



LESSON 13

God's sovereignty in the book of Ruth

RUTH 1:1-4:22



God is sovereign to bless His people.



“Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!’ (Ruth 4:14).

Supporting Truths

1. God is sovereign.
2. God is sovereign to bless those who act faithfully.
3. God is sovereign over difficulties.
4. God is sovereign over coincidences.
5. God is sovereign over His plan of redemption.

Objectives

1. Explain what it means that God is sovereign.
2. Describe how Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz display faith in God and love for others.
3. Explain how God turned Naomi’s trouble into blessing for her and for the world.
4. Identify one event in the story that seemed to happen by chance.
5. Explain how God preserved the line of Christ when it was about to die out.

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God's sovereignty in the book of Ruth • Ruth 1:1-4:22



Lesson Summary

In the dark days of the judges, the story of Ruth shines with hope. Although Naomi felt like God was against her, God used her troubles to bring Ruth back to Israel. Then God arranged what seemed like coincidence to draw Boaz into the story. Finally, God worked through the steadfast love of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz to bless all three of them beyond what they could have imagined. But even more than that, God worked through their faithful actions to preserve the line of the Messiah.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God had promised that through Abraham's seed all nations would be blessed. But Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel, seemed like they were about to destroy themselves during the time of the judges. The line of the Messiah seemed like it had died out altogether. But God sovereignly arranged events to preserve the Messiah's line through the faithful actions of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

LAST WEEK



God uses Samson to
deliver Israel
Judges 13:1-16:31

THIS WEEK



God's sovereignty in
the book of Ruth
Ruth 1:1-4:22

NEXT WEEK



God gives Israel a
prophet and judge
1 Samuel 1:1-7:17

POSSESSION

UNITED KINGDOM

Lesson Commentary

God is sovereign to bless His people.

During the time of the judges everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judg 21:25). Because of Israel's idolatry, the book of Judges ends with depressing descriptions of Israel's great wickedness. Then comes the book of Ruth, a breath of fresh air. Israel seemed hopelessly lost in sin, but the story of Ruth shows that God was still in control. He was still at work to bless His faithful ones and to keep the line of the Messiah alive.

Moab: God is sovereign over trouble (1:1–22)

As would be expected during the time of the judges, the story begins with trouble. Israel suffered such severe famine that even Bethlehem, which means, “house of bread,” had no bread (Ruth 1:1). In search of food, Elimelech left the promised land and moved to the pagan land of Moab (1:2). His two sons married Moabite women, something forbidden by the law of Moses (1:4; Deut 7:3–4; 23:3–6; Num 25). Such disregard for God just made the trouble worse: both sons and Naomi's husband died, leaving Naomi alone (Ruth 1:5).

But the LORD was at work, even during their trouble. He once again provided food in Israel, so Naomi prepared to return (1:6). She urged her daughters-in-law to return to their people and marry again (1:8–13), selflessly seeking their good since she would be unable to provide them with new husbands. However, although she recognized God's control in the midst of trouble, Naomi's outlook on life was not pleasing to God. She bitterly complained that the LORD's hand was against her (1:13).

But God was not against her. He gave her Ruth, who left everything she knew—her people, her country, her religion—for the sake of Naomi. Ruth devoted herself to Naomi, and to Naomi's God, for life (1:16–17). During a time when Israel as a whole had forsaken God, it took a Moabite woman to show what it meant to love the LORD with all her heart (Deut 6:5) and to love her neighbor as herself (Lev 19:18).

Even so, Naomi could only see her problems. She called herself Mara, which means “bitter” (Ruth 1:20). She knew God was **sovereign** and in control of everything, everywhere, all the time, but she felt empty. She did not realize that all her trouble—the famine, the trip to Moab, and the deaths of her husband and sons—was not just under God's control, but also a part of God's plan to bless her, Israel, and the world.

THINK ABOUT IT

Even when life is difficult God's people can have confidence that He remains in sovereign control.



The Fields of Bethlehem: God is sovereign over coincidences (2:1–23)

As two widows, Naomi and Ruth had no income. Fortunately, God's law made a way for widows and foreigners to survive. They could gather the grain that land owners were required to leave behind during harvest (Lev 19:9).

Ruth “happened” to come to Boaz's field, but this was no coincidence. God is in control of all things—even over what appears to be **chance** or coincidence (Prov 16:33). Ruth did not know whose field she had come to, but we do: the owner of the field was not only a godly man, but also a relative of Elimelech. God was directing events, even ones that seemed to happen by chance, to accomplish His purpose and bless His people.

