

Boaz and Ruth: Strong Foundations¹



SABBATH—AUGUST 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ruth 1–4.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Where you go I’ll [I will] go. Where you stay I’ll [I will] stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. When you die I’ll [I will] die. And there my body will be buried’ ” (Ruth 1:16, 17, Nlrv).

FROM THE FALL IN EDEN TO THE MARK OF THE BEAST AT THE END OF THE WORLD, THE BIBLE SHOWS A RATHER SAD PICTURE OF HUMAN² HISTORY. The Word of God does not hide from us how sinful we are and how much we need God to save us. From one end of the Bible to the other, the history of man is pictured for what it is.

In the middle of all this sits the book of Ruth and her story. The people in this story show courage, strong belief, faith, and trust, and they care more about others than themselves. Where did these people come from?

Boaz and Ruth are very different from most couples living in the time of the judges.³ The judges ruled Israel in a time when there was no king, and everybody did what they wanted. But Ruth, a Moabite,⁴ shows great loyalty to her widowed mother-in-law and to the God of the Israelites. Boaz shows steady goodness. Life throws so many hurdles (problems) in our way, but the story of Ruth shows how hope and trust in God can overcome odds.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY UP CLOSE: The story of Boaz and Ruth is a love story. In it we learn many good things. Their story teaches us how to make a happy marriage. The story of their love also teaches us how to have a stronger faith in God.

1. foundations—the basis on which ideas or beliefs rest.

2. human—man, woman, or child.

3. the time of the judges—the period of time that falls between the time of Joshua's death and the time Saul was appointed the first king of Israel.

4. Moabite—a person from the country of Moab.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 12**FAMILY TIES (Ruth 1:8, 9)**

Have you ever been surprised by someone's kindness? Or maybe someone was good to you at a time you did not expect it. Sometimes we find people in our lives who put the needs of others before their own needs. That is what happened to Naomi. After Naomi's husband and sons died, she did not think that Ruth would want to stay with her. But Ruth did. Her selflessness⁵ gives us something to think about and enjoy.

Read Ruth 1 and answer the following questions:

- ❶ What same thing is happening in Ruth 1:1 that happened in Genesis 12:10 and in Genesis 26:1?
- ❷ How well did Ruth get along with her husband's family? And how well did Ruth's in-laws get along with one another? How did the family show their love for one another?
- ❸ What do Naomi's words in Ruth 1:8, 15, 20, 21 tell us about her?

This must have been one amazing family! Who would have ever thought a Hebrew mother-in-law and two "pagan"⁶ daughters-in-law could get

along? It would seem the family did not have a chance to be happy or work out.

But this family's loyalty⁷ toward one another is very moving. We do not know all that went on in this family. But this family clearly had something that many homes could use.

How faithful⁸ and loyal are you to those around you? What can you do to think less of self and more about the good of others?

MONDAY—AUGUST 13**RUTH'S DEVOTION⁹
(Ruth 1:12–18)**

Based on Ruth 1, what kind of person is Ruth? What did she say or do that shows she believed in the God of Israel?



**Orpah returned to her people and her gods.
But Ruth stayed with Naomi.**

5. selflessness—putting the needs of others ahead of your own needs; not being selfish.

6. pagan—having to do with the worship of idols or nature instead of God.

7. loyalty—the act of being true or faithful to someone or something, such as family, duty, or God.

8. faithful—being true and loyal; being someone that others can trust and count on.

9. devotion—loyalty or deep affection; being faithful to someone or something.

Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law was powerful. Orpah's return to Moab made Ruth's decision (choice) to stay with her mother-in-law much harder. Naomi pointed to Orpah and told Ruth, " '[She is] going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her' " (Ruth 1:15, NIV). That is when Ruth made her famous speech about wanting to be part of the people of Israel. Clearly, Ruth saw something special in those people and in their God that won her interest. All this happens, even though Naomi herself does not seem to be trying to witness¹⁰ to Ruth.

What proof do we have in Ruth 1:15 that Naomi was not a strong witness for the Lord?

Ruth was a Moabite¹¹ who tried hard to be part of Israel. But the Israelites accepted Edomites¹² and Egyptians better than they did Moabites. Edomite and Egyptian great-grandchildren (the third generation) might be welcomed to join in worship with the Lord's people (Deuteronomy 23:7, 8). But no future child of any Ammonite¹³ or Moabite could join in worship with the Lord's people (Deuteronomy 23:3). But there was no law that says an

Israelite could not marry an Ammonite or a Moabite. And there was no law that says an Ammonite or Moabite could not be saved. Ruth accepts Naomi's God as her very own; so, in return God shows her His favor in many ways.

