

August 23, 2026 Faithfulness Session 12 Ruth 1:11-18; 2:5-12

Intro: The setting for the book of Ruth comes toward the end of the judges' rule over Israel. During this time Israel struggled with idolatry and immorality. God ordained judges to rule the people as they proceeded through the cycles of sin, judgment, confession, repentance, and deliverance. Israel's leaders, the judges, and the people needed direction.

Background: Before beginning this study, I wondered why Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons were in Moab. Why would a Judean family move from Bethlehem to Moab? **Ruth 1:1** *"Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judea, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons."* During their time in Moab, Naomi's husband died. Her two sons both took wives of the women of Moab: Orpah and Ruth. They dwelt in Moab about ten years. Then the two sons died. Naomi had lost her husband and her two married sons in a foreign land. She urged her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their own families. Naomi felt she had nothing to offer them, as her future seemed bleak and filled with uncertainty. At least it would be possible for the Moabite women to remarry if they stayed in Moab. Naomi, whose name means "pleasant," decided to return to Bethlehem. **Ruth 1:6** *"Then she [Naomi] arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread."* Naomi and her daughters-in-law did not want to be separated. Naomi insisted it would be best for them if they stayed in Moab. Orpah did return to her family, but Ruth pledged to stay with Naomi.

Loss (Ruth 1:11-15) p.111

Naomi must have cared very much for her daughters-in-law. She pleaded with them to return to their homes in Moab. Naomi felt that her only chance for survival was to return to Judea.

Vs. 13 This is really sad for Naomi to say, *"...life is much too bitter for you [daughters-in-law] to share, because the Lord's hand has turned against me."* It sounds like she is blaming God for her circumstances. In her mind the only way for her daughters to experience blessing from God was **not** to travel with her to Bethlehem. Naomi emphatically released them from any obligation to her and thereby absolved them of any sense of guilt they may have felt about her misery. If calamity comes my way, I will ask God to help me show me the way through it and not blame Him. I thought of the book of Job and how all those around him did not encourage him other than to condemn him. Job's wife told him to "curse God and die" (Job vs. 9). His friends insisted Job had done something to bring God's wrath down on him (Job vs. 7-9). Job didn't understand why the

catastrophic tsunami of total loss happened to him, but he proclaims what he does know. **Job 19:25-27** *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* We do not need to do anything to have sin in our lives. We, that is all people, are born with a sinful nature, and we live in a fallen world. There is only one way to survive what sin has done to us and our world: Trust God. Believe Jesus died and rose again for the forgiveness of our sins. We need to act upon God’s grace and mercy by being obedient, and develop a relationship with God by following Jesus.

Vs. 14 One thing seemed obvious, the two young Moabite women felt at home with Naomi and did not want to leave her. All three women were overcome with emotion, bursting into weeping and wailing at the gravity of their situation. Orpah expressed her decision to part ways. Her choice was understandable and rooted in practicality, reflecting no wrongdoing but rather a sensible choice given the circumstances. She was returning to her family and familiar surroundings, which promised security and a potential future. In stark contrast, Ruth chose a different path. Ruth’s loyalty defied the logical route, driven by a deeper commitment and love of Naomi. She was determined to stay by Naomi’s side, embracing an uncertain future in a foreign land. Ruth’s steadfast decision reflects profound courage and devotion. It highlights her willingness to embrace uncertainty for the sake of her bond with Naomi. Her actions were steeped in loyalty and faith.

Levirate Marriage Had Naomi considered the Hebrew custom of levirate marriage? This is an arranged marriage where a brother-in-law could marry his deceased brother’s widow. **Deuteronomy 25:5-6** *“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.”* The importance of levirate marriage was the perpetuation of the deceased man’s name in Israel. The levirate marriage was obligatory only if the brother in line for marriage was alive when his brother died. If a brother was born after the deceased brother, the obligation did not hold. Another requirement was that the brothers had to have the same father. If either condition described above was not satisfied, the widow was free to marry anyone she chose.

Vs. 15 Naomi tried to convince Ruth to return to her own people and to follow their gods. Naomi questioned the wisdom of Ruth’s decision, implicitly asking if Ruth truly dared to leave behind everything she ever knew—her heritage, her faith, her culture—for the uncertain life of a childless, foreign widow. The life she knew in Moab was familiar and predictable, offering a sense of security with her

own people and traditions. This moment forced Ruth to confront a profound choice, one that extended beyond the physical journey to a spiritual and cultural transformation. Would she follow in Orpah's footsteps, returning to the comfort and certainty of her homeland, or would she venture into the unknown, carving out a new path entirely? There was no hesitation with Ruth. She bonded with Naomi and entered into her uncertain future. She would not allow Naomi to suffer alone.

