

# PEOPLE LIKE US: Ruth

12/18/22

Ruth 1:1–22 (CSB)

## NAOMI'S FAMILY IN MOAB

**1** During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land. A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while. <sup>2</sup>The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the fields of Moab and settled there. <sup>3</sup>Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup>Her sons took Moabite women as their wives: one was named Orpah and the second was named Ruth. After they lived in Moab about ten years, <sup>5</sup>both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two children and without her husband.

## RUTH'S LOYALTY TO NAOMI

<sup>6</sup>She and her daughters-in-law set out to return from the territory of Moab, because she had heard in Moab that the LORD had paid attention to his people's need by providing them food. <sup>7</sup>She left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, and traveled along the road leading back to the land of Judah.

<sup>8</sup>Naomi said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. <sup>9</sup>May the LORD grant each of you rest in the house of a new husband." She kissed them, and they wept loudly.

<sup>10</sup>They said to her, "We insist on returning with you to your people."

<sup>11</sup>But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why do you want to go with me? Am I able to have any more sons who could become your husbands? <sup>12</sup>Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, <sup>13</sup>would you be willing to wait for them to

grow up? Would you restrain yourselves from remarrying? No, my daughters, my life is much too bitter for you to share, because the LORD's hand has turned against me." <sup>14</sup>Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. <sup>15</sup>Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Follow your sister-in-law."

<sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied:

Don't plead with me to abandon you  
or to return and not follow you.

For wherever you go, I will go,  
and wherever you live, I will live;  
your people will be my people,  
and your God will be my God.

<sup>17</sup>Where you die, I will die,  
and there I will be buried.

May the LORD punish me,  
and do so severely,

if anything but death separates you and me.

<sup>18</sup>When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped talking to her.

<sup>19</sup>The two of them traveled until they came to Bethlehem. When they entered Bethlehem, the whole town was excited about their arrival, and the local women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

<sup>20</sup>"Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara," she answered, "for the Almighty has made me very bitter. <sup>21</sup>I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has opposed me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi came back from the territory of Moab with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabitess. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

### Introduction: Does your faithfulness matter?

A. Do you ever feel as if what you do doesn't really matter?

1. Does it really matter what you do every day?
2. Will anyone care if you live for Jesus or don't?
3. Perhaps you feel invisible or disposable.

B. Ruth was a great candidate to be someone forgotten in history.

1. She was a foreigner.
2. She was a widow.
3. She had no children and no amazing skills.
4. Even her story isn't terribly impressive or tragic.

C. Yet, God preserved Ruth's story as a testament to what God can do through ordinary people like us.

1. Ruth may not be the most familiar story.
2. Even though it is only 4 chapters long, I hope to summarize instead of reading the whole book.
3. The significance of Ruth's story is that she becomes one of the women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy.
4. The faithfulness of Ruth shows us what God can do in people who are willing to be faithful.
5. The One thing I hope you walk away with today is a firm commitment to be faithful where God has placed you and with the people God has placed you with.

## 1. Naomi and her husband left in a time of famine.

### A. This is an interesting context:

1. Remember, this is the same promised land that God had given to Israel, and that was possessed in the book of Joshua just a few decades earlier.

2. The presence of famine in this context, along with timing during the days of the Judges, tells us that this was during a sinful period of Israel's history.

a. God promised Israel blessing if they obeyed.

b. But sin and disobedience would lead to seasons of famine.

3. Naomi's family is willing to leave their inheritance to escape the dual hardships of starvation and moral compromise.

### B. While in the neighboring lands of Moab, the father dies, and the sons marry local women.

1. This wasn't ideal, as Jewish people were supposed to marry other Jews.

2. But the family seemed desperate to put down roots.

3. But before Orpah and Ruth could conceive children, their husbands die, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law.

### C. Naomi starts heading home, and Ruth stays by her side.

1. When you don't know where to turn, go to the place where God planted you.

2. Naomi knew she couldn't survive where she was, so she turned towards home.

3. They walk back to Naomi's family: in Bethlehem.

a. Bethlehem means "house of bread".

b. This is the same Bethlehem that would welcome Jesus into the world.

c. The "house of bread" would be the birth place of the Bread of Life.

d. The small community that fed thousands would be the landing place for the One who would feed the multitudes.

