



Ruth

REDEEMING LOVE
IN
A BROKEN WORLD

A story of ordinary faithfulness, divine providence, and unexpected redemption—leading straight into the line of Christ.

- **Week 1: When Life Falls Apart (Ruth 1)**
 - **Theme:** God's providence meets us even in our pain.
 - **Key Ideas:**
 - Naomi's family flees famine, and she loses everything.
 - Ruth, a Moabite, chooses faithfulness over comfort.
 - The chapter ends with grief—but not without hope.
 - **Big Question:** When you feel empty, will you return to God or remain bitter?
- **Week 2: God at Work in the Ordinary (Ruth 2)**
 - **Theme:** Even mundane obedience matters in God's story.
 - **Key Ideas:**
 - Ruth "just so happens" to glean in Boaz's field—divine providence in daily life.
 - Boaz's kindness reflects God's character.
 - The chapter is quiet, but filled with covenant faithfulness.
 - **Big Question:** Where might God be working through the unnoticed details of your life?
- **Week 3: Bold Faith and Risky Grace (Ruth 3)**
 - **Theme:** God honors bold, vulnerable acts of faith.
 - **Key Ideas:**
 - Ruth and Naomi devise a bold plan of proposal at the threshing floor.
 - Boaz responds with grace, integrity, and provision.
 - This scene echoes the Gospel: grace meeting vulnerability.
 - **Big Question:** Are you willing to trust God with your vulnerability?
- **Week 4: From Bitterness to Blessing (Ruth 4)**
 - **Theme:** God restores, redeems, and writes a better ending.
 - **Key Ideas:**
 - Boaz acts decisively as kinsman-redeemer.
 - Ruth, the outsider, becomes the great-grandmother of David.
 - God turns Naomi's emptiness into joyful legacy.
 - **Big Question:** What might God be writing at the end of your story?

Leader's Guide: Ruth – *Redeeming Love in a Broken World*

Introduction: A Story of Redeeming Love

It was the time of the judges, when the land groaned under the weight of famine and the silence of God felt like thunder. Fields that once bent heavy with grain now cracked under a relentless sun. Families gathered what little they could, some clinging to hope, others drifting toward despair.

Among them was a woman named Naomi. With her husband and two sons, she left Bethlehem—the “house of bread” now empty—to search for life in a foreign land. To the east lay Moab, a country whose hills and gods were strangers to Israel’s covenant. It was not a journey of triumph but of survival, the desperate gamble of a family on the edge.

And in Moab, Naomi lost everything. Husband. Sons. Future. The world, once full, had collapsed to ashes and silence. She would return to Bethlehem with nothing but bitterness in her mouth and the hollow echo of her name.

Yet walking beside her on the road was a daughter-in-law, Ruth. Young. Foreign. Vulnerable. With every reason to turn back to her people and her gods, Ruth instead clung to Naomi with words that still cut across history: *“Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”*

What begins as the quiet faithfulness of two widows on a dusty road becomes one of the most unexpected love stories in Scripture—not love in the way of fleeting romance, but love forged in loyalty, sacrifice, and redemption. A love that will echo through Bethlehem’s gates, resound in David’s throne room, and break open in a manger centuries later.

The book of Ruth is not simply the tale of a widow and a foreigner, nor even of a kind man at a threshing floor. It is the story of God weaving grace into the fabric of ordinary lives, of His providence hidden in “chance” encounters, and of His redemption breaking through where bitterness once ruled.

This is the story of redeeming love in a broken world. And, like all true stories, it is not merely about them. It is about us.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is written to help you lead others through Ruth with both confidence and flexibility. Each chapter’s study includes:

- **Icebreaker (choose one or two):** simple entry points that invite participants to connect personally.
- **Text Meaning:** key themes and questions that draw out what the passage is saying in its context.
- **Implications:** reflection questions that bring the text into conversation with our lives.
- **Gospel Connection:** ensures that discussion points to Christ, not simply moral lessons.
- **Apply & Pray:** practical next steps and prayer prompts (Thank you / Sorry / Please).

Key Reminders for Leaders

- **Keep the Big Story in View:** Ruth is about more than one family; it points to God’s plan of redemption in Christ.
- **Embrace the Ordinary:** The book shows how God works through ordinary obedience and “chance” details.
- **Highlight Christ, Not Just Character:** Boaz points us to the true Redeemer; Ruth and Naomi’s faith points us to our need for Christ.
- **Lead with Grace:** Participants may bring their own grief, bitterness, or vulnerability into the room. Be tender, listening as God weaves their story into His.

