



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

Ruth

Faithful Love, Redemption, and God's Providence

The Short Answer

Ruth's story begins with famine, death, and emptiness and ends with harvest, family, redemption, and hope. Ruth was a Moabite widow who chose to remain with her widowed Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi. She left her homeland and declared that Naomi's people would become her people and Naomi's God her God. In Bethlehem, Ruth gleaned grain to provide food. She entered a field belonging to Boaz, a relative of Naomi's deceased husband. Boaz protected her, provided generously, and eventually acted as a family redeemer. Ruth and Boaz married and had Obed, father of Jesse and grandfather of David. Centuries later, Matthew named Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Ruth could not see that ending when she left Moab. She simply chose faithfulness. Her story does not promise that every painful circumstance will quickly become pleasant; it teaches something deeper: God remains faithful even when His providence is difficult to see.

Ruth 1–4 · Leviticus 19:9–10 · Leviticus 25:25–34 · Deuteronomy 24:19–22 · Matthew 1:1–6

Opening Memory Anchor

God can be working faithfully even when His plan is still hidden.



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PART ONE

BEGINNER GUIDE

1. WHEN DID RUTH'S STORY HAPPEN?

Ruth begins "in the days when the judges ruled." Judges describes a turbulent period marked by rebellion, oppression, and moral instability. Against that background, Ruth narrows the camera to one family and ordinary choices of loyalty, generosity, and integrity. A famine drove Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, and Chilion from Bethlehem to Moab. Elimelech died; the sons married Orpah and Ruth; then both sons died. Naomi was left without husband or sons. The story begins not with romance but grief.

2. WHY WAS RUTH BEING A MOABITE IMPORTANT?

Moab, east of the Dead Sea, had a complicated relationship with Israel. The Moabites descended from Lot, and at times Moab and Israel were enemies. Ruth is repeatedly called "Ruth the Moabite." Yet this foreign widow would become David's great-grandmother. Her story reminds readers that God's redemptive purposes were never limited by ethnicity.

3. WHY DID NAOMI RETURN TO BETHLEHEM?

Naomi heard that the LORD had visited His people and given them food. She urged Ruth and Orpah to return to Moab because their future in Judah was uncertain. Orpah eventually returned. The text does not condemn her; Naomi had strongly urged both women to go. The emphasis falls on the extraordinary loyalty Ruth chose.

4. WHAT DID RUTH MEAN BY "YOUR GOD WILL BE MY GOD"?

Ruth 1:16–17 is more than a travel decision. Ruth left homeland, culture, and familiar life, binding her future to Naomi, Naomi's people, and especially the LORD, the God of Israel. These words are often used in weddings, but originally they are spoken by a widowed daughter-in-law to her widowed mother-in-law in the middle of grief and uncertainty.

Memory Anchor

Biblical faithfulness is often revealed in ordinary choices made when the future is uncertain.



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5. WHY DID NAOMI SAY, “CALL ME MARA”?

Naomi means pleasantness; Mara means bitter. Naomi said she went away full and the LORD brought her back empty. Scripture records her grief honestly and does not rebuke her for sorrow. Yet readers can see Ruth standing beside her. The story does not mock Naomi's grief—her losses were enormous. It shows how limited human vision can be inside suffering.

Pastoral Safeguard

Ruth should not be used to tell grieving people that their pain is insignificant because “God has a plan.”
Biblical hope does not require pretending suffering does not hurt.

6. WHAT WAS GLEANING?

God commanded Israelite landowners not to harvest every last portion of their fields (Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19–22). Portions were left for the poor, foreigners, widows, and others who were vulnerable. Ruth fit several categories at once: poor, widowed, and foreign. Gleaning required work, while the law required landowners to leave room for vulnerable people to survive. Personal responsibility and commanded generosity worked together.

7. DID RUTH “JUST HAPPEN” TO FIND BOAZ’S FIELD?

Ruth 2:3 says she happened to come to Boaz's field. From Ruth's perspective it may have looked accidental. The narrator has already told readers that Boaz is a relative of Elimelech. This is one way Ruth quietly portrays providence—God's wise and sovereign care. No angel directs Ruth to a field. She goes to work; Boaz arrives; he notices her. God's providence often works through ordinary circumstances without announcing itself.

