*. Though she is not taken from his body, God works miraculous means to bring this foreigner to him. These are more than whimsical coincidences thread through a nice love story meant to merely warm our hearts. This story was given to open our eyes to the glory of the **Last Adam**, the Better Boaz. Jesus, born in Bethlehem, redeemed His foreign bride, the church (cleansed and created anew from His wounded side!), by His sacri-

ficial death. Through His powerful Holy Spirit He has made us “a helper fit for Him” to proclaim His name and fill the earth with His image bearers (Genesis 2:18).

May the story of Boaz and Ruth inspire us to seek character over beauty and charm, and prize covenant commitment over passion and novelty. Yet let us not miss the fact that Boaz and Ruth are first meant to point us to their offspring,

to David, to the **Son of David**, that He may ravish our hearts with His love. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Are you smitten?



*(Inspired by Psalm 139)*

*Father,*

*You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.*

*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to the heavens you are there. If I hide*

*in the darkness you are there.  
You formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my  
mother's womb. I praise you, for  
I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made. Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.  
Search me, O God, and know  
my heart! Test me and know  
my thoughts! See if there is any  
grievous way in me, and lead me  
in the way of everlasting!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Exodus 6:6

**WK4 | FRIDAY**

 Ruth 3:1-18

## A Redeemer Nearer than I

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). It is a verse so familiar to many of us that we almost say it with a dull voice and a roll of the eye. You probably just skipped to the second sentence without marveling; maybe you didn’t even read it all the way through! God forgive us! You see, Scripture tells us that the **Old Testa-**

**ment** literally exists to point us to the person and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Luke 24:27). Yet the beautiful thing is the *way* that it does this. The ancient Augustinian maxim reads: “The new is in the old concealed, the old is in the new revealed.” The Old Testament conceals Jesus in prophecies, law, proverbs, songs, and stories like Ruth. And stories have a way of not simply telling us the truth, but showing it to us. They make truths that we “know” in our heads come alive in our hearts. Ruth is a prime example.

Boaz longs to marry Ruth and redeem her and Naomi. Yet he is a man of honor, he knows there is a “redeemer nearer than [him]” (3:12). In other words, Elimelech (Naomi’s deceased husband) has a closer relative than Boaz who should have an opportunity to marry Ruth, this “worthy woman,” before Boaz does (3:11). On the one hand, this is simply a detail in the story, probably included by the author to show how morally upstanding Boaz was, and to demonstrate that it wasn’t something like impulsiveness or lust driving his actions. On the other hand, it should cause

our hearts to burn for the ultimate Boaz, the Nearer Redeemer, one who is not long dead and can do much more than fill our empty stomachs. We need a Redeemer who is alive, and can fill our empty souls with His presence.

His name is Jesus Christ. Though we were unworthy, He has redeemed us by His blood; He has “spread His wings over us,” covering our nakedness and shame with the robe of His righteousness. He has filled us with His Spirit that we might bear the fruit of righteousness. He has guaranteed us an eternal

inheritance, glorious beyond all comparison. He has ushered us into His own Kingdom. Christian, do you really “believe” these things? Does your “heart burn within” you (Luke 24:32)? We share what we love. If that were not universally true of humanity, art would not exist, social media would not exist. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). How can we not share that love?



*(Inspired by Psalm 145)*

*Father,*

*Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. You are great and greatly to be praised. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous work, I will meditate.*

*You are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. You are good to all, and your mercy is over all*

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*that you have made. All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Exodus 6:6

**WK4 | SATURDAY**

 **Ruth 3:1-18**

## **But Is He Willing?**

Boaz has the cash and the bloodline. But is he willing? That is the question that drives the tension of the undercover midnight meeting of chapter three. Redemption in the Book of Ruth has three requirements. A *kinsman redeemer* must be *related, able, and willing* to “redeem” a family member who has lost a husband and is without an heir. In short, if a woman’s husband was to die and she had no children and no provision, various laws of the Old

Testament encouraged a kinsman redeemer to act on behalf of this relative.

Boaz is a relative of Naomi's. Boaz has certainly has the ability to provide financially as he has done rather well in real estate. He has shown immense kindness to Ruth, no doubt, but will he take her as his wife and act as a kinsman redeemer to bring an heir to a barren family and secure their family land? It's time to find out. So Naomi plots and plans a proposal, Ruth takes bold action and proposes to Boaz on the threshing floor, and Boaz re-

veals his heart—he is willing! His heart explodes with affection: *“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. 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”* (3:10-11). The one called a “worthy man” now calls Ruth a “worthy woman.” Like Adam and Eve, this is a matched pair. Loyal love is exchanging vows in the harvest field.

What does this practice of an able and willing relative playing the family hero in ancient Israel have to do with us? At first, nothing; but ultimately, everything. Why is this story of Ruth even in the Bible? To show us moral people from millennia ago? To make our hearts swoon with romantic sentiment at a tale well told? No. Ruth is a romance of redemption that points us to the truer and greater kinsman redeemer: Jesus. When Jesus spoke of the Scriptures pointing to Him (John 5:39), He knew full well that Ruth was a story pulsing with the loyal love and law-ne-

cessitated sacrifice that would find its long awaited fulfillment in His life, death, and resurrection.

So, what do we learn about God here at the center of the Book of Ruth? We learn that God is *willing* to redeem the one in need. At the heart of Ruth we see the heart of God! He is eager to stretch out his arm and deliver a needy humanity. And how does this God who has the riches of the cosmos at His command redeem a wayward and soul-shattered people? By taking on skin. Seriously. Skin and bones, flesh and blood. By

the miracle of the incarnation—that is, taking on the *meat* of a body (think *carne asada* or *carnivore*). By the Son of God becoming a relative by becoming fully human. And it is by being fully human *and* fully God He could pay the price humanity owed, and then conquer death by letting death exhaust its artillery on Him like only the living God could.

Throughout Ruth we see God orchestrate even the smallest of details with His invisible hand. But is that good news? Is it really good news that the God of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz is in

control of all things? It is if He is *good!* And we see his goodness as we see his loyal love fulfilling His promises to redeem His people. He is willing.

At the barley harvest in Bethlehem we find Boaz willing to provide redemption for the destitute. He is a good man. Ages later, in the very same Bethlehem, God's loyal love took on flesh and was born in a stable. This baby, born in the breadbasket of the Promise Land, was a distant relative of Ruth's baby Obed. And this Jesus (whose very name means *God is our salvation*) was to be the bread of

life that would save the world from the ancient famine of rebellion. Is he willing to redeem? God is willing. God is good. There is much to celebrate.



*(Inspired by Psalm 66)*

*Father,*

*How awesome are your deeds!  
So great is your power that your  
enemies come cringing to you.  
And while we were enemies  
we were reconciled to you by  
the death of your Son! May all  
the earth worship you and sing  
praises to you. May all come and  
see what you have done. May all  
people bless you Lord. May the  
sound of your praise be heard,  
you, who have kept our soul  
among the living and has not let*

*our feet slip. May all come and  
hear what you have done. You  
have answered the cry of your  
people. You have cleansed us from  
our iniquity. To you be all glory  
and blessing, for you have not  
rejected our prayers or removed  
your steadfast love!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



**YOUR TURN:** Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

## WEEK FIVE

# The Purchased Bride

Ruth 4:1-12

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. <sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> 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.”

