
Ruth Obeys God And Finds Love

An EasyEnglish Bible Version and Commentary (2800 word vocabulary) on the Book of
Ruth

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The translated Bible text **has been** through Advanced Checking.

Words in boxes are from the Bible.

A word list at the end explains words with a *star by them.

Introduction

The book of Ruth is a beautiful story. The events in it happened over 3000 years ago. Because it is about ordinary people, this story can help us today. This story is about an ordinary family whose members suffered many losses but God went on looking after them. Then he gave them new gifts to make them glad.

We do not know who wrote Ruth. Perhaps it was a familiar story that a *scribe wrote down after King David's death. In chapter 4 verses 18-22, there is a list of people who were born into Ruth's family. This includes King David. He was a very great king, an *ancestor of Jesus.

Chapter 1

<p>v1 There was a *famine in the country. It happened in the days when the *judges ruled the people. A man from Bethlehem in Judah went to stay in the country called Moab. His wife and his two sons went with him. v2 The man's name was Elimelech and his wife's name was Naomi. His two sons' names were Mahlon and Kilion. They were all *Ephrathites. They went from Bethlehem in Judah and they came to live in Moab.</p>
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Verses 1-2 These verses introduce the story. The events happened in the time of the *judges, before there was a king ruling Israel's people. Judah was an area in the south and west of Israel. Moab was on the opposite side of the Dead Sea and was a separate state.

Bethlehem was a large town. The local area usually produced plenty of food. Then there was a *famine (a time when crops did not grow well and so there was not enough food). Elimelech and his family wanted security. They left home to look for food elsewhere. They came to a country where the people did not *worship God.

Elimelech was from Ephrath. This probably meant that he belonged to one of the chief families in Bethlehem. ('Ephrath' is an old name for Bethlehem – see Micah 5:2.) He took his wife Naomi and his two sons Mahlon and Kilion. They planned to stay in Moab only for a short time.

The names in this story are important. Elimelech means 'My God is king'. Naomi means 'pleasant'. What had happened in Naomi's life did not match her name. In Ruth 1:20, Naomi realised that. Mahlon and Kilion seem to come from two other words. Those words mean to be sick and to become weak and die. These names show the sad events to come.

v3 But Elimelech died. He was Naomi's husband. Naomi and her two sons remained. **v4** The two sons married women from Moab. The name of one was Orpah and the name of the second was Ruth. Naomi's family stayed there for about 10 years. **v5** Then Mahlon and Kilion died also. The woman now remained without her children or her husband.

Verse 3 Elimelech died. We do not know his age or the cause of his death. Naomi still had two sons who could provide for her.

Verses 4-5 The two sons married local girls, Orpah and Ruth. They were from Moab. (The name of their god was Chemosh – see 2 Kings 23:13.) After 10 years, the girls became widows too. They had been married but they had no sons. Naomi was now without any man from her family to look after her, and she was in a foreign country.

v6 Then she heard in Moab that the *LORD had given his people help. He was giving food to them. So, she started to go home from Moab. Her sons' wives went with her. **v7** She left the place where she lived. She and her two sons' wives went on the road to return to the place called Judah.

Verses 6-7 Naomi heard that God had helped his people. News came from Judah. God had provided food there. She still trusted that he looked after his people. She wanted to go back home. Orpah and Ruth started the journey with her. They loved her and they wanted to stay together.

v8 Then Naomi said to her two sons' wives, 'Go; return home to your own mothers. You gave kind love to me and to those that died. So I hope that the *LORD gives you his kind love. **v9** I hope that the *LORD will give you rest in the home of a husband.' Then Naomi kissed them. But they cried.

Verses 8-9 But Orpah and Ruth were from Moab. They were young and they could marry again. Their people would look after them. Naomi was grateful for their kindness and she blessed them. This showed that she trusted God. And she spoke about him. She prayed to him to look after Ruth and Orpah too.

v10 They said to Naomi, 'No, we will not go home. We will go with you to your people.' **v11** But Naomi said, 'My daughters, go home. Why are you coming with me? I will not have more sons to become your husbands. **v12** Go, my daughters, go home. I am too old to have a husband. I could say that there is hope for me. I could say, "I will have a husband tonight and I will have sons." **v13** But even so would you wait until they were men? Would you not have husbands until then? No, my daughters. What the *LORD has done is more bitter for me than for you. The *LORD is against me.' **v14** Then they cried aloud again. Orpah kissed her husband's mother, but Ruth held on to Naomi.