Look at your own life, your church, your relationships¹⁴ to others and to the Lord. What is there that would help others to be interested in your church and in your God? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your church? Talk about your answer in class on Sabbath.

TUESDAY—AUGUST 14

BOAZ (Ruth 2:1–12)

So far we have seen many things in Ruth that show us what kind of person she is. We learn she is faithful.¹⁵

But as we know, it takes two to make a couple. So, here comes Boaz into the story.

What can we learn in Ruth 2:1–12 about the kind of person Boaz is? What points stand out about him?

10. witness—to tell other people about God through your words and the loving deeds you do for them.

11. Moabite—a person from the country of Moab.

12. Edomites—the people who come from Esau, the older brother of Jacob.

13. Ammonite—a person belonging to the group of people who came from Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot by his own daughter.

14. relationships—connections (ties) to other people and how deep our feelings are for each one of them.

15. faithful—being true and loyal; being someone that others can trust and count on.



Boaz asked who the young woman was gleaning in his field.

Boaz found out who the young woman gleaning¹⁶ in his fields was. Then he did several thoughtful things for her. (1) He encouraged Ruth to glean in his fields; (2) he gave peace of mind to Ruth about her safety. He told her that the men had been instructed not to bother her; (3) he took care of her other needs. He made sure she had fresh water to drink. And (4) he helped her faith to grow stronger.

In what ways do we see in Boaz the principles¹⁷ found in James 2:14–17? What lesson is in here for us?

Boaz tried not to make Ruth feel like a beggar (Ruth 2:13–23). At mealtime Boaz invited Ruth to join his harvesters (workers) for bread and a dipping sauce for the bread made with

vinegar. Boaz gave her cooked grain to eat too. He gave her so much food to eat that there were leftovers. Boaz told his men not to make Ruth feel bad even if she gleaned among the tied sheaves.¹⁸ Boaz even told them to remove stalks of grain on purpose from the sheaves and leave them for her. The amount of grain that Ruth took home was more than could be gained through hard work. It showed how kind Boaz was to Ruth. Finally, Boaz invited Ruth to spend the rest of the harvest days in his fields.

How often a kind word can make such a difference in a person's life! How quick are you to give praise and hope to those around you? Avoid finding fault in others and pointing out their mistakes. Encourage and give support (help) when needed.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 15

THE PROPOSAL¹⁹ (Ruth 3:8–12)

What noble traits²⁰ are shown by the people in Ruth 3? In what ways were these traits shown in the life of Jesus?

There is one thing about the Bible that should be clear to us. We must keep the cultural²¹ background of a Bible story in mind. God teaches us

16. gleaning—gathering the grain from the field the reapers leave behind.

17. principles—basic rules of life.

18. sheaves—a bunch of cut stalks of grain bound up in a bundle.

19. proposal—the act of making a plea or an offer to someone for something you want from them.

20. traits—qualities or features that make you who you are; such as being honest and faithful.

21. cultural—having to do with the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and way of life of a certain people at a certain time.

eternal truths through His Word. His truth comes to us through people who live and work in their own culture.²² It is a culture that sometimes can seem very strange to those who live in other cultures.

What cultural things are shown in Ruth 3 that are strange to your own culture?

Ruth came to Boaz in the darkness of the night. But the proposal she made could be very embarrassing for her. She could have been spotted by someone. Then stories might have spread. Boaz might have refused Ruth's bid (offer). But Boaz quickly showed his thoughtfulness by trying to make her feel safe. He acted as though she was doing him a favor by choosing him instead of some younger man. Boaz then promised to do all that she asked. Finally, he sent her back to Naomi with a load of food. He also went out of his way to protect Ruth from any false charges that might have resulted from her visit to him.

Go back through Ruth 3 again and look at the different traits of character²³ shown by Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. How well do you show these traits in your own life? How could these traits help you face some of the problems in your own

life? Take some time to think through what is giving you the most trouble. How can you do the right thing with God's help?



Ruth came to Boaz in the darkness of night and lay down at his feet.

THURSDAY—AUGUST 16

REDEMPTION²⁴ (Ruth 4:9, 10, 14)

What finally came of this marriage in Ruth 4 between a Jew and a non-Jew?

