

Lesson 10

RUTH

GOD STATEMENT FOR RUTH: THE GOD WHO EXTENDS _____ (a) TO THE _____ (b)

The events of the book of Ruth take place during the war-ravaged, bloody, violent, spiritually dark days of the judges. But while the book of Judges gives us a macro-view of the _____ (c) of the Israelites as a whole during that evil era, the book of Ruth presents us with an account of one woman's personal _____ (d). Oh, by the way, *she's a* _____ (e).

Ruth is one of only two women—the other being Esther—to have a book of the Bible named after her. Her short love story—it's only four chapters long—is familiar to most Bible readers and deeply cherished. The book of Ruth can be divided into four parts which correspond to the four chapters.

PART 1: RUTH'S _____ (f) (Chap 1)

The story opens as an Israelite family (husband, wife, and two sons) migrates from their home in Bethlehem to the land of Moab, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. The reason they made this move was to escape a _____ (g). Even though the Bible doesn't say it, it's reasonable to guess that this famine was part of God's punishment of Israel during one of their cycles of _____ (h).

While in Moab, the two boys marry Moabite girls; but before any children can be added to the family picture, both husbands die . . . and their father dies as well. Suddenly the family consists of three grieving widows—the Israelite woman from Bethlehem, _____ (i), and her two Gentile, Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and _____ (j).

Soon Naomi hears that better times have returned to Judah, so she decides to return to her homeland. She urges her daughters-in-law to go back to their own homes and kin in Moab. Orpah heeds Naomi's counsel and decides to stay in Moab, but Ruth won't hear of leaving her mother-in-law. By _____ (k) to Naomi, Ruth gives up her _____ (l), her _____ (m), and her _____ (n) (Ruth 1:16-17).

When Naomi gets back to Bethlehem, she expresses _____ (o) about her situation. She feels that God has become her _____ (p) because of the terrible losses she has suffered (Ruth 1:19-21).

PART 2: RUTH'S _____ (q) (Chap 2)

Once they're back in Israel, these two husbandless, childless women are facing the enormous problem of how to survive. Being a couple of impoverished, destitute widows, there was only one real solution— _____ (r). Gleaning was something like a “Welfare to Work” program that God put into His covenant with Israel (i.e., the Law of Moses). Instead of relying strictly on handouts, the poor were allowed to glean in the fields—that is, to pick up the _____ (s)—after the harvesters did their job. Also, farmers were required to leave the _____ (t) of their fields unharvested so the poor could eke out a subsistence living (Lev 19:9-10; Deut 24:19-20).

With Naomi's permission, Ruth goes off to find a field, and the field she finds belongs to a relative of Naomi, a rich man named _____ (u). Of course, Ruth has no idea at this point that he's related to her mother-in-law. Boaz is a _____ (v) man with exceptional character, and he is quickly impressed with her _____ (w), commitment, and _____ (x) ethic. He speaks to her with great respect and kindness, and he offers her his protection and resources.

When Ruth got home and told Naomi about the extraordinary man who blessed her, Naomi got excited, and justifiably so. After all, a marriage to this man could solve all of their financial problems. And why would Naomi suddenly start entertaining thoughts about a Ruth-and-Boaz-wedding? Because of another important part of the Law of Moses called “ _____ (y) marriage” (The word “levirate” comes from the Latin word “levir” which means “husband's brother”). This law stated that if a woman's husband died before she had a son, her deceased husband's brother had to marry her and give her a son, so that the land of the deceased man can stay in the family (Deut 25:5-10). The one who was expected to fulfill this duty to a widow was known as a “near relative” or a “kinsman- _____ (z)” (Ruth 2:20).

PART 3: RUTH'S _____ (aa) (Chap 3)

After a month or more has passed, Naomi and Ruth set a plan in motion. They decide it's time to let Boaz know that Ruth is willing to marry him. It was a common, ancient Near Eastern custom for a widow to ask a “kinsman-redeemer” to marry her in the place of her dead husband. The

plan was for Ruth to “propose” to Boaz late at night on a threshing floor during the harvest. Winnowing threshed grain—that is, separating grain kernels from the chaff (or husks) that surround the seeds—was often done at night to take advantage of the more predictable night-time breezes that were essential for the winnowing process.

After a hard day’s work and a good evening meal Boaz drifted off to sleep on the threshing floor. At winnowing time it was common for men to sleep on site to protect their grain from thieves or animals. Ruth, who was lurking nearby, approached the sleeping Boaz and “uncovered his feet and lay down” (Ruth 3:7). While this definitely looks bizarre to us, not to mention morally questionable, it was neither bizarre nor immoral in their world. Instead, it was simply part of a _____ (bb) appeal to signal her desire and willingness to marry him; this is clear from Ruth’s statement to Boaz and his response to her (Ruth 3:9-13).

Not surprisingly, Boaz was startled when he woke in the middle of the night and felt someone at his feet. After discovering it was Ruth, he covered her with his garment. This gesture was a symbolic act which signified that he had accepted her _____ (cc) to establish a new relationship with her and provide for her. This symbolic action also appears in Ezekiel 16:8 where God spreads His garment over Israel.

Unfortunately, there was a complication to their possible marriage—there was another relative closer in line than Boaz. In other words, there was another kinsman-redeemer who had a stronger legal claim to marrying Ruth (Ruth 3:11-13).

