

The Book of Ruth

God at work among his people



MU Sydney Bible Studies 2016

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Suggestions for using these studies

1. Enjoy the studies. There is no test at the end. They are provided to help you grow in your relationship with our great God.
2. Make sure that each person has a copy of the study booklet you are using. Some people have hearing problems and no-one concentrates all the time, so they need a written copy of the questions to take part in the discussions. Copies of the studies can be bought from the MU Office for each person, or you may wish to buy one copy and use your church facilities to photocopy the number you need.
3. If possible it is good to hand out the studies a week or so before the day, so people have time to prepare in advance. Encourage your people to read the Bible passage a couple of times as they prepare. If you do this it is wise to have some extra copies available on the day in case some people forget to bring theirs, or extra people join you.
4. It is essential that the leader has fully prepared the study beforehand. You will find that the background notes are relevant to the answers of the questions.
5. The 'Think About' section is there to help you focus on the big issue of the study. They are hypothetical questions and there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer. Don't stress over this section, enjoy it.
6. You may need to choose a selection of questions to discuss if your group has limited time available for discussion. Choose your selection beforehand, don't simply end when you run out of time.
7. Where you find multiple questions within the one question read all the questions first and then deal with each individual question separately. This is so you understand the bigger picture before you deal with the simpler breakdown.
8. You can increase participation by asking several people to read the Bible passages aloud for the group. This also provides a variety of voices and helps to keep people engaged with the study. Make sure you ask your potential readers ahead of time to make sure they are comfortable doing this.
9. It is generally better for discussion to sit in a semi-circle rather than to sit in rows. It is hard to talk to the back of someone's head, and it is generally easier to hear when sitting in semicircles.
10. If you have a large group (twenty or more), consider breaking into smaller groups of about six to ten for the discussion time. The person leading the study could do an introduction, small groups could then discuss the questions with an assigned leader for each group (who has prepared beforehand), and then all could rejoin for a conclusion time directed by the leader.
11. Another alternative for a large group, is choosing several questions that don't just need factual answers but require discussion, and asking the members of the group to discuss those questions with the person next to them. Then, if appropriate, ask if anyone would like to share their thoughts with the rest of the group.
12. All Bible readings are taken from New International Version, as found on the Bible Gateway website <https://www.biblegateway.com>

Background to the Book of Ruth

Ruth is set in the period of the Judges. It was a time when men did as they pleased with little reference to the God who had preserved them and saved them. The God who had restored them, protected them, and given them a land and a place to rest.

It was a rough and violent time.

The setting is Bethlehem and Moab.

Despite its name Bethlehem, the house of bread, there was a famine in the land.

Famine was a common occurrence in Israel as the land was harsh, the climate was harsh and the rains were irregular.

It was often thought that God allowed the famine to cause the people to turn back to him because he was the true giver and sustainer of life.

It is interesting that at this time while there was famine in Israel, Moab had plenty of food for its people.

The Moabites were a tribe deeply disliked by the Israelites. They had their beginnings through an incestuous relationship between Lot and his older daughter. She called her son Moab. (Genesis 19:30-38)

The Moabites were also gross idolaters, worshipping Chemosh and Baalpeor using obscene rites. (Numbers 25:1-8; 2 Kings 3:27)

There were often periods of hostility between Israel and Moab. Although God spared the Moabites from conquest, he excluded them and their offspring even to the tenth generation from the peculiar privileges of his people. (Deuteronomy 23:3-6)

Intermarriage between the tribes was not expressly forbidden. But the Jewish law did not allow the offspring of a mixed marriage to participate in worship or any of the benefits of membership within the covenant community. This is not, apparently, the case for Israelite women who marry a Moabite man. A Moabite woman marrying an Israelite man and who clings to her husband's faith can be accepted into the community of worship. She can enjoy the benefits of belonging to that community.

This brings us to the book of Ruth.

There have been many purposes expressed for the book of Ruth.

1. It is a romantic story of true love, kindness and faithfulness.
2. It was written to counter the exclusive tendencies of the Jews who saw themselves as a superior race because they lived under the covenant of God's promises and believed that no-one else was worthy of his concern.
3. It expresses the meaning of true friendship as displayed by Ruth's devotion to Naomi.

4. Written to give credence to the legitimacy of David as King through the list of his pious ancestors.
5. Written to give expression to the working out of the law in regard to Levirate marriage. Levirate laws also gave protection to childless widows to ensure the name of the dead man was continued within the community.
6. Written to express the sovereignty of God.

It is on this last one that I want to place stress. While the Book of Ruth does bring out all the other points its main focus is actually on God and his faithfulness to his people. The focal verse is 2:12 *"May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."*

The book is about God. He rules over all and brings blessing to those who trust in him.

