

PART TWO



REDEEMING LOVE

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Redeeming Love

Spending 8 weeks in Ruth (a book with four chapters), we are hoping that we'll be able to slow down enough to really camp in this part of God's word, and that we can understand its message more deeply. Our journey, like all good journeys, might have a meandering quality to it. But we're hoping that this will provide the people of Village with an opportunity to rest in this beautiful valley of God's word, and that in your community groups and in your conversations, the slower pace will give you a chance to stop and meditate on your life before God, and to be honest about the struggles in your life at the moment. The book of Ruth is short and sweet, but there is a great, humane richness beneath the surface of the story. It's a story about unwavering love, God's quiet sovereignty, and a love that we soon learn is a chapter in the unfolding hope of a Messiah.

“Ruth is a story about unwavering love, God's quiet sovereignty, and a love that we soon learn is a chapter in the unfolding hope of a Messiah.

Through this series we will be working through the themes of love, gospel, community, lamenting, prayer, femininity and masculinity, and asking questions like: What's the cost of love? How does understanding the love that we see in the book of Ruth enrich and anticipate our understanding of the gospel? What's the glue that keeps us together as a community? How do you relate to God when he seems to have deserted you? What does it mean to live in a story?

We'll discover different aspects of love as we encounter them in the story of Ruth. Ruth offers a template for love that understands both the craziness of our modern world and a way forward in it. Ruth is all about surviving (and even thriving) in a collapsing world.

Our hope and prayer is that the story of Ruth will remap your story and draw you into the life of redeeming love that it paints. In a world that's losing its capacity to feed our souls, we hope that the book of Ruth feeds your soul, and overflows into your life, as we follow these two ancient widows, Ruth and Naomi, on their journey.

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) is used in these studies.

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WEEK 5

LOVE OVERFLOWS

Ruth 2:17-23

17 So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. She beat out what she had gathered, and it was about 26 quarts of barley. **18** She picked up the grain and went into the town, where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. Then she brought out what she had left over from her meal and gave it to her.

19 Then her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you gather barley today, and where did you work? May the Lord bless the man who noticed you."

Ruth told her mother-in-law about the men she had worked with and said, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."

20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers."

21 Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also told me, 'Stay with my young men until they have finished all of my harvest.'"

22 So Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "My daughter, it is good for you to work with his female servants, so that nothing will happen to you in another field." **23** Ruth stayed close to Boaz's female servants and gathered grain until the barley and the wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Split up into groups of 2 or 3 and have someone tell the other/s the story up until now.

When Naomi hears that Boaz is the one who befriended Ruth, her tone changes. How would you describe Naomi's tone in verse 20?

A kinsman-redeemer (or *goel*) was a male member of the clan who rescued or redeemed another member of the clan who had fallen on hard times. It was a unique personalization of the law that didn't just provide rules, but provided a person. A *goel* could...

- Restore property (see Leviticus 25:25-30).
- Purchase a relative out of slavery (see Leviticus 25:47-55).
- Avenge a relative's killing (see Numbers 35:12, 19-27).
- Receive a restitution (see Numbers 5:8).
- Assist in a lawsuit (see Job 19:25, Psalm 119:154, Jeremiah 50:34).
- Provide an heir through marriage to himself (see Genesis 38, Deuteronomy 25:5, Ruth, Mark 12:19-22). One of the principal ways a *goel* did this was by marrying the widow.

In this one day, what has Boaz done for Ruth? If it helps, divide the question into sections: early morning (2:3), morning (2:8–12), lunch (2:14), after lunch (2:15–16), and at home (2:18–20) (If you are feeling creative, spend some time drawing a picture of the scene, and of the love throughout it).

In one word, summarize what Boaz has brought to this family in just one day?

What do you learn about being a *goel* from Boaz?

"There is a delightful ambiguity in the Hebrew in her response. It is ambiguous who is being referred to by the 'who has not...' [verse 20]. Is it Boaz who is showing hesed? Or it is the Lord? Possibly both as a way of showing that God is doing his hesed through Boaz." Libbie Groves.

"To be a follower of Jesus is to be a *goel*. We've isolated the word redeemer to Jesus' salvation of us. But the Israelite use of the word is rooted in the human activity of the *goel*. We think of the spiritual meaning of redeemer but not the every day redeeming that is crying out all around us. Our lives should reflect the redeeming life of Jesus. If that were to happen, we would live not one life, but a thousand lives." Paul A. Miller

Read Luke 10:25-37. How does the Samaritan act as a *goel*?

