

The Book of Ruth, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: The Kinsman-Redeemer and a Place in the Line of David

Ruth 4:1-22

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal stakes of this lesson are high and glad. In Boaz at the gate we are meant to see the gospel in shadow: a redeemer who is near of kin, who is able to redeem, who is willing to pay, and who pays a price he was under no obligation to pay in order to claim a bride who could never redeem herself. The nearer kinsman draws back 'lest I mar mine own inheritance'; the Lord Jesus, our true Kinsman-Redeemer, did not spare His own inheritance but gave Himself, His own blood, to claim us and give us a future and an inheritance that cannot fade (Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Teach the type reverently, letting the real history of Boaz and Ruth stand on its own feet while it points beyond itself to its fulfillment in Christ.

The second great stake is grace to the outsider. A Moabite widow, born outside the covenant, who took refuge under the wings of the God of Israel, is brought near, married, blessed by a whole town, and written into the family tree of David and of the Messiah (Ruth 4:17-22; Matthew 1:5). This is no minor footnote; it is God announcing, generations early, that His salvation was always meant to reach every nation, the gospel that would one day go to all the world. The line runs to David and on to Christ, the Son of David, who reigns now from the right hand of the Father over His kingdom, which is His church (Acts 2; Colossians 1:13), not a future earthly political throne but a present and unshakable reign.

The formational aim is to leave each student trusting the God of providence and grace. Naomi went out full and came home empty, and called herself bitter; she ends the book with a redeemer, a restorer of her life, and a grandchild in her lap who leads to a king. We want students to read their own empty seasons in the light of God's faithfulness, to see that He works through real love and real choices and not by fatalism, and to anchor their hope in the Redeemer to whom this whole tender story has been pointing all along.

Question 1

Student Question:

At the gate Boaz lays out the matter so that the nearer kinsman first says he will redeem the land (Ruth 4:3-4), then refuses once he learns he must also take Ruth 'to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance' (Ruth 4:5-6). What does the nearer kinsman's reason, 'lest I mar mine own inheritance,' reveal about him, and how does it set Boaz in contrast?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The scene opens at the gate, the civic heart of an ancient town, where elders sat, contracts were witnessed, and disputes were settled. Boaz does not handle this redemption in a corner; he brings it into the open, before ten elders, where everything will be lawful, public, and binding. This is the action of a man who intends to keep his word fully and rightly.

Boaz frames the matter as land first: Naomi is selling the parcel that belonged to Elimelech, and the nearer kinsman has the first right to redeem it. The man quickly agrees, 'I will redeem it' (Ruth 4:4). On the face of it, redeeming a field is a fine investment that enlarges his holdings.

Then Boaz adds the rest: to redeem the field is also to take Ruth the Moabitess, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance (Ruth 4:5). This is the levirate principle, the duty to give the deceased a son and heir so his name and land would not be blotted out of Israel. Now the math changes. Any son born would carry Mahlon's name and eventually inherit that very land, so the kinsman would spend his own resources without permanent gain to his own house.

So he refuses: 'I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance' (Ruth 4:6). His reasoning is purely self-protective. He will redeem where it profits him and decline where it costs him. He is not wicked, only careful, and his carefulness is exactly what throws Boaz into bright relief. Boaz will take on the same cost, the same threat to his own inheritance, and embrace it gladly to claim Ruth and restore Naomi.

Remember that the levirate custom and the land laws here are Old Testament arrangements for Israel, not commands bound upon Christians today (Romans 15:4 tells us such accounts are written for our learning). What endures is the portrait: one man who counts the cost and keeps his hand closed, and another who counts the cost and opens it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gate as the place of public, legal business in ancient Israel
- The levirate duty: raising up a son to preserve a dead man's name and inheritance
- Why the nearer kinsman's investment in the land changes once Ruth is included
- 'Lest I mar mine own inheritance' as self-protective calculation
- Old Testament custom, not a binding law for Christians (Romans 15:4)
- The contrast that sets Boaz, the willing redeemer, in relief

Discussion Prompts

- What exactly does the nearer kinsman lose by including Ruth?
- How does his caution highlight Boaz's costly willingness?
- Where do we redeem only when it profits us?

