

August 30, 2026

REDEMPTION: RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17

Teacher's Note: This lesson was selected by the ETB team to be overtly evangelistic. The Leader Guide only touches on this, though. The following lesson attempts to be more evangelistic. For a note on why you need to present the Gospel in small groups, see the Notes Box.

Introductory Activity

Ask the group: Has anyone recently read or seen *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*? One of the most memorable characters is the White Rabbit. Alice spends a bit of time chasing the White Rabbit. Sometimes when someone gets off track in a conversation, they will "chase a rabbit." In those cases, it appears that what they are talking about has nothing to do with the original conversation. Now, sometimes when you are talking to a wise person, they are not really chasing a rabbit. They are actually trying to teach us something or point out an unseen issue.

The book of Ruth can seem like a rabbit. The story kind of interrupts the flow of the biblical narrative. The book of Judges ends with the pronouncement "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him." (Judg. 21:25) First Samuel picks up with the birth of Samuel, who would eventually anoint the first two kings of Israel. Ruth seems like an interruption. However, the book serves a purpose. First, it reveals that during the time of the judges, some Israelites followed the Lord faithfully. In that case, it serves as a counterpoint to the entire book of Judges. Second, the book provides a genealogical backstory for the second and greatest king of Israel. Some have said the book is an apologetic for the king's reign, written to silence his opponents. Third, the book provides a real-world example of redemption and points us to the ultimate redemption provided by Christ. Today, we are going to explore the story of Ruth and Boaz from that perspective.

Summarize and Transition: Last week we looked at the events that brought the Moabite widow Ruth to Bethlehem. She and her mother-in-law, Naomi, arrived in desperate need. They had nothing and no way to provide for themselves. Ruth took the initiative and acted in accordance with Jewish law that allowed her to glean in the fields during harvest season. Boaz, the landowner, took an interest in this hard-working widow who did what was necessary to care for herself and particularly for her mother-in-law. During the intervening time between the events we discussed last week and the events for this week's lesson, the relationship between the poor woman and the wealthy landowner had developed. He continued to help the family, and more importantly, Naomi realized something very important about Boaz: he was a kinsman redeemer. "As a redeemer, Boaz had multiple responsibilities. In addition to purchasing family land that had been forfeited (Lev. 25:25) and restoring a relative

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETBC)
- *Preaching the Word: Judges and Ruth* (Preaching)
- *New American Commentary: Judges* (NAC)
- *Exalting Jesus in Judges and Ruth* (Exalting)

Why present the gospel in small groups?

We present the gospel in small groups because small groups *should* have unsaved members. If we are doing small groups correctly, we should be reaching new people by inviting our friends and/or new church attendees. Therefore, there should be unsaved people in each of our groups. If you look around and wonder why you should even present the gospel today, then maybe you need to have a conversation with your group. You can use this lesson to do that. If you are fairly certain everyone is saved, you can tell them that today you are going to use the lesson to present the gospel. Explain, why (see above), and then challenge them to fill your group with unsaved people.

that had been enslaved (Lev. 25:48), redeemers were expected to marry a childless widow and carry on the family name (Deut. 25:5-10).” (ETB LG, 144) Knowing this, Naomi hatched a plan that would provide the opportunity for Boaz to marry Ruth and serve as their redeemer. Let’s look at the events and see how they point us to our true redeemer.

1. FUTURE UNCLEAR (RUTH 3:8-10)

Read (or have someone read) **Ruth 3:8-10**.

Explain: Naomi’s plan was rather convoluted, and we will not go into it very deeply. In short, the plan was for Ruth to cease practicing the traditional actions of a widow and make herself available for remarriage (see Ruth 3:3 and NAC, 684). She was to meet Boaz on the threshing floor and in effect propose marriage to him. That is what is going on in this passage. She has waited until he fell asleep and then uncovered his feet and then lay down under her own blanket to sleep. (see NAC 683)

Verse 9 presents the story in a poignant narrative. Boaz wakes in the middle of the night because something startled him. Upon waking, he is even more startled because there is a woman asleep near him. In the darkness of the pre-electrified world, he does not know who the woman is, so he asks her to identify herself. Ruth answers in a way that reveals that she understands her situation. She declares that she is Boaz’s servant. Then she requests that he “Take [her] under [his] wing, for [he is] a family redeemer.”

The first thing we can recognize in this situation is that Ruth is in a very uncertain situation. First, her physical position was uncertain. She does not know how Boaz will interpret her presence at the threshing floor. This was no place for a respectable woman. The threshing floor would have been located near the fields in which they had been harvesting. It was not very near the town of Bethlehem. It was not common for the men to sleep there, but during the harvest season they would do so to protect the harvest from thieves and pests. The only women who would come to the threshing floor during this time of year were women of ill repute. Would Boaz misunderstand her intentions?