<sup>6</sup> 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.”

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. <sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> 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,<sup>12</sup> 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.”

**WK5 | MONDAY**

 **Ruth 4:1-12**

## **Calculating or Cheerful?**

Though we now know our story will have a happy ending: Naomi and Ruth will be cared for, we have become too emotionally invested to breathe a sigh of relief. This story has played on our heartstrings: it just wouldn't be *right* for Ruth to marry this mysterious redeemer. Ruth and Boaz belong together! Our hearts fall as we hear this nameless man declare: “I will redeem it” (4:4). And why not? With no children in-

volved, just the caretaking of old Naomi, he can add some prime real estate to his investment portfolio (inheritance). What a lame ending. And yet here's where Boaz plays his ace: "Oh yeah, one minor detail: you need to marry this foreign widow and give the land to any kids you might have with her." Eyes widening with horror, our nearer redeemer changes his tune right on cue, saying effectively: "I can't do that; that will damage my earnings! You do it, damage your own." Boaz then does just that, redeeming the land and purchasing Ruth in the presence of all the people.

What's happening here? A lot! On the one hand, there is the nameless redeemer. His generosity is calculated: ready to take care of a poor old lady as long as it means financial benefit for him. On the other hand, there is Boaz. His generosity is cheerful: giving copious amounts of barley to two widows and even redeeming their land, performing the duty of a **levirate marriage** with no obligation and no financial upside. Boaz is the embodiment of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully*

*will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* Boaz sowed bountifully, and instead of being a nameless detail, he not only became respected in the community, but received royal lineage, becoming the great grandfather of King David. And he received his beloved Ruth. The other guy? He went the way of Orpah: filed under “Irrelevant” in the annals of history.

Are you a calculating or a cheerful giver? Before giving or serving, do you ask how it will ben-

efit you? How it will fulfill you? How others will view you? Only by looking to the generosity of Jesus, who “though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich,” can our miserly, scrooge-like hearts become joyfully open (2 Corinthians 8:9). In God’s kingdom, it is truly more blessed to give than receive, because in giving we get the Blessed One (Acts 20:35). Loosen your grip on the things of this world, for a New World is coming. Our beloved Bridegroom is worth the loss of all things; He has purchased us in the presence of all the peo-

ple and has given us His royal lineage. “Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).



*(Inspired by Psalm 34)*

*Father,*

*You deserve to be blessed at all times, for your people to continually sing your praises. May my soul boast in you and you alone. May your people gather together and exalt your holy Name. When I call on you, you answer me. When I seek you, you deliver me. When I cry to you, you save me. I have tasted and seen that you are good. All I have has been given by you. You redeem the life of your servants;*

*none who take refuge in you will  
be condemned.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



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earth.

Ephesians 1:4b-10

**WK5 | TUESDAY**

 **Ruth 4:1-12**

## **The Law Fulfilled**

If the message of Christianity is essentially “God loves you,” then where did all the persecution come from? Who would have a problem with that? It is an important question to ask. The answer is not, as we sometimes like to think, that we in America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are just so civilized, and that if everyone else could get it together and be like us persecution would end. Unfortunately, that is the false gospel of modernism, not the **gospel** of Jesus

# Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must begin with the law of God. No one who has not understood the “bad news” of the law can understand the “good news” of the gospel: that “*God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*” (Romans 8:3-4). In other words, if we depend on ourselves (the flesh)

to fulfill the law, we are up a creek. So God sent his own Son, Jesus, to live in the flesh and be condemned in our place on the cross. Having His righteousness as a gift, we can now fulfill the law as we learn to depend on Him (the Spirit). The law slays us, grace saves us. This is why Jesus says: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).

What does this have to do with Ruth and Boaz? Simply this, Boaz does not run away with

Ruth simply because he “loves her,” destroying their integrity along the way. He fulfilled the law, redeeming her legally in the presence of all people, showing himself both merciful and just. This is what the cross was all about, where mercy and justice kissed (Psalm 85:10). Christians, we have an unpopular message. It is that you are so bad, God had to die a brutal death on a cross (law & justice). But He loved you so much, He did it (grace & mercy). Don’t settle for a watered-down “gospel” of love without the law, of glory without the cross. The early church was persecuted be-

cause they sensed the *gravity* of God's grace (they had crucified the **Messiah!**) and those meddlers were turning the world upside down (Acts 2:36; 17:6). May we *all* have the “*strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:18-19).



*(Inspired by Psalm 85)*

*Father,*

*You have forgiven the iniquity  
of your people; you covered all  
their sin. You withdrew all your  
wrath; you turned from your  
hot anger. By the blood of Jesus  
you have restored us. The wrath  
that we deserved was taken by  
Him. You have revived us that  
we may rejoice in you. You have  
shown us your steadfast love and  
granted us salvation. Love and  
faithfulness meet; righteousness  
and peace kiss each other.*

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*Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. You have given us what is good. You have saved us.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



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Ephesians 1:4b-10

## **WK5 | WEDNESDAY**



### **We are Witnesses**

How weird is the sandal thing? To confirm a transaction when redeeming and exchanging land in Israel at this time, one took off their sandal and gave it to the other, giving them the right to redeem the land. It probably made for an uncomfortable walk home! The important thing is that Boaz had just “purchased” Ruth for his bride, and that the ten other elders and the townspeople witnessed the legality of the purchase. “You are witnesses this day” declares Boaz.

It almost sounds like a challenge, as all the people respond immediately by affirming: “We are witnesses” (4:10-11). This incident recalls another marriage, two books earlier in our Bibles, when the people of Israel renew their covenant vows with God at Shechem, officiated by Joshua, “the servant of the Lord” (Joshua 24:29). Joshua, perhaps the worst motivational speaker of all time, tells them effectively: “Look, He’s holy. You’re not. You can’t serve God.” But the people insist, and Joshua says with resignation in his voice, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you

have chosen to serve the Lord. The naïve Israelites respond just as elders and townspeople do to Boaz: “We are witnesses” (Joshua 24:23).

These are joyous occasions in Scripture. Upon witnessing the “marriage” of Boaz and Ruth, the town breaks into a jubilant blessing of Boaz and his bride, recognizing her as a “wife” instead of a Moabitess, and asking God that she’d be like Rachel and Leah, “who together built up the house of Israel” (4:11). After witnessing to their own marriage to Yahweh, Joshua sends them away, “every man to

his inheritance” (Joshua 24:28).

We too are witnesses (Acts 1:8). Once foreigners to God’s covenant like Ruth, we are witnesses that Jesus has redeemed His bride with His own blood. Though God’s firstborn son Israel, His wandering bride, was unfaithful to her vows at Shechem, we are witnesses that God’s Firstborn Son, the True Israel, was not. This Greater Joshua, “The Servant of the Lord,” was faithful even unto death on a cross. This was a much stranger exchange than a sandal—our sin for His righteousness. Are you still hedg-

ing your bets, claiming that you haven't seen quite enough? Give it up. "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). In Him we have more than a plot of Promised Land as our inheritance; we have the whole earth (Matthew 5:5). As we, the bride of Christ, "together build up" the church, "the body of Christ, may we be like the Witnesses Peter and John, declaring: "for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Ruth 4:11, Ephesians 4:12, Acts 4:20).



