

# HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

**Ruth**  
Leader's Guide

# Hearing the Word Ruth Leader's Guide

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*Nigel Barge, July 2021*

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### Resources

*The New Bible Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, published by Inter Varsity Press  
*The New Bible Commentary* 21<sup>st</sup> century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

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# Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



**LOOK** – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
  - a) What questions does it raise -  
*Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?*
  - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
  - a) the surrounding text
  - b) the Book of the Bible
  - c) the whole Bible
  - d) the place in the Bible Story



**LEARN** – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



**LISTEN** – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



**LIVE** – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
  - a) His nature and character?
  - b) His grace\*
  - c) Jesus / his salvation\*\*
- 2) What should I do?

\* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

\*\* The Bible, from 'the Fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

# Reading Narrative

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. Ruth is mainly *narrative* (story), the most common type. To approach narrative correctly we need to keep these principles in mind:

## 1 In General: It is *God's* story

The whole Bible recounts the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and the fall in Genesis, the rest describes how God works out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity in Jesus. The OT prepares for the arrival, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The NT recounts these and looks forwards to his return at the end of time. It is *all* about Jesus. Therefore:

a) Every part relates to Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

So as we read, we should be asking – ‘what does this show about Jesus; what is He doing?’

b) Everything is relevant.

In a film every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often, we are shown things in the early stages that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So, as we read Bible narrative – knowing how it ends – we should be asking ‘what relevance has *this* part of the story to the *main* story?’

## 2 In particular: ‘Follow the camera angle.’

A film director focuses the viewer's attention on particular shots to tell ‘his story’. In the same way each narrator in the Bible is selective about what to tell us. They leave out much general detail, only giving us what is relevant to what they are trying to convey.

As we read, we should therefore be asking the question, ‘Why is he telling me this and in this particular way?’

## 3 Warts and all

Human beings often get things wrong. The Bible narrative faithfully records errors, even by people who are elsewhere commended. For instance, Moses murdered a man, King David committed adultery, and Peter, who was praised one minute for realising Jesus was the Christ, was minutes later roundly scolded when he tried to stop Jesus being the Christ through suffering! (Exodus 2:12; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 16:16-23)

So we can't treat every thought or action in a narrative as something to copy, just because ‘it's in the Bible’. We must ask the Holy Spirit to use the rest of Scripture to discern good examples to follow, and bad ones to avoid.

# Background to the Book of Ruth

The Author

?

# Study 1

# Ruth 1

## Be wholehearted for God and His people

### Background

Before Moses died, the Lord allowed him to *see* Canaan, the Promised Land, even though he was not allowed to enter it (Deuteronomy 34).

After his death, **Joshua** became the leader and led the people in the conquest of Canaan (c.1230BC). After Joshua in turn died, there was a period of disorganisation, tribal discord and defeat. The book of **Judges** tells how God 'raised up judges who saved them.' (Judges 2:16) They were leaders in battle and rulers in peace. The book of **Ruth** is set within this period – a time amongst Israel of disobedience, selfishness and idolatry. (1:1)

Abraham had a nephew, Lot. Lot had a son, Moab, by one of his own daughters (Genesis 19:30-38). The Moabites were thus related but not of the line of the Promise – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc.

Moab was 'next door' to Judah, across the Dead Sea. Perhaps the family travelled only 50 to 100 miles. Palestine has a rather uncertain rainfall, so times of drought and famine are not uncommon. Conditions can vary widely over comparatively small areas.

### Word List

1	<i>ruled</i>	traditionally <i>judged</i>
	<i>land</i>	<i>ie</i> Canaan, the promised land
	<i>sojourn</i>	live for a while
	<i>Bethlehem</i>	<i>lit</i> 'House of bread' <i>ie</i> granary
2	<i>Elimlech</i>	means, God is King <i>or</i> My God is King
	<i>Naomi</i>	means pleasant, lovely, delightful
	<i>Mahlon</i>	possibly from a root meaning 'to be weak' or 'sick'
	<i>Chilion</i>	possibly 'failing' or 'pining'
	<i>Ephrathites</i>	Ephrath or Ephrathah was an earlier name for Bethlehem
6	<i>arose</i>	indicates start of an action, especially a journey
	<i>visited</i>	word used in OT to describe divine activity
8	<i>the LORD</i>	YAHWEH, the personal name of the God of Israel
20	<i>Mara</i>	bitter
21	<i>Almighty</i>	Hebrew <i>Shaddai</i> Sometimes <i>El Shaddai</i> , God Almighty
22	<i>barley harvest</i>	<i>ie</i> towards the end of April