8. WHO WAS BOAZ?

Boaz was a man of standing from Elimelech's family. He heard of Ruth's loyalty, told her to remain in his fields, instructed the young men not to bother her, gave her water and food, and ordered harvesters to leave extra grain. He did more than the legal minimum. Importantly, he used his social and economic power to protect a vulnerable foreign woman from harassment.

9. WHAT DID BOAZ MEAN BY GOD’S WINGS?

Boaz prayed that Ruth would be rewarded by the LORD, “under whose wings” she had come for refuge. Later Boaz himself becomes one of the human means through which God provides that protection. Prayer and faithful action belong together.



10. WHAT DID NAOMI REALIZE WHEN RUTH MENTIONED BOAZ?

Naomi recognized Boaz as “one of our redeemers.” The Hebrew term *go’el* is associated with a close family member who could protect family interests, including redeeming property lost through poverty. Ruth brings together property redemption and preserving a deceased man’s family line. Interpreters discuss exactly how these customs relate, but the central idea is clear: Boaz may be able to help restore a family that seemed to have reached its end.

11. WHAT HAPPENED AT THE THRESHING FLOOR?

Naomi instructed Ruth to approach Boaz after he had lain down. Ruth asked, “Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.” This echoes Boaz’s earlier prayer about refuge under the LORD’s wings. The scene is culturally unfamiliar and vulnerable. Some interpreters see sexual overtones, but Ruth 3 does not say Ruth and Boaz had sexual relations. The narrator emphasizes Boaz’s concern for Ruth’s reputation and his commitment to handle the matter properly.

12. WHY DID BOAZ NOT MARRY RUTH IMMEDIATELY?

Another relative was nearer and had the first opportunity to redeem. Boaz said that if the nearer redeemer would act, he should; if not, Boaz would. Good intentions did not give Boaz permission to ignore proper responsibility. Faithfulness sometimes means refusing a shortcut even when the desired outcome is good.

13. WHAT HAPPENED AT THE CITY GATE?

The city gate was a place for public business and legal transactions. In the presence of elders, Boaz discussed Elimelech’s property and Ruth with the nearer redeemer. The man declined because he feared damaging his own inheritance. A sandal exchange publicly confirmed the transaction. Boaz then declared his intention to redeem the family interests and marry Ruth. Redemption involved responsibility, cost, inheritance, and public accountability—not merely romance.

14. HOW DOES RUTH’S STORY END?

Boaz married Ruth, and Ruth 4:13 says the LORD gave her conception. Their son was Obed, father of Jesse, father of David. The women of Bethlehem praised Ruth as “better...than seven sons.” The family that seemed to be collapsing became connected to Israel’s royal line.



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15. HOW DOES RUTH CONNECT TO JESUS?

Matthew 1:1–6 names Ruth in Jesus Christ's genealogy: Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth. Ruth could not see that future while gleaning grain; Naomi could not imagine it when she said she returned empty. Their lives became part of a story much larger than they could see.

Memory Anchor

God's faithfulness can reach far beyond what one generation is able to see.

PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

INTERMEDIATE

16. WHAT IS HESED, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Hebrew word *hesed* can communicate steadfast love, covenant loyalty, faithful kindness, or mercy. No single English word captures every use. Ruth shows loyal love repeatedly: Ruth stays; Boaz provides and protects; Naomi recognizes God's kindness. Biblical love is not merely emotion. It acts, stays, provides, protects, and keeps commitments.

17. HOW DO LEVIRATE MARRIAGE AND THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER FIT TOGETHER?

Leviticus 25 discusses the *go'el*, especially family property redemption. Deuteronomy 25:5–10 describes levirate marriage, in which a deceased man's brother could marry his widow to preserve the family line. Boaz was not Ruth's brother-in-law, and Ruth does not reproduce Deuteronomy 25 mechanically. Ruth 4 connects concerns involving property, redemption, marriage, inheritance, and preservation of the deceased man's name. Scholars differ on exactly how the customs relate.

