

REDEEMING

STUDIES IN RUTH

love



REDEEMING LOVE

The book of Ruth is a quiet, hopeful story, happening behind the chaos and distress amidst God's people, "during the time of the judges" (1:1). It's a book that moves between lament and hope; bitterness and rejoicing; loss and blessing; isolation and intimacy. It's a book that portrays how God loves to work: In the quiet, unexpected ways and places, through the least-expected people. The book of Ruth is short and sweet, but there's 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.

We're hoping that our time in Ruth will provide us with an opportunity to rest in this beautiful valley of God's word, and that in your community groups and in your conversations, to stop and meditate on your life before God, and to be honest about the struggles in your life at the moment. 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

"During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land.

A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons..."

Ruth 1:1

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.

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KEY FIGURES IN THE BOOK OF RUTH



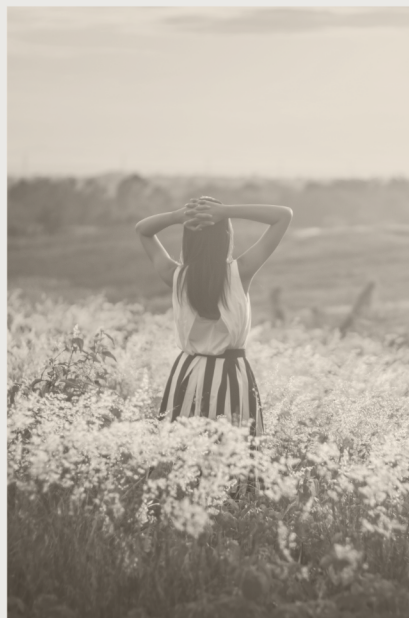
Naomi

A grieving widow who travels home to Judah, with Ruth by her side.



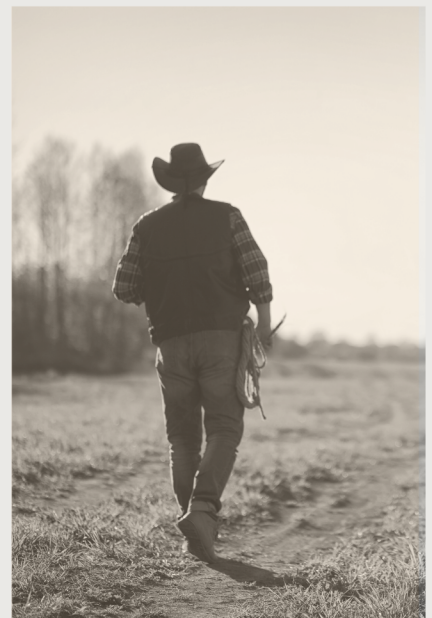
Elimelech

Naomi's husband, who left Judah because of the famine, and died in Moab.



Ruth

A young widow who promises to care for her mother-in-law, Naomi.



Boaz

A prominent man of noble character, from Elimelech's family.

Across these studies, we'll be looking at three repeated questions:



How do we see hope taken away here?

Across these few chapters, we see almost every hope stripped away from the people, particularly from Naomi. As we work through the studies, we'll keep thinking about this question, so we can keep a note of their losses and laments, and meet them in those places.



How do we see hope restored here?

As we think about hopes taken away, and the losses and laments of the people in Ruth, we also want to stay alert to the ways that God will seek out those losses and restore hope. As is often the case, God doesn't work in the way that we would expect, or according to the timing that we might want. But in every grief, loss and lament, God steps in to decisively restore hope (and as the book alludes to in its final words, this all points to the ultimate hope of Christ).



How do we see *hesed* love here?

One of the key ways that God's at work in Ruth to restore hope is through this idea of *hesed* love: a Hebrew word for a committed, sacrificial love—"when you love with *hesed* love, you bind yourself to the object of your love, no matter what the response is," Paul Miller. We'll see this kind of love throughout Ruth, which is how God is at work, and also a picture of his *hesed* love for his people.

LOVE

RUTH 1

dies

1 During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land. A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while. **2** The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the fields of Moab and settled there. **3** Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** Her sons took Moabite women as their wives: one was named Orpah and the second was named Ruth. After they lived in Moab about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two children and without her husband.