The main point is that God is watching over his people, and that what he causes to happen is very good.

God acts with great kindness towards his people. His acts of kindness are found throughout this story. We are often able to see God's actions in the bigger picture of life. We see him as the great creator. We see him involved as our saviour. We see that he answers our prayers.

What we often don't see or don't acknowledge as God's acts are the little things that occur in the background of our lives. In this story we will see many of these instances as we explore it closely and this may help us acknowledge God's acts of kindness in our own lives that we largely ignore.

There are three major themes running through the book and these are:

1. Faithfulness.
2. Hesed (kindness and loyalty).
3. The providence and sovereignty of God.

Faithfulness is played out by Naomi through her belief that it is the Lord who provides both the good and the bad things that occur in her life. Naomi believed he caused the famine in Bethlehem, he caused her husband and sons to die, he caused the barrenness of Ruth and Orpah. He also caused the famine to end in Bethlehem, he caused Ruth's conception of Obed, he caused her life to go from being empty to full.

Faithfulness is shown by Boaz in his relationship with his workers. He also shows faithfulness through the blessing he bestows on Ruth. He shows faithfulness in his trust that everything would work out well for Ruth in the end.

Faithfulness is shown by Ruth through her complete commitment to Naomi's God, through her statement "Your God will be my God." Ruth also shows faithfulness in her devotion to and her trust in Naomi that her plan will work as she commits herself to Boaz. Ruth never waivers from her trust in Yahweh throughout the story.

Hesed is a significant theme throughout the story. It means, kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, goodness and mercy, love and compassion. It is a very little word with a very big meaning.

We see Naomi displaying hesed even through her pain as she asks that Yahweh will bless her daughters in law with husbands and children, a home and security and rest. We see it again as she devises a plan to ensure security for Ruth through marriage to Boaz.

Ruth's example is the ultimate act of hesed through her devotion and care of Naomi despite Naomi's difficult behaviour. Ruth leaves her home and her family and her culture to be with Naomi. She goes to a foreign land where she is likely to be ostracised and mistreated. Yet she loves Naomi too much to not go with her to Bethlehem. She risks her life as she goes to glean in the fields to gather food for herself and Naomi. She also does more than ask Boaz to be her husband. She does this in the context of caring for Naomi by stating that Boaz is a Kinsman-Redeemer thus able to restore the family line of Elimelech and give Naomi an heir.

In Boaz we see many acts of hesed as he cares for Ruth and Naomi by offering protection in the fields, by the provision of additional ears of grains as she gleaned, by the provision of food and water shared with his workers. Boaz shows his kindness through his immediate action to resolve the issue of Kinsman-Redeemer in order to marry Ruth and provide the possibility of an heir for Naomi.

We see the hesed of the Lord throughout the story as he acts in the background.

1. The chance arrival of Ruth in the field of Boaz.
2. The chance arrival of Boaz himself at his field that day.
3. The successful scheme of Naomi's to find a husband for Ruth in Boaz.
4. The outcome of Boaz' plan at the gate of the city. God has been at work for his people.

We see the hesed of the Lord as he acts in the foreground of the story in regard to the end of the famine in Bethlehem and the birth of Obed.

We also see the Lord acting for all his people, both Jews and Gentiles, in the most remarkable act of grace and kindness of all. He is the Kinsman-Redeemer for all of Israel in the provision of King David through the line of Elimelek. Ultimately we see him as our Kinsman-Redeemer through Jesus.

The hesed of the Lord is how he shows us his providence for and his sovereignty over his world.



NB. Bethlehem is 9kms SW of Jerusalem

Additional Notes

Meanings of names:

1. Bethlehem means 'house of bread'
2. Elimelek means 'my God is King'
3. Naomi means 'pleasant, lovely, delightful'
4. Mara means 'bitter'
5. Mahlon is linked to a root meaning, 'to be sick'
6. Kilion signifies something like 'failing or pining or possibly annihilation'
7. Ruth means lovely friend, comrade, companion
8. Orpah means something like 'back of the neck.' This may have been derived because of her turning back to her own family.
9. Boaz means 'in him is strength' or 'in the strength of Yahweh, rejoice.'

Background to Bible Study 1: Naomi and Ruth

In the first chapter of Ruth we find the family of Elimelek, which included Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion, leaving Bethlehem for greener pastures in Moab.

This would have been a difficult decision for Elimelek. The people of Israel were taught that God was a providential, sovereign God. They were taught that he would provide for his people. They chose to go to Moab. One wonders why. Moab was a people who worshipped foreign gods. While not at war with Israel at this time they were a hostile nation. Moabites by Jewish law were not welcomed into the congregation of Israel. Relationships were not encouraged between Moabites and Israelites.

