



RUTH: A VIRTUOUS WOMAN NAOMI: A WOMAN OF WISDOM

INTRODUCTION

Israel was in great moral decay during the time when the Judges ruled. . . . *every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (Judges 21:25). A famine had swept the country and a certain man named Elimelech took his wife, Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to the country of Moab. The sons took Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, as wives.

Sudden calamity befell the three women, and they became emotionally bound by a common grief, the death of their husbands. Although the future looked bleak, the women offered each other love and sympathy. Amongst the torrent of their tribulations, choices had to be made which changed each one of their lives forever.

By divine providence,¹ the hand of God moved in their lives; in Ruth virtuous qualities surfaced. It was her determination and devotion that made life sweeter despite the bitter hardships. In the midst of a terrible time in history, a beautiful love story surfaces, capturing the love of a *kinsman redeemer*². Moreover, this timeless story exemplifies Christ's compassion and love for us as our Redeemer.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

And now, my daughter [Ruth], fear not; I [Boaz] will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman (Ruth 3:11).

¹ providence: God's foresight and care, control and intervention in the affairs of life.

² kinsman redeemer: a male near kinsman who had the duty to protect his relatives and their property. He had to redeem the property belonging to the relative including begetting and raising children with the wife of the deceased brother so as to carry on his name.

Names Given to the Women in this Story

Naomi	<p>... <i>the name of his wife Naomi</i> ... (Ruth 1:2b). The name <i>Naomi</i> in Hebrew means - pleasant, agreeable, suitable, splendor or grace, to be sweet, lovely.</p>
Ephrathites	<p>... <i>Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah</i> ... (Ruth 1:2c) <i>Ephrathites</i> was a designation for the inhabitants of Bethlehem; an ancient name of Bethlehem.</p>
Mara	<p>... <i>call me not Naomi, call me Mara</i> ... (Ruth 1:20). <i>Mara</i> in Hebrew means - bitter, angry, chafed. After the tragedies in her life, Naomi changed her name to one that fit her circumstances.</p>
Women of Moab	<p>... <i>they took them wives of the women of Moab</i> ... (Ruth 1:4a). In Hebrew, <i>Moabite</i> means - from "her [the mother's] father". Moab was an incestuous son of Lot. Therefore, Ruth and Orpah were Moabites, the ancestors of Lot.</p>
Orpah	<p>... <i>the name of the one was Orpah</i> ... (Ruth 1:4b). The name <i>Orpah</i> in Hebrew means - dropped down, nape or the back of the neck, stiff-necked, stubborn.</p>
Ruth	<p>... <i>and the name of the other Ruth</i> ... (Ruth 1:4c). The name <i>Ruth</i> in Hebrew means - friend, neighbor, companion.</p>
Stranger	<p>... <i>seeing I [Ruth] am a stranger?</i> (Ruth 2:10). Not from Bethlehem but from an idolatrous nation.</p>

SECTION I – A Woman of Determination

READ Ruth Chapter 1.

1. DESCRIBE what happened during the days the Judges ruled (vv. 1, 2). _____

What did Elimelech do? Where did they sojourn³? _____

2. What calamity came upon Naomi (v. 3)? _____

3. What women did the sons take as wives (v. 4)? _____

What were their names? _____

³ sojourn: to visit temporarily, turn aside from the road for lodging or any purpose, to be in a strange place, to be a guest; to visit temporarily.

LOOK DEEPER

Who were the Moabites and how did they originate (Genesis 19:30-38)? _____

What gods did the Moabites worship (Numbers 25:1-3; I Kings 11:33)? _____^{4 5}

Why were the Israelites forbidden by God to intermarry with the Moabites (I Kings 11:1, 2)? _____

4. What other bitter circumstances befell Naomi and her two daughters-in-law (Ruth 1:5)? _____

^{6 7}

PERSONAL

How do you think these hardships affected the women? _____

5. Why did Naomi decide to return to Bethlehem (vv. 6, 7)? _____

6. What did Naomi advise her two daughters-in-law to do (v. 8a)? _____

7. What blessings did Naomi desire her daughters-in-law to receive from the Lord (vv. 8b, 9a)? _____

8. Despite Naomi's words, what had both her daughters-in-law decided (v. 10)? _____

⁴ Baal-peor - *Baal* master, lord, husband: lord of the gap, a god of the Moabites worshipped by obscene rites on Mount Peor.