### Bible Connections

1	<i>famine</i>	<i>see eg</i> Genesis 12:10; 26:1; 41:56; 1 Samuel 21:1
11	<i>levirate marriage</i>	<i>see</i> Deuteronomy 25:5ff
21	<i>Almighty</i>	<i>see</i> Genesis 17:1; 35:11; Exodus 6:3, Psalm 91:1ff

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why was there a famine in the land?*  
*Why did the man of Judah leave Israel?*  
*Why did he go to Moab?*
- 2 *Why does it tell us again that they were from Bethlehem, and Ephrathites?*
- 4 *Why did they take Moabite wives?*
- 5 *What is the significance of 10 years?*
- 6 *Why did she 'hear in the fields'?*  
*What was her motive for going back?*
- 8 *Why did Naomi advise her daughters to return to their mother's house?*
- 9 *Why did they weep together when Naomi sent them home?*
- 11 *Why did Naomi cite her having no more children as a reason for sending them home?*
- 13 *How did she know the hand of the Lord had gone out against her?*
- 15 *Why was Naomi sending her back to 'her own gods'?*
- 16 *Why did Ruth say, 'Do not urge me...'?*
- 17 *What did Ruth mean by this oath?*
- 18 *Why did Naomi agree to her coming back to Judah with her?*
- 19 *Why was the whole house stirred because of them?*
- 20 *Why had the Lord 'dealt with her bitterly'?*
- 21 *Why 'empty' – what about Ruth?*
- 22 *What is the significance of the barley harvest?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 6 *Why did she start out on her return with her daughters in law and then send them back?*

## 2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible might help you understand this passage?

a) whole Bible

- 1 *Famine (Deuteronomy 28:15,22).*  
*Jesus is the bread of life. (John 6:35)*

*Moab (Genesis 19:37).*

*Submit yourselves to God (James 4:7).*

- 2 *'Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah' (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5).*
- 4 *Abraham was determined his son should have a wife from his own kindred (Genesis 24:4).*  
*Intermarrying with non-Israelites was not permitted but -*  
*Cf Matthew 1:3-7, 16 with Tamar + Perez (Genesis 35), Rahab mother of Boaz, (Joshua 2), Bathsheba + Solomon. (1 Samuel 11:1ff; 12:24)*
- 6 *The Lord gives rest to those He loves. (Psalm 127:2)*  
*When he came to his senses ... I will arise and go to my Father. (Luke 15:17,18)*
- 8 *'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'. (Luke 23:34)*
- 12 *Levirite marriage – bearing a son for a dead brother (Deuteronomy 25:5)*
- 13 *The cost of discipleship (Mt 10:37-39; Lk 14:25-33)*  
*I know the plans I have for you – plans for welfare not for evil (Jer. 29:11)*
- 15 *You shall have no other God's before me (Deuteronomy 5:7)*  
*Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4)*
- 16 *Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*
- 17 *It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20)*
- 21 *'Calamity' c.f. Job (in all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong (Job 1:22) curse God and die? Shall we not receive good from God and shall we not receive evil (Job 2:9,10)*
- 22b *At the beginning of barley harvest – at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6)*

b) Bible story

*After God created him, man sinned and so death entered.*

*God's Law has been given but man are unable to keep it.*

*In Ruth the line of the promised Saviour is furthered.*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

1 *There was a famine because the people had disobeyed God.*

*He left Israel as he was disobeying God.*

*Moab were 'relatives' and had not been hostile to the Israelites as they headed for the promised land.*

2 *It tell us again that they were from Bethlehem and Ephrathites because that is a very important part of the story and its implications.*

4 *They took Moabite wives as they were disobeying the Lord.*

5 *It was an extended period of time – more than a local famine.*

6 *She 'heard in the fields' ie in a place of harvest – plenty.*

*Her motive for going back was she heard they had food again.*

8 *Naomi said this, as she was trying to avoid her responsibility to care for them.*