*(Inspired by Psalm 36)*

*Father,*

*Your steadfast love extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains; your judgments are like the great deep. How precious is your steadfast love, O God! Continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart! Let not arrogance come upon me, nor the wicked drive me away. Keep near to you. Jesus has saved; He has changed my*

*heart and made me to love you.*

*May I proclaim this news of  
salvation to all those around me.  
That you are God and you save!*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



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Ephesians 1:4b-10

**WK5 | THURSDAY**

 **Ruth 4:1-12**

## **Dirty & Barren**

Perhaps the benediction that the elders give to Boaz in 4:11-12 was the common blessing upon a newly married couple in Bethlehem at the time, but it was certainly filled with more significance than they had intended. Rachel and Leah (the wives of Jacob or “Israel”) were both barren, just like Ruth during her 10 years of marriage to Naomi’s deceased son, Mahlon. Leah’s granddaughter Tamar, a foreigner like Ruth, also dressed up in an attempt

to procure a kinsman redeemer (see Genesis 38). However, unlike Ruth, Tamar dressed as a prostitute and tricked her father-in-law, Judah himself, into sleeping with her in order to have a child (Perez). In truth, this shouldn't surprise us. Boaz himself is the son of Rahab the Amorite prostitute! Ruth fits right in. However, Boaz and Ruth may be the brightest spot on this most renowned of family trees.

Of course, what makes all of this so striking is that this is the family tree of Jesus Christ. If you think your family is messed

up, spend a little time reading up on Jesus' most famous ancestors: Adam and Eve, David and Bathsheba, Manasseh...the list goes on. What can we learn from this? Well, Jesus summed it up best in his own ministry as the Great Physician: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). In a world where "Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good," Jesus Christ pursues sinners and makes them righteous (Proverbs 13:21). God answered His child's cry: "Why does the way

of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?" on the cross of Jesus Christ when the Righteous One stood condemned in the place of the wicked and treacherous (Jeremiah 12:1). Make no mistake; Jesus is the friend of sinners, unashamed to call us His brothers (Hebrews 2:11).

Are our church doors swung open wide to the promiscuous, the self-absorbed, the cheaters, the homosexuals, the corrupt politicians, the addicts, the abusive, and the con artists (1 Corinthians 6:9)? We have very good news for them. Through repen-

tance and faith in Christ, they can be those who “were” those things, but are now “washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). “[Grace] meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us” (Lamott). God loves His children too much to leave them dirty and barren; He cleans us up and makes us fruitful by His Spirit. Those Christians who are not open to “those messy

outsiders” have forgotten the grace that God shed on them. In fact, some of them may be shocked to find themselves left out in the cold on the last day.



*(Inspired by Psalm 147)*

*Father,*

*I will praise you! For it is good to sing praises to you. You heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds. You determine the number of the stars and give all of them their names. You are great and abundant in power. You lift up the humble and cast the wicked to the ground. You send rain; you cause life; you keep us fed and satisfied. You delight in those who hope in your steadfast love. The brokenhearted*

*and the stone-hearted, the poor  
and the proud, the suffering and  
the self-righteous, you can save  
them all. No one is beyond your  
reach. You are powerful; you are  
able to save.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



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Ephesians 1:4b-10

**WK5 | FRIDAY**

 **Ruth 4:1-12**

## **Risk & Reward**

On their first encounter, Boaz notes that it is well-known how Ruth left her life in Moab behind to care for Naomi and become one of God's people. He exclaims: "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!" (Ruth 2:12). Did he know just how fully this blessing would come to fruition? Could he have imagined at the time that

he would have been the source of a blessing much greater than a meal in the shade and some grain to go? Probably not, but Boaz knew His God. He knew that the Lord is not only merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, slow to anger and quick to forgive, but also that he justly “rewards those who seek Him” (Exodus 34:6-7; Hebrews 11:6). That is not to say that God is merely fair, giving people what they deserve, for that would mean wrath for us all! Apart from grace, “No one seeks after God,” say Paul and the Psalmist emphatically (Romans 3:2;

Psalm 14:2, 53:2). And yet, no one on the last day will be ever to accuse God of being unjust or partial. “For although they knew God, they did not honor Him or give thanks to Him” (Romans 1:21).

Let these hard truths drive us not to despair but into the open arms of our Father! He “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). More than that, when we come to Him, we do not meet a stingy lender or a disapproving dad. It is not the reunion of a cruel master and a slave who has

run away. We meet the father of the Prodigal Son, running to embrace us, to place his robe over our shoulders and his ring on our finger, his excitement overflowing into a party and a feast. Behold your God! An all-consuming fire, holy and righteous, yet gentle and kind, crying “Comfort, comfort my people!” and speaking tenderly to us that our “warfare is over” and our “iniquity pardoned” (Isaiah 40:1-2). He is our “very great reward” (Genesis 15:1, NIV). The reward of faithfulness is the Beloved.

All of us have been called to leave “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for [Jesus’] name’s sake” (Matthew 19:29). Though it may not mean literally leaving, a real break must happen. We must leave our nets like Peter, James, and John. We must die to every other allegiance, taking up our cross to follow Him. The cost of faithfulness is the death of the beloved self because our beloved Savior’s faithfulness cost His death. C.S. Lewis invites us to “throw [ourselves] away blindly,” ensuring us that “nothing you have not given away will

ever really be yours” (Lewis 226-227). Ruth broke with home and family, and God gave her a home and family that “he might show the immeasurable richness of his grace in kindness toward [her]” (Ephesians 2:7). Her reward was great. Ours is greater: we who lose all for Jesus “will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29). Cling to life and you’ll lose it. Give up your life, cling to Christ, and you’ll find it (Matthew 10:39).



*(Inspired by Psalm 5)*

*Father,*

*Give attention to the sound of my voice, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. You are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.*

*The boastful shall not stand before your eyes. But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. By the blood of Jesus I will bow down toward your holy temple.*

*Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness. Let all who take*

*refuge in you rejoice; let them  
ever sing for joy, and spread your  
protection over them, that those  
who love your name may exult  
in you. I have searched and come  
up empty; there is no life apart  
from you. For you bless those  
whom you have made righteous,  
O Lord; you cover them with  
favor as with a shield.*

*In Jesus' Name,*

*Amen.*



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Ephesians 1:4b-10

**WK5 | SATURDAY**

 **Ruth 4:1-12**

## **A Bride By The Book**

I can't imagine they got much sleep that night. Can you? Under the cover of darkness Ruth had proposed and Boaz had revealed his heart of love. Though there is no hint of sexual engagement, their hearts must have been white-hot with affection while their heads hummed with a possible future as man and wife. The excitement is off the charts—but there is a catch. There is another man in the picture. After all, isn't there a troublesome trian-

gle in every love story?

It seems that there is a “closer” relative that would have first rights at helping Naomi through marrying Ruth and saving the family’s land. And here is the amazing thing! Though Boaz is head over heels for Ruth, he does the difficult thing. He does the right thing. Boaz knows he must go at this relationship by the book, which means that the other man must be made aware of the situation—which means there is a chance Ruth and Boaz won’t be together. *Ugh.* The tension ratchets higher than it was be-

fore the midnight meeting!