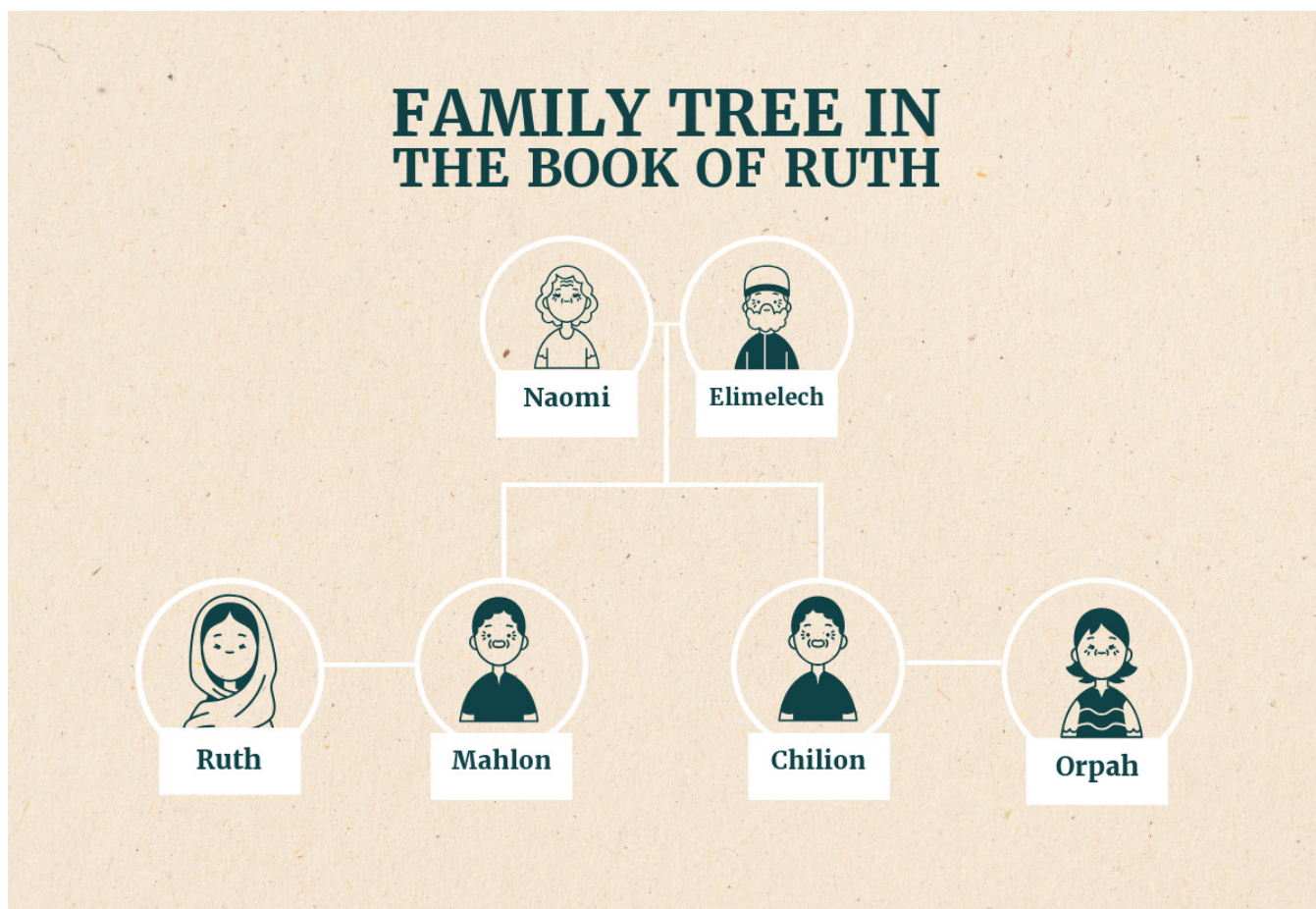
6 She and her daughters-in-law set out to return from the territory of Moab, because she had heard in Moab that the Lord had paid attention to his people's need by providing them food. **7** She left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, and traveled along the road leading back to the land of Judah. **8** Naomi said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. **9** May the Lord grant each of you

rest in the house of a new husband." She kissed them, and they wept loudly. **10** They said to her, "We insist on returning with you to your people." **11** But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why do you want to go with me? Am I able to have any more sons who could become your husbands? **12** Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, **13** would you be willing to wait for them to grow up? Would you restrain yourselves from remarrying? No, my daughters, my life is much too bitter for you to share, because the Lord's hand has turned against me." **14** Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. **15** Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Follow your sister-in-law."