9 *They wept as they were truly family.*

11 *If Naomi had had another son, it would have been his responsibility by the Law of Levirate marriage to take his brothers' wife and have a son for him.*

13 *She knew because of the 'failure' of her flight to Moab.*

15 *She was sending her back to 'her own gods' as she didn't believe that 'the Lord was one'.*

16 *Ruth said this as she believed in the God of Israel.*

17 *Ruth's oath meant her commitment to Naomi and Naomi's God.*

18 *Naomi agreed, as it was the right thing that Ruth was choosing to do.*

19 *The whole house stirred because she had come back after so long.*

20 *The Lord 'dealt with her bitterly' because of their disobedience – leaving the promised land.*

21 *'Empty' inferred that Ruth didn't count as a blessing.*

22 *The barley harvest was at the end of April – early in the year.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*As she got nearer Israel the implication of appearing back with two foreigner family members start to weigh on her.*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*To avoid a famine, Elimelech, Naomi and their sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem in Judah and went to Moab. The sons there married, Ruth and Orpah. During the 10 years they lived there, Elimelech and his sons died. (1-5)*

*Hearing of plenty back in Israel, she left with her daughters-in-law. On the way, she tried to send them back to Moab. The girls were reluctant but Naomi pressed. Orpah returned home but Ruth 'dug her heels in'. (6-14)*

*Ruth resisted Naomi's pleas and was determined to remain with her and serve the God of Israel. So Naomi gave up. (15-18)*

*Naomi entered her hometown, humiliated by her time in Moab and accompanied by her Moabite daughter in law, Ruth. (19-22)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Commitment to God means also commitment to His people .*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

**16 c**

*Your people shall be my people and your God, my God.*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

**2** *God expects more than nominal obedience.*

**6** *The Lord gives his people food.*

**7** *The Lord receive any who give themselves whole heartedly to Him.*

**22** *The Lord's timing is perfect.*

b) His grace?

**16** *God will accept people from anywhere who come to Him.*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

**2** *Jesus, the King, God Himself, came Bethlehem – an Ephrathite.*

2) What should I do

- 1 Be very careful not to try and avoid the Lord's call.*
- 6 Be prepared to return to the Lord.*
- 11 Beware the 'reasonable' voices that would stop you from following the Lord.*
- 15 Never go back to other gods however bleak your prospects.*
- 17 Commit yourself to the Lord and His people, whole-heartedly.*
- 21 (Unlike Naomi) Count your blessing name them one by one.*

## Obey authority and trust the Lord to repay

### Background

In ancient Palestine there were not many ways open to widows to make a living. **Gleaning** was one possibility. Provision for the poor was laid down in the laws given to Moses. A man must not reap to the very border of his field, nor pick up what was left after the reapers had been through (Leviticus 19:9) nor go back for a sheaf he had overlooked. (Deuteronomy 24:19) The poor could come and pick up what was left. (That was gleaning). There would be one common field outside a village with people owning parts of it.

**Kinsman-redeemer.** In Leviticus, family relationship involves a variety of duties *eg* redeem a relation from slavery (25:48f), redeem a relative's field (25:25).

A regulation in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 says that if a man dies childless then his next of kin should marry the widow and have a child who would be regarded as the child of the deceased man and carry on his name. This was known as levirate marriage.

### Word List

1	<i>Boaz</i>	Meaning not certain, may have idea of quickness/strength, son of Rahab the prostitute (Josh 2:1; Matt 1:5)
	<i>land</i>	<i>i.e.</i> Canaan, the promised land
	<i>Elimelech</i>	Ruth's late father-in-law
5	<i>"Whose young woman...</i>	Boaz assumes Ruth is someone's servant
8	<i>do not go</i>	The Hebrew is emphatic
10	<i>bowed down...</i>	Token of humility and gratitude
11	<i>native land/ homeland</i>	Land of your kindred; there is a strong family sense
12	<i>reward</i>	Hebrew denotes 'wages'
	<i>under whose wings</i>	Denotes trust and security
17	<i>ephah</i>	About 22 litres/4 gallons
20	<i>kinsman-redeemer</i>	Hebrew <i>goel</i>
22	<i>my daughter</i>	A term of addressing someone (2:2,8,22; 3:1,10,11,16,18) only used once elsewhere by Jephthah (Judges 11:35)
23	<i>wheat harvest</i>	After the barley harvest (1:22)- 2 months + from beginning of barley to end of wheat