Boaz knows what must be done—and he goes about it with great savvy. At the gate of the city (the place of legal transactions and old men slinging wisdom), Boaz talks with *the other man*. In short, Boaz offers the redemption of old Naomi to Mr. Anonymous (the author does not dignify him with a name). Being a shrewd businessman and knowing one day the old woman would die off and he would acquire her land, Mr. Anonymous saw a good deal and was ready to close it. But sensible Boaz then lets Mr.

Anonymous is on a little detail: “*Oh, and there is one more thing. There is this widowed Moabitess named Ruth that you will have to marry and have a child with. Did I not mention that?*” Mr. Anonymous scowls and drops the deal in a flash. The cost-benefit analysis is now flipped—he won’t make money at all! Now he will have to give sacrificially and the land will not even be to his profit. Mr. Anonymous bails and Boaz celebrates as the people bless his wife-to-be.

Amazing, isn’t it? Boaz follows the law, and though it meant that he might lose his future

life with Ruth, it was the godly thing to do. But, by God's grace, rather than losing his love, Boaz purchases Ruth as his bride. He has followed the law with a spirit of love and Ruth becomes his bride by the book.

And as it was with Boaz and Ruth, so it is with Christ and His church. Christ could not just marry His bride. He had to purchase his bride. Jesus had to fulfill all the law in order to make us His own. He could not ignore or rewrite the law—the law was given by God and God cannot go against Him-

self. God is consistent and He fulfills all His promises. Therefore the great problem standing in the way of Christ and His bride was sin and death. The law said the sinner who rejected his Creator was to die. So how does Jesus purchase His bride? As innocently as a dove and as shrewdly as a serpent (Matthew 10:16)! Jesus fulfills the law, yet dies in the place of the sinner, thereby purchasing His lover through his blood. All is right. Brilliant, just brilliant—love fulfills the law!

True romance does not throw off the laws of the universe. It is not some bohemian rebellion. True romance is bowing to God, trusting in His ways and reveling in the wonder of being His blood-bought bride.



*(Inspired by Psalm 19)*

*Father,*

*The heavens declare your glory,  
the skies proclaim the work  
of your hands. Your law is  
perfect, it revives my soul, your  
testimony is sure, it makes the  
ignorant wise; your precepts  
are right, they make my heart  
rejoice; your commandments are  
pure, they enlighten my eyes;  
your majesty is clean, it endures  
forever; your rules are true and  
altogether righteous. They are  
more desired than gold and*

*sweeter than honey. Moreover,  
by them is your servant warned,  
and in keeping them there is  
great reward. Keep me from  
presumptuous sins; let them not  
have dominion over me. Let  
the words of my mouth and  
the meditations of my heart be  
acceptable in your sight, O Lord,  
my Rock, and my Redeemer.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



YOUR TURN: Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

## **WEEK SIX**

# **Perfect Reversals**

*Ruth 4:13-17*

<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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! <sup>15</sup> 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.”<sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.<sup>17</sup> 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.

## **WK6 | MONDAY**

### **Ruth 4:13-17**

## **No Rest for the Wicked**

In the book of Ruth, similar to the book of Esther, God is in the background. The constant tension, the morally dubious scheming, and the “just so happens” of the narrative cause us to question just how involved God is in this story. It’s very much like our own lives. In light of the seemingly arbitrary nature of our suffering, in the midst of our moral failures, in the overwhelming banality and monotony of day to day life, where is God? Yet the author

gives us several hints, not only that God is very much in control, but even of His ultimate intentions. The original audience, who would have memorized the story of Abraham, wouldn't have missed these hints. In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham land and numerous offspring through whom the nations would be blessed. Later, God adds that "kings shall come from you" (17:6). In the conclusion of Ruth, we are invited to marvel at a microcosm of God bringing these promises to fruition. The nations are blessed in the blessing of the Moabite Ruth, and through

the marriage of Ruth and Boaz come King David. The purposes of God cannot be thwarted, why do we fret?

We fret because we do not trust God's purposes for *us*. We may believe in His long term purposes for good, but we are afraid of our smallness, that we will get lost in the chaos. We need not fear. Jesus calls us to consider the ravens, who neither sow nor reap and yet are fed by God (Luke 12:24). He calls us to consider the lilies, who neither toil nor spin and yet grow (Matthew 6:28). Are God's children not of much more val-

ue than birds and flowers? Our God has revealed Himself as the Good Shepherd, who lays His life down for the sheep and will not lose a single one, but will search far and wide for the one who strays (Luke 15:6). “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). We see a hint of this in Ruth. The two times that God comes to the foreground, that He is the subject of a verb, we see him “visiting” His people with food and “giving” Ruth conception. He is *for* us.

Sinclair Ferguson, commenting on this passage, quotes Shakespeare's famous play, *Hamlet*: “*There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will*” (Ferguson 109). Two men in the English countryside would cut hedgerows, one hewing vigorously and carelessly, the other following behind shaping the hedge into perfection. As we follow Jesus, His Spirit graciously shapes us, conforming us into His perfect image, no matter how much of a mess we make along the way. Do you long for that peace? Walk in obedience towards your God and in love towards

your neighbor. For “there is no peace for the wicked” (Isaiah 48:22).



*(Inspired by Psalm 94)*

*Father,*

*You are a God of vengeance. You are the Judge of the whole earth. You will repay the wicked what they deserve. Nothing is done in secret. You, who formed the ear, hear all. You, who formed the eye, see all. Blessed are the ones whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law, to give him rest for days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked. For you will not forsake your people; you will not*

*abandon your heritage; justice  
will return to the righteous and  
all the upright in heart will  
follow it. When the cares of my  
heart are many, your consolations  
cheer my soul. You are my  
stronghold, and my God the rock  
of my refuge.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

**WK6 | TUESDAY**

 Ruth 4:13-17

## A Baby Born in Bethlehem

One of the most wonderful things about the Bible is that *God is the hero*. Human figures become renowned or infamous simply because of their faithfulness or unfaithfulness: they are mere *servants*—and all of them deeply flawed. This is because the Bible is a book of God's heroic deeds, not man's (which goes a long way in explaining why superhero-obsessed Hollywood is struggling to make a decent Bible movie). In fact,

many are shocked upon a first reading of God's Word as to just how *human* its characters are. Naomi, as we have seen, is all too human. Do you not relate to her? There is a Naomi in all of us: mistrusting God, seeking greener pastures, stewing in bitterness, and manipulating circumstances.

What about Ruth? Though a widow like Naomi and a foreign idolater to boot, in the narrative she is much more like Boaz than Naomi: seemingly perfect, always relying on and demonstrating God's loyal love, His ***hesed***. At the end of

the story, barren Ruth's *hesed* is rewarded with the miraculous birth of the infant redeemer, Obed. How can we not be reminded of sweet, humble, virginal Mary giving birth to Jesus in the same town of Bethlehem roughly 1,200 years later? But then something very odd happens in our story. Obed is set on Naomi's lap. Old Testament scholars agree that the words used in this scene indicate that the child is now Naomi's surrogate son, and that "what assured Naomi [that the child would care for her] was not social obligation or family ties but Ruth's deep affection for

her” (Hubbard 272-273). She “loves” Naomi (4:15).