How to lead a Small Group Bible Study

Perhaps you've been leading Bible Studies for a long time... or maybe this is your first attempt. Either way, know that we're here to coach and guide you! Here are some simple things to keep in mind and a brief outline as you begin: First, realize what a Small Group Bible Study is. It's not a book club, lecture society, or sensitivity training. A Small Group Bible Study's goal is to apply the Gospel to everyday life as we intersect with the Bible.

A Small Group Bible Study Defined

- 1 – A weekly meeting where the Bible is the one curriculum
- 2 – Two targets: The Gospel and Discipleship Engines
- 3 – 12 People... once it gets larger discussion is hindered
- 4 – Questions to help apply to real life.

Purpose - Discipleship = Follow, Form, Fulfill - "Making Disciples" means we are helping people move into being followers of Jesus to people who are being formed by Jesus to people who are fulfilling the great commission. We are sharing the Gospel, making Disciples, and equipping Ambassadors.

Rules of the Road

- #1 BE SELF-AWARE not AUDIENCE AWARE: Be self-aware of how you personally affect the group through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. Use "I" statements about what you think/feel... and make sure everyone talks. No preaching! Let Jesus (through his Word) fix people. Give encouragement; speak truth, point to Jesus.
- #2 CONFIDENTIALITY: What's said in the group stays in the group.
- #3 LISTEN: (PAUSE and SILENCE and No "Cross Talk") Value one another during the discussions. Don't think about what to say next. Affirm what's being said right now. Take a breath and think about what's just been said before responding. And don't fill the silence... Stay in the moment... be considerate... listen. No side conversations.

Open – Help the group focus on the reason they're there - Start by checking in. Ask what people learned the previous week and shared with anyone. This will help move people from "information" to "transformation".

"Open" questions help break the ice and get people relating with each other and the text. Use what's provided or make one up to help your group connect as you see fit. A great opening question will tie real life with the theme of the text... and it helps get people on task in a fun relational manner.

Story the Bible Passage - *Leader: Tell the story in your own words, asking the group to re-tell it back to you.*

This method is called "Storying" and it really helps people to engage with the story. It doesn't replace the reading of God's Word, but it does help people focus and hear things they might not have from the text. After they've heard the passage, and re-told it to you, read the passage. There are some great Storying helps at the end of this booklet.

Dig - Ask the questions in the book OR create new questions with simple journalist investigation. The point of these questions is to dig into the who, what, where, when, why facts of the passage. This helps keep the Bible the main teacher. Everyone has an opinion, but we always want to go back to what the text says. Help everyone keep in mind that the Bible is God's Word, all of it, so we need to let it teach us... rather than simply being commentators.

Apply - This is where a group really learns to apply grow. In order to apply the Gospel to daily living, it's important to ask these four kinds of questions. They help us see God's character and actions and contrast them to people's (and our!) character and actions. Once we see that, the Good News begins to come into focus. And, if you can identify the Good News then it's easy to share it with others.

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do? Who do I need to share this with?

Pray - *Thank you / Sorry / Please* - Keep it simple, inviting everyone to pray, out loud, with simplicity. Simply list the thing(s) you're thankful for in prayer. Then share what you're sorry for (Perhaps something in this study reminded you of something about God you need to remember, or something you need to do that you've neglected) Then, going around as a group, individually listing out your requests (Ask God to please help you with what you need to do... or help you in another area).

Week 1: When Life Falls Apart (Ruth 1)

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.’” (ESV)

Week 1: When Life Falls Apart (Ruth 1)

Theme: God’s providence meets us even in our pain.

Focus Verse: Ruth 1:16–17

Icebreaker Questions

1. Have you ever made a decision that others thought was unwise, but you knew it was the right thing to do?
 2. What’s the hardest goodbye you’ve ever had to say?
 3. If someone looked at your life, what would they see about what you value most?
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Reading the Text

Read Ruth 1 aloud together, then return to verses 16–17.

Leader’s Note: Encourage participants to notice not just Naomi’s bitterness, but Ruth’s remarkable covenant loyalty—what the Expositor’s Bible Commentary calls a “classic expression of devotion and loyalty”.