Not only was she in an uncertain physical situation, but she was also in a propositionally uncertain situation. When she requests that he take her under his wing, we are reminded of the language from Ruth 2:12 where Boaz blessed Ruth and commended her for coming under the wings of God’s care. However, there is more going on here. Ruth acknowledges that Boaz is a redeemer and, in that role, she seeks his care and protection. The redeemer can only provide the care she requests by marrying her. So here we have a poor, foreign widow proposing marriage to a wealthy, older Israelite. Upon making the request, she is in an unsure situation.

Discuss: What has provided you a sense of hope [or surety] when everything seemed out of control [or uncertain]? (ETB LG, 143)

Notes:

“On the analogy of 2 Sam 12:20, it appears that Naomi is hereby advising Ruth to end her period of mourning over her widowhood and get on with normal life.” (NAC, 684)

Explain: During uncertain times, we can look to the idols in our life like wealth, family, position, or ability to address the situation. Or, we can look to the Lord and His ability. In effect, we practice our faith and live out our faith when things are “out of control” or uncertain. That is what Ruth is doing. She had observed the character and kindness of Boaz. Now she had to have faith that he would respond righteously and act as her kinsman redeemer. And he does.

Reread verse 10. (See Notes Box.)

This has application for us. Ruth is a picture of the steadfast love of Christ. The atoning life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a kindness to us. Christ chose, like Ruth, to do the difficult task of redeeming mankind because of His love for us. Ruth’s life also pictures for us the need for a redeemer.

Summarize Transition: The gospel begins with the bad news of life. Everyone knows that life is difficult. It does not match up with the fairytale image we get from children’s movies. The perfection of creation was shattered when sin entered the world. Not only was perfection shattered, but man’s relationship with God was broken. Ruth’s life provides a picture of this brokenness. Her fairytale life with her husband and extended family was broken. She toiled hard to survive in the brokenness by gleaning and caring for Naomi. But she knew that nothing aside from a kinsman redeemer could truly address her broken life. Similarly, men and women strive to repair the brokenness of sin. They strive to provide a good life, or they strive to dull the effects of brokenness through self-medication. Nothing can truly address their sin problem. All humans need a redeemer. They need Jesus.

Let’s return to the story and see how Boaz assuages her uncertainty and agrees to be her kinsman redeemer.

2. FUTURE SECURED (RUTH 3:11-13)

Read (or have someone read) Ruth 3:11-13.

Let’s begin by looking at the events in these three verses.

First, we see that Boaz addresses the **fear** that comes with uncertainty. We know how this story will end, but Ruth does not. You might say that in verse 9 Ruth just laid it all out there and now waits for Boaz to either agree or disagree. It was a harrowing moment for her. But Boaz tells her not to fear because, secondly, he **agrees** to do for her whatever she asks. He says yes to the proposal. Next, Boaz does a third thing. He tells her the **reason** he agrees to marry and redeem her. He says that he and everyone know that she is “a woman of noble character.” “Ruth was an upstanding force of nature.” (ETB LG, 146)

Boaz proceeds to tell Ruth that there is an issue with the proposal. He does not sugarcoat the situation. If you read the book of Ruth carefully,

Notes:

Ruth 3:10

¹⁰ Then he said, “May the Lord bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor.”

Ruth could have married for good looks (younger man), she could have married for wealth (rich), or she could have married for love (poor). Instead she chose to marry for *the love of Naomi* and chose Boaz.

“The Hebrew word for *noble character (hayil)* means “strength, might, efficiency, wealth.” Interestingly, as a masculine noun, it sometimes carries a military connotation, rendered as “strength and army.” For example, Joshua and his best (*hayil*) soldiers fought in Joshua 10:7... Positively speaking, Ruth was an upstanding force of nature.” (ETB LG, 146)

you will notice that the author drops hints throughout the book about his little snag in Naomi and Ruth's plan. Repeatedly, we notice that Boaz is *a* kinsman-redeemer, not *the* kinsman-redeemer. There is a closer relative who has the responsibility to redeem Naomi and Ruth. Only if he says no would Boaz have the right to do so. You see, Boaz is a man of character who will follow the **process** and obey the law; you might say that he is righteous in this way. But he tells her not to worry because he will take care of things. Then, to finish off the scene, he tells her to sleep there for the remainder of the night. We should not read anything illicit into this request. Actually, it is the opposite. They are far from town, and it is the middle of the night. His request that she sleep there is an offer of **protection**. A young woman walking alone in the night would not be safe.

So, we see here that Boaz allays her **Fear**, enters into **Agreement** with her, provides the **Reason** for doing so, outlines the **Process**, and provides **Protection** for her. Again, we see a picture of Christ's work in our life. I don't think it is too much to see the story of our Redeemer in the actions of Ruth's redeemer.