Obed was an underserved gift of love to Naomi. He was to be her redeemer: lawfully, yes, but not *because* of the law. He would be her redeemer simply because he was her son! Isn’t that beautiful? Can you imagine Naomi’s joy? You see, we are not Ruth. We are not Boaz. They are not there for us simply as moral examples, but as signposts to the perfect and redemptive *hesed* of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Jesus is the Greater Obed, the Infant Redeemer of Bethlehem whose name would be “renowned in

Israel” (4:14). You and I are Naomi, the undeserving recipient of an “inexpressible gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

In the gospel of Luke, innocent, humble Mary had a sword pierce her soul as she watched her son perish on a cross so that a weary world, pining in sin and error, might rejoice (Luke 2:35). Imagine the pain that Ruth experienced in giving her first child to be raised by Naomi. Why did she do it? *Love*. That is the kind of love the Father has for us. *Deserve* has nothing to do with it. “For God so loved the world, He gave his

one and only Son..." (John 3:16). God loves His kids, and Jesus loves His bride. So rejoice! "Again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4)! Moping is unbefitting of the Christian. May our words (including our social media feeds!) be marked by grace rather than grumbling, for it is "out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).



*(Inspired by Psalm 67)*

*Father,*

*You have been gracious to us and blessed us. You have made your face shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.*

*Let the people praise you, O God; Let all the people praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for you, for you judge the people with equity and guide the nations upon the earth. You are very great; may all the ends of the earth know your strength and*

*your power. You are the joy of  
your people; you are our delight  
and our hope. Let the people  
praise you, O God; let all the  
people praise you!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

## **WK6 | WEDNESDAY**

### **Ruth 4:13-17**

## **How to Be Great**

Ruth 4 revolves around names: Elimelech, Mahlon, Boaz, and the genealogy at the end. However, we are unsure as to why it was the women of the town who chose the name for Naomi's redeemer, the miraculous child of Ruth and Boaz. Some have speculated that it is an ancient, perhaps local custom. In any case, their intentions were clear: that "his name [would] be renowned in Israel" (2:14). To some of us, then, the name chosen seems odd. Obed lit-

erally means “one who works/serves.” There are a couple of possible reasons for this choice. One, Obed probably means “servant” of Naomi as he was to be her redeemer who would provide her food and care for her into her old age. Second, in light of him carrying out God’s purpose of bringing King David into the world, there may have been the idea of “Servant of God” as well (4:17). But in any case, if you were trying to choose a great name for your son, I doubt many of us would settle on “servant” or “worker.”

We have one other biblical ex-

ample of a community being involved in naming a child, this time in the New Testament at the birth of Zechariah and Elizabeth's son (Luke 1:59). He is named (by the Lord) John, which means "Yahweh has been gracious, he has shown favor." This is the humble servant who prepared the way of the Lord, saying "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Was John great? Jesus thought so: "among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist." But He doesn't stop there: "Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than

he” (Matthew 1:11).

In a world in which love has conquered death, the greatest is the one who serves. Jesus talks about the way the world is run: manipulation, scheming, back stabbing, posturing, and power plays. But He doesn’t mince words with His disciples: “It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).

See, you and I have been like Adam, grasping at equality with God. Jesus, on the other hand, “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant...[humbling] himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”(Philippians 2:6-8). How can we argue about which of us is the greatest as the immaculate Son of God washes the filth from our feet? Do you wish to be considered great at work? At home? There is only one way: give it up and follow him. “Do

nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others as more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). Does this sound like weakness? Which is easier? To punch your enemy or to pray for them?



*(Inspired by Psalm 104)*

*Father,*

*You are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment. You set the earth on its foundations so that it should never be moved.*

*At your voice the mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. You make springs gush forth in the valleys; beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches.*

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*You cause the grass to grow and  
plants for man to cultivate.  
You made the moon to mark  
the seasons; the sun knows its  
time for setting. O Lord, how  
awesome are your works! In  
wisdom have you made them  
all; the earth is full of your  
creatures. They all look to you.  
When you open up your hand,  
they are filled with good things.  
When you hide your face they are  
dismayed; when you take away  
their breath, they die and return  
to the dust. When you send forth  
your Spirit, they are created and  
you renew the face of the ground.  
May your glory endure forever;  
may you rejoice in your works,*

*you, who looks on the earth  
and it trembles, who touches  
the mountains and they smoke.  
Truly, you alone are worthy of  
all glory and honor. I will sing to  
the Lord as long as I live; I will  
sing praise to my God while I  
have being.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

**WK6 | THURSDAY**

 Ruth 4:13-17

## The Great Inversion

Remember Elimelech from chapter one? Naomi's deceased husband is a tragic tale. Endowed with a great name that means "My God is King," Elimelech doubts God's "steadfast love," His *hesed*, during a famine in Bethlehem and seeks refuge for his family in Moab, running from the God who promises to "keep [those who fear him] alive in famine" (Psalm 33:18). Essentially, Elimelech acts as his own god and king, and the result is a bitter and early death.

before verse two. By verse five, his two sons Mahlon (“Weakling”) and Chilion (“Pining”) are dead too, leaving Naomi penniless. Having left Bethlehem “full” with a husband and two eligible sons, she returns now “empty” to lament to the silent townswomen. She finds herself in the line of Sarah, Rachel, Tamar, Hannah, and Manoah’s wife: a childless woman in need of a miracle (not to mention Elizabeth and Mary!).

Consider the spectacular reversal that occurs in just four chapters! Picture “empty,” starving, childless Naomi, now

surrounded in her home by copious amounts of barley (gifts from her renowned son-in-law) and bouncing her “restorer of life and nourisher of [her] old age” on her knee (4:15). This “son” Obed now joins the ranks of other miracle sons like Isaac, Jacob, Perez, Samuel, and Samson. In chapter one, Naomi lamented her circumstances to the silent townswomen as Ruth the Moabitess stood forgotten in the background. Now, she sits and listens to the townswomen praise Ruth, worth “more to [her] than seven sons,” considered the ideal number in Israel. Even more

remarkable, our story that began with tragic Elimelech, “My God is King,” ends with victorious David, God’s son the King. Elimelech sought refuge in Moab; Ruth and Naomi sought refuge under the wings of the Lord (Ruth 2:12). In a very literal way, “The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned” (Psalm 34:22).

God will reverse the fortunes of the humble and lowly. This is why Ruth appears in Matthew’s royal genealogy of the final Miracle Child: “without

this Moabite girl, Christianity would be without its Founder, Israel and the world would be immeasurable the poorer” (qtd. in Hubbard 278). Jesus’ mother Mary sings that “God has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate” (Luke 1:52). Why do we constantly exalt ourselves over others? When God raised His Son to glory, He made it abundantly clear that the humble suffering will one day be exalted over the proud and comfortable. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may

exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).