Verses 10-14 Both Ruth and Orpah still wanted to stay with Naomi. But Naomi wanted what was best for them. She could not give them new husbands. They needed to marry for security. So, Naomi tried to persuade them to go back to their families in Moab. At last, Orpah agreed, although it made her sad.

v15 'Look', said Naomi, 'your *sister-in-law is going back to her family and to her gods. Go back with her.'

v16-17 But Ruth said,

Do not ask me to leave you or not to follow you.

Where you go, I will go. And where you stay, I will stay.

Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.

Where you die, I will die. And there they will bury me.

I want the *LORD to hurt me if anything except death makes us separate.

v18 Then Naomi knew that Ruth wanted to go with her. So, she did not argue any more.

Verses 15-18 Ruth understood the practical wisdom of Naomi's advice. However, her love for Naomi and her wish to obey God made her strong. She would be loyal to him and to Naomi. She was ready to give up everything else. 'Where you go, I will go. And where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God', she said. Ruth chose to belong to Naomi's people and to *worship Naomi's God. The book now becomes Ruth's story.

v19 The two women went to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, all the people in the town started to talk about them. The women asked, 'Is this really Naomi?' **v20** But Naomi said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi. Call me *Mara, because *The Almighty has made life very bitter for me. **v21** I went away full. The *LORD has brought me back empty. So do not call me Naomi. The *LORD has spoken against me. *The Almighty has done bad things to me.' **v22** So Naomi came home. Ruth, her son's wife, came with her from the country called Moab. They reached Bethlehem at the beginning of the *barley harvest.

Verses 19-22 Ruth and Naomi travelled together. They arrived at Bethlehem when the men were beginning to harvest the *barley. The women from the town recognised Naomi. They were surprised at how she appeared. She explained her circumstances. She thought that her name should now be Mara. Mara means 'bitter'. She was without a husband or sons. She had nothing. She thought that God was against her. Only Ruth, the young woman from Moab, remained with her. But in all that she had suffered, Naomi did not stop believing God. She did not understand why her life was sad. She only knew that God was in command.

Chapter 2

v1 Elimelech had been Naomi's husband. Boaz was a relative of Elimelech. Boaz was an important man. **v2** Ruth was from Moab. She said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field where I can *glean *grain. Perhaps someone will be kind to me.' Naomi said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' **v3** So Ruth left and went to the field. There she *gleaned *grain behind the harvesters. Now she happened to come to the part of the field that belonged to Boaz. He was a relative of Elimelech. **v4** Just then, Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the harvesters, 'I pray that the *LORD will be with you.' They said to Boaz, 'We pray that the *LORD will do good things to you.'

Verse 1 This verse tells us about Boaz before he actually comes into the story. He was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, and he was a rich and honourable man. It is important for us to know the family connection. In Israel, families owned the land. All the land was a gift from God, so each family cared very much about their part of it. Elimelech had no son to take his responsibilities, but his family tried to help Naomi and Ruth.

Verses 2-3 Ruth was younger than Naomi was. So she offered to gather grain that the men had left. It was usual to allow widows and foreigners to do this (see Leviticus 19:9-10). This was called *gleaning. God made this rule for his people. It was a way for them to share his gifts with poor people. Ruth seems to have chosen Boaz's field by chance. However, we know that God makes good things happen. He does this when we trust him.