Like Ruth, Boaz expressed his love for God by loving others. He was kind to his servants, as well as to Ruth and Naomi (2:4, 8–16). He provided for Ruth's safety, let Ruth eat the food and drink the water prepared for his servants, and instead of just allowing Ruth to gather grain at the corners of his field and among the leftovers, he told his servants to purposely leave behind additional grain for her. By the end of the day, Ruth took home between 30 and 50 pounds of barley! Boaz went far beyond what the law required to make sure that Ruth and Naomi were taken care of.

At home Naomi discovered whose field Ruth happened to be in, and Ruth learned that Boaz was a family redeemer. A **family redeemer** is a man who rescues, provides

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for, and protects relatives who are in need (Lev 25:25–30; 27:47–55; Num 5:8; 35:12, 19–27; Jer 50:34). Naomi had complained of being bitter and empty, but now she saw that the LORD had not forgotten her (Ruth 2:20).

Boaz's Threshing Floor: God is sovereign to bless those who act faithfully (3:1–18)

Boaz was kind, but Naomi wanted Ruth to find long-term security through marriage (3:1–4). Ruth obeyed Naomi and asked Boaz to spread the wing of his cloak over her, which was asking him to bring security to her life through marriage (3:9). This was very unusual: a young, poor, Moabite

woman asking an older, rich, Israelite man to marry her! But God guided Boaz's response, because God is sovereign over human hearts (Prov 21:1). Rather than being insulted, Boaz rejoiced (3:10–13).



THINK ABOUT IT

Their faithful love for others is a picture of God's faithful love for His people.

Even though Naomi's plan resembled the immoral activity common during the time of the judges, Boaz and Ruth were different. Their actions were not sinful. Boaz even insisted that there not even be the appearance of evil (3:14). All three characters consistently acted for the sake of others: Naomi sought a husband for Ruth, Ruth sought a family redeemer for Naomi, and Boaz sought the security of both Naomi and Ruth.

The City of Bethlehem: God is sovereign over His plan of redemption (4:1–22)

Boaz acted quickly. He went to the city gate, the place of business, and found the man who was a closer relative to Elimelech (4:1). Although this unnamed man was willing to buy back Elimelech's land to keep it in the family, he was unwilling to marry Ruth, saying that this would endanger his own estate (4:4–6). Because he cared more about his own name and legacy than about loving Naomi and Ruth, his name ends up being forgotten forever.

So Boaz became the family redeemer in order to keep Elimelech's and Mahlon's name alive (4:10). He married Ruth, and through that marriage God blessed all involved and fulfilled His plan of redemption.

Naomi, who felt bitter and empty at the beginning of the story, was full and blessed at the end. She lost two sons, but now she had a daughter-in-law worth more than seven sons. She lost a husband, but now she had a grandson to continue the family line and to care for her in her old age. Looking back, she could see that God is good, even when His ways are mysterious.

Ruth began as a Moabite widow, but because she chose to worship the LORD and love His people, she gained a godly husband and a place among God's people. Through her, Moabite blood would flow in the veins of David and of Jesus. Her life shows how wide God's grace is, extending far beyond ethnic Israel and offered to any who will love Him with all their heart.

Boaz was willing to give up his own name in order to be the family redeemer for Naomi and Ruth. As a result, he enjoyed marriage with Ruth, a model of the Proverbs 31 woman. And instead of having his name disappear from history, his name is recorded forever, both as an ancestor of David and of the Messiah, and also as an illustration of God's redeeming love.

The way God blessed these three is just a small glimpse of the much greater blessing God was working through them. Through their faithful love, God preserved the line of David, and through David would come the Messiah. God was keeping His promise to make Israel a great nation and to bless all nations through Israel. He sovereignly arranged all of the events, whether trouble or chance, to bring about His plan of salvation.