16 But Ruth replied: Don't plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. **17** Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me. **18** When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped talking to her. **19** The two of them traveled until they came to Bethlehem. When they entered Bethlehem, the whole town was excited about their arrival and the local women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" **20** "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara," she answered, "for the Almighty has made me very bitter. **21** I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has opposed me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" **22** So Naomi came back from the territory of Moab with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabitess. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The writer of Ruth tells us that this story is set during the time of Judges. For those of you with some Bible background, what does that immediately tell you? What was the period of Judges like?



What does the downward spiral look like in verses 1-5?



How do we see hope taken away here?

Names are important in culture (to Biblical culture more than us).
What does your name mean?

Bethlehem means "house of bread."

Moab means "who's your daddy?"

Naomi means "pleasant."

Elimilech means "God is king."

Mahlon means "weak."

Chilion means "frail."

Rewrite verses 1-7, with these words replacing the names. What ironies do you notice?

1 During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land. A man left _____ in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of _____ for a while. **2** The man's name was _____, and his wife's name was _____. The names of his two sons were _____ and _____. They were Ephrathites from _____ in Judah. They entered the fields of _____ and settled there. **3** _____'s husband, _____, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** Her sons took _____ite women as their wives: one was named Orpah and the second was named Ruth. After they lived in _____ about ten years, **5** both _____ and _____ also died, and the woman was left without her two children and without her husband. **6** _____ and her daughters-in-law set out to return from the territory of _____, because she had heard in _____ that the Lord had paid attention to his people's need by providing them food. **7** _____ left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, and traveled along the road leading back to the land of Judah.

STUDY QUESTIONS

This is only the beginning of the story, but from the very beginning we meet people who don't run away from suffering.

These women's love for one another will be a key part to this book. Love will not grow if we give in to cynicism or to bitterness, or if we seek comfort in other places. Sometimes we just need to hang in there and seek the Lord. How does Naomi do this in verses 6-7?

"When God does not meet our expectations, it opens the door not just to despair but also to cynicism, to shutting down in our hearts." What do you think of this statement? Has it been true for you?

What were the good things remaining in Naomi's life?



**How do we see
hesed love here?**

"Ruth took on the uncertain future of a bitter widow in a land where she knew no one, enjoyed few legal rights, and—given the traditional Moabite-Israel rivalry—faced possible ethnic pressure... She gave up a marriage to a man to devote herself to an old woman—in a world dominated by men." Robert Hubbard

The culture of this story had great struggles for single women. What

are some modern-day challenges that single women face?

What's a modern cultural equivalent of Ruth's commitment to Naomi?

"Ruth is God's answer to Naomi's lament. Ruth's love for Naomi is God at work. Ruth embodies the gospel. All acts of love done in faith are small pictures of the gospel."

Paul Miller.

How do you see God's love emerging already in the book? Where can you see this picture of the committed, sacrificial love of Christ?

When Ruth and Orpah don't budge, because of their *hesed* love, Naomi uses a different tactic—lament (v. 11-14). She laments out of her relationship with God—like a third of the Psalms, this is a relational lament). In the West, we've almost entirely lost the ability to pray prayers of lament. The Hebrews were constantly in God's face, even when it meant saying "God, it feels like I'm your enemy." Why do you think it's hard for us to pray that way?

How might a prayer of lament be filled with faith? How might lament be a difficult yet important dimension in our relationship with God?
Background: **if you get time during the week, read this article by Graham Cole on Lament: A Missing Practice**



If you're in a season where there are things you need to bring before God in lament, turn to page 18 (whether now or throughout the week) and write a prayer of lament to God. Or if it would work for your group, each write one line of lament (for your own heart, or for what's going on in the world around you), and go around the group and read your prayer of lament together.

LOVE

RUTH 2

endures

2:1 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side. He was a prominent man of noble character from Elimelech's family. His name was Boaz. **2** Ruth the Moabitess asked Naomi, "Will you let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favor?" Naomi answered her, "Go ahead, my daughter." **3** So Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She happened to be in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech's family. **4** Later, when Boaz arrived from Bethlehem, he said to the harvesters, "The Lord be with you." "The Lord bless you," they replied.