However they spend ten years in Moab and during this time Elimelek and his two sons die leaving Naomi and her two childless daughters in law. Naomi is empty. She left Bethlehem full. She is about to return to Bethlehem empty.

The future for Naomi and her daughters in law was very grim but Naomi hears that the famine in Bethlehem has ended. There is food there. "The Lord had come to aid his people." Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem.

Ruth and Orpah decide to go with her but after two attempts by Naomi to strongly discourage them only Ruth continues on the journey.

Naomi has very clearly told the girls that they would be better off in Moab, their own country with their own families, their own gods and in their own culture. In Israel they would be foreigners, they would be very poor. Naomi could not promise them husbands therefore they would have no security in Israel, no rest.

BUT Ruth makes an amazing statement of commitment to Naomi and faith in Naomi's God.

¹⁶But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

Ruth makes six very firm affirmations in her life changing statement to Naomi.

1. "Where you go, I will go." Ruth is saying to Naomi that her life's direction is now in Naomi's hands.
2. "Where you stay, I will stay." Ruth is saying that she now is dependent on Naomi for shelter and basic needs.
3. "Your people will be my people." Ruth is stating that nothing will now come between them. Not even her own family can separate her from Naomi's family and her people or Naomi's community.

4. *"Your God will be my God."* Ruth is stating her commitment to Naomi's God. She will worship only the one true God. She will worship Yahweh. She will no longer cling to the gods of Moab. Her break with Moab and its religion and culture is a complete one.
5. *"Where you die, I will die."* Ruth is stating that this commitment is for life. There will be no turning back.
6. *"There I will be buried."* Even death will not separate Ruth from Naomi.

Together they travel to Bethlehem and arrive unharmed.

Naomi is almost unrecognizable due to the hardships she has lived under, including her grief, her depression and her bitterness. She declares that she is no longer to be called Naomi but is to be called Mara. She is no longer pleasant or lovely, she is now bitter for, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

They arrive in Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest period, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Bible Study 1

Think about:

What would it be like to leave your own land where you belonged, where you knew the rules, you were comfortable in the culture and you worshipped your God, the one true God? How would you feel about going to a foreign land, a land that had been at war with your country? Here you would be a foreigner. The people would not like you, there was much animosity and even hatred felt between your people and the people of this new land. Although there was peace at this time it was an unstable peace.

Naomi and Ruth

Read Ruth 1:1-22

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ² The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

³ Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶ When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹¹ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husband's? ¹² Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—

¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!"

¹⁴ At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

¹⁹ So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

²⁰ "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹ I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back

4. From this chapter what do you understand Naomi's relationship with Yahweh was like? (Vs 6, 8-9, 13, and 21)

5. What do you understand about Naomi's relationship with Ruth and Orpah? (Vs 8-9, 11-13 and 14)

Naomi, Kilion and Mahlon would have had some influence on Orpah and Ruth's understanding of who Yahweh was. He is the one true God. He was not like the gods they worshipped in Moab. He is a relational God who cares for his people.

6. There has been much commentary on Orpah's eventual response to Naomi's pleading with her to go home to her mother's house. Was she being obedient to Naomi as she respected her wisdom in this situation? Was she afraid to face a new life in a foreign and possibly unfriendly land? Was she afraid of change? What are your thoughts? Discuss Orpah's eventual response to Naomi's pleading. (There is no right or wrong response to this question)

7. Ruth's response to Naomi's pleading was life changing for both her and Naomi. Discuss your response to Ruth's decision. Think about it in terms of the six affirmations you read in the notes before the Bible Study.

8. What do you see are the similarities between Ruth's statement of commitment to Naomi and her God and that which is required of a disciple of Jesus in order to enter the Kingdom of God? (Some of the following texts might be helpful: Luke 18:18-25, Matthew 8:18-22, Mark 10:15, Mark 1:5, John 11:25.)

9. In the background information to this story three themes were mentioned. These were faithfulness, hesed, and God's providence and sovereignty. Where in this chapter have you seen the theme of 'hesed', or kindness?

10. We see God working in the background in this story. At what points can you see the providence of God at work here in chapter one?

11. Where have you experienced God working in the background of your life? How do you thank him for this experience of his providence and grace towards you?

Concluding Thoughts

We have seen God at work throughout this passage. Despite Elimelek's decision to move his family to Moab. Despite the death of Mahlon and Kilion. Naomi is blessed with two daughters in law who love her deeply and care for her. Naomi is so blessed by Ruth's faithfulness to her new God, the one true God, that she has a travel companion as she returns to Bethlehem.