PART 4: RUTH’S _____ (dd) (Chap 4)

Boaz acted quickly to sort out the situation and secure the legal right to become Ruth’s nearest kinsman-redeemer. He went straight from the threshing floor the next morning to the city _____ (ee). The city gate was the ancient equivalent of city hall or the county courthouse. It was the place of business and judicial transactions.

By taking a seat there, he was giving public notice of his intention to conduct a legal transaction. No sooner had he sat down than he saw the man who stood between him and the redemption of Naomi and Ruth. Boaz summons him over, and the man sits down to find out what Boaz has in mind.

Boaz commandeered ten men to constitute a legal assembly. Boaz then explained to his legal rival that he—Boaz’s legal rival—had a right to acquire some more land from Naomi. Such a chance to enlarge his land

portfolio was too good to pass up, so, without hesitation, the man said, in effect, “I’ll redeem it.”

Boaz then skillfully follows up with the second part of the deal. He explained how the land comes with a new wife, a mother-in-law, and the obligation to raise a son who will ultimately take back the land on behalf of Ruth’s dead husband. Suddenly, the other kinsman-redeemer changes his mind, and he tells Boaz that he can redeem it in his place.

After a strange little ritual to seal the deal—the man gives his sandal to Boaz in the presence of witnesses—the contract was settled. The rights and responsibilities of redemption of Elimelech’s estate (Naomi’s dead husband) had been officially transferred to Boaz, and he was formally validated as the kinsman-_____ (ff).

Boaz then turns to the witnesses and delivers an impassioned reflection on the events that they had observed. He has bought the field and would now marry Ruth to preserve the name and allotment of Elimelech’s family forever (Ruth 4:10).

Finally, the witnesses affirmed the acceptance of their role by repeating Boaz’s last word, “Witnesses!” With that declaration, they fulfilled their legal obligations to the court, but this did not mean they had nothing more to say. On the contrary, they pronounced a heartfelt blessing over Boaz (Ruth 4:11-12).

Boaz and Ruth marry and have a son named _____ (gg). Obed would become King David’s _____ (hh). And that means Ruth—a Moabite—is an ancestor of _____ (ii).

THE LESSONS OF RUTH

- God is _____ (jj) over everything. In other words, He’s in complete control. His hand is present when Ruth chooses to glean in Boaz’s field, and when Ruth proposes to Boaz, and when Boaz “goes to court” to settle the kinsman-redeemer matter, and when Ruth gives birth. So, we can _____ (kk).
- It’s okay to _____ (ll) when we’re _____ (mm). Like Job and the lamenting psalmists, Naomi’s faith includes expressing _____ (nn). She is not silent in her suffering. She feels abandoned (Ruth 2:20-21), but she still knows that God is good (Ruth 1:6).

- God's _____(oo) is _____(pp). Boaz's generosity toward Ruth is so extravagant that it's almost comical (Ruth 2:9-10, 14, 16, 18). And that's a picture of what God does for us. That's grace in a nutshell. It's ridiculous what God offers us.
- When God is _____(qq) in your life, it shows up in your _____(rr) and _____(ss). Boaz exemplifies what "God first" looks like in the life of a real person. He couldn't help but talk about God (Ruth 2:4,12). He's also committed to obeying God's law (e.g., the law of gleaning). And he genuinely cares about the needy and wants to show them God's generous mercy.
- Faith is something we _____(tt). Faith deliberately reaches out to the redeemer and appeals to Him for mercy. Faith is not passive waiting. Ruth wanted rest, peace, and security, and she boldly asked Boaz to redeem her (Ruth 3:9).
- _____(uu) is always _____(vv). When Ruth calls on Boaz to respond to her request, he doesn't hesitate. Christ, our redeemer, doesn't _____(ww) either. Anytime we exercise faith, God responds to that faith.
- God _____(xx) _____(yy) who takes shelter in Him. Again, Boaz represents God, and he sincerely desires for Ruth to be blessed as much as any of God's people. It didn't matter that she was a Gentile. It didn't matter that she was Moabite. God's mercy transcends racial or national barriers.

KEY PASSAGES IN RUTH

- Ruth 1:16
- Ruth 2:11-13
- Ruth 3:8-9
- Ruth 4:11-12
- Ruth 4:13-17

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| [a] MERCY | [aa] PROPOSAL |
| [b] FAITHFUL | [bb] legal |
| [c] faithlessness | [cc] proposal |
| [d] faithfulness | [dd] REWARD |
| [e] Gentile | [ee] gate |
| [f] FAITHFULNESS | [ff] redeemer |
| [g] famine | [gg] Obed |
| [h] rebellion | [hh] grandfather |
| [i] Naomi | [ii] Jesus |
| [j] Ruth | [jj] sovereign |
| [k] committing | [kk] relax |
| [l] gods | [ll] lament |
| [m] culture | [mm] suffering |
| [n] people | [nn] pain |
| [o] bitterness | [oo] grace |
| [p] enemy | [pp] extravagant |
| [q] SERVICE | [qq] first |
| [r] gleaning | [rr] words |
| [s] leftovers | [ss] deeds |
| [t] edges | [tt] exercise |
| [u] Boaz | [uu] Faith |
| [v] godly | [vv] effective |
| [w] character | [ww] hesitate |
| [x] work | [xx] rewards |
| [y] levirate | [yy] anyone |
| [z] redeemer | |