Question 2

Student Question:

Have you ever, like the nearer kinsman, said yes to God only until the cost became personal and then quietly backed away? Name one specific area, a relationship, your money, your time, your reputation, where you have counted the cost and pulled your hand back.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a searching, personal question, and it deserves honesty. The nearer kinsman is not a villain; he is a mirror. He said yes to the part that cost him nothing and no to the part that cost him something, and he had a respectable reason ready: 'lest I mar mine own inheritance.'

Many of us have lived that exact pattern. We commit to follow Christ, to serve, to forgive, to give, until the commitment reaches our wallet, our calendar, our pride, or a relationship we would rather protect. Then, like the kinsman, we find a careful reason to draw back.

Jesus warned about precisely this when He spoke of counting the cost (Luke 14:28-33). Discipleship is not a yes we say once in the abstract; it is a yes we keep paying. The goal of this question is not guilt but light, so that a believer can name the one place where the hand has quietly closed.

Push gently for specifics. 'I'm not fully committed' changes nothing. 'I have backed away from being honest with my brother because it would cost me face' can be repented of and acted upon this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Saying yes to God only until the cost turns personal
- Respectable reasons we use to justify drawing back
- Counting the cost as ongoing discipleship (Luke 14:28-33)
- The difference between vague confession and naming a specific area
- Light, not guilt, as the aim

Discussion Prompts

- Where has the cost of obedience turned personal for you?
- What 'respectable reason' have you used to back away?
- What is the one specific place to reopen your hand?

Question 3

Student Question:

Boaz declares before the ten elders and all the people, 'Ye are witnesses this day' (Ruth 4:9-10), that he has bought all that was Naomi's and taken Ruth to be his wife. Why does God repeatedly emphasize witnesses and the public, binding nature of this redemption, and what does that teach us about how God works and how we should keep our word?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Boaz turns to the ten elders and all the people: 'Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's... Moreover Ruth the Moabitess... have I purchased to be my wife' (Ruth 4:9–10). The redemption is declared aloud, sealed by witnesses, made publicly binding. There is nothing hidden or tentative about it.

Scripture loves witnesses because God's saving acts are not done in secret. The covenant at Sinai had witnesses; the gospel was preached openly; the great confession of Christ is made before men (Romans 10:9–10; 1 Timothy 6:12). Redemption that is real is redemption that can be testified to.

There is also a lesson here about keeping one's word. Boaz had promised Ruth, 'I will do to thee all that thou requirest' (Ruth 3:11). Now he does it, fully, before the whole town, in a way he cannot quietly undo. A man of God lets his yes be yes (Matthew 5:37).

And the public, costly, binding nature of Boaz's act foreshadows the open work of Christ, who was lifted up before the world, whose redemption is proclaimed to all nations, and who is not ashamed to call us brethren (Hebrews 2:11–12). What God redeems, He redeems openly and forever.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- 'Ye are witnesses this day': redemption made public and binding
- Why Scripture surrounds covenant acts with witnesses
- Confessing Christ openly before men (Romans 10:9–10)
- Boaz keeping his word fully (Ruth 3:11; Matthew 5:37)
- A foreshadow of the open, proclaimed redemption of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God make redemption a public, witnessed act?
- How does Boaz model keeping one's word?
- Where should your commitment to Christ be more open?

Question 4

Student Question:

Boaz did not have to redeem Ruth; he chose to, openly and at cost to himself. Where is God asking you to make a costly commitment public and binding rather than keeping it private and easy to abandon? What is one step you can take this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the previous one into the student's own life. Boaz could have arranged things quietly; instead he made his commitment public, binding, and costly. There is a discipleship principle here: commitments we keep private are commitments we find easy to abandon.