### Bible Connections

2	Gleaning	<i>see</i> Leviticus 19:9; Deuteronomy 24:19
12	under God's wings	<i>see</i> Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 63:7

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *What is a 'worthy' man?*  
*What does 'Boaz' mean?*
- 2 *Why is she still called "Ruth the Moabitess"?*  
*What does she mean after him in whose eyes I find favour*  
*Why didn't Naomi go with her too ( she was still young enough for children (12)?)*
- 3 *Why does it repeat – who was 'of the clan of Elimelech'?*
- 4 *Why does it say 'came from Bethlehem'?*  
*What does the writer mean by including this greeting.*
- 5 *What did he mean by 'Whose young woman is this'?*
- 6 *Why again include 'Moabite ...from Moab'?*
- 7 *What does Ruth's manner in asking and working demonstrate?*
- 8 *What did he mean by calling Ruth 'my daughter'?*  
*What did Boaz's attention suggest?*
- 10 *Why did she fall on her face, bowing to the ground?*
- 12 *What would 'a full reward' be?*
- 14 *What did this mean – come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel into the wine?*  
*Why 'roasted grain'?*
- 19 *Why did Naomi 'bless the man that took notice' of her*
- 22 *Why does the writer remind you that she was her daughter in law*  
*Why the sudden concern for Ruth well-being? Cf vs 2!*
- 23 *What does it mean 'and she lived with her mother in law'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 2 *Why did Ruth so demean herself and so willingly?*

### 2) The Context

surrounding passage,

individual book,

1      *worthy – Ruth (3:11)*

12     *spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer (3:9)*

whole Bible,

1      *Worthy to be praised (Ps 18:3)*

*Boaz' mother was Rahab the harlot from Jericho (Mt 1:5)*

4      *The Lord bless you (Nu 6:24) (unusual phrase in OT)*

8,9    *The fields are white unto harvest (Jn 4:35)*

9      *If anyone thirst let him come to me and drink (Jn 7:37)*

10     *falling on their faces before a king (1Sam 25:23; 2 Sam 14:4)*

11     *cf Abraham leaving Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 11:31 – 12:4)*

12     *A hundred times in this times ... and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mk 10:30)*

*Under his wings you will find refuge (91:4)*

14     *Jesus invites us to eat and drink (Mt 26:26-28)*

*She had some left over cf feeding of 5000 (Lk 9:17)*

23     *submit your self to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)*

Bible story

## LEARN

1)      How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

1      *a 'worthy' man is an upright man of moral integrity*

*'Boaz' doesn't have a specific meaning*

2      *'Ruth the Moabitess' reminds u that she is no one of God's chosen people of Israel*

*It means she is dependent on someone for charity*

*Naomi could be bothered / was not prepared to lower herself?*

3      *'of the clan of Elimelech' underlines the fact that unbeknown to either of them, she was a relative*

4      *it say 'came from Bethlehem' as it show he was a close relative*

*this greeting underline that he is a holy man who has the respect / affection of*

5      *This you woman must have belonged to a household v*

6      *'Moabite ...from Moab' shows us that everyone knew who she was and where she had come from.*

7      *Ruth's manner shows she was humble and hard working*

8      *He calls Ruth 'my daughter' as he assume responsibility for her*

*Boaz's attention suggests honour, generosity and romance!*

10     *She fall on her face, before God in gratitude and relief, acknowledging this man's kindness*

12     *'a full reward' would be what she had given up - husband, family, security etc*

14     *This meant – I fancy you! (it was way above generosity to the poor – cf saying to a beggar 'come sleep in my house')*

16

*'roasted grain' was fine food.*

19 Naomi 'blessed the man that took notice' of her as it had been way above an act of kindness

22 He reminds us that she was her daughter in law because she was in authority over her?  
The sudden concern for Ruth was she saw the opportunity for herself

23 It means she lived under her authority

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*Ruth demeaned herself so willingly because they were desperately poor*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Naomi had a relative of her husband clan of Elimelech whose name was Boaz. Ruth happened to glean in Boaz' field. Boaz notice her and was told that she was the Moabites that had come back with Naomi (1-7).*