⁵ Chemosh: the destroyer, subduer or fish-god; the god of the Moabites; believed to be the god of war.

⁶ Mahlon: sickly, puny.

⁷ Chillion: the pining one, wasting away.

9. Why did Naomi encourage them to return to their own homes (vv. 12, 13a)? _____

10. Who did Naomi say was against her (v. 13b)? _____

11. What was each of the daughters-in-law reaction toward their mother-in-law's words (v. 14)? _____

Orpah _____

Ruth _____ ⁸

12. What was Orpah's decision (v. 15)? _____

13. WRITE Ruth's determined poetic statement of faith and pledge to continue to follow Naomi (vv. 16, 17).

To whom was Ruth ultimately making a commitment to follow? _____

14. How did Naomi respond to Ruth's unwavering faith (v. 18)? _____

15. How did the city of Bethlehem-judah react to Naomi's return (v. 19)? _____

16. By what name did Naomi ask to be called? Why (vv. 20, 21)? _____

_____ ⁹

Although Naomi was going through a bitter season in her life and went so far as to change her name to express her pain, she still acknowledged God as the Lord Almighty.

17. In what time of the year did they return (v. 22)? _____

⁸ clave: to cling or adhere; be joined together.

⁹ the Almighty - Hebrew *Shadday* most powerful.

PERSONAL

When your heart is full of sorrow and your head is bowed down, with hopelessness, have you been tempted to turn back like Orpah, to your old life and gods? Do you react like Naomi and become bitter? Or do you respond like Ruth and follow after God?

SECTION 2 – A Woman of Devotion

READ Ruth Chapter 2.

1. DESCRIBE Boaz (v. 1). _____

2. What was Ruth’s request of Naomi (v. 2)? _____

Gleaning is the process of gathering grain or other produce left in the fields by the reapers. The Old Testament law required that property owners leave some of their produce in the fields so they might be gathered by the poor and the stranger (Leviticus 19:9, 10, 23:22).

3. Into whose field did Ruth glean (Ruth 2:3)? _____
4. EXAMINE the special greeting Boaz gave to his reapers, and their response. What did this reveal about Boaz’s character (v. 4)?

5. As Ruth was hard at work, Boaz took notice of her when he came into his fields. What question did he ask his servant and what was his servant’s response (vv. 5, 6)?

PERSONAL

Nothing in Ruth's life had happened by chance, but by the providence of God. What a comfort to know, in the midst of the normal business of our days, the invisible hand of God is at work behind the scene, unfolding His master plan for our lives! How does Jeremiah 29:11 help you understand this truth?

Why do you think Boaz took notice of Ruth? _____

6. What did Boaz say to Ruth, concerning gleaning within his field (Ruth 2:8, 9a)? _____

7. What instructions did Boaz give to the young men (v. 9b)? _____

8. How did Ruth respond (v. 10)? _____

9. What had been reported to Boaz concerning Ruth (v. 11)? _____

10. What blessing did Boaz state Ruth should receive from the Lord (v. 12)? _____

LOOK DEEPER

What does one find under the shadow of the LORD God of Israel's wings? _____

Psalm 17:8 _____

Psalm 36:7 _____

Psalm 57:1 _____

Psalm 61:4 _____

Psalm 63:7 _____

Psalm 91:1, 4 _____

Who is the LORD God of Israel (Matthew 23:37)? _____

11. What did Ruth find in Boaz (Ruth 2:13)? _____

12. What special invitation did Boaz give to Ruth (v. 14)? _____

13. When Ruth rose up to glean in the fields again, what further kindness did Boaz show towards her (vv. 15, 16)?

14. How long had Ruth gleaned in the field and how much had she acquired (v. 17, 18)? _____

10

What did Ruth do with the barley? _____

PERSONAL

Ruth's love and devotion for the Lord overflowed in love and devotion towards Naomi by sharing her blessing with her. How are you willing to be used of God as a channel of His overflowing goodness and share with your family and others, no matter how small or great the gift?