Think of the commitments God asks us to make openly: the confession of Christ, marriage vows spoken before witnesses, membership and accountability in a local body of believers, a pledge to serve or to give. When these are dragged into the light, they hold; when they stay in the privacy of our own intentions, they evaporate.

Encourage the student to identify one area, perhaps reconciliation, generosity, a habit of service, where a private good intention needs to become a public, binding step. Tell a trusted brother or sister. Make the vow before a witness. Put it where it cannot be quietly undone.

The aim is one concrete step this week, not a general resolve. Boaz did not feel his way toward Ruth; he stood at the gate and acted.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Private commitments are easy to abandon; public ones hold
- Confession, vows, accountability as God-given public commitments
- Bringing a good intention into the light before witnesses
- Naming one concrete step rather than a vague resolve

Discussion Prompts

- What private intention needs to become a public commitment?
- Who could serve as your witness this week?
- What single step will you actually take?

Question 5

Student Question:

The people and elders bless the marriage, 'The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah... and let thy house be like the house of Pharez' (Ruth 4:11-12). What is significant about a whole town blessing a Moabite woman into the family of Israel, and what does it tell us about God's heart toward the outsider who comes to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The townspeople pronounce a remarkable blessing: 'The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel' (Ruth 4:11). They are praying that a Moabite widow would be counted among the mothers of the nation. This is grace spoken out loud.

They go further: 'let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah' (Ruth 4:12). Pharez too came from an unlikely, even scandalous union, yet God wove that line straight toward David and Messiah. The townspeople are unknowingly naming the very family tree Ruth is about to enter.

What is striking is the warmth of the welcome. Ruth is not merely tolerated as a foreigner; she is blessed, prayed for, and folded into the covenant family by a whole community. The law of Moses had warned about Moab, yet here is a Moabite who came to shelter under the wings of the LORD (Ruth 2:12), and grace runs out to meet her.

This is the heartbeat of God toward the outsider who comes to Him in faith. It anticipates the gospel that would go to every nation (Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:34–35), the good news that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek for those who belong to Him. The wall comes down; the stranger is brought near.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A whole town blessing a Moabite woman into Israel
- Rachel and Leah: Ruth counted among the mothers of the nation
- The house of Pharez and the unlikely line toward Messiah
- Refuge under the wings of the LORD (Ruth 2:12)
- God's heart for the outsider, anticipating the gospel to all nations

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the town's blessing of Ruth so significant?
- What does her welcome reveal about God's heart?
- How does this anticipate the gospel for every nation?

Question 6

Student Question:

Ruth was an outsider by birth who was welcomed in by grace. Who is the 'outsider' in your world right now, the person you would naturally keep at arm's length, and what would it look like for you to bless them and bring them near as God has done for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ruth was an outsider by birth, brought near by grace. This question asks the student to find the 'outsider' in their own world, the person they would naturally keep at a distance, and to consider blessing them as God has blessed us.

We all have categories of people we instinctively hold at arm's length: a different background, a hard history, an awkward personality, an old offense. The townspeople of Bethlehem could have done that with Ruth. Instead they blessed her into the family.

The gospel logic is plain: we who were once strangers and foreigners have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:12–13, 19). Having received that grace, we are to extend it. Hospitality, welcome, and blessing toward the outsider are not optional extras; they are the natural overflow of the grace we ourselves received.

Press for a name and a step. Who is the person? What is one specific act of welcome, an invitation, a kindness, a word of blessing, you can offer them this week?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Identifying the 'outsider' in our own world
- Categories of people we instinctively hold at a distance
- We who were strangers, brought near by Christ (Ephesians 2:12–13)
- Welcome and blessing as the overflow of received grace
- Naming a specific person and a specific act

Discussion Prompts

- Who is the outsider you tend to keep at arm's length?
- How has God brought you, an outsider, near?
- What one act of welcome will you offer this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

When Ruth bears a son, the women say to Naomi, 'Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman... he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age' (Ruth 4:14–15). How does this verse answer Naomi's complaint in Lesson 1 that the LORD had dealt bitterly with her, and what does it teach about God's faithfulness over time?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After the birth of the child, the women of Bethlehem turn to Naomi: 'Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman... he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age' (Ruth 4:14–15). This is the deliberate answer to Naomi's complaint in Lesson 1.