Verse 4 Now Ruth was working in the field. Boaz, the master, arrived. He said, 'I pray that the *LORD will be with you.' The workers replied, 'We pray that the *LORD will do good things to you.' His words to his workers show that he is a good master. He was using words that a priest would use to bless the people. The workers replied in the same way. God was there, at their place of work. His people can always be sure of this.

v5 Boaz asked his servant, 'Who is that young woman?' The servant was the leader of the harvesters. **v6** He said, 'The young woman is from Moab. She came back from the country called Moab with Naomi. **v7** She said, "Let me *glean by the *sheaves. Let me walk behind the harvesters." She came at dawn and has been working until now. She only rested in the house for a short time.'

v8 So Boaz said to Ruth, 'Listen to me, my daughter. Do not go to another part of this field to *glean. Do not go away from here. Stay with my women servants. **v9** Look in the field where the harvesters are. *Glean where they are. I will tell the men not to touch you. The men have filled jars with water. If you want a drink, use those jars.' **v10** Then Ruth fell on the ground and hid her face. She asked him, 'Why are you so kind to me? Why did you notice me? I am a foreign woman.' **v11** Boaz replied, 'They told me everything that you have done for your husband's mother. When your husband died, you came away from your mother and father and from your own country. You came to people that you did not know before. **v12** I ask the *LORD to be good to you for what you have done. I pray that the *LORD, the God of Israel, will pay you in full. That is because you came to him for protection.' **v13** Then she said, 'You are so kind to me, my *lord, because you are giving me help. I am only a servant girl, but you speak to me like a friend. I am not even one of your own women servants.'

Verses 5-13 Verse 5 makes it clear that Boaz and Ruth had not met before. The chief worker told his master that Ruth had come to Bethlehem with Naomi. And he told Boaz that she was from Moab. She had asked him to allow her to join the other women. And he did. She worked hard. So Boaz's chief worker had obeyed God's law. The stranger had gathered food with the women from Bethlehem.

In verse 8, Boaz showed Ruth that he accepted her. He gave her protection. And he offered her drink from the water jugs that his young men had brought. This was more than the law demanded. Boaz was very helpful to Ruth. He was a generous master. And he was kind to those who depended on him.

Ruth had not expected so much kindness. She was very grateful and humble. She fell on the ground to show that she respected him. Her first question was, 'Why are you so kind to me? I am a foreign woman.' He had looked after her especially.

Boaz showed Ruth that he accepted her. Boaz's God will accept her too. She has chosen to come and be one of God's people, so God will surround her with his love. He will keep Ruth safe. He will be like a mother bird that provides shelter for her babies under her wings.

v14 When it was time for a meal, Boaz said to her, 'Come with us. Take some of our bread. Put it in the *vinegar.' So she sat by the harvesters. Boaz gave her some of the *barley, hot from the fire. She ate as much as she wanted. But some remained. **v15** Then Ruth started to *glean again. Boaz told his men, 'Let her *glean under the *sheaves. Do not stop her. **v16** You can also pull out some *barley from the *sheaves. Drop it where she can *glean it. And do not tell her that she must not.'

Verses 14-16 Boaz continued to offer Ruth more than God's law told him to do. He was happy for Ruth to share food with him. And he allowed her to take grain from the whole field, not just the edges. It was a huge gift without limits. God is a generous God who loves us. And so he gives to us in the same way.

v17 So, Ruth *gleaned in the field until the evening. Then she *threshed what she had *gleaned. She had about 20 litres of *barley *grain. **v18** She took the *grain and she went to the town. Her husband's mother saw how much Ruth had *gleaned. Then she gave her husband's mother the food that she had not eaten at the meal time. **v19** Her husband's mother asked her, 'Where did you *glean today? Where did you work? Good things should happen to the man who gave you help.' So she told her husband's mother what she had done. She said, 'The name of the man that I worked with today is Boaz.' **v20** Then Naomi said to her son's wife, 'I pray that the *LORD will do good things to him! He has not stopped showing his kind love to the living and to the dead.' Naomi also said to her, 'The man is a relative of ours. He might *redeem us.' **v21** Then Ruth, the woman from Moab, said, 'Boaz also told me, "Stay near my servants until the end of the harvest".' **v22** Naomi said to Ruth, her son's wife, 'It is good if you stay with his young women. Do not go to another field where someone may hurt you.' **v23** So Ruth stayed near Boaz's young women. She *gleaned until the end of the *barley harvest and of the wheat harvest. She continued to live with her husband's mother.