5 Boaz asked his servant who was in charge of the harvesters, "Whose young woman is this?" **6** The servant answered, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab." **7** She asked, "Will you let me gather fallen grain among the bundles behind the harvesters?" She came and has been on her feet since early morning, except that she rested a little in the shelter." **8** Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Don't go and gather grain in another field, and don't leave this one, but stay here close to my female servants. **9** See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven't I ordered the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled."

10 She fell facedown, bowed to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me, although I am a foreigner?" **11** Boaz answered her, "Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and your native land, and how you came to a people you didn't previously know. **12** May the Lord reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." **13** "My lord," she said, "I have found favor with you, for you have comforted and encouraged your servant, although I am not like one of your female servants." **14** At mealtime Boaz told her, "Come over here and have some bread and dip it in the vinegar sauce." So she sat beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain. She ate and was satisfied and had some left over.

15 When she got up to gather grain, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her even gather grain among the bundles, and don't humiliate her. **16** Pull out some stalks from the bundles for her and leave them for her to gather. Don't rebuke her." **17** So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. She beat out what she had gathered, and it was about twenty-six quarts of barley. **18** She picked up the grain and went into the town, where her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She brought out what she had left over from her meal and gave it to her. **19** 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 whom 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 the Lord bless him because he has not abandoned 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

What about Ruth's situation made her vulnerable?

"As soon as Boaz sees Ruth, he says 'whose woman is this?' This question is a perfect example of how non-western cultures view community and women. In a non-western world people are never defined individually; they are always understood in relation to a group, be it a family, a village, or a clan. An unmarried woman got her identity from her father. If she chose to live outside the authority and protection of her father she was deemed to be a harlot. **This gives you some sense of how vulnerable Ruth truly was.**" Paul Miller

Verse 3 literally reads "her chance chanced the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." Then, it just so happened that Boaz showed up! What do you think the author is pushing us to think about these coincidences?

How have you seen God use seeming coincidences in your life? Can you share an example of a time when "chance chanced" you?

Imagine the first day of your new job and the boss told you that he'd warned all the young men were not to touch you. What would you think?

"When Boaz told Ruth not to go to another field to glean, he was saying more than simply. 'Hey, I have plenty. Save yourself a few steps... He was recognising how much she was at risk and saying, 'You will be safe here. As long as you stay in my fields you will not be harmed.'
As modern Westerners I think we miss his extreme generosity." Libbie Groves

Boaz - Israelite clan leader, wealthy, connected, male - is worlds apart from Ruth - foreigner, poor, disconnected, female. In this one day, what has Boaz done for Ruth?

Time of day	What has Boaz done for Ruth?
Early morning (2:3)	
Morning (2:8-12)	
Lunch (2:14)	
After lunch (2:15-16)	
At home (2:18-20)	

Have every person in your group pick a time of day and spend some time drawing a picture of the scene, and spend some time retelling the story through your drawings:

STUDY QUESTIONS

What motivates Boaz to treat Ruth like this? How would you describe his attitude towards Ruth? (verses 11-12)



How do we see *hesed* love here?

How do you think Ruth felt, from verses 10-14?

When Jesus reflects on what he will do at the wedding feast of the Lamb he says, "He will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37). What parallel do you see between Boaz and Jesus? What do they both do?

What kind of a picture of masculinity does Boaz give us?

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. Boaz is identified as a *goel* in verse 20. It was a unique personalization of the law that didn't just provide rules, but provided a person. A *goel* could...

- Restore property (Leviticus 25:25-30).
- Purchase a relative out of slavery (Leviticus 25:47-55).

- *Avenge a relative's killing (Numbers 35:12, 19-27).*
- *Receive a restitution (Numbers 5:8).*
- *Assist in a lawsuit (Job 19:25, Jeremiah 50:34).*
- *Provide an heir through marriage to himself (Genesis 38, Deuteronomy 25:5, Ruth, Mark 12:19-22).*

One of the key ways a *goel* did this was by marrying the widow.

How does this change how we read the story, and the love that Boaz has for Ruth?



How do we see hope restored here?

Read Luke 10:25-37.

How does the Samaritan act as a *goel*?

Which character are we meant to most identify with in this story?
Which character is meant to give us a picture of Jesus' love for us?

Spend some time writing a prayer of thankfulness for some of the ways that Jesus has provided for you in your life. If you are in a season of lament, you can either: Turn to page 19 and write "but" after your lament from last week, and remind yourself of things that you know are true of God, or ask a brother or sister to write you a prayer of thankfulness for God's work in your life.