D. On the way to Bethlehem, we begin to see the character of Ruth.

1. Ruth could have stayed with her people, in her home town.
2. But she had married into this family, and this was the family she would journey with.
3. We don't know if Ruth was pretty, smart, or talented.
4. But we know she was faithful.
5. And "faithful" is what God is looking for.

2. The Book of Ruth is only 4 chapters long.

A. A summary of what happens next is like this:

1. Naomi is too old to remarry and have children to continue the family name.
2. Ruth younger and had every right to remarry whoever she wanted.
  - a. She was only family by marriage.
  - b. Yet, she seems to truly love Naomi.

B. For these women to survive, two things needed to happen:

1. They needed food.
2. Ruth needed a husband.

C. Ruth takes advantage of a Jewish law that allowed widows and the poor to harvest after the harvesters have gone through.

1. Because harvesters gleaned by hand, they would inevitably drop or leave some of the harvest.

2. They weren't allowed to go back and reharvest, because what was left was for the care of the poor.

3. Ruth wants to ensure that she and Naomi had something to eat, so she went to work.

a. Sometimes, God's provision comes through sweat and hard work.

b. God provided for Ruth's and Naomi's needs, but Ruth had to engage the process to receive the provision.

### 3. Chapter 2 introduces a family relative named Boaz:

A. Boaz is presented as both wealthy and righteous.

1. Boaz is not like Judah was.

2. Judah took advantage of Tamar, a woman in distress.

3. Boaz assists Ruth with protection from predatory people and plenty of opportunities to harvest the food she needs.

B. Boaz, although not perfect, is a much better example of biblical manhood than Judah.

1. Biblical leaders:

a. Protect those around them.

b. Provide opportunities for growth.

c. Do not take advantage of people in desperate situations.

2. Boaz, without any motive, acted in such an honorable manner that Ruth wanted to be with him.

a. Are you living your life in a way that people want to be around you?

b. Do people leave your presence feeling encouraged, nurtured, protected, and wanted, or do you leave behind you people more broken and hurt than before?

C. At this point, Naomi introduces more information that changes the story.

1. Boaz is family, and one of the few in a position to serve as the Kinsman Redeemer.

2. Definition: **Kinsman Redeemer: a man sharing the same racial, cultural, or national background as another. In the Old Testament the word “kinsman” is often used as a translation of a Hebrew word that means, “one who has the right to redeem.”** Since an Israelite could sell himself, his family, or his land (Lev. 25:39–43) in cases of poverty, the kinsman-redeemer (Lev. 25:25) was provided to protect the clan. This person, a near relative, had the first option by law to buy any land being sold, thus allowing it to be kept within the clan (Lev. 25:23–28; Jer. 32:6–10).<sup>1</sup>

3. God instituted kinsman redeemers because He knew that there would be seasons and situations when we wouldn't be able to save ourselves.

#### 4. How to “catch” a husband.

Ruth 3:1–9 (CSB)

**3** Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, shouldn't I find rest for you, so that you will be taken care of? <sup>2</sup>Now isn't Boaz our relative? Haven't you been working with his female servants? This evening he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup>Wash, put on perfumed oil, and wear your best clothes. Go down to the threshing floor, but don't let the man know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup>When he lies down, notice the place where he's lying, go in and uncover his feet, and lie down. Then he will explain to you what you should do.”

<sup>5</sup>So Ruth said to her, “I will do everything you say.” <sup>6</sup>She went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law had charged her to do. <sup>7</sup>After Boaz ate, drank, and was in good spirits, he went to lie down at the end of the pile of barley, and she came secretly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

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<sup>1</sup> Youngblood, Ronald F., F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. 1995. In [Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<sup>8</sup>At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! <sup>9</sup>So he asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Ruth, your servant," she replied. "Take me under your wing, for you are a family redeemer."

#### A. What's happening here?

1. At the very least, Ruth signaled her desire for marriage.
2. She doesn't choose a young man, but the man uniquely positioned to bless Naomi and her former husband's family.
3. In a male-dominated culture, Naomi knew Ruth would have to be sly about it.
  - a. Ruth couldn't propose to him.
  - b. Naomi guided Ruth in the cultural way to signal the desire for marriage.