Verses 17-20a Ruth had gathered about 20 litres of grain. She was able to take this to Naomi, as well as what remained from her meal. First Naomi blessed the good man who had been kind to Ruth. Then she praised God for the meeting of Ruth and Boaz. God had remembered those who were dead, Elimelech and his sons. And he had remembered the widows who were still living. His kindness continues for all time. By Boaz, God will provide for them.

Verses 20b-23 Boaz was a member of Elimelech's family (see verse 1). He would protect Ruth as she continued to find food in his fields. After the *barley harvest, it was the wheat harvest. All through the time of harvest, Ruth worked in the fields that belonged to Boaz.

Chapter 3

Introduction

The harvest was now over. Naomi made plans for the future. If a man from Israel died without children, his brother or another relative used to marry the widow. That was the custom. Then the first son that she had would carry on the dead man's name. And he would own his land. (See Deuteronomy 25:5-6.)

There was another custom also. If someone had financial difficulties, a man from their family would buy their land. He would then look after the land, so that it still belonged to the same family. This also meant that the person with financial difficulties would not have to become somebody's slave. People called a man who carried out these duties a "redeemer". Naomi hopes that Boaz will accept the *redeemer's duties. So Naomi is not doing anything unusual.

v1 Naomi, Ruth's husband's mother, said to her, 'My daughter, I am looking for a home where you can rest and be happy. **v2** Now Boaz is a relative of ours. You have been with his young women. Tonight he will *winnow *barley at the *threshing floor. **v3** Now have a bath and make yourself smell nice. Then dress in your best clothes. Go down to the *threshing floor. Remain hidden until he finishes eating and drinking. **v4** Notice carefully the place where he lies down to sleep. Then go there and lift his skirt. And lie by his feet. He will tell you what to do.'

v5 'I will do everything that you have told me', Ruth said to Naomi.

Verses 1-5 After the men finished harvesting, the farmer had to *thresh the wheat and the *barley. He stayed at his place of work all day and all night. He would be very tired and hungry. Ruth had to wait until Boaz had finished eating and drinking. She had to be very quiet and prepare herself like a bride in her best clothes. Boaz would understand why she had come to him. Ruth showed that she trusted Naomi. And she obeyed her.

v6 So Ruth went to the *threshing floor. There she did everything that her husband's mother had said. **v7** Boaz ate and drank. He began to feel very happy. He went to sleep next to the heap of *grain. Ruth came in secret. She lifted his skirt and lay down by his feet. **v8** At midnight, something made the man feel afraid. He turned and discovered a woman lying by his feet. **v9** 'Who are you?' he asked. 'I am Ruth, your servant', she replied. 'Cover me with the edge of your skirt because you are a *redeemer.'

Verses 6-9 Ruth had chosen Naomi's God and Naomi's country. Here, she obeys the customs of Naomi's country. She showed courage and trust when she offered herself to Boaz. He was surprised. But he was also grateful that this young woman was willing to become his wife. She asked him to spread his clothes over her. This was to show that she wanted him to marry her. Here 'redeemer' means one of her husband's family.

v10 'My daughter, I pray that the *LORD will be good to you', said Boaz. 'You are even more kind to me now than you were earlier. You have not run after young men, poor or rich. **v11** Now, my daughter, do not be afraid. I will do everything that you have suggested. Everyone in the town knows that you are a good woman. **v12** It is true that I am a *redeemer. But there is a *redeemer closer to you than I am. **v13** Stay here for the night. It may happen in the morning that he will *redeem you. If so, that will be good. He will *redeem you. But if he does not want to *redeem you, then I will *redeem you. I promise this, as the *LORD lives! Lie down until morning.

v14 So Ruth lay by his feet until the morning. She got up before anyone might recognise the person next to him. Boaz said, 'Do not let anyone know that a woman came to the *threshing floor.' **v15** He also said, 'Bring me your *shawl. Hold it in front of me.' When she did, he poured a lot of *barley into it. He gave her help to pick it up. Then he went back to town. **v16** Ruth came back to her husband's mother. Naomi said to Ruth, 'What happened, my daughter?' Ruth told her all that had happened with Boaz. **v17** She also said, 'He gave me all this *barley. He told me not to come back to my husband's mother with empty hands.' **v18** Naomi replied, 'Wait, my daughter. And see what happens. The man will make sure that he finishes everything today.'