Remember her words at the start: 'Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me... the LORD hath testified against me' (Ruth 1:20–21). She read her losses as a verdict against her. She could not see past the empty present.

Yet the same LORD she accused of bitterness has now become her restorer. The God who seemed to take has, in His time, abundantly given: a redeemer, a grandchild, a future, a place in the line of a king. Naomi's theology was not wrong about God's sovereignty; it was simply too short. She judged the story by chapter 1.

The lesson is one of patient faithfulness. God's purposes unfold over time, often through ordinary means, often slower than our fears. The believer learns to trust the Author even in the empty chapters, knowing that the One who restored Naomi keeps His covenant love to a thousand generations (Psalm 30:5; Lamentations 3:22–23).

Note too the tribute to Ruth: she 'which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him' (Ruth 4:15). The loyal love Ruth pledged back in Lesson 2 has borne its fruit. God's faithfulness and Ruth's faithful love are woven together, not set against each other.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The women's blessing as the answer to Naomi's bitterness
- Naomi's complaint in Ruth 1:20–21 (Mara, dealt bitterly)
- The LORD as restorer of life and nourisher of old age
- Judging God's story too early, by chapter 1
- Ruth 'better than seven sons': loyal love bearing fruit
- God's faithfulness over time (Lamentations 3:22–23)

Discussion Prompts

- How do the women's words overturn Naomi's complaint?
- Why was Naomi's reading of her story too early?
- Where do you need to trust God's slower timing?

Question 8

Student Question:

Naomi could not see in chapter 1 what God was already doing toward chapter 4. Where have you recently been tempted to conclude that God has dealt bitterly with you? How might He be writing a restoration you cannot yet see?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns Naomi's story toward the student. Naomi concluded in chapter 1 that God had dealt bitterly with her, and she was wrong, not about His power but about His purpose. She could not see chapter 4 from inside chapter 1.

We do the same. In the empty season, the unanswered prayer, the loss that has no visible repair, we are tempted to read the verdict the way Naomi did: the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. The temptation is understandable, and the book of Ruth gently corrects it.

Help the student name the place where this temptation is real right now, then set it beside the truth that the same God who restored Naomi is at work in them. This is not a promise that every earthly story ends with a cradle; it is a call to trust the faithful Author whose final chapter for His people is glory (Romans 8:18, 28).

The pastoral aim is hope, not denial. We do not pretend the empty chapter is full. We trust the God who specializes in turning Mara back into Naomi.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Concluding too soon that God has dealt bitterly
- Reading chapter 1 as if it were the whole story
- The same God who restored Naomi at work in us
- Hope grounded in God's character, not denial of pain (Romans 8:28)

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to say God has dealt bitterly?
- What 'chapter 4' might He be writing unseen?
- How does Naomi's ending steady your hope?

Question 9

Student Question:

Boaz the kinsman-redeemer, who at his own cost claims Ruth as his own, restores her future, and gives her a name and an inheritance, is a beautiful picture pointing forward to Christ our Redeemer (Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18–19); and Ruth the Moabitess is written into the line of David and of Christ Himself (Ruth 4:17–22; Matthew 1:5). Trace these two threads carefully: how is Boaz a type of Christ our Redeemer, and what does Ruth's place in Messiah's family tree declare about the reach of God's grace to all nations?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the heart of the lesson, and we must hold two glorious threads. The first is Boaz as a type, a foreshadowing portrait, of Christ our Redeemer. A kinsman-redeemer in Israel had to be near of kin, able to redeem, and willing to pay the price to buy back what was lost. Boaz is all three. The nearer kinsman drew back 'lest I mar mine own inheritance'; Boaz took on the very cost the other man feared, and did it gladly, to claim Ruth and restore Naomi.