*(Inspired by Psalm 146)*

*Father,*

*I will praise you as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. I will not trust in men, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. My help is from you O God of Jacob; my hope is in you. You made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, you keep faith forever; you execute justice for the oppressed, you give*

*food to the hungry. You set the prisoners free; you open the eyes of the blind. You lift up those who are bowed down; you love the righteous. You watch over the sojourners and uphold the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked you bring to ruin. You, O Lord, will reign forever!*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

**WK6 | FRIDAY**

 **Ruth 4:13-17**

## **Far as the Curse is Found**

“All was well” would be a fitting ending to the book of Ruth. The final scene is of a small town buzzing with infectious joy: a wedding, a birth, and a feast (Pentecost), while praises and blessings are showered upon all involved. The bitter Naomi we remember from chapter one would have been utterly incredulous if she were allowed to glimpse just seven weeks into the future. And yet, verse 17 reveals that this sub-

lime ending is really just the beginning of a much grander story. This is only a tiny acorn of fulfillment; the towering oak (family) tree is the Davidic Dynasty: the zenith of Old Testament fulfillment.

But our God is not a simple pragmatist. The ends do not justify the means. The Lord knows that Naomi and Ruth have scars from the thorns of our curse. He feels them in a very real way. Though their lives have been redeemed, their minds and hearts will be forever branded with the memory of three dead husbands and a

beloved daughter and sister-in-law lost in idolatry. Are we not like them? As we carry our cross, does its weight not sometimes press into our scars of rejection and loss? Perhaps this is why the blessing of the townswomen has a future-oriented feel: “May [Obed’s] name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age” (4:14-15).

Let us not settle for a false happy ending, and may we not seek functional heavens along the way. When you think of personal peace, what do you en-

vision? What is your peace? A perfect marriage? A child? Retirement? Another hit? For the Christian, “He Himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14). Only when we hold Jesus in our arms with Simeon and see His salvation can we “depart in peace” (Luke 2:29-30). He is Israel’s Renowned Son, the “name above every name” the restorer of our lives and nourisher of our old age (Ephesians 1:21). Let the book of Ruth give us a future-oriented faith, an invincible love for Jesus Christ that is drenched with hope, living today as citizens of the heaven that will soon come to

earth (Philippians 3:20). Even if your today is Naomi's chapter one, marked with only ruin and loss, "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). You, along with innumerable brothers and sisters "from all tribes and peoples and languages" will feast with the one who bore the thorns of your curse on His brow (Revelation 7:9). He will wipe away every tear from your eye and rub a soothing salve on your scarred memory. Expectancy will become consumma-

tion, and the adoption papers  
will become a Father's embrace.  
Glory!

*“No more let sins and sorrows  
grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His bless-  
ings flow  
Far as the curse is found.”*  
—Joy to the World

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*(Inspired by Psalm 13)*

*Father,*

*King David writes “How long,  
O Lord? Will you forget me  
forever? How long will you  
hide your face from me? How  
long must I take counsel in my  
soul and have sorrow in my  
heart all the day? How long  
shall my enemy be exalted over  
me? Consider and answer me,  
O Lord my God; lift up my eyes  
lest I sleep the sleep of death, let  
me enemy say, “I have prevailed  
over him,” lest my foes rejoice*

*because I am shaken.” Father, I confess that there are days when I feel this way. I feel abandoned and hopeless. I feel the distance between now and then. I long to be with you, and there are days when the troubles of the world weigh down and crush me. There are days when all I can do is cry out to you “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?” But, like David, my those prayers always end in remembrance of what you have done and you have promised to do. “But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully*

*with me.”*

*In Jesus’ name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

## **WK6 | SATURDAY**

### **Ruth 4:13-17**

## **The Story's Shape**

The book of Ruth is a resurrection shaped story. Think of how it begins: “*there was famine...but Elimelech...died... and both Mahlon and Chilion died...the woman was left without her two sons and her husband*” (1:1-5). In these fierce five verses that send Naomi in a grave-ward trajectory there are exactly 72 Hebrew words. Read these verses again carefully. Now, read again 4:13-17. There are exactly 72 words here in the original Hebrew as well.

This is by design. The brilliant author of Ruth is keying us in to something—“*Pay attention! Look here, there is something to see!*” This literary technique of bookending is called an *inclusio*; and this inclusio is clueing us in to the shape of the story.

What began in death will end in life. What was planted with tears will be harvested with joy (Psalm 126:5). In these verses we see a well-woven tapestry of inversions: the famine at the outset has now given way to a bountiful barley harvest; Moab has been abandoned for abundant Bethlehem; Ruth the wid-

ow has now become a wife; the terrible barrenness that marked Elimelech's family turns to fertility and brings Ruth and Boaz little baby Obed; the margin-alized Moabitess has become “better than seven sons;” lonely funerals have been traded for town-wide festivities; and empty Naomi has now been made full as God is seen to be the “restorer of her life” (4:15). The story has made the painful trek from a famine to a fruitful family tree.

The Book of Ruth is a micro-cosm of the entire Bible; Ruth is the Bible in miniature. Ruth

begins in the Promise Land, heads east into rebellion and death, turns again to the Promise Land where an unexpected kinsman redeemer restores a shattered family, and all the story points to the glory of a king—King David. The Bible begins in Eden, heads east into rebellion and death, zooms in on a family (Israel) in The Promised land where an unexpected member of that family brings ultimate redemption and restoration (Jesus of Nazareth), and all the story points to the glory of the True King—the Son of David.

All of our lives begin like the Book of Ruth: in a world of hurt, a world of unsatisfied soul-hunger, in desperate need of a hero. Our lives are meant to be *resurrection shaped stories*—but only by faith in Jesus can there be a turnaround in our terrible trajectory. Jesus is the pivot that turns a plummeting line of death into a heavenward u-shape. May our lives not only be shaped by Ruth and the Bible, but may our lives truly have the grave-conquering shape of both Ruth and the Bible itself.



*(Inspired by Psalm 126)*

*Father,*

*You have redeemed your people.  
You have filled our mouths with  
laughter, and our tongues with  
shouts of joy. You have done  
great things for us. We wait  
with eagerness for your full  
restoration; we long for your  
rule and reign over all the earth.*

*We long for you to cast away  
all wickedness and darkness,  
and restore and renovate your  
creation. We will wait faithfully  
until that time. Those who sow*

*in tears shall reap with shouts  
of joy. Make us patient. Keep us  
faithful. Fix our eyes on Jesus,  
our strength and our reward.*

*We will be with you, bless us  
with faithfulness until that day.  
You will not let your people see  
destruction; you will not lose any  
of your chosen ones. You have  
saved us, you will keep us.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



YOUR TURN: Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

# **WEEK SEVEN**

# **Family of the King**

*Ruth 4:18-22*

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

# The Twist at the End

You've now (hopefully!) read through just about the entire book of Ruth at least seven times, read 36 devotionals on just four chapters, and maybe even heard a handful of sermons. Hopefully the repetition has led you into deep wonder at the loyal love (*hesed*) of our God. Familiarity breeds contempt, but we can never be too familiar with God's Word.

We now reach the surprise ending of the book of Ruth: the twist, the big reveal, the "Aha!" moment. The back-

ground comes to the forefront of the story. What seems like a dry, historical note at the end of a perfectly good love story is no less than a stunning revelation of the ultimate purposes of God. The author is showing us that this is more than a love story between an Israelite and a Moabite, more even than a story about the faithful love of God to a lucky few in Bethlehem around 1,200 B.C.