*Boaz treated Ruth with special kindness. When this was questioned by Ruth, he called the Lord's blessing upon her for her devotion to Him / her mother in law. Ruth acknowledged his favour on her gratefully (8-13)*

*Boaz showed special favour to her at mealtimes and in the fields (14-16)*

*Naomi noticed the very surprising 'fruit' she brought back and concluded something special had happened. Ruth told her of Boaz and she noted that he was a close relative / a redeemer. When Naomi was told of his ongoing provision for Ruth, she recognised her chance, and told Ruth to stick close to Boaz. She obeyed and did so to the very end of harvest time. (17-23)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Faith in the Lord for your whole life is rewarded by Him*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

*'The Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge' (12)*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 *God is worthy - He alone declares who is worthy*

3 *God's providence just 'happens'!*

4 *The Lord should be at the heart of all our relationships.*

b) His grace?

10 *Why have I found favour? – the wonder of grace!*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

14 *Jesus invites us to eat the bread and wine (Mt 26:26-28)*

2) What should I do

2 *Don't wait to be asked – volunteer*

*Be prepared to do the most menial of work*

4 *Be prepared in daily life to wear your devotion to Jesus on your sleeve.*

10 *Bow down and acknowledge God's grace in your life.*

12 *Expect the Lord to reward faith in Him with blessing*

23 *Live under the authority that God has set you*

## Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing floor

### Background

After harvest, grain was separated from its husks by being trodden on by animals, usually pulling a 'threshing sledge' made of wood with nails protruding from the underside. Then it was *winnowed*, i.e. the mixture was thrown into the air during a stiff breeze; the wind blew the chaff away and the grain, being heavier, fell more or less straight down. Threshing floors were usually situated in exposed places to catch the breeze. (Unusually, Gideon winnowed hidden in the hollow of his wine press, lest marauding Midianites stole his crop, Judges 6:11.)

At harvest time people would camp out, perhaps to guard the crop.

**Kinsman-redeemer.** See Background in Study 2

9 'Spreading skirt/corner of garment' over a woman is used as a metaphor for marriage in Ezekiel 16:8.

15 **six measures – one short of God's perfect seven (Gen 2:1-3)**

### LOOK

#### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

1 *Why does it remind us that she was her mother in law/ Ruth was her daughter?*

*Why now should she seek rest?*

3 *Why should she wash and anoint herself?*

*Why not make herself known till they have finished eating and drinking?*

4 *Why uncover his feet?*

*How does she know that he will tell her what to do?*

5 *Why did she say 'All that you say I will do'?*

6 *Why 'as mother in law had commanded her'?*

7 *What did it mean that 'his heart merry'?*

*Why did she come 'softly'?*

9 *What did 'spread your wings over me' mean?*

*What does he mean by calling her 'my daughter'?*

10 *What was this last kindness and what was the first one?*

11 *Why should she fear?*

*How did he know what all his fellow townsmen thought?*

12 *Did Naomi not know that there was a closer redeemer than Boaz?*

13 *Why remain tonight --- until morning?*

14 *Why lay at his feet?*

- Why did she leave in secret?*
- 15 *Why six measures of flour?*
- 16 *Why did she ask Ruth?*
- 17 *Why should she not go back to her mother in law empty handed?*
- 18 *What did she mean "wait my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today".*

What surprises or confuses you?

- 3 *Why did Ruth take the risk and obey her mother in law's commands?*

## 2) The Context

surrounding passage,

- 2 *Boaz a close relative – redeemer (2:20)*
- 9 *Spread your wings (2:12)*
- 10 *May you be blessed by the Lord (2:4, 12)*

individual book,

- 10 *The first kindness- left your father, mother, and native land (2:11)*
- 11 *worthy woman cf Boaz - (2:1)*
- 17 *empty handed cf (1:21)*

whole Bible,

- 1 *'My daughter' very unusual address. Used only by Jephthah (Ju 11:35) but in Ruth – 8 times (2:2,8,22; 3:1,10,11,16,18)*
- 3 *anoint yourself (very unusual cf 2 Sam 14:2), 'anoint' a command almost always used of what the Lord did (occasionally Moses, and Joshua)*
- 7 *'merry' – tipsy or drunk (1Sa 25:36)*
- 12 *Redeemer – cf Jesus (Gal 4:5; Tit 2:14)*
- 14 *abstain from all appearance of evil KJV (1Thess 5:22)*
- 18 *He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:8)*

Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

## LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?
- 1 *It reminds us of the authority in the relationship*  
*Should she seek rest from her gleaning in the fields*
- 3 *Should she wash and anoint herself because Naomi was hoping for physical attraction*

*She not make herself known till they have finished eating and drinking because she was waiting for darkness and drunkenness*

4 *Uncover his feet to cause him to wake up*

*She knew he was 'worthy'(2:1) and that he had fallen in love with Ruth.*

5 *Ruth said 'All that you say I will do' because she submitted to her mother in law's authority.*

6 *'as mother in law had commanded her' because it showed she was simply following her instructions.*

7 *Merry meant 'tipsy'?*

*She came 'softly' as she did not want to wake him*

9 *'Spread your wings over me' was a proposal of marriage*

*'my daughter' was a recognition of their family bond and also his care for her*

10 *the first one was coming back with her mother in law and gleaning for them both. The second one was being willing to marry Boaz for her other in law's family line's benefit*

11 *She should not fear of being caught and exposed in the men's quarters*

*He must have known because he had asked about(?)*

12 *Surely she did know this but thought of Boaz as a better catch*

13 *'remain tonight and in the morning? Because of safety*

14 *she lay at his feet meaning there was no 'hanky panky'!*

*she left in secret for modesty's sake*

15 *Why six measures was one short of the perfect seven – it was a type not the real one*

16 *she asked Ruth as she had been eagerly, sleeplessly waiting*

17 *Not empty handed to give proof of his good intentions*

18 *She perceived that she had 'caught this fish'!*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*Ruth obeyed her mother in law as, though she might not have chosen it herself, it was lawful*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Naomi, for Ruth's 'own good', sets her up with Boaz. She instructs her to go to the threshing floor and when he is asleep to gently reawaken him and then to obey him. Ruth agreed (1-7)*

*Boaz retired after eating and drinking and fell asleep. At midnight he awoke with a start and discovered a woman, Ruth, who 'proposed' to him. He was amazed that she should have chosen him for her mother in law's sake. He told her to stay. He informed her of a closer redeemer and agreed the next morning to redeem her if he will not. (8-13)*

*Without anything improper, she slipped away in the early morning, being give 6 measures of barley. Naomi awaited her and was told that this gift was to ensure 'she didn't go back empty handed'. Naomi concluded he would act that very day (14-18)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*We choose to invite the Lord to graciously redeem us*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

*Spread your wings over your servant for you are a redeemer (9b)*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

10 *the Lord rewards kindness*

13 *The Lord lives!*

b) His grace?

2,3 *The Lord puts up with our scheming for his Sons sake (who was yet to be born)*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

9 *the redeemer responds to the appeal*

2) What should I do

1 *Be aware of concealing our desires beneath altruistic motives*

5 *Obey authority willingly as long as it is within the law (?)*

10 *Give the Lord's blessing to those who honour him*

13 *Do things right in God's eyes and the outcome will be 'good'*

*Act consciously in the sight of God*

14 *be circumspect in all your dealing avoid giving the wrong impression*

18 *trust in the Lord to finish His good work*

## Boaz marries Ruth

## Background

Excavations show that houses in Palestinian cities were generally built very closely together; there were no large open spaces like the Roman *forum* or the Greek *agora*. Instead, room was found at the city gate, so the gate became the centre of city life. Any important assembly happened there (1 Kings 22:10; Jeremiah 38:7). It was the place for formal, legal business (2 Samuel 15:2; Amos 5:10,12,15, AV, ESV ‘in the gate’; NIV translates ‘in the courts’). Informally, that was where people gathered socially.

If a man died childless and his brother refused to marry the widow, Deuteronomy 25:7 told the woman to ‘go to the elders at the town gate’ to begin the process of public humiliation of the offender.

It is not clear how Naomi had rights of ownership over her late husband Elimelech’s piece of land. Jeremiah 32:6-12 seems to show that land for sale would normally be offered to a member of the family before anyone else. (*That* transaction happened not at the city gate, but in the courtyard of the guard of the royal palace (Jer 32:2.) – since Jeremiah was imprisoned there:!