PRAYER OF LAMENT

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

LOVE

RUTH 3

risks

3:1 Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, shouldn't I find rest 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 charged her to do. **7** After Boaz ate, drank, and was in good spirits, he went to lie down at the end of the pile of barley, and she came 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 servant," she

replied. "Take me under your wing, 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, "What happened, my daughter?"

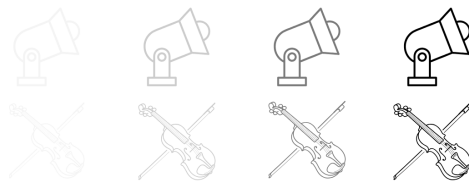
Then Ruth told her everything the man had done for her.

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

Think of a situation where you had to do something difficult, but you did it because you knew it was the right thing to do. What gave you the courage to go ahead with it?

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's very little privacy. Because of his prominence, Boaz is always surrounded by people. Naomi's problem is, 'How do I create a situation where Ruth can make an appeal for marriage in private with someone who's constantly around people?'" Paul Miller

What three things does Naomi tell Ruth to do to prepare? (3:3) How risky do you think this move was?

"Take me under your wing" (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. Does this seem bold? Brave? Headstrong? Too forthright? Sweet?

In 2:12, Boaz uses this same expression about God and Ruth. Do you think this is significant?

"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.

Can you think of a time when someone loved you in a way that wasn't really extraordinary, but God worked powerfully through it, and their love changed your life?

How does Boaz love Ruth in verses 11-13? Divide the answer into his emotional and his physical care.

Emotional care	Physical care

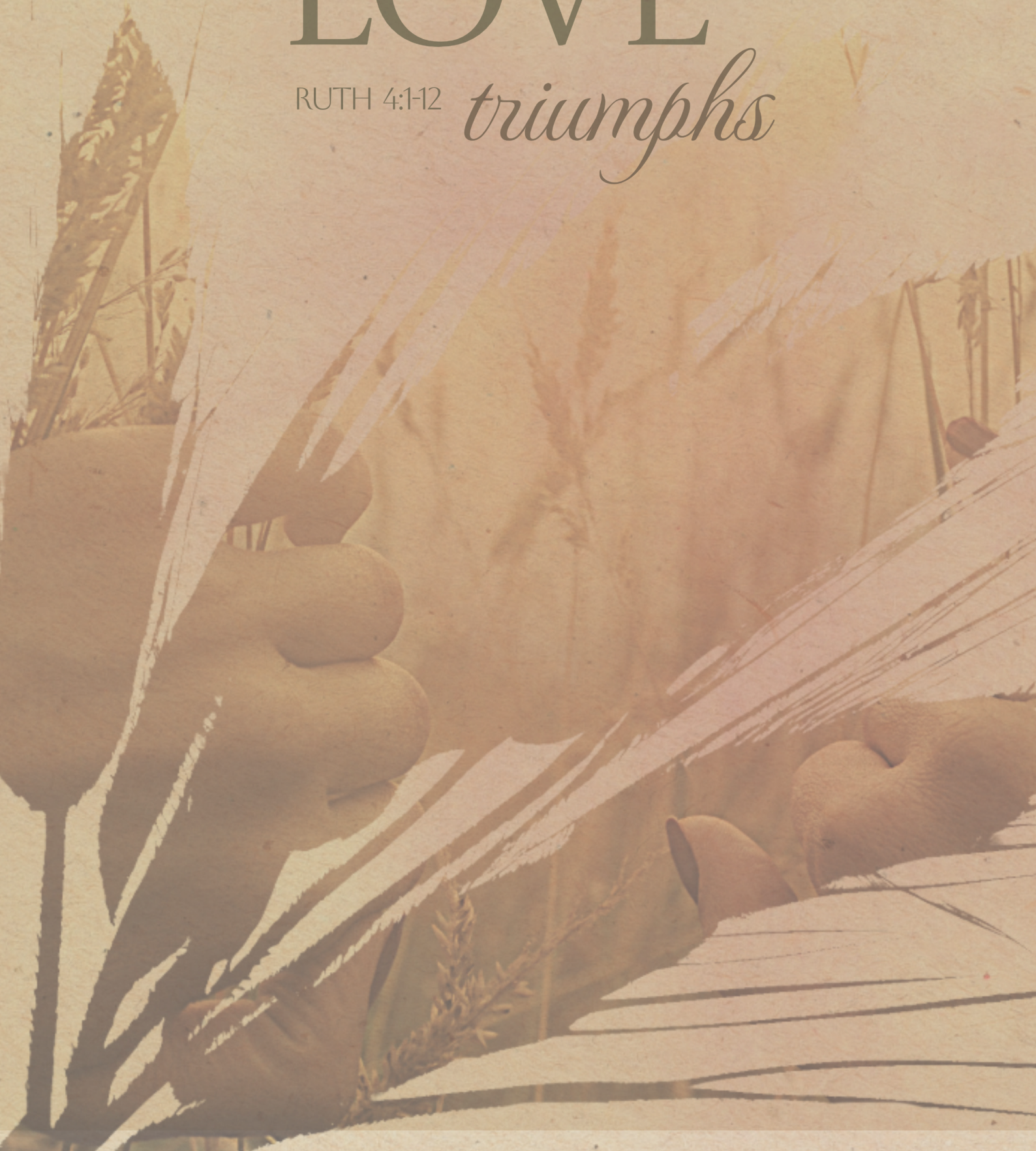
How might we need to be more open to take risks in how we love one another?