God's loving kindness is expressed in the safety they enjoy on their journey. They did actually arrive in Bethlehem. In fact they arrived just as the Barley harvest was to begin and before the wheat harvest. They would be provided with food. God is a God of providence. He will provide for his people.

David Atkinson in his commentary "The Wings of Refuge" best sums up the story of Ruth chapter one with these words: "the book of Ruth amply demonstrates that God's gracious providence is not bound by man's foolishness. The ultimate joy in the family and purpose in their history which derive from the arrival of Ruth on the scene demonstrate the rich loving kindness of God's providential care. It is evidence of his love that such benefits were reaped as a result of such foolish conduct (*Elimelek's decision to move to Moab*). Fortunately God's providence covers even our mistakes!"

We can rely on God to care for his people despite our foolish decisions. We can rely on God to fulfill his promises to his people. We can rely on God to complete his plans for his people in his world. Our God is kind, faithful and providential.

Background to Bible Study 2: Ruth meets Boaz

In Chapter two of Ruth we are introduced to Boaz. He was a man of standing in the community, a landowner, probably a man of some wealth. He was a member of Elimelek's family. This is significant.

We can tell from Boaz' greeting to his workers that he is a Godly man. He openly declares his faith to his workers in this time in Israel when every man looked after his own interests. In this chapter we find that Boaz was not at all like this.

Boaz does in fact give us a sense of what undeserving love and care is all about.

Boaz went out of his way to care for Ruth above and beyond that which was required by God's law, in regard to the care of widows and the poor in Israel.

We also find out that Boaz is indeed a Kinsman-Redeemer for Naomi and Ruth.

A Kinsman-Redeemer played a very important role in Israelite life. A Kinsman-Redeemer was responsible for restoring land to its original owners when it may have needed to be sold to pay debts or for survival. This was to restore the line of inheritance attached to the piece of land. A Kinsman-Redeemer was the one who could buy a person out of slavery to redeem them from their debt. A Kinsman-Redeemer could demand a financial payment for a wrong that may have occurred to a deceased member of a clan. They also had authority to avenge the killing of a relative.

More importantly a Kinsman-Redeemer was a member of the clan who had the right and duty to marry the widow of a fellow kinsman on the death of that person. This was to prevent the extinction of that family name. In this case the firstborn son of that relationship would take on the name and any inheritance of the deceased man.

The role of the Kinsman-Redeemer was to strengthen the inheritance laws of the clan and ensure the clan or tribe remained intact and ensured its permanence.

Ruth is pictured in this chapter as a person who shows respect and kindness towards Naomi. She does this through her preparedness to risk her own safety to ensure they have food to eat.

We also see that Ruth shows respect for the Israelite laws and the new culture in which she finds herself. She is a foreigner, in a hostile land. She is at the mercy of those whose fields she asks to glean. Ruth as a Moabitess would certainly stand out as being different to the other workers in the field.

Ruth shows respect and humility toward Boaz. She recognizes his kindness towards her. She understands her position. She expresses this respect and humility both physically and with words: "*At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"*"

This chapter is a turning point in the Book of Ruth.

Bible Study 2

Think about:

How would you feel facing a new job in a foreign land? How would you want your new boss to relate to you? How would you want your new boss to show leadership? If you are not working think about going to a new church. How would you want the leadership team at that church to treat you? How would you want to be received by the people at that church?

Ruth meets Boaz

Read Ruth 2:1-23

2 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favour."

Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."³ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

4 Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The LORD be with you!"

"The LORD bless you!" they answered.

5 Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"

6 The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi."⁷ She said, "Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters." She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

8 So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me."⁹ Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"

¹¹ Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before."¹² May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

¹³ "May I continue to find favour in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants."

¹⁴ At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar."

When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. ¹⁵ As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. ¹⁶ Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her."

¹⁷ So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.¹⁸ She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

¹⁹ Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said.

²⁰ "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

²¹ Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'"

²² Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed."

²³ So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Bible Study Questions:

1. God works in the background of our lives. We don't always recognize his work but he is there. In vs 3 it says " so it turned out." In other texts it says, it was her 'hap,' meaning chance, that she found herself in the field of Boaz. I read recently that 'chance is simply God's way of showing up without making an announcement.' This is one of those instances.
 - a. Can you think of examples when God has acted in the background of your life?

 - b. How have you responded when you have realized this?

2. Read vs 4-16. We have an example here of Godly leadership and service. Clearly Boaz is a man of God. What are some of the indicators of this in these verses?

3. Ruth was obviously humbled and amazed at Boaz' care of her. He has displayed true acts of 'hesed,' kindness. How do you think she felt in the midst of this wonderful care?