What is this story meant to teach us about Jesus' love for us?

The critical difference between what a *goel* does and how we normally help people is the level of ownership. It is sometimes easy to give advice or to point to people where they can get help, but a *goel* owns the problem. What's the difference between what a *goel* does and how we normally help people in the church?

How has someone been like a *goel* to you?

Are there any people in your life who would be blessed by your *goel*-ing?

What would the church of Jesus be like if we had more *goels*? If you like, spend a few minutes writing what captures your heart, and what challenges you, about this idea.

WEEK 6

LOVE RISKS

RUTH 3:1-18

1 Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, shouldn't I find security for you, so that you will be taken care of? **2** Now isn't Boaz our relative? Haven't you been working with his female servants? This evening he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. **3** Wash, put on perfumed oil, and wear your best clothes. Go down to the threshing floor, but don't let the man know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. **4** When he lies down, notice the place where he's lying, go in and uncover his feet, and lie down. Then he will explain to you what you should do."

5 So Ruth said to her, "I will do everything you say." **6** She went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had instructed her. **7** After Boaz ate, drank, and was in good spirits, he went to lie down at the end of the pile of barley. Then she went in secretly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. **8** At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! **9** So he asked, "Who are you?" "I am Ruth, your slave," she replied. "Spread your cloak over me, for you are a family redeemer."

10 Then he said, "May the Lord bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor. **11** Now don't be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say, since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character. **12** Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer closer than I am. **13** Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that's good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn't want to redeem you, as the Lord lives, I will. Now lie down until morning."

14 So she lay down at his feet until morning but got up while it was still dark. Then Boaz said, "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor." **15** And he told Ruth, "Bring the shawl you're wearing and hold it out." When she held it out, he shoveled six measures of barley into her shawl, and she went into the town. **16** She went to her mother-in-law, Naomi, who asked her, "How did it go, my daughter?" Then Ruth told her everything the man had done for her. **17** She said, "He gave me these six measures of barley, because he said, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" **18** Naomi said, "My daughter, wait until you find out how things go, for he won't rest unless he resolves this today."

STUDY QUESTIONS

Describe a situation where you had to do something difficult, but you knew it was the right thing to do. What gave you the courage (or prevented you from stepping out) to address the problem?

This is the first scene of Act III. If verses 1–9 were a play, what would the mood be like? The background music? The lighting?

How does this compare with the general lighting of the first two Acts?

“In a village everyone knows everyone else’s business. There is very little privacy. Because of his wealth and prominence, Boaz is always surrounded by people. In a nutshell, Naomi’s problem is, ‘How do I create a situation where Ruth can make a strong and effective appeal for marriage in private with someone who is constantly around people?’” Paul A. Miller

What three things does Naomi tell Ruth to do to prepare? (3:3)

How risky do you think this move was?

There are a lot of social and cultural divisions separating Ruth and Boaz (v. 3-9). How are Naomi’s plans and Ruth’s actions audacious? How does it further highlight Ruth’s courage and vulnerability?

“Spread your wings” (Ruth 3:9) means to spread the hem or corner of his garment over Ruth. There is considerable evidence in the Ancient Near East that this was language used for a marriage proposal. Ruth makes sure that her intentions are crystal clear.

Ruth 2:12 Boaz uses the same expression about God and Ruth. Do you think this is significant? Is Ruth asking Boaz to be the answer to his own prayer for her?

“The reversal of the death...that has afflicted Naomi’s life is effected by God through their ordinary hopes, intentions, and actions.... God often effects his purposes in the world through the ordinary motivations and events of his people—ordinary people like Ruth and Boaz or like you and me.” Frederick Bush.

How do we see this evidenced in our everyday lives?

How does Boaz love Ruth in verses 11–13? If it helps, divide the answer into his emotional and his physical care.

In verse 17 Boaz tells Ruth to give Naomi a message; is he referring to Naomi’s remark about coming back empty?

In what ways do we need to take risks in how we love others?

