

The Book of Ruth

Lesson 4: The Kinsman-Redeemer and a Place in the Line of David -- Ruth 4:1-22

Some stories end where they began, only fuller. Lesson 1 opened with an empty woman walking back into Bethlehem with bitterness on her lips: 'I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty.' She had buried a husband and two sons in a foreign land, and she asked her old neighbors to call her Mara, which means bitter. That is where we started. Now watch where God is taking us. We end this book not at a graveside but at a cradle, with the same women of Bethlehem gathered around Naomi, and a baby in her lap, and a song of blessing on their tongues.

But before the cradle there is a gate. In the ancient world the gate of the city was the courtroom, the marketplace, the place where business was witnessed and made binding. And there, in chapter 4, a quiet, faithful man named Boaz sits down to do a hard and costly thing. He has already promised Ruth he will not rest until the matter is settled, and Boaz is a man whose word is a deed waiting to happen. So he goes to the gate, he gathers ten elders, and he sets in motion the redemption of a widow's land and a widow herself.

There is a closer kinsman, a man with first claim, and for a moment it looks as though he will take everything. He says yes to the land. Then he learns the land comes with Ruth the Moabitess, and with the duty to raise up a son in the dead man's name, and suddenly his arithmetic changes. 'I cannot redeem it for myself,' he says, 'lest I mar mine own inheritance.' He counts the cost and walks away. And right there, in the difference between the man who would not pay and the man who would, you can begin to see a face you know. The kinsman who counts the cost and says no, and the Kinsman who counts the cost and says yes anyway.

So pull your chair up to the gate of Bethlehem. Watch a good man pay a price he did not have to pay, to claim a woman the world had written off, and to give her a future and a name and a place in a story far larger than she could see. Watch the empty become full. And watch a Moabite widow take her seat, by grace, in the family tree of King David and of David's greater Son. This is not only Ruth's happy ending. This is a small bright window into the whole gospel of God.

Group Discussion: Read Ruth 4 aloud together as a group, slowly. Where do you see God's quiet providence at work in this chapter, and where do you see the real, costly choices of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi? How does the book hold both of those truths together without canceling either one?

Personal Reflection: Naomi began this book empty and bitter and ends it with fullness she never engineered for herself. Where in your own life are you still standing in a Lesson 1 chapter,

feeling empty, while God may already be quietly writing your chapter 4? What would it look like to trust Him there this week?

Read Ruth 4:1-22

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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.
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?

10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Ephesians 1:7, in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the costly price our Kinsman-Redeemer willingly paid; Titus 2:14, Christ gave Himself to redeem us and purify a people of His own; 1 Peter 1:18–19, we were redeemed not with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ; Matthew 1:5–6, Ruth named in the genealogy of Jesus, leading from Boaz to David to the Christ; Colossians 1:13, God has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, the kingdom David's line pointed toward, reigning now.

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