4. Think about the relationship between a man and his wife and the promises made at the wedding service to love, honour and obey or in some cases cherish. Now think about Boaz' role as the man in this story. What is your response to his role as a man and a leader?

5. Think about Jesus and how he loves and cherishes us. Do you want to love, honour and obey him? Compare Boaz' behaviour and Jesus behaviour.

6. Think about some of the 'good' leaders you have experienced. In what ways have they been similar to Jesus and Boaz leadership? Have they provided good examples of Godly male or female leadership?

7. How difficult do you think it would have been for Ruth to obey Boaz' instructions to stay in his field, stay close to his maidservants and drink from the water provided for his people? Why?

8. Think about these verses in Matthew 25:37-40: ³⁷ *Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?* ³⁸ *When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?* ³⁹ *When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?* ⁴⁰ *The King will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*
 - a) Where do you think Boaz would stand before the Lord in relation to these words from Jesus?

 - b) Where do you stand?

9. In vs 19-22 we find Naomi's response to Ruth's day of gleaning. What changes do you notice in Naomi's outward behaviour?

10. What changes do you notice in Naomi's relationship with God? Why do you think those changes are occurring?

11. Think about your own relationship with God.

a) Do you only respond positively towards him when things are going well or do you always give thanks to him regardless of what is happening in your life?

b) What can we do to be thankful to God when we are not feeling thankful?

12. Verse 23 shows us that Ruth was obedient to Boaz' request that she stay close to his maid servants. This action shows Ruth's respect of Boaz' leadership.

a) How hard is it for you to trust in the leadership of others?

b) How do you recognize Godly leadership?

c) Is it easier to be obedient to what you recognize as Godly leadership or is it still difficult for you?

Concluding thoughts:

Ruth followed Boaz' instructions and continued to glean in his fields. She stayed in these fields until both the barley and the wheat harvests were completed and she remained safe. Ruth also continued to care for her mother in law, Naomi. Her acts of kindness towards Naomi did not go unnoticed.

In Ecclesiastes we learn that troubles fall on the wise and the foolish, the good and the bad. Our role is to remain in relationship with God, to recognize his goodness to us and to remember that we are only in this world for a short time but in eternity forever.

As we walk our lives in relationship with our God, it might be a good exercise, as we prepare to pray each day, that we take a look at how the day has gone and

examine the ways in which God may have been present "just by chance." We can take this opportunity to give him thanks for his presence in all aspects of our lives.

Our God is a God of providence and he cares for us in every way. He is always in the midst of all we do. He will never stop caring for his people wherever they are or in whatever they are doing or saying. This is a great and wonderful promise for Jesus said in Matthew 28:29b "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This makes me want to rejoice and bless the name of the Lord, expressed best in the congregational song by Matt Redman: Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be Your name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name

Pre-Chorus
Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in Lord still I will say

Chorus
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name
When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's all as it should be
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name

Bridge
You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say

Chorus
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be Your name

Background to Bible Study 3: Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor

Throughout this chapter we see many examples of 'hesed,' kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, goodness and mercy, love and compassion. These examples are from all the main characters of this story.

Naomi seems to be recovering from her depression and starting to show concern for Ruth's future. She longs for her to have a place of 'rest,' a place to belong where she will be secure. 'Rest' is a big Old Testament concept that is largely to do with being at one with God. Our final 'resting' place will be with him but we can enjoy a taste of that 'rest' here on earth. Naomi longs for this for Ruth. She does in fact put a plan in place for this to occur. This plan is described here in chapter three.

Ruth shows her kindness towards both Naomi and Boaz. To Naomi she shows it through her adding on to her reason for approaching Boaz that he was a Kinsman-redeemer of her family. She could have claimed Boaz as simply a partner in marriage without the added responsibilities a kinsman-redeemer would have. In vs 9 she says "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a Kinsman-redeemer." She is requesting marriage of Boaz but she is requesting it within the boundaries of God's law. Should she marry Boaz and have a child, that child will carry the family name of Elimelek and will gain all of the inheritance of Elimelek. That child will be Naomi's security for the future. He will be Naomi's child, not the child of Ruth and Boaz in terms of inheritance and family name.

Ruth could have chosen a younger man for marriage and not have been bound to the kinsman-redeemer obligations but she chose Boaz. And Boaz is obviously pleased about this.

Boaz continues to show us that he is a man of God. He fully understands his role as Kinsman-Redeemer but he is careful to carry it out to the letter of God's law. He wants to protect Ruth's reputation and his own. This transaction must be done properly so no questions can be asked in the future in regard to the legalities of their union.