Questions on the Text’s Meaning

1. What does Ruth’s pledge show about faith?

- Ruth commits to Naomi, Naomi’s people, and Naomi’s God. The IVP Commentary notes that Ruth’s words may seem relational more than theological at first, but they are a radical departure from her people and gods.
- **Leader’s Note:** Stress that faith is not just belief in doctrine—it is allegiance, loyalty, and costly trust.

2. Why is Ruth’s response surprising in the context?

- She is a Moabite—outsider, from a people opposed to Israel (Deut. 23:3). Yet she clings (Hebrew *dābaq*) to Naomi, using covenantal marriage language.
- She is not promised security, but hardship. And yet she binds herself by invoking Yahweh’s covenant name.

3. How does Naomi interpret her suffering?

- Naomi sees the “hand of the Almighty” against her (vv. 20–21). The Christ-Centered Expository Commentary calls this the **mystery of mercy**: God’s sovereignty is not absent in suffering, but often hidden in it.
 - **Leader’s Note:** This is where reformed theology affirms *God’s providence*. As Cranmer prayed, “Whose property is always to have mercy”—even through affliction.
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Questions for Implications

1. What does Ruth teach us about faithfulness in suffering?
 - J.C. Ryle often said true faith clings when all else falls away: “Faith is the hand that clings to Christ in the dark.”
 2. How does Naomi’s bitterness reflect our own struggles?
 - Tim Keller reminds us that “suffering awakens us to our misplaced hopes” (cf. his sermons on Job). Naomi thought she left Bethlehem full and returned empty—yet in God’s eyes, she was being brought back to the place of true fullness.
 3. How does this moment connect to the larger story of the Bible?
 - From Abraham’s call to Jesus’ Great Commission, God is always bringing outsiders in. Ruth’s vow anticipates Gentile inclusion in Christ (Eph. 2:12–13).
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Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

- Ruth’s vow foreshadows Christ’s greater vow. Where Ruth says, “Where you die, I will die,” Christ goes further: **He dies in our place.**
- Naomi feels empty, but God is preparing a Redeemer through Ruth’s line—ultimately leading to David and to Jesus (Matt. 1:5).
- C.S. Lewis once wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, but shouts in our pain.” Naomi thought she was abandoned, but God was shouting redemption.

Leader’s Note: Emphasize that the Gospel doesn’t say “be like Ruth” but rather, “look to Christ, who clung to us even when we were foreigners and sinners.”

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
 2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
 3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can’t do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
 4. What do we (I) need to do?
 5. Who do I need to share this with?
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Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for never abandoning us, even when life feels bitter.
- **Sorry** for the times we interpret your providence as absence or anger.
- **Please** help us cling to Christ with Ruth’s faith, and see your mercy even when it feels hidden.

Week 2: God at Work in the Ordinary (Ruth 2)

“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!” (ESV)

Week 2: God at Work in the Ordinary (Ruth 2)

Theme: Even mundane obedience matters in God’s story.

Focus Verse: Ruth 2:12

Icebreaker (choose one or two)

1. Have you ever had a “chance encounter” that turned out to change your life?
 2. Who has shown you unexpected kindness when you least deserved it?
 3. What’s the most ordinary act of obedience that later revealed God’s bigger plan?
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Reading the Text

Read Ruth 2 aloud together, then focus on verse 12.

Leader’s Note: Highlight that Ruth 2 begins with what seems like coincidence—Ruth “just so happens” to glean in Boaz’s field—but the commentary reminds us this is providence, not accident.

Questions on the Text’s Meaning

1. What does Boaz’s blessing in v. 12 reveal about God?

- The imagery of “taking refuge under God’s wings” was common in Israel, expressing covenant care and protection.
- Boaz recognizes Ruth’s faith in action—leaving Moab, clinging to Naomi, and trusting Israel’s God.

Leader’s Note: Connect this to Psalm 91:4, where God covers His people with His wings.

2. How do we see providence at work in Ruth’s “ordinary” gleaning?

- The Hebrew phrase “her chance chanced” (2:3) stresses that what looks like luck is God’s hidden hand.
- Ruth’s mundane labor places her exactly where God wants her to be.

Leader’s Note: Remind the group that reformed theology sees God’s sovereignty over all things—even what feels random. Cranmer prayed, “whose property is always to have mercy,” and here that mercy is hidden in daily tasks.