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 Christ's character encourage us? In what ways do we need to take courage and risk in how we love?

"He himself has said, 'I will never leave you or abandon you,'" Hebrews 13:5. Jesus has given his life for you, so that you will always be protected and provided for. What aspect of Jesus' love stands out to you from this chapter of Ruth?

LOVE

RUTH 4:12 *triumphs*



4:1 Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by. Boaz said, "Come over here and sit down." So he went over and sat down. **2** Then Boaz took ten 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 territory of Moab, is selling the portion of the field 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 it. 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 field from Naomi, you will 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 have also acquired 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 hometown. You are witnesses today." **11** All the people who were at the city gate, including the elders, 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 your name well known 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

Chapter 3 left us on a cliff-hanger: How will Boaz sort out this business with this family redeemer who was closer than he was? So Boaz goes to the gate—which at that time was kind of a combination of a town hall and a courthouse—to sort this all out, and look after the redemption of Ruth.

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?

There's a rescue mission taking place in Bethlehem, but it isn't just to rescue Ruth—it's also to rescue Elimelech (verses 9-10). How does Boaz resurrect Elimelech's legacy?

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?

Deuteronomy 25:5-10	Ruth 4:7-8

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

In verses 11-12, the elders give a blessing over Ruth, by asking God to make her like three people God has blessed before her: Rachel, Leah, and Perez. In each of these people, God worked in the midst of hopelessness and brokenness to give them hope, through their children. Given this, what does their blessing mean for Ruth?



How do we see hope restored here?

We soon hear that Boaz was descended from Perez (4:18-21). 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). So what does: "May your house be like the house of Perez" (4:12) mean?

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?

LOVE'S

RUTH 4:13-22

legacy



4:13 Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. He slept with her, and the Lord granted conception to her, and she gave birth to a son. **14** The women said to Naomi, "Blessed be 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 became a mother to 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 these are the family records of Perez:

Perez fathered Hezron,

19 Hezron fathered Ram,

Ram fathered Amminadab,

20 Amminadab fathered Nahshon,

Nahshon fathered Salmon,

21 Salmon fathered Boaz,

Boaz fathered Obed,

22 Obed fathered Jesse,

and Jesse 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?

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.

Words of death...



Ruth 1:1-5

Words of life...



Ruth 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.

To do a quick recap: At the start of the book of Ruth, we were introduced to Naomi, Ruth and then Boaz. How were they introduced to us? What situations were they each in?



Naomi (1:2)



Ruth (1:4)



Boaz (2:1)

Now, as if mirrored, the book of Ruth ends by wrapping up the stories of Boaz, Ruth, then Naomi. How does each story give hope to their stories, when compared with how they were each introduced?



Boaz (4:9)



Ruth (4:10-13)



Naomi (4:14-16)

STUDY QUESTIONS

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

Why would this baby mean so much to Naomi?

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

This narrative arc, from loss to hope, 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.

In your own life, how have you seen God give you hope in those places of loss and grief?



Loss



Hope

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



How do we see *hesed* love here?

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 our lives?

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?

PRAYER POINTS

NOTES



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