When Boaz tells Ruth to stay he is beginning to answer his own prayers for her that we read in chapter two. Boaz prayed for Ruth, if it is the Lord's will he will give to Ruth the "wings of refuge."

BUT the romantics among us hold our breath at the end of the chapter for we now want Ruth and Boaz to marry. However Boaz is determined to follow the will of the Lord even if he has to sacrifice Ruth to another man. The cost for him will be great but he is willing to be obedient to God's laws. It seems that the story includes this detail to ensure we understand that it will be God at work here and any act on our part will always be at the mercy of his grace.

Boaz' final act of kindness in this chapter is to ensure Ruth doesn't go home empty handed. It is almost as though he is offering a down payment of the promise he has made to her. He gives Ruth six measures of barley to take home. He also sets out directly for the town. He will waste no time in settling the question of Naomi and Ruth's future.

Boaz' behaviour is that of a true Kinsman-Redeemer, a model of the one who was to come to save his people and bring them into an everlasting place of 'rest.' Our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Bible Study 3

Think about:

What is your initial response to the main characters of this story? Put yourself in the shoes of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz. How would you have responded in each of their situations? What action might you have taken? Would your response have been a Godly one? Would your response bring honour to God?

Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor

Read Ruth 3:1-18

3 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. ² Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. ³ Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

⁵ "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. ⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

⁷ When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

⁹ "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer of our family."

¹⁰ "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or

poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. ¹² Although it is true that I am a kinsman-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your kinsman-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning. ”

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”

¹⁵ He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?”

Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

¹⁸ Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

Bible Study Questions:

We see in this chapter and other places in this book God's people taking the initiative to have their prayers to God answered. God doesn't want us to be passive bystanders in our relationship with him. He doesn't always want us to sit back and wait for him to act! Sometimes we need to take some responsibility regarding our prayers. An example of this is Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8)

1. What are some of the examples you see here of God's people taking the initiative in regard to their own prayers (Read Ruth 1:8-9 compared with Ruth 3:1-4; Ruth 2:12 compared with Ruth 3:11-13, 15).

2. Naomi's behaviour has turned around. We see this in her concern now for Ruth. She has moved out of depression and can now think beyond herself to those she really cares for. She longs for Ruth to find a home, to enjoy 'rest,' to be secure in her future.

a. What has triggered Naomi's changed behaviour?

b. Does the change in Naomi's behaviour give you any clues for helping people who are depressed? What are those clues? (Do you know anyone you might be able to help in this way?)

Ruth's response towards Naomi's instructions is very interesting. It appears we don't always need to understand what is going on to be obedient. We don't even need to be comfortable. We just need to be prepared to take the necessary risks and let God do the rest. We don't always need to be in control!

3. Have you ever been in a situation where you have known what God wanted you to do but didn't fully understand why or what the outcome might be?

a) How would you have felt in Ruth's situation?

b) How would you have responded to Naomi's instructions?

4. 'Hesed' (kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, goodness and mercy, love and compassion) abounds throughout this chapter.
 - a. What are some of the examples of 'hesed' that you can find?
 - b. How have you experienced this kind of kindness in your relationships with God's people?
 - c. When have you offered this kindness to God's people or to those who are not yet in the Kingdom?
5. Boaz is a Kinsman-Redeemer. He foreshadows the greatest Kinsman-Redeemer of all, Jesus. Both these Kinsman-Redeemers chose the route of obedience to the Father's will. Both of them chose the route of staying in the Father's favour. Both of them brought about much good for God's people.
 - a. We know what the cost was for Jesus but what was the cost for Boaz?
 - b. Why did he choose the route he did in order to marry Ruth? (Have you ever wondered why Boaz threw this great spanner in the works regarding the closer Kinsman-Redeemer.)
 - c. Do you question God's ways at times? Are you prepared to be obedient to him even when the cost is high? Why?
6. We talked about the relationship between husbands and wives and the relationship between our church leaders and ourselves in the previous Bible Study. In this chapter too, we find Boaz providing us an example of how a man of God can choose to act towards his people or those he cares for. What is it about Boaz' behaviour that impresses you here?

7. Naomi appears to have great confidence in Boaz. (Read vs 16-18) She is actually giving Ruth, and us, a lesson on waiting on the Lord. She has done all she can do to this point. From here on the outcome is outside of her control. There is no point in being anxious about it. They are to just wait.

a) How hard is this for you to do?

b) How often do you want to hurry up the actions of the Lord that are outside of your control?

c) Can you learn from Naomi?

Concluding thoughts:

As we live our lives in relationship with our great and marvelous God we sometimes live in tension. We are strung out wondering when we need to take action and when we need to wait on the Lord. The knowledge that God is sovereign and will fulfill his plans shouldn't stop us from taking some responsibility and taking appropriate Godly action.