Redemption is perhaps the most important lesson in the book of Ruth. In different forms the Hebrew word for redemption comes up more than 23 times in these four chapters. Boaz fulfills the role of redeemer (savior) for Naomi and her dead husband and son. King David is the famous great-grandson of Boaz. David later became

22. culture—the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and way of life of a certain people at a certain time; civilization.

23. character—who you are; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

24. redemption—the process (method or way) through which Jesus saves us. He saves us by buying us back from sin and setting us free through His death on the cross. In Bible times the closest male family member of a dead man could marry the dead man's widow to keep the property (land) in the family. This practice was also a symbol or way of showing how Jesus' death on the cross saves His people and keeps them in God's family.

the redeemer of Israel's fortunes lost after Joshua. And Jesus, a future relative of David, gave salvation²⁵ to all people (Galatians 4:5; 1 Peter 1:18; Revelation 5:9).

What were the duties of a kinsman-redeemer (relative-savior) in Leviticus 25:25, 47–49; Numbers 36:8, 9; Deuteronomy 25:5, 6?

The custom²⁶ of a male relative marrying the dead man's widow to give the dead man a son was practiced in other countries of the Near East. Deuteronomy 25:5 shows that in Israel this practice was only for brothers living together. Judah tried to get his second son to follow this practice. Boaz was not the kinsman-redeemer under the rules of Deuteronomy 25. But it is clear that other terms of custom were practiced. Often the kinsman-redeemer was the nearest male relative.

Naomi had not sold the family property (land). But if and when the land did go up for sale, the closest male family members would have the first choice to buy it. This was so the land could be kept in the family. It was the duty of the family member who bought this property to marry Ruth. In this way, a child born to Ruth would provide (give) an heir for Mahlon, Ruth's dead husband.

Becoming redeemer had its risk. If the kinsman-redeemer had only one

child with Ruth, then his own property would pass on in the name of Mahlon. So the law gave the nearest kin (family member; relative) the chance to refuse to become the kinsman-redeemer. But, the one who refused to redeem (buy and save) his relative's property and name would be put to shame in front of the town leaders (read Deuteronomy 25:7–10).



Boaz saved Naomi by marrying Ruth and giving her a son. This son would own the land of Naomi's dead son and keep his name alive.

The Bible shows us practices and customs that are different from what we do today. These customs can often be hard for those in other cultures²⁷ to understand fully. Still, what principles²⁸ can we find in these Bible customs that show us how to treat our own family members? How well are you fulfilling your duty to your own family?

25. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

26. custom—something that has been done for a long time and so has become the accepted or common thing to do.

27. cultures—the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and ways of life of certain people at certain times; civilizations.

28. principles—basic rules of life.

FRIDAY—AUGUST 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Compatibility,”²⁹ pp. 83–86, in *The Adventist Home*.

In the beginning of the story the chances of Ruth’s marrying Boaz were very small. Several things needed to take place first that would lead to Boaz and Ruth’s meeting and marriage. (1) There had to be a famine³⁰ in Judah. If not, the family of Elimelech would not have left Bethlehem. (2) The family had to choose Moab rather than some other country for safety, such as Egypt or Edom. There they met Ruth. (3) There had to be unmarried sons in Naomi’s family. And one of them had to want to marry Ruth. (4) Ruth’s husband died. This meant Ruth could get married again. (5) The famine in Judah had to end so that Naomi could think about going back to her home country. (6) Ruth had to decide to go with Naomi. (7) Ruth needed to work in the field of Boaz.

In the end, the Bible shows that God rules over everything. And nothing passes by God without His knowing about it. For those who love God and put Him first, all things work together for good (Romans 8:28).

This story is really a great example of that principle (rule).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Look at how Naomi felt in Ruth 1:19–21. Compare her words in Ruth 2:20. Why is Naomi’s bitterness such a common feeling? But what is wrong with her idea of God?

❷ As a class, talk about your answers to Tuesday’s last question. What do your answers tell you about yourself and your church? What things in your church would get people interested in your church? What things would push people away? What useful things should be changed to make your church something that would pull others to it and to God? How can you as a class help to start making the needed changes?

❸ As a class, talk about your own culture.³¹ How does your culture deal with family relationships?³² What things in your culture work toward strengthening those relationships? What things work against them? What can you do to help others better understand their duty to family members?

29. compatibility—being able to get along well together and live with others.

30. famine—not having enough food.

31. culture—the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and way of life of a certain people at a certain time; civilization.

32. relationships—connections (ties) to other people and how deep our feelings are for each one of them.