Reader Safeguard

You do not need to reconstruct every detail of ancient Israelite family law to understand the central point: Boaz willingly accepts a costly responsibility that another qualified relative declines.



18. WAS THE THRESHING-FLOOR SCENE SEXUAL?

The text does not say Ruth and Boaz had sex. Some interpreters argue the scene contains sexual ambiguity; others understand “feet” literally and see the scene as demonstrating integrity. What is explicit is more important: Ruth asks Boaz to act as redeemer; Boaz praises her character, acknowledges the nearer relative, protects her reputation, and sends her home with grain. Unfamiliarity should not become certainty beyond what Scripture says.

19. WAS NAOMI MANIPULATING RUTH INTO DANGER?

Modern readers may understandably feel uncomfortable with Naomi's instructions. Ruth was a vulnerable widow and foreigner. The story gives no direct divine command endorsing every detail of Naomi's plan, nor does it explicitly evaluate her strategy. It does show Boaz behaving honorably. Narrative description is not automatically moral prescription.

Pastoral Safeguard

Biblical faith never requires a person to ignore legitimate concerns about safety, coercion, abuse, or exploitation.

20. IS BOAZ A “TYPE OF CHRIST”?

Christians have long noticed meaningful similarities between Boaz's redemption and Christ's. Boaz is able and willing to redeem; redemption costs him something; his action restores a family facing loss. Jesus accomplishes far greater redemption. Scripture does not explicitly call Boaz a type of Christ, so levels of certainty matter. **Explicit:** Jesus is the Redeemer. **Strong biblical pattern:** Boaz's costly, willing redemption helps readers understand aspects of redemption. **Possible analogy:** individual details may remind Christians of Christ, but every detail should not be turned into prophecy.

21. DOES RUTH TEACH THAT GOOD PEOPLE EVENTUALLY GET A HAPPY ENDING?

No. Ruth has a joyful ending, but many faithful people in Scripture suffered without comparable earthly resolution. Ruth should never become a formula: be faithful and God will give a spouse, child, money, or restored circumstances. Christian hope rests in Jesus and the final restoration promised through resurrection and new creation.



22. WHY DOES RUTH 4:13 SAY GOD GAVE RUTH CONCEPTION?

The verse explicitly attributes Ruth's conception to God's gracious provision. It does not teach that infertility is evidence of weak faith, punishment, or spiritual failure, nor promise that every faithful person who desires children will conceive. Ruth 4:13 tells readers what God did in Ruth's story; it must not become a universal guarantee God has not made.

23. WHAT DOES RUTH TEACH ABOUT FOREIGNERS AND GOD'S PEOPLE?

Ruth is repeatedly identified as a Moabite, yet her ethnicity does not prevent her from trusting Israel's God, joining His people, being praised for character, marrying Boaz, becoming David's great-grandmother, and appearing in Jesus' genealogy. The Old Testament itself anticipates the nations being blessed through God's redemptive purposes. Through Jesus, the Gospel goes to all nations. Ruth's inclusion is an early and beautiful preview.

24. WHY DOES MATTHEW SPECIFICALLY NAME RUTH?

Matthew names several women in Jesus' genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah, and Mary. Rahab appears immediately before Ruth. Scholars propose different explanations for Matthew's choices—unexpected family circumstances, Gentile connections, or providence through surprising people. No single proposal commands universal agreement. What is certain is that Matthew intentionally names Ruth. Jesus' genealogy contains grief, foreigners, kings, failures, faithfulness, judgment, and grace. God's redemptive plan moved through real human history.

RUTH AND THE BIGGER BIBLICAL STORY

RUTH → OBED → JESSE → DAVID → THE DAVIDIC ROYAL LINE → JESUS CHRIST

Ruth begins during the judges and ends with David. Matthew carries the line forward to Jesus. Ruth saw Naomi, a road, a field, grain, Boaz, and a family needing redemption. God saw generations. God's large purposes often move through small acts of faithfulness.