The book of Ruth and the book of Nehemiah give us some very clear guidelines for living in this tension:

- a) We need first to pray.
- b) We need to listen to God through his word and the Holy Spirit speaking to us.
- c) We need to decide what we can do to assist in the situation.
- d) We need to be strategic, make plans, take responsibility for what we can control.
- e) We need to act on what we can control and pray for what we can't control, trusting God to act according to his purposes.
- f) We need to thank him for his guidance and faithfulness to us in the midst of the situation we find ourselves.

As we reflect on this chapter let us remember that our God is kind, that he is faithful and that he always provides for us. Let us reflect on his greatest provision for us. Jesus, the real Kinsman-Redeemer. The one who acted according to His Father's will. He didn't sit back and wait for God to rescue him. He took action and chose to die for us that we might know him and be in a saving relationship with him. Jesus also knew the promises his Father had made to him. He knew that while he had to endure much suffering, more than we can ever comprehend, the outcome would be a great one. Jesus would be in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, acting as our mediator and preparing a place for us there with him.

We can rejoice and be glad in this!

Background to Bible Study 4: Boaz marries Ruth

Again we see God's sovereign hand at work among the plans of his people. The nearer Kinsman-Redeemer just happens to come by at the time that Boaz needs to meet with him. There just happen to be 10 elders at the gate when needed and enough people present to witness the transaction about to take place. This is not a chance occurrence but God at work in the background of the lives of his people.

This is the first time we read of the land that Naomi was surrendering the rights to. She wasn't actually able to sell it as the land belonged to the Lord. There were legal implications involved with the 'selling' of land. In this particular case Naomi and Ruth were part of the agreement. It is interesting that Boaz chose this process in order to achieve the outcome he wanted.

The land in question was owned by Elimelech, who must have 'sold' it on his departure to Moab. He has really only 'sold' the rights to its use until it could be later redeemed. As Naomi was Elimelech's widow the land was part of her inheritance although she had no funds to redeem it herself. The nearer Kinsman-Redeemer has made no effort to take up his responsibilities towards Naomi and Ruth although he would have known they had returned to Bethlehem. Boaz has made some effort as a Kinsman-Redeemer while this man has done nothing. While these obligations were not mandatory they were however moral ones. At this time under the Judges' leadership however, moral obligations were not even a consideration by many Israelites.

Hence Boaz begins his negotiations with the land option. He seems to entice the unnamed Kinsman-Redeemer to purchase the land and when he is eager to do so he then adds the moral obligation to redeem Ruth as Mahlon's widow as well. This is all too much for our unnamed friend. (it is interesting to note that the Hebrew text for this man actually means so-and-so, meaning he is of little consequence to the greater focus of this story.) The expense of the land, the expense of caring for Ruth and Naomi, and the loss of the land to any child of his and Ruth's union would have too great an impact on his own inheritance. He therefore tells Boaz, using quite forceful language, to redeem it himself. He says, "I cannot do it.....Buy it yourself." He appears to have no concern for Ruth or the family line of Elimelech. His concern is purely for himself and his own inheritance. He willingly transfers the right to Boaz. This is symbolized by the removal of his sandal and giving it to Boaz. This was an Ancient Near Eastern custom that legalised the transfer of ownership.

The transaction takes place in front of the people and elders who are simply witnesses to the procedure thus ensuring its legality. Boaz verbally declares the complete ramification of the transaction so legalizing it and leaving no room for future gossip or argument.

Those present at the transaction offer Boaz a threefold blessing:

- 1. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel.*
- 2. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.*

3. *Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.*

"So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife." There is a very happy ending to this story.

Naomi having left Bethlehem full is now full again with the birth of Obed. In this instance it is clear that God has intervened in order for Ruth to conceive Obed. He is not working in the background here but is obviously at work. It is the women who acknowledge the Lord's work here as they give him praise. They remind Naomi that Obed is the answer to her prayers. He is her Kinsman-Redeemer. He will give her future security and he is the one who restores the family line of Elimelech. They also offer the highest of praise to Ruth saying she is better for Naomi than seven sons. (Seven sons was the ideal number of sons in a Jewish family.) Verses 16-17 offer a picture of a very fulfilled, very happy grandmother.

Boaz' prayer for Ruth is answered. (Ruth 2:11-12) She has a home, she has security. God has rewarded her for her faithfulness and kindness to Naomi. She is now a member of the Israelite community in Bethlehem, she has a heritage that will be forever, into eternity.

The final verses of the chapter, the genealogy, reveal that the blessings asked for by the people and the elders for Boaz are answered.

The 'hesed,' Kindness shown by Ruth, Naomi and Boaz is seen to have repercussions, not just for themselves in their lifetimes, but for the nation of Israel for generations to come.

Out of the line of Boaz comes Jesse and David and ultimately Jesus, our Kinsman-Redeemer. Imagine what might have been had the actions of these three characters never occurred. So it is that we see God and his sovereign providence clearly taking place. God will work out his purposes and nothing will stand in his way.

Just as a note, if you consider fully the genealogy you will see that it is made up of members with interesting backgrounds. It is of interest that Tamar and Judah are emphasized for if you read their story in Genesis 38 it is not a pure one in terms of race. We also have Ruth a Moabitess as the grandmother of David. So it is, that you can see that God's bigger picture is being revealed. God will include the gentiles as people among the Kingdom of God! God will work out his purposes from generation to generation.

From the standpoint of history we can appreciate the significance of this genealogy when we link it to the one in Matthew 1. We can now dwell on our own redemption through the saving work of our own Kinsman-Redeemer who came to save **all** of God's people to bring them into the Kingdom of God's everlasting love.

We can dwell on the knowledge that Jesus as our Kinsman-Redeemer willingly lay down his life to redeem us. On the cross Jesus publicly paid the price of redemption. Jesus personally paid for our redemption with his blood. Jesus redeems

his people to make them his bride and provides his people with an eternal inheritance.

Our God is a God who fulfils his promises. Our God is our sovereign provider. Our God is our Kinsman-Redeemer. Our God continually showers 'hesed' upon his people.

Bible Study 4

Think about:

What are some of the things you truly long for or have longed for? Have any of these longings been realized? What did you do in order to achieve them? Were some of them outside your control? What did you do then?

Boaz marries Ruth

Read Ruth 4:1-22

4 Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

2 Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so.³ Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. ⁴I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."

"I will redeem it," he said.

5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

6 At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."

7 (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)

8 So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.

⁹ Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰ I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!"

¹¹ Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ This, then, is the family line of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz,

Boaz the father of Obed,

²² Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of David.

d) What do we do?

5. How were the prayers of the elders and the women eventually answered? (4:11-12 and 14)

6. Three themes can be found throughout this book. They are faithfulness, 'hesed' and God's sovereign providence. Where in this chapter can you see these themes presented?

7. The women praise God because he "has not left you without a Kinsman-Redeemer." The law of redemption which is wonderfully told in the story of Ruth offers us a picture of Jesus **our** Kinsman-Redeemer. Complete the table on the following page by comparing the following statements regarding Boaz with the verses listed from the New Testament. (*Read the notes for this study to help you complete this table*)

Boaz the Kinsman-Redeemer	Jesus our Kinsman-Redeemer	How are Boaz and Jesus similar and/or different? What does Jesus act of redemption offer us?
Boaz was willing to redeem because of his loving kindness or covenant love	John 10:11-13 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."	
Boaz publicly fulfilled all the legal requirements of redemption.	Hebrews 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. Galatians 3:13-14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.	
For Boaz, being the Kinsman-Redeemer involved personal cost.	1 Peter 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.	
For Boaz, redemption lead to marriage.	Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.	
Boaz provided an inheritance for Elimelech's family.	Hebrews 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.	

NB: This table has been largely copied from the Bible Study guide, Good Book Guide edited by Tim Chester: " Ruth: Poverty and Plenty."

8. We are Gentile Christians, at least most of us doing these Bible studies are. Ruth was an alien. In many ways Ruth's story is our story. As a gentile she was separated from sharing in the blessings of a relationship with God. But, in committing herself to the God of Israel, she was provided with a redeemer. Using Ephesians 2 as a guide how is the story of Ruth similar to our story of salvation?

Read Ephesians 2:1-22

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

9. The story of Ruth takes place in the time of the Judges when every man thought and acted only for himself. The people of Israel were not faithful to their God. The times we live in are not too different. How does this book help us to live in times of unfaithfulness? You might like to use Ruth 4:16-22 as a guide here.

Concluding thoughts

Our hope is the same as Ruth's. We long for security, God's rest and to know we are loved unconditionally. Ruth's commitment to the God of Israel fulfilled her longings. Our God is the same God. He has sent us our Kinsman-Redeemer in Jesus. He has fulfilled and is continuing to fulfill his promises to his people.

We can rest in the knowledge that Jesus died for us so that we can be in relationship with God our heavenly Father.

We can rest in the knowledge that our faith is in a God who keeps his promises, who provides us with all we need to remain in relationship with him.

We can hang on to the knowledge that although times may be hard from time to time we cannot be separated from our God.

We can look forward to spending eternity with him. Let us rejoice in this!

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