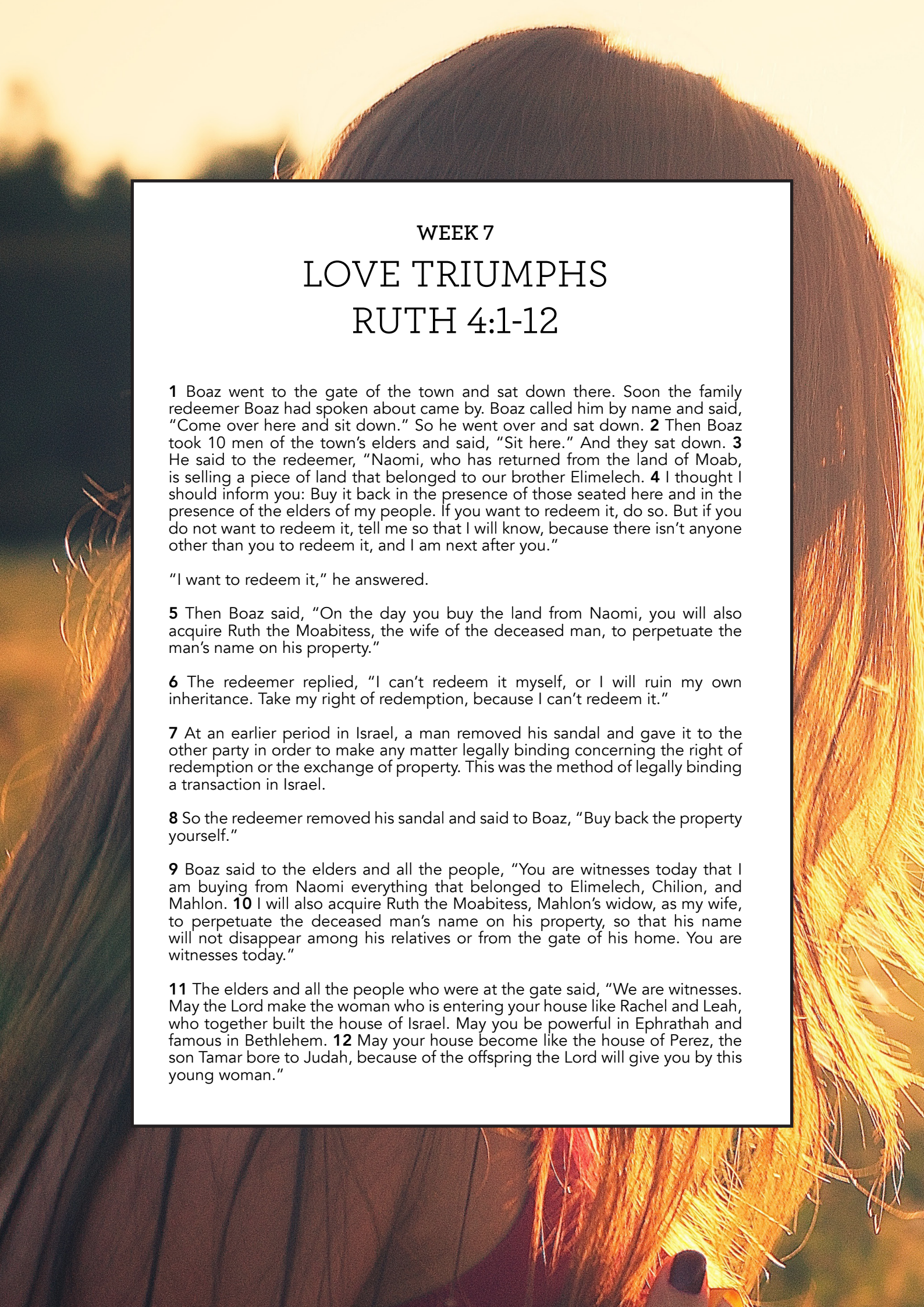
How does being grounded in Christ’s love help us face disappointment and rejection?

In what relationships do we need courage at the moment?

How does the way Ruth and Boaz love point us to Jesus?

Ruth and Naomi take a massive risk. But their risk is right and appropriate because it is based upon their confidence in the character of Boaz. How does God’s character encourage us take risks?

In what ways do we need to take courage and risk in how we love?



WEEK 7

LOVE TRIUMPHS

RUTH 4:1-12

1 Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by. Boaz called him by name and said, "Come over here and sit down." So he went over and sat down. **2** Then Boaz took 10 men of the town's elders and said, "Sit here." And they sat down. **3** He said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, is selling a piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. **4** I thought I should inform you: Buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do so. But if you do not want to redeem it, tell me so that I will know, because there isn't anyone other than you to redeem it, and I am next after you."

"I want to redeem it," he answered.

5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you will also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the deceased man, to perpetuate the man's name on his property."

6 The redeemer replied, "I can't redeem it myself, or I will ruin my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I can't redeem it."

7 At an earlier period in Israel, a man removed his sandal and gave it to the other party in order to make any matter legally binding concerning the right of redemption or the exchange of property. This was the method of legally binding a transaction in Israel.