Loyalty (Ruth 1:16-18) p. 113

Ruth's reply to Naomi's plea to return home demonstrated a deep loyalty birthed out of sincere love. She fully committed herself to Naomi's country, home, people, and God. Ruth not only committed to live alongside Naomi and adopt all the nuances of her life, but to stay with her until death. Ruth's words capture the beauty of true, sacrificial love. Both women were genuinely concerned about each other's futures. "Wherever you go, I will go, and where you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried." Ruth's unselfish loyalty recorded in the book of Ruth has been shared throughout generations. In today's culture of self-promotion and individualism, loyal love stands out like a rare jewel.

Vs. 18 Naomi knew the difficulties and uncertainties that awaited them in Bethlehem, especially as widows returning without a male protector. The shared silence was an unspoken agreement, acknowledging that Ruth's choice had set a course they would now face together. Naomi's quiet acceptance allowed both women to move forward, united in purpose as they embarked on the difficult journey back to Bethlehem. What began as a maternal concern for Ruth's future evolved into a partnership of mutual respect and shared destiny.

Provision (Ruth 2:5-12) p. 114

God provides, but we still need to do the research. Ruth did not randomly choose a field to glean from. God led her to the field of Boaz. **Ruth 2:1,2** *"There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him [Boaz] in whose sight I may find favor.' and she [Naomi] said to her, 'Go, my daughter.'"* Ruth took the initiative to find work. She got permission from Naomi to pursue gleaning the grain fields. Gleaners followed behind harvesters, gathering leftovers and reaping the corners of the field. By Jewish law, Ruth had the right to glean in any field with the landowner's permission, but having done her research, God led her to Boaz.

Vs. 5 I think Ruth was not only different, but very attractive. She got the attention of Boaz. He wanted to know who she was. In the Old Testament society a person's identity depended largely on their family and group affiliations. A woman was typically connected to a man, her father or uncle, before marriage and her

husband afterward. I guess one could say Boaz was “checking Ruth out.” He asked the servant in charge of the harvesters about her, and the servant knew Ruth was a young [single] Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from Moab. **Vs. 8** Boaz permitted Ruth to stay with his female servants, allowing her to glean closer to the harvesters than was typical for gleaners. This opportunity let Ruth identify with the female servants, symbolizing a rise in her social status. No longer an outsider, Ruth began to integrate into the Israelite community. Boaz told Ruth not to glean in another field, and he ordered his young men not to touch her. She was not only protected but also enjoyed newfound privilege. Boaz gave Ruth permission to “drink from the jars the young men have filled.” This was not the norm. Typically, women fetched water for men, but Ruth drank the water drawn by male servants. Also, foreigners usually fetched water for Israelites, yet a Moabite like Ruth drank water drawn by Israelites.

Vs. 10 Ruth immediately demonstrated her gratitude and respect for Boaz. There were many reasons for Boaz to overlook her or treat her as insignificant. Strangers and widowed women were often targets of prejudice and abuse. As a Moabite, she was an outsider, both culturally and socially. Yet, despite all the societal norms that might have encouraged him to disregard her, Boaz chose to extend his grace and protection. “Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me...” Sometimes I think, “Why me, Lord?” Of the thousands of people, some are in my own family, who have not [yet] accepted Christ as their savior, why me? We have been given God’s undeserved love. **Romans 5:8** *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* God noticed us! That is, He has given us value. We come before Him in worship, gratitude, and commitment to His leadership. Boaz went above and beyond what was required or expected, and that speaks volumes about his character. Boaz’s generosity was an embodiment of mercy that transcended the standard legal and social obligations of the time. In doing so, he exemplified the true nature of compassion, which sees beyond the surface and reaches out to the marginalized and the needy. Ruth’s reaction to Boaz’s favor was equally telling; it highlighted her humility and readiness to be part of the society she had entered, no matter how challenging it might be.

Vs. 11 Boaz’s decision to bless Ruth was a carefully considered action based on the depth of knowledge and discernment about Ruth’s situation. Her character captivated him. Ruth’s commitment to stand by Naomi and step into a new life with all its uncertainty was a testament of her character. A person’s character held a high status among Jews, especially with widows. Ruth demonstrated she was willing to integrate fully into Naomi’s world, adopting her people, her culture, and her God. Boaz recognized Ruth’s moral and spiritual integrity. For Boaz, providing for Ruth was not only an acknowledgment of her bravery and faithfulness but also a response to the divine call to embody kindness and justice.

Vs. 12 Boaz's favor toward Ruth was not just a matter of personal kindness but also a reflection of their shared connection through Naomi's husband, which made them part of the same extended clan. This kinship bond carried cultural significance, reinforcing Boaz's duty to act with compassion and support. By offering protection, sustenance, and acceptance, Boaz demonstrated the selfless love and faithfulness that God embodies. His actions illustrated how God's love could work through people to create a ripple of compassion and kindness that extends well beyond individual acts.

Next week we will see how God used the circumstances and the people who followed His lead to demonstrate again the magnitude of God's providential care for all people. From an uncertain future to a future secured by the redeeming grace of God, the story of Ruth demonstrates God's grace and reveals His glory, foreshadowing His redemptive plan through Jesus.

Things to think about

Believers will suffer loss.

We need to allow others to minister to us.

Believers can be confident in God's sovereign ability to provide for our needs.