HOW DOES RUTH POINT TO JESUS?

Through genealogy: Matthew explicitly names Ruth in Jesus' family line. **Through David:** Ruth becomes David's great-grandmother, and the Messiah comes through David's royal line. **Through redemption:** Boaz's willing, costly restoration gives a meaningful pattern; Jesus accomplishes redemption at a far deeper level. **Through the inclusion of the nations:** Ruth the Moabite is brought into Israel through faith and covenant loyalty, anticipating the Gospel gathering people from every nation.



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

1. REMAIN FAITHFUL WHEN THE FUTURE IS UNCLEAR.

Ruth did not know the ending when she left Moab. Faithfulness often begins before clarity arrives.

2. TAKE GRIEF SERIOUSLY.

Naomi's sorrow was not dismissed. Christians can hold hope and grief at the same time.

3. LET FAITHFULNESS BECOME PRACTICAL.

Ruth worked. Boaz protected. The gleaning laws provided. Biblical love takes action.

4. USE POWER TO PROTECT RATHER THAN EXPLOIT.

Boaz had social and economic power Ruth did not have. He used it to provide safety, dignity, and generosity.

5. DO NOT TAKE SHORTCUTS AROUND INTEGRITY.

Boaz respected the nearer redeemer's rights even though he wanted to marry Ruth. Good desires do not justify dishonest methods.

6. TRUST GOD WITHOUT CLAIMING TO KNOW HIS HIDDEN PLAN.

Ruth encourages confidence in providence. It does not authorize Christians to explain exactly why every painful event happens.

7. REMEMBER THAT ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS CAN HAVE GENERATIONAL IMPACT.

Ruth could not see David or Jesus. God's work can reach farther than one lifetime.

REVIEW AND RETENTION

1. **During what period does Ruth take place?** During the period of the judges.
2. **What makes Ruth's faithfulness stand out?** She lives with loyalty, generosity, and integrity during an era often marked by moral instability.
3. **Why did Naomi's family go to Moab?** A famine affected Bethlehem.
4. **What happened to Naomi in Moab?** Her husband and both sons died.
5. **What made Ruth's decision remarkable?** She left Moab, remained with Naomi, joined Naomi's people, and identified herself with the LORD.
6. **Why did Naomi call herself Mara?** She felt bitter because of devastating losses.
7. **What was gleaning?** Gathering grain left behind under God's laws for poor and vulnerable people.
8. **Who was Boaz?** A relative of Elimelech, a landowner, and a potential family redeemer.
9. **How did Boaz treat Ruth?** With protection, generosity, dignity, and kindness.
10. **What is a go'el?** A family redeemer who could act to protect or restore family interests.



REVIEW AND RETENTION — CONTINUED

11. Does Ruth 3 explicitly say Ruth and Boaz had sexual relations? No.
12. Why did Boaz not immediately act as redeemer? A nearer relative had the prior opportunity.
13. What happened when the nearer redeemer declined? Boaz publicly accepted the responsibility and married Ruth.
14. Who was Ruth's son? Obed.
15. Who was Obed's grandson? David.
16. Where is Ruth named in Jesus' genealogy? Matthew 1:5.
17. Which woman is named immediately before Ruth? Rahab.
18. Does Ruth promise every faithful person an earthly happy ending? No. It teaches God's faithfulness and providence, not a formula guaranteeing specific earthly outcomes.
19. In what sense can Boaz point toward Jesus? His willing, costly redemption provides a meaningful biblical pattern, while Jesus accomplishes ultimate redemption from sin.
20. Central truth? God can be working faithfully even when His plan is still hidden.

KEY TERMS

Bethlehem — Town in Judah associated with Naomi, Ruth, David, and later the birth of Jesus.

Boaz — Relative of Elimelech who protected Ruth and ultimately acted as family redeemer.

Gleaning — Gathering portions of harvest intentionally left for poor people, foreigners, widows, and others in need.

