

RISKY BUSINESS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Week 10 – Ruth & Naomi: Risky Loyalty

Franklinton Baptist Church (September 23, 2026) RCHILDRESS

INTRODUCTION

A survivor story of two widows navigating loss, poverty, and uncertainty and discovering the power of risky loyalty.

Discussion Question:

Why do stories of survival and loyalty resonate so deeply with us?

WHEN WAS RUTH WRITTEN?

Set *during the time of the Judges* (a chaotic period of instability, famine, and spiritual decline).

Discussion Question:

How does knowing the setting help us understand the desperation in this story?

WHAT KIND OF BOOK IS RUTH?

A love story, a family story, a redemption story, and a picture of God's quiet providence.

Discussion Question:

Which theme stands out most to you; love, loyalty, redemption, or providence?

WHO ARE THE MAIN CHARACTERS?

- **Naomi** – Israelite widow, grieving and bitter.
- **Ruth** – Moabite widow, loyal, courageous, faithful.
- **Orpah** – Moabite widow who returns home.
- **Boaz** – Wealthy landowner, man of integrity, redeemer.
- **Obed** – Son of Ruth & Boaz; grandfather of King David.

Discussion Question:

Which character do you relate to most at this stage of the story?

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Marriage Was Not a Safe Haven

Women depended entirely on husbands for survival.

Levirate Marriage

A brother-in-law was expected to marry the widow to preserve the family line.

Naomi Loses Everything

Husband gone. Sons gone. No income. No protection. Alone in a foreign land.

Discussion Questions:

How does this background deepen your understanding of Naomi's grief?

Why is it important to understand the cultural vulnerability of widows?

2. RUTH'S RISKY DECISION (Ruth 1:6-18)

Ruth chooses Naomi over safety, family, culture, and familiarity. Her vow is a covenant of loyalty and faith.

Discussion Question:

What makes Ruth's loyalty so risky and so beautiful?

3. SURVIVOR: NAOMI'S RETURN HOME (Ruth 1:19-22)

Naomi returns to Bethlehem bitter, empty, and grieving, but Ruth stays by her side.

Discussion Question:

Why is it hard to see God's hand when life feels "empty"?

4. RUTH'S RISKY LOVE IN BETHLEHEM (Ruth 2)

Ruth gleanes in the fields (dangerous, humiliating work) to provide for Naomi. Boaz notices her faithfulness.

Discussion Question:

What does Ruth teach us about serving others even when our own life feels uncertain?

5. SURVIVOR: THE THRESHING FLOOR (Ruth 3)

Ruth approaches Boaz in a culturally risky moment. Boaz responds with integrity, protection, and honor.

Discussion Question:

Why is integrity essential in relationships, and how does Boaz model it?

6. GOD'S QUIET PROVIDENCE (Ruth 4)

Boaz redeems Naomi's family. Ruth becomes part of the lineage of King David and Jesus.

Discussion Question:

Where have you seen God quietly working behind the scenes in your life?

7. THE BALANCE SHEET - A PERFECT APPLICATION

From "bitter" to "blessed." From empty to full. From loss to redemption. Worship mirrors Ruth's journey; confession, grace, provision, blessing.

Discussion Question:

How does worship help reframe our losses and remind us of God's provision?

8. HOW RUTH & NAOMI CONNECT TO OTHER RISKY BUSINESS STORIES

- **Mark 2** – Risky Friendship
- **Jonah** – Risky Obedience
- **Philemon** – Risky Reconciliation

- **Good Samaritan** – Risky Compassion

Discussion Question:

- Which connection helps you see Ruth's story in a new way?

9. WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

Ruth teaches us:

- Loyalty is costly
- Love is sacrificial
- Faithfulness is noticed by God
- Relationships require risk
- God writes redemption stories through ordinary people