Verses 10-18 We know already that Boaz was an honourable man. He was kind to Ruth. And he kept her visit secret so that nobody would think bad things about her. He also thought about how Ruth and Naomi would need food now. They would need food now because the fields were empty. He gave her another large quantity of grain. He was very generous. However, he could not marry Ruth yet. There was a man who was a closer relative to Elimelech's family than Boaz. Boaz had to ask this man if he wanted to marry Ruth.

Chapter 4

v1 Boaz went to the gate of the town. He sat down there. Then the other *redeemer came past him. He was the one that Boaz had talked about. Boaz said, 'My friend, come here and sit down.' So the man went over and sat down. **v2** Boaz had found 10 important men from the town. He said to them, 'Sit down here' and they sat down. **v3** Boaz said to the other *redeemer, 'Our brother Elimelech had part of the field. Naomi, who has returned from Moab, wants to sell it. **v4** I thought that I ought to tell you about it. I suggest that you buy it. Buy it in front of all the people who are sitting here and in front of our people's leaders. If you will *redeem it, then *redeem it. But if you will not *redeem it then tell me. Then I will know. There is nobody else to *redeem it except you first and me second.' 'Yes, I will *redeem it', the other man said. **v5** Boaz said, 'On the day that you buy the field from Naomi you also buy it from Ruth. She is the woman from Moab. She is the widow of the dead man. You must take her also to continue the dead man's name on his land.' **v6** The other *redeemer replied, 'I cannot *redeem it. If I did, I might put my own land in danger. You *redeem it in my place. I cannot do it.'

Verses 1-6 Boaz arranged a public meeting with this man. There were 10 witnesses. They met at the city's gate. Men arranged matters there. And they decided what was fair there. It was necessary for men who were not in the same family to witness the arrangements. We do not know this other man's name. Boaz said that Naomi had land to sell. Boaz had to offer the land to him first because he was a closer relative of Elimelech.

The man was glad to buy the land, so that it would still belong to Elimelech's relatives. However, Boaz said that he must also marry Ruth. And he must make her son the owner of the land. He must be the one to give Elimelech an *heir. That *heir would have a right to Naomi's land. This changed everything. The man could not risk his own family's future. He would have to provide for Ruth's child or children until they became adults. So, he would have less money to give to his other children. And perhaps, when he died, some of his own land would also belong to Ruth's child. So again, there would be less land for his other children to own. For these reasons, this man gave Boaz his right to the land and to Ruth.

v7 Now this is how they finished selling or *redeeming anything in earlier times in Israel. A man took off his shoe and gave it to the other man. This was the proper way in Israel. **v8** He said to Boaz, 'You buy it.' And he took off his shoe. **v9** Then Boaz said to the important men and to all the people, 'Today you saw what I did. I bought from Naomi all that Elimelech, Mahlon and Kilion had. **v10** Ruth, the woman from Moab, was the wife of Mahlon. She also is now mine. This means that everyone will remember him. And they will remember where his land was. His family will not forget him and the people from his village will not forget him. You have all seen this today.' **v11** The most important people and everyone else said, 'We have seen it. We pray that the woman coming into your home will be like Rachel and Leah. These two women built up the house of Israel. We want you to be important in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem. **v12** We pray that your family will be like the family of Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah. We pray that this will happen because of your child. We pray that the *LORD will give you a child by this young woman.'

Verses 7-10 The man took off his shoe. This was the custom to show that he agreed to give up his rights to the property. He agreed to pass them to another man. Boaz took the shoe from him to make the arrangement final. Then Boaz said that he would take Ruth to be his wife.

Verses 11-12 The agreement was now legal. There were witnesses to it. The witnesses were happy with what had happened. They blessed Boaz. The witnesses prayed that Ruth would be like Rachel and Leah. And they prayed that she would be the mother of a great family. Rachel and Leah were the wives of Jacob, and they were important in the history of God's people. The 12 family groups of Israel came from these two women. The witnesses also prayed that Boaz would do many good things. They prayed that he would be famous for all these good things.

v13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. He had sex with her. Then she was going to have a baby. The *LORD gave her a baby son. **v14** The women said to Naomi, 'The *LORD is good. Today he has given you a *redeemer. We pray that his name will be famous in all Israel! **v15** He will give you a new life. He will give you help when you become old. Your son's wife loves you. She is better to you than 7 sons. She is the boy's mother.' **v16** Naomi held the boy in her arms. She took great care of him. **v17** The women that lived there said, 'Naomi has had a son.' They called him Obed. He was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David.