This is a story about God's faithfulness to Israel in providentially directing the events of their history to bring them their great, troubled, and be-

loved King David of Bethlehem, who would subdue the nations and give birth to the prince of peace, Solomon. But when we see this genealogy appear again in the opening lines of Matthew's gospel, we find that something even bigger was being prepared through the tragedies and triumphs of Ruth. Here are ancestors of an even Greater David, the ruler of Israel who will arise from Bethlehem but whose origins are much more ancient (Micah 5:2), ancestors of the Last Adam who would crush the head of the serpent through His death and reverse the curse

that has left us bitter and destitute like Naomi (Genesis 3:15). He is our Prince of Peace, our Victorious King, and our great Kinsman Redeemer. His name is Jesus Christ.

**Now for a surprise twist of our own!** We invite you to finish this devotional yourself. For the final four days of our 40 day journey, read one chapter of Ruth a day and spend time reflecting on your notes from the corresponding week(s). If it helps you to concentrate, answer the questions we have provided you. God brought Ruth and Naomi on a journey

from worldly fullness, to emptiness, and back to a true fullness by the end of the story. They were blessed. We pray that you have been too.

*“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)*

## **WK7 | MONDAY**

### **Ruth 1**

## **Ruth Reflection One**

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- . How has the book of Ruth helped you better understand God's sovereignty at work through human suffering?
- . What does trusting God look like when you are suffering? What would it look like to show someone you love God's loyal love, His *Hesed*, when they are suffering?
- . Is it harder for you to trust

that God is sovereign or that God is good? Why?

- . How can stop healthy grief from transforming into unhealthy bitterness?
- . What does Ruth's commitment to Naomi teach us about Jesus' love for us?
- . Who are the “Orpahs” in your life? How can you show them the love that God had for you when you were a “stranger” (Ephesians 2:12)?
- . Naomi laments her situation to the other wom-

en in town. Think about your words, both vocally and online. Would you say they are more characterized by thankfulness or by bitterness?

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*(Inspired by Psalm 130)*

*Father,*

*Out of the depths I cry to you;  
hear my voice! Let your ears  
be attentive to the voice of my  
pleas for mercy! If you, O Lord,  
should mark iniquities, who  
could stand? If you gave to us  
as we deserve, who could bear  
the weight? But with you there  
is forgiveness, that you may  
be feared. You have forgiven  
your people that your kindness,  
patience, and generosity may  
be seen; that your name may be*

*glorified. I will wait for you and  
hope in your word. With you  
there is steadfast love; with you  
is plentiful redemption. You have  
redeemed your people from all  
their iniquities.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11:1-2

**WK7 | TUESDAY**

 **Ruth 2**

## **Ruth Reflection Two**

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- . Ruth's loving kindness to Naomi is a far cry from the squabbles between women of the Old Testament such as Sarah and Hagar or Rachel and Leah. Who in your family do you find difficult to love? How can you show them God's love without grumbling?
- . Why aren't working hard and depending on favor (grace) mutually exclusive?

- . What does Boaz' greeting to his employees tell you about how he treats those in his charge? Who is in your charge and what can you learn from Boaz?
- . What does it mean to get a reward from God? Is it something we simply earn? Why or why not?
- . What does it mean practically to “take refuge under the wings of God” in our day and age?
- . List the blessings in your life, both material and spiritual, until you can describe

His grace towards you as “over-the-top.”

- Who in your life has demonstrated the “kindness” of God? Do you think people would glean from your life that your God is “kind?”



*(Inspired by Psalm 33)*

*Father,*

*Your Word is upright, and all  
your work is done in faithfulness.*

*You love righteousness and  
justice; the earth is full of your  
steadfast love. Let all the earth  
fear you; let all the inhabitants  
of the world stand in awe of  
you! For you spoke, and it came  
to be; you commanded, and  
it stood firm. You look down  
from heaven; you see all of your  
creation. Your eye is on those  
who fear you, on those who hope*

*in your steadfast love. You will  
deliver their soul from death  
and keep them alive in famine.  
My soul waits for you, O Lord;  
you are my help and my shield.  
My heart is glad in you, because  
I trust in your name. Let your  
steadfast love, O Lord, be upon  
your people as we hope in you.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11:1-2

## **WK7 | WEDNESDAY**

### **Ruth 3**

## **Ruth Reflection Three**

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- . What is the primary source of restlessness in your life?
- . Where in your life do you take morally dubious short-cuts to achieve your ends? Does success in those short-cuts give you peace?
- . When is the last time you took a risk for the gospel?
- . How is faithfulness more than avoidance of sin?

- . Note the way that Boaz fiercely protects Ruth's reputation. What does it mean to protect the reputations of others in your life?
  - . Ruth must have been disappointed by the fact that there was a “nearer redeemer” than Boaz. How do you handle disappointment? What does healthy disappointment look like?
  - . How has God settled the matter of our restlessness?
-



*(Inspired by Psalm 29)*

*Father,*

*To you be all glory and strength.*

*I will worship you in the splendor of your holiness. How mighty and powerful you are.*

*Your voice is over the waters, your glorious voice thunders.*

*Your voice is powerful; your voice is full of majesty. Your voice breaks the cedars; your voice flashes forth flames of fire.*

*Your voice shakes the wilderness.*

*Your voice brings life and your voice takes it away. Speak to me,*

*Father. Be near to me.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11:1-2

## **WK7 | THURSDAY**

### **Ruth 4**

## **Ruth Reflection Four**

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- . The “nearer redeemer” is ready to redeem Naomi, as long as there is something in it for him. How do we move from being “calculating” givers to “cheerful” givers?
- . What motivated Boaz to redeem Naomi and marry Ruth? What can we learn from this about God’s motive to redeem us?
- . How does the fact that

you've been "redeemed" change your day-to-day life?

- . How would your life change if you found out you were the heir to a fabulous inheritance? Does your eternal inheritance change the way you live (1 Peter 1:3-4)? Why or why not?
- . How are you a "witness"? What have you witnessed? What stops you from sharing what you've witnessed?
- . Should we expect material blessings in this life in exchange for our faithfulness?

. How does the end of the story change your perspective of the suffering that happens in the beginning of the book? Does it change your perspective of your own suffering?

---



*(Inspired by Psalm 27)*

*Father,*

*You are my light and my  
salvation; whom shall I fear?*

*You are the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid? One  
thing I desire, O Lord: to dwell  
with you all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon your beauty. You  
have said to seek your face, and  
so I have. Teach me your way,  
O Lord, and lead me on a level  
path. I believe that I shall look  
upon the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living! I will*

*wait for you. O God, make me  
strong and bring courage to my  
heart.*

*In Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*



YOUR TURN: Write  
the meditation verse from  
memory.