8 So the redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, "Buy back the property yourself."

9 Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. **10** I will also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, to perpetuate the deceased man's name on his property, so that his name will not disappear among his relatives or from the gate of his home. You are witnesses today."

11 The elders and all the people who were at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel. May you be powerful in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem. **12** May your house become like the house of Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring the Lord will give you by this young woman."

STUDY QUESTIONS

In verse 1 the text says: "So Boaz said 'Friend; sit down here.'" But in the Hebrew, Boaz is calling him "Mr. So-and-so." What do you think Boaz's view of this guy might have been by calling him Mr. So-and-so?

This is a scene of a negotiation between two redeemers. What do they stand to gain in this negotiation? What could Boaz lose if he loses the negotiation?

What can you tell about Boaz in the way he handles this negotiation? What qualities do you see in him?

How does he compare with the nearest redeemer?

There is a rescue mission taking place in Bethlehem but it isn't just to rescue Ruth—it's also to rescue Elimelech (verse 9). How does Boaz resurrect Elimelech's legacy? How does God resurrect the dead in the book of Ruth?

Compare the role of the sandal in Deuteronomy 25:5–10 and Ruth 4:7–8. Why do you think the narrator mentions it in Ruth 4:7–8?

If you were a bystander, how would the scene have grown? Look at verses 1–2 and 11.

What does the crowd gathered at the gate do in verses 11–12?

We soon hear that Boaz was descended from Perez (4:18–21). "May your house be like the house of Perez" might seem like a weird blessing at first, considering Perez wasn't one of the patriarchs, and he was the son of an illicit liaison between Judah and his daughter-in-law (Genesis 38). But then again, Boaz was marrying a much younger woman from Who's-Your-Daddy. How does God answer this blessing spoken by the witnesses?

What does this tell us about God's grace?

Read Colossians 1:9–14. What do we learn about Christ's redemptive work for us in these passages?

What's one thing about your former life in the "domain of darkness" that you're thankful you've been redeemed from?

What's one thing about life in the "kingdom of His beloved Son" that you've been thankful for lately?



WEEK 8

LOVE'S LEGACY

RUTH 4:13-22

13 Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he was intimate with her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. **14** Then the women said to Naomi, "Praise the Lord, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel. **15** He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." **16** Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and took care of him. **17** The neighbor women said, "A son has been born to Naomi," and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 Now this is the genealogy of Perez:

Perez fathered Hezron.

19 Hezron fathered Ram,
who fathered Amminadab.

20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon,
who fathered Salmon.

21 Salmon fathered Boaz,
who fathered Obed.

22 And Obed fathered Jesse,
who fathered David.



STUDY QUESTIONS

Who steps from the shadows in verse 13?

Can you remember the other place where the narrator tell us of God's active intervention?

[Hint: 1:6] Why do you think the author only explicitly talks about God's work in these two places? What are we being taught?

Why would this baby mean so much to Naomi?

What is the significance of saying that Ruth was worth "seven sons?"

How does this scene contrast with the opening scene? Find all of the "death" words in 1:1–6, and then all of the "life" words in 4:13–17.

DEATH; 1:1-6	LIFE; 4:13-17

"Everything that Ruth has done from the first scene until now has led to the possibility of the birth of this child of hope. It is Ruth's faithfulness, kindness, loyalty, in a word, Ruth's hesed, that has led to this outcome." Katharine Sakenfeld.

What surprise has the narrator saved for the very end of the story?

This upward trajectory is the same as in the gospels. Jesus becomes flesh, empties himself by taking on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), is tempted in every way (Hebrews 4:15), and obediently follows the will of his Father, even to the point of death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). Yet, through this, Jesus brings a resurrection hope to all who believe in his name.

See Jesus' family tree in Matthew 1:1–6. What is significant about the women who are mentioned? What is common about their backgrounds?

For some of us, we've been born into a legacy of faith: from our parents, grandparents, and maybe even further. But for others, we might look more like Ruth, where our family hasn't brought us up to know God. But it's helpful to remember here that the greatest king of Israel (who was a descendent of the perfect king, Jesus) was descended from a destitute widow, her Moabite daughter-in-law and an aging bachelor from the humble town of Bethlehem, who himself was the son of a prostitute. What does this tell us about how God's grace can work in history?

Through our study of Ruth we've seen so much of God's hesed love, His quiet sovereignty, and His desire to write stories through people's lives. How have these things changed your view of God?

How has your view of love changed through your study of Ruth?

What lessons do you want to stick with you as an individual, as a family, as a group, as a church?



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