3. How does Boaz’s character contrast with the dangers Ruth could have faced?

- He greets workers with “The LORD be with you” (2:4), revealing godly leadership.
- He orders protection for Ruth, offers water, and invites her to eat at his table—actions that go beyond the law’s requirements.

Leader's Note: J.C. Ryle often said, "True grace is seen not in great things only, but in little acts of everyday holiness."

Questions for Implications

1. What ordinary responsibilities in your life might be places where God is at work?
2. How does Ruth's humility challenge our attitude toward receiving kindness?
3. How does Boaz's generosity call us to reflect God's character in our treatment of others?

Leader's Note: Tim Keller reminds us that "real faith is not primarily in what we do for God, but what we trust Him to do through us—even in the small things."

Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

- Ruth comes under Boaz's protection, but the deeper reality is her coming under **God's wings**. This points us to Christ, who longed to gather His people "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings" (Luke 13:34).
- Boaz's kindness foreshadows Jesus' hospitality—He invites sinners to His table, not just to glean scraps but to feast on the bread of life (John 6:35).
- What looked like an ordinary day in the field becomes part of the lineage leading to David, and ultimately to Christ. God's providence in the ordinary brings about extraordinary redemption.

Leader's Note: C.S. Lewis once wrote that God is "the great artist who never wastes a line." Nothing in our lives—no small act of faithfulness—is wasted.

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
 2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
 3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
 4. What do we (I) need to do?
 5. Who do I need to share this with?
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Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for working through the ordinary details of our lives.
- **Sorry** for when we despise small things or overlook your providence.
- **Please** help us find refuge under Christ's wings and reflect His kindness in our daily lives.

Week 3: Bold Faith and Risky Grace (Ruth 3)

“He said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.’” (ESV)

Week 3: Bold Faith and Risky Grace (Ruth 3)

Theme: God honors bold, vulnerable acts of faith.

Focus Verse: Ruth 3:9

Icebreaker (choose one or two)

1. Have you ever taken a risk that could have backfired but instead turned into a blessing?
 2. What's the boldest step of faith you've taken in your life so far?
 3. Do you find it easier to wait patiently or to try to "make things happen" in your own strength?
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Reading the Text

Read Ruth 3 aloud, then focus on verse 9.

Leader's Note: Set the scene. Naomi's plan is risky, Ruth's obedience is bold, and Boaz's response is crucial. The text is filled with ambiguity, but the author highlights virtue and faith rather than scandal.

Questions on the Text's Meaning

1. What is Ruth asking when she says, "Spread your wings over your servant"?

- The word "wings" (*kanaph*) connects directly to 2:12, where Boaz prayed Ruth would take refuge under God's wings. Now Ruth is asking Boaz to be the instrument of God's covenant care—essentially a marriage proposal.
- The IVP notes that this phrase was also used in the OT to describe betrothal (Ezek. 16:8).

Leader's Note: This is both vulnerable and faithful—Ruth risks rejection, but she appeals to Boaz as *redeemer*, not as a mere suitor.

2. How does Boaz interpret Ruth's boldness?

- He calls her a "woman of noble character" (3:11), the same phrase used in Proverbs 31.
 - Boaz assures Ruth that her request is not improper but an honorable appeal to redemption.
 - The Christ-Centered Commentary highlights that Ruth shifts from Naomi's manipulative plan to a posture of faith once she is in Boaz's presence.
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3. How does this passage redefine "rest"?

- Naomi sought rest through scheming, but true rest comes from trusting the redeemer's provision.
- Ruth and Naomi must wait—this echoes Hebrews 4, where the people of God are called to enter God's rest not by effort but by faith.

Questions for Implications

1. Where do we struggle with trying to manipulate our way into security rather than trusting God's providence?
 - Tim Keller often warned that "idols are the things we can't imagine life without." Manipulation is often an attempt to force our idols to deliver.
2. How does Ruth's vulnerability challenge our self-protective instincts?
 - J.C. Ryle wrote, "Faith is the hand which lays hold of Christ... in the dark and in the light, in weakness and in strength."
3. How might God be calling you to bold obedience even if the outcome is uncertain?

Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

- Ruth appeals to Boaz to "spread his wings" over her; we appeal to Christ, our greater Redeemer, who has already spread His arms on the cross.
- Ruth risks shame to find rest in Boaz; Christ bore our shame to give us eternal rest.
- As C.S. Lewis said, "Nothing you have not given away will ever really be yours." Ruth gave up security in Moab, Naomi gave up control, and both received more than they could imagine.
- Thomas Cranmer reminds us in his collect for peace that true rest comes not from our maneuvering, but from God's gift: "whose service is perfect freedom."