Go'el / Redeemer — A close family member with responsibilities connected to protecting or restoring family interests.

Hesed — Hebrew term conveying faithful love, steadfast kindness, loyalty, or mercy depending on context.

Levirate Marriage — Family practice described in Deuteronomy 25 in which a deceased man's brother could marry his widow to preserve the family line.

Moab — Nation east of the Dead Sea with a complicated historical relationship with Israel; Ruth was a Moabite.

Providence — God's wise and sovereign care and governance as He accomplishes His purposes.

Ruth — Moabite widow who trusted Israel's God, remained faithfully with Naomi, married Boaz, and became David's great-grandmother.

FINAL MEMORY ANCHORS

- God can be working faithfully even when His plan is still hidden.
- Biblical faithfulness is often revealed in ordinary choices made when the future is uncertain.
- God's providence often works through ordinary circumstances without announcing itself.
- God repeatedly calls His people to protect the vulnerable.
- Biblical love does not merely feel. It acts faithfully.
- Redemption involves willingness, responsibility, and cost.
- God's faithfulness can reach far beyond what one generation is able to see.



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A SCRIPTURE PATH FOR CONTINUED STUDY

Judges 21:25 — The spiritual setting surrounding Ruth's era
Ruth 1 — Loss, Naomi's return, and Ruth's commitment
Ruth 2 — Gleaning, providence, and Boaz's kindness
Ruth 3 — Ruth's appeal to Boaz for redemption
Ruth 4 — The nearer redeemer, marriage, Obed, and David's genealogy
Genesis 12:1–3 — God's promise to bless the nations through Abraham
Leviticus 19:9–10 — Gleaning and provision for vulnerable people
Leviticus 25:25–34 — Family property and redemption
Deuteronomy 24:17–22 — God's concern for foreigners, orphans, widows, and gleaning
Deuteronomy 25:5–10 — Levirate marriage background
Psalms 57:1 — Refuge under God's wings
2 Samuel 7:8–16 — God's covenant promises concerning David's royal line
Matthew 1:1–6 — Rahab and Ruth in Jesus' genealogy
Galatians 3:13–14 — Christ's redemption and Abrahamic blessing reaching the nations
Titus 2:11–14 — Jesus giving Himself to redeem a people
1 Peter 1:18–19 — Redemption through the precious blood of Christ
Revelation 5:9–10 — The redeemed gathered from every tribe, language, people, and nation

CLOSING THOUGHT

Ruth begins with people leaving Bethlehem because there is no bread. It ends with a family line that will one day lead back to Bethlehem. Naomi returned home believing she had nothing. Ruth simply knew Naomi was going home, so she chose: "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." Then she walked. She arrived with no husband, wealth, or guarantee of security, and did what was available: she went to glean. One field. One ordinary day of work. One landowner named Boaz. God was working through ordinary faithfulness. Boaz protected, fed, and honored Ruth; the man who prayed that she would find refuge beneath God's wings became one of the means through which God provided it. A field, extra grain, an honorable decision, a legal transaction, a marriage, then a child: Obed, Jesse, David. Generations passed. Then Matthew wrote, "Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth." The Moabite widow who once gathered leftover grain in Bethlehem appears in the human ancestry of the Messiah born in Bethlehem. Ruth never knew how far her story would reach. Faithfulness does not require seeing the ending. Naomi did not need to pretend she was not grieving; Ruth did not need to understand the genealogy; Boaz did not need to understand messianic prophecy. Each needed to keep choosing what was faithful. Ruth does not promise every painful story will end with marriage, children, or restored circumstances. It points beyond Boaz and David to **Jesus—the Redeemer greater than Boaz and the King greater than David**. When the field looks ordinary, the future remains uncertain, or grief makes everything feel empty, Ruth reminds us: **the story may be larger than what can presently be seen**. Keep opening God's Word. Keep trusting His character. Keep choosing what is faithful. And keep looking toward Jesus.

Rooted in Scripture — Pointing to Jesus