We said earlier that the gospel, the good news, begins with the bad news of a broken world and a broken relationship with God. In response to that brokenness, men and women strive to do what they can to repair the damage, but they can't do it on their own. However, the gospel can also dispel the **Fear** that comes with that brokenness because Jesus **Agrees** to redeem humanity, and He does so for a **Reason**. Unlike the Ruth and Boaz story, though, Jesus doesn't agree to do so because of our "noble character." Instead, He does because of His holiness and righteousness in light of our sinfulness. And there is a **Process** by which He redeems mankind. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth and lived a sinless life. He is the only person to ever do so. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jesus, though, did not sin. Instead, He came because "God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) The means by which anyone can have eternal life is that the sinless son of God, the one who did not know sin, became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21) That is the process by which Jesus can reconcile us.

Unlike the story of Ruth, our redeemer did the work to reconcile us to Him before we ever knew we had a problem. Moreover, He has already decided to do so. All we have to do is come to Him in faith. We admit we have a sin problem, and He did what was necessary to save us. We believe that He is who He says He is. We confess our sin to Him, turn away from our sin, and place ourselves under His Lordship (leadership). This is the process we follow to experience redemption. When we do experience Christ's redemption, we enter into His protection for this life and the life to come.

Summarize and Transition: Boaz and Ruth sleep through the night. She leaves before dawn, and he goes to the men of the town. There he does the work of redeeming both her and Naomi. The next passage jumps ahead at least nine months. In it we will see the fruits of their marriage and again notice how they point us to the promises that come from reconciliation to God through Christ.

3. FUTURE REDEEMED (RUTH 4:13-17)

Read (or have someone read) Ruth 4:13-17.

Explain: Here we have a celebration. The author skips right over the celebration of the marriage feast to the celebration of a birth. The language of verse 13 implies that Ruth had been barren during her ten years of marriage. Now the Lord blesses her miraculously with a son.

In this **birth**, we can be reminded that in Christ we can experience a **rebirth**. One night a man came to Jesus to ask about salvation. We have already read one verse from that encounter in John 3. Along with explaining that God loves humanity and sent His Son to redeem humanity, Jesus tells the man that he must be born again (v.3) and experience eternal life (v. 15). When we are born anew in Christ, the old broken life we knew has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17), and we are given a new life. That new life will be filled with abundance here (John 10:10) and will proceed into eternity with Christ.

The celebration in Ruth chapter 4 does not only recognize a new birth, but it also celebration **Renewal**. In verse 14, the focus shifts back to Naomi. While the story of Ruth focuses on the actions of the younger, Moabite widow, the book's central thematic character is Naomi. She left Moabite empty (1:21). Now, through the love of Ruth, she can experience renewal (v. 15). The neighbor women explain that the baby will "renew" and "sustain" Naomi, his grandmother. This can remind us that the new birth in Christ brings a new life in Christ. The shame of sin and the guilt of things done or not done can be washed away. The believer can experience the life that Christ wants for us because Christ will renew us.

The book ends in an interesting manner. The end of verse 17 through verse 22 focus on the child's genealogy. We learn that the child, Obed, was the grandfather of King David. For the original reader, this would have been remarkable enough. The great-grandmother of the greatest king of Israel was a Moabite convert to Judaism! However, for the modern reader, we can see so much more here because the gospel of Mathew picks up where this genealogy leaves off.

Read Matthew 1:5-6a (See Notes Box.)

The genealogy in Matthew continues until we get verse 16, which reads "and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah."

Matthew 1:5-6a

⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab,
Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth,
Obed fathered Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.

Redemption: Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17

The story of Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, and Obed points us directly to our **Redeemer**. God can do as God pleases, but God chooses to use humans in His plans. Through the righteous acts of Ruth, a pagan convert to Yahweh worship, God continued the genealogical tree from Abraham to Jesus. Through the work of Christ in our life, we can experience a new birth and renewal that is only pictured in the birth of Obed and the life of Naomi.

Summarize and Transition: The people of Bethlehem celebrated on the day Obed was born. Many years later, the angels of heaven were present in Bethlehem and celebrated another birth. Luke 2:13-14 tells us that they declared “Glory to God in the highest” when they announced Christ’s birth in this city of David. That same Jesus later declared in Luke 15:10 that the angels rejoice when a person comes to faith in Christ. Today can be a day of celebration.

Teachers Note: Take a moment to review the Gospel with the group and invite group members to talk with you about it following your time together or to seek out a pastor to speak with.

CONCLUDE

The story of Ruth might seem like the Bible is chasing rabbits, but it is not. The book is a pause in the action to point us to the only hope for the troubled Israel we see pictured in the book of Judges. It can teach us so much, but it truly serves as an arrow pointing straight to Jesus.

As we conclude, we can explore a few challenges.

Challenge:

- 1) If you have never experienced the forgiveness of Christ, you can do that today.
- 2) If you are a follower of Jesus, maybe you need to function as a Ruth. She brought redemption and renewal to Naomi by marrying Boaz. Maybe you need to bring the message of redemption and renewal to others this week. You can share the gospel with someone. You can invite someone to join you in church or your small group.
- 3) Maybe you need to function as Obed did. His life brought joy to Naomi. Maybe you need to find someone to bless this week. Be a bringer of joy this week.

Notes: