

Story of Ruth

Ruth 1:1—4:22

Main Street



bible verse

COMMITTING TO MEMORY

Ruth 1:16

Your people will be my people,
and your God my God.



story lesson

BIBLE STORY

The book of Judges is a very dark and depressing account of the people of Israel, God's special people. There is almost no hope in the book. Things keep getting worse and worse. Almost like it can never get better. Well things can always get better, and in the story of Ruth, it does.

The four chapters that make up the story of Ruth in the Bible are just enough to give one hope that things are not completely lost with the people of God. This story happens "in the days when the judges ruled..." (Ruth 1:1).

According to the story, there was a famine in the land of Israel. A man from the town of Bethlehem and his wife and two sons went to live in the neighboring country of Moab. The man eventually died and left behind his wife, Naomi, and two sons. The sons married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. Tragedy strikes yet again when both of the two sons pass away after 10 years, leaving "Naomi... without her two sons and her husband" (Ruth 1:5). Naomi heard reports back from Israel that "the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them..." (Ruth 1:6). She decides to go back home to Israel.

As she prepares to leave, Naomi releases her two daughter-in-laws. "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband" (Ruth 1:8-9). Both Orpah and Ruth wanted to stay with Naomi, but finally Orpah decided to say goodbye. Meanwhile, Ruth clung to Naomi:

"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. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her" (Ruth 1:16-18).

Together, Naomi and Ruth returned to the city of Bethlehem in Israel.

There is a long standing tradition in Israel known as gleaning. It was a measure that was put in place by God to feed the poor. Gleaning was a welfare system that was built into the societal structure. During the harvest, the workers would harvest the crop. Whatever crop fell on the ground, they were to leave there. What was left on the ground could be “gleaned” by those people who needed food.

When Ruth and Naomi were settled in, Ruth went to the fields “and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters” (Ruth 2:3). Ruth found herself in a field owned by a man named Boaz. As it turns out, Boaz is a relative of Naomi’s late husband. Boaz noticed Ruth and asked his foreman specifically about her. The foreman relayed the story of Ruth coming back from Moab to stay with Naomi. Boaz was amazed. He approached Ruth and asked her not to go to another field, but to stay in his field. Boaz treated her with bread and wine. When she got up to glean again, Boaz instructed his men: “Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don’t embarrass her. Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her” (Ruth 2:15-16).

Ruth gleaned until evening and then she carried her threshed barley back to town. Naomi was amazed at how much she had gathered. She said that someone must have noticed you to be blessed this way.

“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. ‘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’” (Ruth 2:19-20).

During both harvests, barley and wheat, Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz.

Meanwhile, Naomi has a plan. She is going to get Ruth together with Boaz. Naomi instructs Ruth to wash up and put on her best clothes and go down to the threshing floor. Naomi added: “...but don’t let him know that you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 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” (Ruth 3:3-4).

Ruth did as Naomi had instructed.

“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. In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered a woman lying at his feet.

“‘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.’”

“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. And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all that you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.’

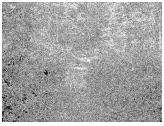
“So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, ‘Don’t let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor.’”

(Ruth 3:7-14)

When Ruth came back home, Naomi wanted to know everything that happened. Naomi was pleased: “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today” (Ruth 3:18).

To close out this amazing love story, Boaz does bring the matter up to the other kinsman-redeemer, who declines to redeem Ruth. Therefore, Boaz is the next in line and he, obviously chooses to redeem Ruth. “So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son ... and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David” (Ruth 4:13, 17).

A little ray of light amidst a dark world of chaos and destruction. When it seems as though all hope is lost (the book of Judges), we see that God is still working in the simple things (Ruth and Boaz’s marriage) to bring about His will on earth as it is in heaven. We will see in the coming weeks just how important this little David character is...



life application

MAKING IT REAL

Family is Important

Even though Naomi released her two daughter-in-laws to go home, Ruth decided to stay. She was close to Naomi. She had spent ten years with her as a mother-in-law. Ruth saw something special in this God-fearing woman that made her want to follow her to a different country. To Ruth family was important even though she was an “in-law.” She stuck by Naomi no matter what. It most likely meant sacrifice. For Ruth, a Moabite woman to go to a different country (i.e. Israel), it probably meant that she would not get married again. And unmarried women (i.e. Ruth and Naomi) in those days were hard-pressed to find a source of income. Family was tight!!

Character Counts

A couple of times in this story we see the noteworthy character of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz heard that Ruth was of noble character as witnessed by other townsmen. And Ruth knew Boaz was character-worthy through the recommendation of her mother-in-law Naomi. Both of the main characters in this story had incredible godly character. They were honest and hardworking and kind. Something all of humanity can learn from.



questions

REMEMBERING

- 1. What country did Naomi, her husband and her two sons go to?** Moab
- 2. Why did they go to the country of Moab?** Because there was a famine in Israel
- 3. What does it mean to glean?** Picking up leftover grain in the fields in Israel
- 4. Why was Naomi so excited when Ruth mentioned Boaz’s name?** Because they were related!!
- 5. What was so special about Boaz? What was Boaz’s position toward Ruth?** Boaz was available as a kinsman-redeemer
- 6. Who was Ruth and Boaz’s great-grandson?** David, future King of Israel



coloring sheet

ON THE NEXT PAGE



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