# Retold

*A Song Inspired by the Book of  
Ruth*

by Jacob Kazakevich

There is no danger that can  
change the loyal love of God  
Should fire, flood, or famine  
come I'm safe within His arms

*Oh Jesus, I'll ever sing  
My Joy, my Redemption, my  
Glory, my King*

Oh Jesus, Savior, Prince of  
Peace upon the  
cross was raised  
The Grain of Wheat trampled  
beneath the feet of

those He'd save  
My grieving heart rejoiced to  
see His triumph o'er the grave  
When Jesus rose in victory  
His people to reclaim

*Oh Jesus, I'll ever sing  
My Joy, my Redemption, my  
Glory, my King*

The wonder and the agony this  
glorious exchange  
That He should bear the  
sinner's curse and I should  
bear His name  
Oh once a stranger, now His  
child, my story's been retold  
By grace have I been  
reconciled and

brought into His fold

*Oh Jesus, I'll ever sing  
My Joy, my Redemption, my  
Glory, my King*

How gracious and  
kind is our God  
Whose life was  
laid down as the cost  
To fill and restore  
what was empty and lost  
Oh Jesus!

# **Glossary of Terms**

## **Blessing**

God's declaration of His preparation to bring shalom—holistic well-being—to His covenant people. To wish someone shalom or declare enthusiastically that they are shalom.

## **Covenant**

The shape of a relationship. Between equal persons, an agreement that involves promises on the part of each to the other. Between God and man, an oath in blood administered sovereignly.

## **Covenant Servant**

The member of the covenant obligated to fulfill the stipulations of the covenant Lord. Breaking the covenant brings curses, obedience brings blessing.

## **Faith**

Knowledge of, assent to, and trust in God's character and revelation.

## **Flesh**

Ingrained tendencies toward self-sufficiency and sin that remain in the Christian after conversion. Believers are to walk by the Spirit (in reliance

upon God) and not by the flesh (in reliance upon Self).

## **Gentile**

A person who is not Jewish.

## **Gleaning**

In the Old Testament, God commanded land owners not to maximize their profits, but to leave the edges of their fields un-harvested (Leviticus 19:9-10). The un-harvested edges were to provide work and food for the poor and the alien (a kind of ancient welfare system). To glean is to harvest these un-collected crops.

## **Glory**

A quality of God's character that emphasizes His greatness and authority. Weightiness. Or, a visible manifestation of God's presence. Brightness.

## **Gospel**

The person and work of Jesus Christ: His sinless life, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God the Father for our salvation and God's glory.

## **Grace**

A free gift to the ill-deserving. God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

## **Hesed**

Loyal love. Hesed is God's loving-kindness, His covenant grace, His unshakable loyalty, His unwavering commitment to bless His people at whatever personal cost.

## **Justification**

Right standing before God. This comes by faith, as the believer's sin is credited to Jesus on the cross and Jesus' righteousness is credited to the believer.

## **Idolatry**

Ascribing ultimate worth in thought, word or deed to any-

thing other than the creator God (Romans 1:25).

## **Inclusio**

An ancient literary device where information is given and repeated at the beginning and end of a passage for emphasis. (If each letter represented a unit of thought: ABCDA).

## **Israel**

Descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), Israel is God's covenant people in the Old Testament who broke the covenant law. Jesus Christ came as the True Israel and fulfilled the law; the New Testa-

ment Church enjoys the blessings of the New Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Kinsman Redeemer**

Someone who was obligated by God's law to buy back relatives who had sold themselves into slavery to pay off debts. Under certain circumstances, they would marry the widow of a brother and father children with her, thereby keeping the inheritance (land) in the name of the deceased (Leviticus 25:25-55; Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

## Last Adam

A title of Jesus Christ, referring to his status as the new head of the human race who gained for His offspring what Adam had lost.

## Legalism

A non-biblical word used to describe the sin of the Pharisees—rigorous adherence to the minute details of the law until one is blind to its weightier matters. Legalism, fueled by fear and pride, misses the “point” of the law: to drive us to faith in Christ and instruct us in loving our neighbor. Legalism focuses on the letter of

the law and misses the spirit of the law.

## **Levirate Marriage**

Levirate marriage is where a dead man's brother is obliged to marry his brother's widow, and the widow is obliged to marry her deceased husband's brother. The offspring of such a marriage would be the heir of the deceased. (Deuteronomy 25:5-6).

## **Messiah**

Literally means “anointed.” The Israelites looked forward to the Messiah as the one who would liberate them from their oppres-

sors. Jesus' title, Christ, identifies Him as the long-awaited (but rejected) Messiah of the Jewish people who has liberated His people from the ultimate oppressors: sin, Satan, and death.

## **Moab**

Moab was born of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter in Genesis 19. His offspring became an idolatrous people to the East of the land of Israel during the time of Ruth.

## **Oath of Self-Malediction**

### Integral to ancient Near East-

ern covenant forming ceremonies, the covenant servant would swear an oath on their own life.

## **Old Covenant**

The covenant between God and His people, mediated through Moses, sometimes referred to as “the Law.” The Old Covenant was fulfilled and superseded by the New Covenant, mediated through Jesus Christ.

## **Old Testament**

The first 39 books of the Bible, made up generally of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. According to Jesus, the Old

Testament pointed to Him (Luke 24:27).

## **Passover**

Refers to the night the Israelites were rescued from slavery in Egypt, when the Lord killed all the firstborn in Egypt except for the Israelites who slaughtered a lamb and painted the doorposts with its blood. This event points to Jesus, our ultimate Passover Lamb.

## **Pentecost**

A feast that occurs 50 days after Passover on the Jewish calendar to commemorate the giving of the Law on Sinai, Pentecost

was fulfilled in the day when the Lord poured out His Spirit on the New Testament church after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

## **Promised Land**

The land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates that God promised to the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They would take possession of this land under Joshua after the Exodus from Egypt and their wanderings in the Sinai desert. Many Christians believe that the Promised Land was a “type” of the New Heavens and New

Earth that believers will inherit it.

## **Redemption**

Deliverance through the payment of a price. Christians are delivered from slavery to Satan, sin and death through the payment of the blood of Jesus Christ.

## **Repentance**

Turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and turning back to God. Literally to change one's mind.

## **Righteousness**

Joyful and reverent adherence to God's objective moral standard.

## **Sanctification**

Sanctification is both the gracious event where believers are set apart from sin and for holiness and the process by which God's love is perfected in His people, conforming them to the image of Christ.

## **Shalom**

Peace, not as in mere absence of conflict, but as in holistic well-being.

## **Sin**

Untrust. Rebellion. Soul insanity. Failure to love selflessly. Sin encompasses both commission (thinking/doing what we ought not to) and omission (failing to think/do what we ought to).

## **Son of David**

A title of Jesus Christ, referring to his status as the long-awaited Messiah of the Jewish people who descended from King David.

## **Sovereign**

God's sovereignty refers to His absolute power, bound only by His own holy attributes.

# Theology

The rational study of the nature of God.

## Type/Antitype

A “type” (Greek term signifying a mark formed by the impression of something else) is a specific event, person or place found in the Old Testament that prefigures a greater “antitype” that supersedes it in the New Testament.

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# Resources for Further Study

*These are the books, commentaries and study Bibles that aided us most in this project. We encourage you to purchase or borrow them at any point during the series if you would like to study deeper. A note on reading commentaries (the majority of our resources): many people attempt to read commentaries cover to cover like a normal book and quickly become exasperated. But commentaries are meant to be used as reference material to aid your own study of the Bible. Think of the author as one more (really smart!) member of your study group.*

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