Lesson Outline

God is sovereign to bless His people.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God used Naomi's trouble to bring Ruth to Israel (1:1–22).
2. God caused Ruth to come to Boaz's field (2:1–23).
3. God caused Boaz to agree to Ruth's request (3:1–18).
4. God made Boaz and Ruth the great-grandparents of David (4:1–22).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. **Moab: God is sovereign over trouble (1:1–22).**
 - Naomi lost her home, her husband, and her sons (1:1–5).
 - Naomi told her daughters-in-law that her future was hopeless (1:6–13).
 - Ruth promised to stay with Naomi for life (1:14–18).
 - Naomi told the women of Bethlehem that her life was bitter and empty (1:19–22).
2. **The Fields of Bethlehem: God is sovereign over coincidences (2:1–23).**
 - Ruth happened to gather grain in the field of Boaz, Naomi's close relative (2:1–7).
 - Boaz was kind to her because he heard of her kindness to Naomi (2:8–18).
 - Naomi knew that God was blessing them (2:19–23).
3. **Boaz's Threshing Floor: God is sovereign to bless those who act faithfully (3:1–18).**
 - Ruth asked Boaz to be the family redeemer by marrying her (3:1–9).
 - Boaz agreed to be the family redeemer if the closer relative would not (3:10–18).
4. **The City of Bethlehem: God is sovereign over His plan of redemption (4:1–22).**
 - The closer relative refused to be the family redeemer (4:1–8).
 - Boaz became the family redeemer by marrying Ruth (4:9–1).
 - Boaz and Ruth continued Naomi's family by having a son, Obed (4:13–17a).
 - Boaz and Ruth were the great-grandparents of David (4:17b–22).



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God's sovereignty in the book of Ruth • Ruth 1:1-4:22



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What happened to Naomi's husband and sons?**
They died in Moab.
- 2. Did Ruth leave Naomi alone?**
No. Ruth loved Naomi and stayed with her for life.
- 3. Why did Boaz care about Ruth and Naomi?**
Boaz was their relative. He was their family redeemer.
- 4. Who was Ruth's important descendant (her great-grandson)?**
Ruth's descendant was David. Much later, her descendant was Jesus.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What troubles did Naomi experience?**
Famine and the deaths of her husband and sons.
- 2. Who did Naomi blame for her troubles?**
She blamed God. This showed she knew God was in control, but she did not trust Him to be good.
- 3. What good thing did Naomi bring back from her troubles in Moab?**
Ruth. God used Naomi's troubles to bring Ruth to Israel.
- 4. Was it just a coincidence that Ruth happened to be in Boaz's field?**
No. God is sovereign over coincidences.
- 5. How did Naomi's plan succeed?**
Her plan succeeded because God gave success and gave Boaz the right attitude to respond.
- 6. Who did Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz care about most?**
They loved others most. All their selfless actions were for the good of others.
- 7. How did God show His love for these three?**
He gave Naomi a grandson. He gave Ruth a godly husband. He gave Boaz a godly wife. He gave all of them a lasting name and the privilege of being in the line of Christ.
- 8. What was God's main purpose in the story of Ruth?**
God was controlling the whole story in order to preserve the line of Christ. The love of the characters, and God's blessing on them, is just a taste of the greater love and blessing that come through Jesus.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



DAVID'S GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

Have your parent, grandparent, or great-grandparent come to class. Have them talk about some of your favorite family memories or traditions. Talk about how God uses relatives to care for us and teach us about God. Tell the children that in today's lesson, we're going to learn about king David's great-grandparents whom God included in the family of Jesus.

GLEANING

Scatter items around the perimeter of the room, and have children race to fill their buckets. Items could be toys or something to represent wheat, such as brown strips of paper. Talk about what gleaning was, who did it, and why. Talk about God's instructions to field owners. In today's lesson, children will hear about Ruth gleaning in a field belonging to a man named Boaz.



FAMINE

Bring a bowl full of fruit to class. Empty the bowl, explaining to the children that famine means there is no rain and therefore no food to eat. A famine would not last just a day or a week, but for months, and there was no store where people could go buy supplies.

SOVEREIGN GOD

Before class, create a cardstock cutout of a small person (about the side of your index finger). Attach a paperclip to the bottom of the cutout. Next create a path for the cutout to be moved along on an 8 ½ by 11 inch piece of cardstock paper. During class, move the person cutout along the path by means of a hidden magnet under the cardstock paper (don't let the children see how you're moving the person). Ask the children how the person is moving. Explain that God is sovereign. Even when we can't see how, God is moving and directing all things (including us!) according to the plan and path He has for us.



OBED'S FAMILY TREE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: For younger children, cut out pictures prior to class. During class, have the students color the trees and the men. Then have them glue the pictures to the tree in the proper order.

Obed's Family Tree
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

DIVINE DESIGN

Show the children the back of a needlework design (don't reveal the front yet). Ask them what they see. Can they identify anything at all? Explain that it just looks like a bunch of random stitches of various colors scattered all over in no particular order. Then show the children the front of the design, revealing how all the different stitches come together to create a beautiful picture. This helps us understand something about God's sovereignty. Even when we don't understand how everything in life fits together, we can be confident that God is using everything exactly as He has planned to create a beautiful picture.