Leader's Note: Emphasize that the point is not "be bold like Ruth" but "trust the Redeemer who honors faith with grace."

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
4. What do we (I) need to do?
5. Who do I need to share this with?

Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** for sending Jesus, our true Redeemer, who spreads His wings of mercy over us.
- **Sorry** for the ways we manipulate and try to secure rest apart from You.
- **Please** help us to be bold in faith, willing to risk vulnerability to receive your grace.

Week 4: From Bitterness to Blessing (Ruth 4)

“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! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.’”
(ESV)

Week 4: From Bitterness to Blessing (Ruth 4)

Theme: God restores, redeems, and writes a better ending.

Focus Verses: Ruth 4:14–15

Icebreaker (choose one or two)

1. Have you ever seen God bring surprising good out of a situation that seemed hopeless?
 2. Who has been a “restorer of life” to you in a difficult season?
 3. If someone were to summarize the “ending” of your story right now, what would it sound like?
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Reading the Text

Read Ruth 4 aloud together, then focus on verses 14–15.

Leader’s Note: Point out how the chapter moves from the legal transaction at the gate to the joyful birth of Obed. Naomi, who once called herself “Mara” (bitter), now receives praise from the women of Bethlehem. The storyline has turned from emptiness to fullness.

Questions on the Text’s Meaning

1. Why is the nearer kinsman left unnamed?

- The narrator calls him *peloni almoni*—“Mr. So-and-So”—a deliberate omission that underscores his refusal to redeem. His name is forgotten; Boaz’s is remembered.
 - **Leader’s Note:** This is a picture of false redeemers: they cannot or will not carry the cost.
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2. What is the significance of the child Obed?

- The women declare him Naomi’s “redeemer”—not because he bought land, but because he would sustain her life and continue her family line.
 - The Christ-Centered Expository Commentary emphasizes that redemption here is not just about property, but about *life restored*—Naomi’s emptiness is filled, her legacy secured.
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3. How does the genealogy (vv. 18–22) shape the story?

- What seemed like a private family drama becomes part of God’s cosmic plan: Obed → Jesse → David → Christ.
 - **Leader’s Note:** God is weaving personal pain into the larger redemptive story. As Thomas Cranmer’s liturgy reminds us, “the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable”—yet God lifts that burden by tying our small stories into His great one.
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Questions for Implications

1. How does Naomi's transformation from bitterness to blessing encourage us when we feel stuck in grief?
 - J.C. Ryle wrote, "Trials are intended to make us think, to wean us from the world, to send us to the Bible, to drive us to our knees."
 2. How does Boaz's decisive redemption point us toward our need for Christ's intervention?
 - Tim Keller often explained that only Jesus pays the price we cannot bear—our Redeemer who does not say "it will ruin my estate" but says, "I will give my life."
 3. How does the genealogy remind us that our story is bigger than ourselves?
 - C.S. Lewis described life as a chapter in God's larger book: "We are not the authors, but characters who are called to trust the Author."
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Gospel Connection (Good News, not Good Advice)

- Boaz steps forward where another redeemer would not—just as Christ steps in where the Law and human effort fail.
- Obed restores Naomi's life, but he points forward to Christ, the greater Son of David, who restores eternal life.
- The women bless Naomi for having Ruth, "better than seven sons." Here we glimpse the upside-down kingdom: God works through the outsider, the barren, the overlooked, to bring salvation.
- The cross is where bitterness becomes blessing: Jesus takes our Mara (bitterness) and turns it into Hallelujah (praise).

Leader's Note: Stress that Ruth 4 is not just about Naomi's happy ending—it is about *our* ending in Christ.

Apply

1. What did you learn about God? (His character, ways, concerns)
 2. What did you learn about people? (yourself?)
 3. What does God do for us? In what way does this point to what Jesus does for us that we can't do on our own? How is this passage Good News rather than Good Advice?
 4. What do we (I) need to do?
 5. Who do I need to share this with?
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Pray (Thank you / Sorry / Please)

- **Thank you** that you turn our emptiness into fullness and our bitterness into blessing.
- **Sorry** for doubting your providence when life feels bitter.
- **Please** help us to trust your redemption and find our ending in Jesus, the Son of David.