Now lift your eyes to Christ. He drew near to us by taking our flesh, becoming our kinsman (Hebrews 2:14–17). He alone was able to redeem. And, unlike the nearer kinsman who would not mar his inheritance, the Lord Jesus did not spare Himself but paid the costliest price of all: 'In whom we have redemption through his blood' (Ephesians 1:7); He 'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people' (Titus 2:14); 'ye were... redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ' (1 Peter 1:18–19). Boaz paid silver at a gate; Christ paid His own blood on a cross. The shadow is lovely; the substance is infinitely greater.

The second thread is Ruth in the line of Messiah. The book closes with a genealogy: Boaz begat Obed, Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David (Ruth 4:21–22). And when the New Testament opens the family tree of Jesus, there she is: ‘Booz begat Obed of Ruth’ (Matthew 1:5). A Moabite woman, an outsider by birth who took refuge under the wings of the God of Israel, is written into the ancestry of King David and of David’s greater Son, the Christ. That is grace with a face on it.

This declares the reach of God’s grace to all nations. Long before the Great Commission, God was quietly stitching a Gentile into the line of the Savior of the world, announcing that His salvation was never meant to stop at one nation’s border. The gospel that would go to every people (Matthew 28:19) was foreshadowed in a Moabite widow’s wedding.

And mark where the line leads: to David, and through David to Christ, the Son of David. He is not a king-in-waiting for some future earthly throne in Jerusalem; He reigns now, exalted at the right hand of God, over a kingdom that is His church, into which God has already translated us (Acts 2:30–36; Colossians 1:13). The little story that began with a famine ends with a King, and that King reigns today.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The kinsman-redeemer: near of kin, able to redeem, willing to pay
- Boaz embracing the cost the nearer kinsman refused
- Christ our Kinsman who took our flesh (Hebrews 2:14–17)
- Redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18–19)
- Ruth the Moabitess in the line of David and of Christ (Ruth 4:21–22; Matthew 1:5)
- Grace to the outsider, foreshadowing the gospel to all nations
- David’s line fulfilled in Christ who reigns now over His kingdom, the church (Acts 2; Colossians 1:13)

Discussion Prompts

- In what three ways is Boaz a true picture of Christ?
- What did our Redeemer pay that Boaz only foreshadowed?
- What does Ruth’s place in the line say about grace to all?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back now across the whole book of Ruth, from the famine and the funerals of Lesson 1 to the cradle and the line of David here in Lesson 4. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus has been forming you, in your faith, your loyalty, your view of His grace, through this study, and what you will do differently because of it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone. We have walked the whole book of Ruth, from a famine and three funerals in Lesson 1, through Ruth's loyal vow and her gleaning under the wings of the LORD, to the redeemer at the gate and a cradle that leads to David and to Christ. Now we ask the student to look back across the entire journey.

Scripture says these old accounts were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort might have hope (Romans 15:4). The point of studying Ruth was never mere information; it was formation. The Lord Jesus uses His Word to shape us into His image (2 Corinthians 3:18).

So the question is direct: name one specific way the Lord has been forming you through this book. Perhaps in loyal love that keeps its word like Ruth's. Perhaps in trusting God's slow providence like Naomi had to learn. Perhaps in a deeper grasp of redemption, of what your Kinsman paid to claim you. Perhaps in a wider heart for the outsider.

Then ask what changes because of it. Formation that stays abstract is not yet formation. Encourage one concrete, livable response, carried out of this study and into the week, as the fruit of having sat at the gate of Bethlehem with the Redeemer in view.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Looking back across the whole arc of Ruth, Lesson 1 to Lesson 4
- Scripture written for our learning and hope (Romans 15:4)
- Study aimed at formation, not just information (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- Naming one specific way Jesus has shaped you
- Turning formation into one concrete change

Discussion Prompts

- What single truth from Ruth has marked you most?
- How is Jesus forming you through this whole book?
- What one thing will you do differently now?