GENERATIONS TIME LINE

String a rope across the room or hang it from the ceiling. Attach the previous coloring pages for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah to the rope. Leave some space between those and the generations of the lesson today, including Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and David. Then allow more space before you get to Jesus Christ. Explain the significance of knowing this genealogy—it leads to Christ (Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:31–34)!



ILLUSTRATE

TWO HEADED COIN

Buy or make a coin with the same image on both sides. Use as a demonstration of sovereignty by seemingly being able to make it land on whichever side you wish (Prov 16:33).

TWICE MINE!

Tom carefully placed his new boat in the water and slowly let out the string. How smoothly the boat sailed! Suddenly a strong current caught the boat. Tom tried to pull it back to shore, but the string broke. The little boat raced downstream. Tom ran along the sandy shore as fast as he could. But his little boat soon slipped out of sight. All afternoon he searched for the boat. Finally, when it was too dark to look any longer, Tom sadly went home. A few days later, on the way home from school, Tom spotted a boat just like his in a store window. When he got closer, he could see—sure enough—it was his! Tom hurried to the store manager: "Sir, that's my boat in your window! I made it!" "Sorry, son, but someone else brought it in this morning. If you want it, you'll have to buy it." Tom reached into his pocket and placed the money in the manager's hand. As he left the store, Tom hugged his boat and said, "Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you."



APPLY

GENERATIONS MOBILE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, white string, red string, hole punch, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Cut out the mobile. Fold it in half, and punch holes where indicated. Students can color and cut out the men on the second page. Punch a hole in the top of each figure, and have students use string to attach the figures to the mobile. Make sure that they put the men in this order. Add yarn at the top for hanging.

Generations Mobile

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Read Psalm 23 (or another familiar Davidic psalm) to the children. Ask them who wrote it. Explain that the author, David, was one of Israel's most beloved kings and was called "a man after God's own heart." When today's Bible story took place, Israel did not have a king, but we are going to learn about David's great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother. Their family also would one day include Israel's Messiah, Jesus.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY & MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

R. B. Kuiper, during his days as a guest lecturer at Calvin Seminary (Grand Rapids, Michigan), once used the following illustration of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility: "I liken them to two ropes going through two holes in the ceiling and over a pulley above. If I wish to support myself by them, I must cling to them both. If I cling only to one and not the other, I go down. Explain that in today's story we're going to see God sovereignly accomplishing His will through the faithful actions of Naomi, Ruth, and, Boaz.



ILLUSTRATE

FLIGHT 191

An unexpected delay in New York kept a would-be passenger from catching Flight 191 in Chicago, which crashed with all 254 passengers aboard. However, the story is told of another passenger, Edwards E. Elliott, the beloved pastor of the Garden Grove Orthodox Presbyterian Church in California, who ran to make the same flight—and made it! His plane from Pennsylvania was late, and a friend who had accompanied him to Chicago said he last saw him "dashing forward" in the terminal to make his connection. Reverend Elliott didn't know he was running to Heaven. The sovereignty of God was indeed operating in both cases.

GOD APPOINTED A FISH

Jonah's deliverance came in the form of a fish. A fish that God created, sustained, and called into action at the exact moment that Jonah was cast overboard the ship headed to Tarshish (Jonah 1:17). It was only by God's sovereignty that this took place. In the same way, God was sovereign over the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz.



APPLY

THE VIRTUOUS WIFE MEMORY GAME

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Photocopy "The Virtuous Wife Memory Game" page on cardstock, and cut out the cards. Place the cards face down. The goal is to match a passage from the book of Ruth with a similar passage from Proverbs 31. Write the list of godly traits on the board for the children to view. If a child turns over one card from each book, he should evaluate whether they describe the same godly trait. If the cards describe the same trait, the child should guess what trait is being described (from list on board). If the child guesses correctly, he can keep the cards.

Godly Trait Matching Cards

Devotion to her family (Ruth

1:15–18; Prov 31:28–29)

Delight in her work (Ruth 2:2;

Prov 31:13)

Diligence in her labor (Ruth 2:7,

17, 23; Prov 31:14–18)

Dedication to the godly (Ruth

2:10, 13; Prov 31:26)

Dependence on God (Ruth 2:12;

Prov 31: 25b, 30)

Dressing with care (Ruth 3:3;

Prov 31:22, 25a)

Discretion with men (Ruth

3:6–13; Prov 31:10–12, 23)

Delivering of blessings (Ruth

4:14–15; Prov 31:31)