## Word List

- |    |                            |   |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 1  | <i>town gate</i>           | See above   |
|    | “Friend”                   | unique in OT to call another ‘friend’   |
| 2  | <i>ten of the elders</i>   | There is no information on significance of 10; elders exercised a judicial function                                   |
| 3  | <i>brother</i>             | term is not confined to immediate family relationships  |
| 4  | <i>I cannot redeem</i>     | this is strong language   |
| 11 | <i>Rachel and Leah</i>     | wives of Jacob, mothers of his 12 sons <i>see</i> Gen 29:14-28  |
|    | <i>Worthily</i>            | very unusual word. Same root as worthy (2:1; 3:11)  |
| 12 | <i>Perez</i>               | son of Jacob’s son Judah, ancestor of Boaz <i>see</i> Gen 46:12   |
|    | <i>Tamar</i>               | mother of Perez <i>see</i> Genesis 38   |
| 14 | <i>Blessed be the Lord</i> | usual way of expressing thankfulness  |
| 17 | <i>Obed</i>                | means ‘servant’; v18-22 show him to be the grandfather of David, Israel’s greatest earthly king                       |
| 20 | <i>Salmon</i>              | married Rahab, (previously the prostitute from Jericho who hid the Israelite spies.) <i>see</i> Joshua 2; Matthew 1:5 |

## Bible Connection

- 18 Genealogy of king David *see* fuller information in 1 Chronicles 2:4-15

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

- 1 *Why did Boaz go to the gate?*  
*Why 'and behold'?*  
*Why is he called 'the redeemer' and not his name as well?*  
*Why does Boaz call him 'friend'.*  
*What did he mean 'turn aside'*
- 2 *Why 10 men?*  
*Why the stress on 'sitting down' – 4 x in 2 verses?*
- 3 *Why did he start speaking about the opportunity of the land and not the obligation as a redeemer to Naomi?*
- 6 *How would he impair his own inheritance?*
- 10 *Why does he say he 'bought' Ruth as well?*  
*Why 'from the gate of his native place'?*
- 11 *How did Rachel and Leah "build up the house of Israel"?*  
*Whose name is to be renown*
- 12 *What was it about Perez' house and his offspring that Boaz's house should be like?*
- 13 *Why does it say , the Lord gave her conception*
- 14 *Why does the focus shift from Boaz & Ruth to Naomi*  
*Who is the redeemer? (Why is he not mentioned by name)*  
*How do they know her daughter in law loves her?*
- 15 *Why seven sons?*
- 17 *What does 'Obed' mean?*  
*Why did the women of the neighbourhood give him a name and not Boaz?*
- 18 *What does this lineage here show?*

What surprises or confuses you?

*Why does the story end with Nomi and not Ruth and Boaz?*

### 2) The Context

surrounding passage,

4:1 *sat down (Luke 4:5)*

*And behold, the redeemer came by – cf (Ruth) happened to come to a field belonging to Boaz*

individual book,

11 *Worthily cf Boaz (2:3;)Ruth (3:11)*

14,15 *cf Ruth's bitter outburst 1:20,21*

whole Bible,

- 1 *I have no longer called you servants but friends (Jn 15:15)*
- 2 *ten elders of 10 years in Moab (1:4)*
- 6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make straight your paths (Prov 3:5,6)*
- 10 *witnesses give evidence (Dt 17:6,7; 19:15)*  
*Bought – the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph 1:14)*  
*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price (1 Cor 6:19)*
- 12 *Tamar bore to Judah (Gen 38)*
- 13 *..those who honour me, I will honour ... (cf 1:16; 1 Sam 2:30)*
- 15 *sons of ones youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them (Ps127:4,5)*
- 17 *Naomi recipient of grace (Eph 2:1-10)*

## LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?
  - 1 *He went to the gate? To find the redeemer and settle the matter/ 'and behold' cf 'it just so happened' ie God brought it about.*  
*His name / identity is irrelevant to the story – only that he was 'the redeemer' – the story teller wants you to make no assumptions about*  
*Boaz calls him 'friend' as he wanted this mans best / he wasn't trying to pull a fly one 'turn aside' meant listen, I have something serious to say to you.*
  - 2 *10 men one for each year that N had been in Moab (?)*  
*Sitting down = official – they were performing an act of their judgement*
  - 3 *He wanted to put no spin on it so he started with the thing that would interest the redeemer.*
  - 6 *He impaired his own inheritance because having purchased the field it would be inherited by 'Mahlon's' son.*
  - 10 *He 'bought' Ruth as well as, in accepting being 'the redeemer' and purchasing the field of Elimelech, he undertook to have a child by Ruth for Elimelech / Mahlon*  
*'the gate of his native place' was from its rule / oversight.*
  - 11 *Rachel and Leah "build up the house of Israel" by having 12 sons.*  
*Boaz's name is to be renown*
  - 12 *Perez' house, though of questionable heritage was at the centre if God's plan – like Boaz's line of Rahab the harlot.*
  - 13 *It says 'the Lord gave her conception' because the child was at the centre of the plan.*
  - 14 *The focus shifts to back to Naomi as a contrast to her conclusion in (1:20f) the everything had been a disaster for her.*  
*Boaz is the redeemer? He is not mentioned by name because his function is the focus*  
*They know her daughter in law loves her by her actions – her care and devotion*
  - 15 *a son is desired for inheritance. 7 is the perfect number. She is infitely to be prized.*
  - 17 *'Obed' means 'servant'.*  
*The woman gave him the name Obed as they recognised he was 'serving' God's purposes.*

18      *this lineage here shows that it was written after the reign of King David*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

*4:17 Naomi is the one we are to identify with going from - faithless resignation to manipulative scheming to receiving unmerited blessing*

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Boaz went to the city gate hoping to see the redeemer. He saw him and officially told him he was first in line to buy Elimelech's field from Naomi. He chose to do it and Boaz told hi he would also therefore have to marry Ruth the Moabite to carry on her line. This made him refuse. (1-6)*

*Before witnesses, he withdrew and Boaz bought the field and Ruth committing himself to perpetuate Elimelech's name (7-10)*

*The witnesses, blessed him that he might act worthily and that his house would grow at the heart of God's purposes (11,12)*

*Boaz and Ruth had a son. The women thanked God that Naomi had been given a child who would be a redeemer. Naomi nursed the child and the women named him Obed (13-17)*

*Obed lay in the line from Perez to David (18-22)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*(To the undeserving, is given the gracious inclusion in the family of Jesus)*

*God had redeemed the disobedient in Israel by his name (Jesus)*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

*(A son has been born to Naomi. They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (17b))*

*"Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!"*

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*12,13 The Lord gives offspring*

*14 The Lord is worthy of our praise*

b) His grace?

*12,17 God includes 'unworthy' (Tamar) and outsiders (Ruth) in his family*

*16 The Lord gives us His hearts desire!*

c) Jesus and His salvation?

*14,15 Jesus our redeemer Ephesians 1:7; Rom 3:24f; Galatians 3:13; 5:1*

## 2) What should I do

- 1 *Wait on the Lord's timing, opportunity*
- 2 *Look for the best, ('friend'), for those who are in competition with you*
- 3,4 *Do not try and "stack the deck"!*
- 6 *Wait on God to order your ways*
- 7-10 *Do things according to the Law – by the book!*
- 11 *Witness to the fulfilment of the Word of God*
- 12 *nothing in your background precludes you from the service of God*
- 14 *Marvel at the grace of God to sinners in Jesus*
- 18 *Note the ongoing purposes of God – generation to generation.*

## Sharing the Word

### Use

*'Hearing the Word'* can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

### Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers. \*

### A format

If you have 45 mins together, you might like to try dividing it up like this:

*(If longer or in a large group, you can extend the times)*

- 1) Drink, bite to eat, chat (10 mins)
- 2) A Bible reading ( 2 mins)
- 3) A Bible study
  - a. Any questions? (Whether answer is known or not!) ( 2 mins)  
(Don't answer any, till all questions noted!)
  - b. Any relevant cross references? ( 2 mins)
  - c. Discussion of answers (13 mins)
  - d. Conclusion (10 mins)
    - i. A Key verse and Main Point?
    - ii. What does it show about God / Jesus?
    - iii. What should I do?
- 4) Sharing (Trials and joys – family, work, self) ( 5 mins)
- 5) Prayer ( 1 min)

### Remember!

As we gather round God's Word

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially, 'seekers' in your sharing together.

\* The **process** is explained and practised in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called *Introduction to Hearing the Word*.      Email: [office@tpc.org.uk](mailto:office@tpc.org.uk)

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