15. What did Naomi say concerning the one who took notice of her (v. 19)? _____

What was his name? _____

11

16. How did Naomi bless the LORD and what did she reveal about Boaz (v. 20)? _____

¹⁰ ephah: a large container with a lid, large enough to hold a woman (Zechariah 5:6, 7). It was a tenth of a homer (Ezekiel 45:11) and was also used to measure cereals (Ruth 2:17). A homer was the largest dry measure.

¹¹ Boaz: ancestor of King David; son of Salmon (a prince of Israel) and Rahab.

17. How long did Boaz invite Ruth to continue to glean in his field (v. 21)? _____

18. What did Naomi wisely agree Ruth should do (v. 22)? _____

19. How did Ruth respond (v. 23)? _____

SECTION 3 – A Woman under Direction

READ Ruth Chapter 3.

1. Through Naomi's godly perception, she continued to seek for Ruth's well being. What did she advise Ruth to do (vv. 1-4)?

2. What did Ruth do (v. 5)? _____

Naomi instructed Ruth of an unfamiliar Jewish custom of that day concerning marriage. Ruth trusted her mother-in-law's godly guidance and obeyed all that was asked of her.

PERSONAL

How do you respond to the instructions of older women? _____

What does Titus 2:3-5 instruct you? _____

3. Boaz, startled and awakened at midnight, saw Ruth. What did she request of him (Ruth 3:6- 9)? _____

4. How did Boaz commend and bless Ruth (vv. 10, 11)? _____

Under Naomi's wise direction, Ruth submitted to her every request. The Jewish custom in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 is what Ruth was asking Boaz to perform. The custom of the leviratic marriage specified that when an Israelite died without leaving a male heir, his nearest relative would act as the kinsman redeemer by marrying the widow in order to continue the family name of the deceased brother. The firstborn son by her would be acknowledged as the deceased brother's legal child.

5. Despite Boaz's eagerness to perform the duty of kinsman redeemer, what obstacle lay ahead (v. 12)?

6. What instruction did Boaz give Ruth (vv. 13-15)? _____

How did he bless her? _____

7. How did Naomi confirm Boaz's pledge to Ruth (vv. 16-18)? _____

Through Boaz, God was going to provide the greatest Gift of all!

¹² *Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid*: A pledge that he would marry her, therefore becoming her redeemer — redeeming her family property, and raising up children in her deceased husband's name.

SECTION 4 – Redeemed Women

READ Ruth Chapter 4.

1. Who did Boaz happen to meet and ask to join him at the city gate (v. 1)? _____

2. Who else did Boaz invite to sit with him at the gate (v. 2)? _____¹³

The city gate was the place for the transaction of public business, announcements, and where legal matters were decided.

3. What did Boaz offer to the nearer kinsman (vv. 3, 4)? _____

4. At first, the relative was willing to redeem the land. Why did he have a change of heart (vv. 5, 6)?

5. What was the significance of a man removing his sandal (vv. 7, 8)? _____

6. Who became a witness of the redeeming act (vv. 9-11a)? _____

What was the final transaction? _____

7. In what way did the people ask the Lord to bless Ruth (vv. 11b, 12)? _____

_____¹⁴

_____¹⁵

8. Briefly WRITE out what the women said to Naomi (vv. 13-15). _____

¹³ ten men: witnesses to this legal transaction.

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah: wives of Jacob who bore him many children.

¹⁵ House of Pharez: from whom Boaz descended (Ruth 4:18).

9. What did Naomi become to the newborn child (v. 16)? _____

10. Who named the child and what did they call him (v. 17)? _____

Who would he become? _____

11. The mystery is revealed! READ Ruth 4:18-22 with Matthew 1:1-16. Who came to this earth through the genealogy of Boaz and Ruth?

MEMORY VERSE

(Ruth 3:11).

Ruth and Naomi teach us to follow God by faith. Despite tragic and bitter circumstances, through knowing and believing on the Almighty, they allowed God to lead and control their lives. By being faithful to God and faithful to each other, these women both experienced the faithfulness of God in every area of need in their lives. Putting their trust in the LORD, He provided a kinsman redeemer for them, through whom came the Redeemer for the entire world.

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