Verse 13 Ruth and Boaz became husband and wife, and God gave them a son. All through this story, we see God giving good gifts to his people who are true to him.

Verses 14-17 Now Naomi had a child to make her happy, too. Her friends praised God for the baby. And they prayed that the baby would have a good life. Naomi had returned to Bethlehem feeling bitter and empty. Now she again had a child to look after. She was hopeful for the future. Everyone shared her joy. Her name was still Naomi. (They did not call her Mara!) The baby's name was Obed, which means 'servant'. Like Boaz and Ruth, he served God.

v18-22 This is the *family tree of Perez:

- Perez was the father of Hezron.
- Hezron was the father of Ram.
- Ram was the father of Amminadab.
- Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
- Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
- Salmon was the father of Boaz.
- Boaz was the father of Obed.
- Obed was the father of Jesse.
- Jesse was the father of David.

Verses 18-22 Perez was the son of Judah by his *daughter-in-law Tamar, who was also a widow. (See Genesis chapter 38.) Judah's family gained God's promise in Genesis 49:8-10. From this family came Boaz and, later, great King David. Jesus, the greatest of all kings, came from Bethlehem from the same family. Jesus was the son of Mary. Like Ruth, she obeyed God and always trusted him. There is no special book in the Bible about Mary, but God has given us this lovely book about Ruth. In this book, we read about ordinary people. They are living as members of God's family because they respect and obey him. It gives us a pattern for our own lives.

Word List

ancestor ~ any person from the past from whom the families of your father or your mother have come.

barley ~ a type of grain.

daughter-in-law ~ son's wife.

Ephrathites ~ people that lived in Bethlehem.

family tree ~ a list of your parents, grandparents and so on.

famine ~ time when food plants do not grow.

glean ~ get what other people leave.

grain ~ the seeds of *barley and wheat.

heir ~ the person who receives land or money after his father or family member dies.

judges ~ leaders of Israel who tried to govern as God directed them.

lord ~ one who rules or is a master.

LORD ~ a special name for God that his people use.

Mara ~ a word that means 'bitter'.

New Testament ~ the second part of the Bible. The writers wrote it after Jesus had lived on the earth.

redeem ~ to pay another person's debts and to protect them when they cannot help themselves. In the *New Testament, we learn that Jesus redeems his people (see Galatians 3:13-14 and 1 Peter 1:18). He pays the price for what they have done wrong.

scribe ~ a man who writes as his work. People pay him to write letters and records.

shawl ~ a square of cloth; women wear it over their shoulders.

sheaf/sheaves ~ some plants of wheat or *barley tied together.

sister-in-law ~ here it means the wife of your husband's brother.

The Almighty ~ a name for God, someone more powerful than anyone else.

thresh ~ to beat the *barley and wheat so that the grains fall out.

vinegar ~ what wine becomes if we leave it open to the air.

winnow ~ after *threshing, you winnow to make the *grain separate from the rest of the plant.

worship ~ to love and thank someone (God) more than we love anyone else.

Book List

David Atkinson ~ The Wings of Refuge ~ Inter-Varsity Press

The following works are listed in David Atkinson's book as sources:

G. A. Cooke ~ Ruth

W. Eichrodt ~ Theology of the O. T.

C. F. Keil and F. Delizch ~ Biblical Commentary on the O. T.

G. A. Knight ~ Ruth and Jonah

D. A. Leggett ~ The Levirate and Goel Institutions and the O. T.

A. E. Cundall and L. Morris ~ Judges and Ruth

H. H. Rowley ~ The Marriage of Ruth

Roland de Vaux ~ Ancient Israel

Bibles ~ AV, RV, RSV, NEB, The Jerusalem Bible

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