

# Ruth

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Ruth and Boaz

**Author** The Book of Ruth was possibly written by Samuel, or perhaps, Isaiah. (Ruth could have originally been an appendix to Judges).

**Date** Ruth is set in the time of the Judges, around 1375-970 BC. It includes a genealogy of David (Ruth 4:18), so at least some of the book was written after David died. The book was possibly written about 900BC.

**Purposes**

- to show how Ruth converted to Judaism and became a “Jew by choice”.
- to show the principle of a ‘kinsman redeemer’.
- to describe part of the ancestry of David, and thus of Jesus Christ. Both Mary (Luke 3:23) and Joseph (Matthew 1:5) were descendants of David. Luke 1:27,32. See the genealogy of Joseph in Matthew 1:1-17, and the genealogy of Mary in Luke 3:23-37.
- to show that Gentiles can receive God’s redeeming love.

Ruth is one of only four women mentioned in Jesus’ genealogy, showing her significance. Also, Ruth is one of only two women whose name is used for a book of the Bible (along with Esther).

**Type** Short historical story.

The story is built around the meaning of the names of its characters:

**Elimelech**, means *My God is King*, showing Elimelech’s link to the line of King David.

**Naomi**, which means *pleasant* or *gracious*, later asks to be called **Mara** (*bitter*). Her sons are called **Mahlon** (*sick*) and **Chilion** (*weak* or *pining*). Her daughter-in-law **Orpah** (*nape* or *back of the neck*) turns her back on Naomi and returns to her people. The other daughter-in-law, **Ruth** (*friend*) comes from Moab, but is loyal to Naomi.

**Boaz**, which means *strength* becomes the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth. They have a child called **Obed servant**. Obed is an ancestor of King David, and ultimately an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

## Key verse

Ruth’s promise to Naomi is often used as part of wedding vows:

*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.* 1:16

## Outline

### Chapter 1: Ruth's choice

There was a famine during the time of the Judges so Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their sons Mahlon and Chilion went from Bethlehem to live in the nearby country of Moab. Elimelech died, and the two sons married Moabite women.

Mahlon married Ruth and Chilion married Orpah. Later Mahlon and Chilion also died. Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem when she heard that *the Lord had come to the aid of His people by providing food for them.* 1:6.

Naomi felt bitter about her circumstances, and told her daughters-in-law to return to their own mothers, and remarry. Orpah left but Ruth said *"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".* 1:16-17 Ruth loved Naomi and wanted to serve her God. so Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem.



Naomi asks Ruth and Orpah to return to the land of Moab.

### Chapter 2: Ruth's service

It was the time of the barley harvest, and Ruth went into the fields to glean so she could support her mother-in-law and herself. The fields belonged to Boaz, a relative of Elimelech. Boaz noticed Ruth and asked who she was. He was kind and let her glean throughout the harvest, providing her with water, food and protection. He even ensured there was grain left over for her to glean. When Ruth asked why Boaz was being kind to her he said he had heard what she had done for Naomi. *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.* 2:12

When Ruth told Naomi how Boaz had helped her Naomi said *"The Lord bless him. He has not stopped showing kindness to the living and the dead".* She added, *"That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers".* 2:20



Ruth in Boaz's Field

### Chapter 3: Ruth's appeal

Naomi wanted to find a husband for Ruth. As Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer he could have been obliged to marry Mahlon's widow, Ruth, to carry on his family line. Naomi sent Ruth to the threshing floor at night and told her to uncover the feet of the sleeping Boaz. Ruth did so and asked him to *Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.* 3:9 Boaz was willing to redeem Ruth, but said there was another relative with more rights to do so. He also gave her extra grain so she wouldn't go home empty.

### Chapter 4: Ruth's joy

Next morning, Boaz went to the town gate and discussed the matter with the other relative and with the town elders. Initially the man was willing to redeem Ruth, but then decided not to when he realised that taking on Elimelech's land would endanger his own estate. Boaz was thus free to marry Ruth and he removed his sandal to announce that he would do so.

Boaz and Ruth got married and had a son named Obed (who was considered to be an heir for Mahlon, and Naomi's grandson). 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".* 4:14

Obed was the father of Jesse, and the grandfather of David.

## Lessons from the Book of Ruth

### Ruth's love, devotion and loyalty to Naomi

Ruth is a wonderful example of selfless devotion and loyalty. She went far beyond what was required with her devotion (*hesed*) and was richly rewarded for this. Ruth is a great example of the principle of sowing and reaping: *Those who sow righteousness reap a sure reward.* Proverbs 11:18 *People reap what they sow.* Galatians 6:7

### Freedom to choose God

Ruth was a Moabite, one of the nations that was an enemy of Israel. She willingly chose to follow the God of Israel, and devote herself to Him. *Your people will be my people and your God my God.* 1:16 This shows that people are able to choose which God they will serve, and that this choice does not have to be determined by the nation or culture in which they are born.

Often when people today convert to follow the Lord they are shunned or persecuted by others from the culture they have left. Fortunately for Ruth this did not happen and she was welcomed into Boaz' family.

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

In Ruth and Boaz's time redemption was important to ensure continuity of families and ownership of their land. Leviticus 25:23. It is part of God's nature to ensure the welfare of His people.

A family could mortgage their land in a time of poverty but the Law required a kinsman to purchase it back into the family. Leviticus 25:25

If a man died without having a son his brother must marry the widow and fulfill the duty of the husband to her. The man may refuse but it will bring him shame. Deuteronomy 25:5-10

Redemption means to "buy back by the payment of a price". The Bible from start to finish is the story of redemption as it shows how God seeks to bring His people back into relationship with Himself. After the fall God instituted the Law and the sacrificial system so that peoples' sin could be atoned for but these could not make people completely right with God. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the perfect sacrifice and make atonement - once for all - so that now, in Christ, we can all have a relationship with God, and have eternal life. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus is the great example of a kinsman-redeemer!

Old Testament qualification	Fulfillment in Christ
Blood relationship	Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 2:16,17
Necessary resources	1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:18,19
Willingness to pay the price	John 10:15-18, 1 John 3:16
Willingness to marry	Romans 7:4, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25-32, Revelation 19:7

For a detailed study of Redemption see <http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com/bible-studies.php> and open up the file on 'Redemption'.

### The genealogy of Jesus

The son born to Ruth and Boaz (Obed) was more than just a gift from God to continue their lineage.

The Book of Ruth shows that Obed was an ancestor of King David. Thus Ruth and Boaz were ancestors of Mary and Joseph, both of whom were from David's line. The story of Ruth is thus an important part of the whole Bible story of God's love for His people shown in Jesus Christ.

## Discussion questions

What characteristics in Ruth do, you admire? Why?

What characteristics in Boaz do you admire? Why?

Ruth willingly 'converted' from one religion to another. What were the implications for her of this decision? What did she leave behind? What did she gain? How did her following of the Lord help her? How does this help us help others who come to Christ, especially those who come to Him from other religions?

What is a kinsman redeemer? How does the story in Ruth foreshadow Jesus as our Redeemer?

*"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".* 1:16-17 This is one of the greatest statements of commitment ever made. How can it help us in today's world where it seems that commitments are temporary or based on whether situations turn out well or not?

Ruth was one of the ancestors of Jesus, and is mentioned in His genealogy. Matthew 1:5. Why is this remarkable?

What are the major lessons you have learnt from your study of the Book of Ruth?