#### B. But what about "feet"?

1. Scripture mentions several times that Ruth uncovered Boaz's feet.
2. Two ways to try to understand this:
  - a. She literally snuck up and uncovered his feet.
  - b. This is a BIG deal in a culture where men and women were clothed head to toe.
3. Or, feet serves as an euphemism for Boaz's male parts.
  - a. Some scholars think Ruth uncovered Boaz enough to ensure that Boaz didn't miss the hint.
  - b. Considering most men don't take hints well, it kind of makes sense.
  - c. This seems especially likely considering Naomi told Ruth to wait until he had drunk enough wine to feel good.

C. It is possible, but not certain, that Ruth signaled her desire for Boaz very sexually.

1. This would make sense considering, in Jesus' genealogy, the other women were all surrounded by sexual scandal.

a. Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Mary were all surrounded by scandal.

b. *Just because there is a scandal, that does not mean it was true.*

2. Regardless of what happened that night, Boaz knew that Ruth wanted to marry him so that he would redeem her family.

a. Ruth requests in Verse 9, "Spread your garment over me..."Vs. 9.

b. In that culture, spreading your garment over someone is a sign of marriage and covenant.

3. The first time this happened was back in Genesis 3, when God "covers" the sins of Adam and Eve with clothes made from skins.

a. Ezekiel 16:8 tells of God's Covenant with Israel, and God is said to have "spread the corner of his garment and covered Israel's nakedness.

b. Perhaps it is no accident that the New Testament speaks of righteousness as a covering in Romans 4:5-7.

4. Redemption, forgiveness, and covenant always have a price.

## 5. There is a process for redemption.

A. Boaz knows there is one family member closer that has the first right to redeem.

1. Chapter 4 tells this story.

2. The person who should have redeemed the family is notified.

a. Boaz tells him that Naomi has to sell the family land.

b. The redeemer likes this, because he could always use more land.

3. But the bombshell is:

Ruth 4:5–6 (CSB)

<sup>5</sup>Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from Naomi, you will acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the deceased man, to perpetuate the man's name on his property."

<sup>6</sup>The redeemer replied, "I can't redeem it myself, or I will ruin my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I can't redeem it."

B. This man wanted the land, but did not want the responsibility of fulfilling the levirate marriage.

1. He's kind of like Onan from the Tamar story:

2. He wants the fun but not the responsibility.

C. But thankfully, Boaz is willing to redeem the family.

1. We read what happens next:

2. Ruth 4:13–22 (CSB)

<sup>13</sup>Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. He slept with her, and the LORD granted conception to her, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>14</sup>The women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel. <sup>15</sup>He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

<sup>16</sup>Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a mother to him.

<sup>17</sup>The neighbor women said, "A son has been born to Naomi," and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

#### **DAVID'S GENEALOGY FROM JUDAH'S SON**

<sup>18</sup>Now these are the family records of Perez:

Perez fathered Hezron,

<sup>19</sup>Hezron fathered Ram,

Ram fathered Amminadab,  
<sup>20</sup> Amminadab fathered Nahshon,  
Nahshon fathered Salmon,  
<sup>21</sup> Salmon fathered Boaz,  
Boaz fathered Obed,  
<sup>22</sup> Obed fathered Jesse,  
and Jesse fathered David.

## 6. Boaz and Ruth's faithfulness blessed many.

A. The old Naomi held in her hands the promised grandchild that would perpetuate the family line.

1. Ruth raised the baby she had been denied to this point.
2. And Boaz became the Great, Great Grandfather of a King.

B. We must never forget that the Gospel is for people like us.

1. Week after week, I hope you realize that YOU are part of God's plans.
2. God's plan involves people just like you and me.
3. And we never know what part of the story God will ask us to play.

C. **Do not underestimate the significance of your faithfulness.**

1. Every woman in Jesus' genealogy was faithful.
  - a. They believed when others did not.
  - b. They stayed when others would have left.
  - c. They fought when others quit.
2. Today, the voice of the Holy Spirit is reminding you to be faithful.

- a. Be faithful to your God.
  - b. Be faithful to your spouse.
  - c. Be faithful to your kids.
  - d. Be faithful to your church and country.
3. Do not quit, but be faithful.
- a. Believe when others doubt.
  - b. Pray when others grumble and complain.
  - c. Love when it's easier to hate.
  - d. Bless when everyone else seems to curse.
4. Be faithful!

Prayer.