

HOW Bitterness Becomes Blessing (The Story of Ruth)



"But Ruth replied, 'Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.'" Ruth 1:16 NLT

- Do you like a love story? Are you going through hard times? Do hard times drive you closer or away from others? Do hard times cause you to question God's love for you?

The book of Ruth is a love story that took place during the dark days of Israel's history. It occurred during the era of the Judges (Ruth 1:1) when Israel had turned away from God and was under the oppression of pagan nations.

The book of Ruth is a story of love, **God's love** working in people's lives during difficult times. The story of Ruth is a story of how **God's love** turned the bitterness of life into a blessing.

- **God's love** is seen in His care & provision for a young widow, Ruth, and her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi.
- **God's love** is seen in the heart & devotion of Ruth. She turns from the pagan gods of her native homeland of Moab and turns to the God of Israel. She follows her Hebrew mother-in-law back to the land of Israel and says, "... *Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.*" (Ruth 1:16 NLT).
- **God's love** is seen in the romantic story of Ruth finding love again and becoming the wife of a Jewish farmer, Boaz.
- **God's love** is seen in the ancient Hebrew custom of the kinsman or family-redeemer. Boaz redeemed Ruth, took her as his wife, and eventually, Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David (cf. Ruth 4:13-22) and part of the lineage for the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jew and became part of "salvation history" (Matt. 1:5).

God's love works in surprising ways. **God's love CAN** turn the bitterness of life into a blessing.

Central Lesson

God's love can turn the bitterness of life into a blessing - if we make Him **FIRST in our life.**

Key Scripture: Ruth 1:16-17; 4:10, 13-17 (NLT)

Key Chapters: Ruth chapter **4**. Boaz redeems Ruth as her family redeemer. Ruth is married, has a son, and becomes the great grandmother of David.

Title: The title "Ruth" is named after the main character of the story, a Moabite woman named Ruth. Only two Old Testament books receive their names from women—Ruth and Esther. The book of Ruth has significance in the Old Testament because it is the only book named after an ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:5) and gives the lineage of King David (Ruth 4:18-22).

Author: **UNKNOWN**. Ancient Jewish tradition identifies Samuel as the author. The Talmud (the ancient Jewish commentary on the law, traditions, etc.) point to Samuel as the author.

Key Words: **"FAMILY Redeemer"** NLT ("*Kinsman' redeemer*" in other translations.) Used 13 times in Ruth (Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14).

Outline: Ruth can be outlined in four parts:

- I. **Ruth's Return (Chapter 1)**
- II. **Ruth's Reaping (Chapter 2)**
- III. **Ruth's Request (Chapter 3)**
- IV. **Ruth's Redemption (Chapter 4)**

Theme: The key theme of Ruth is **God's love can turn the bitterness of life into a blessing if we make Him **FIRST** in our lives!** (2:11-15).

The Life Application Bible explains: "To some, the book of Ruth may be just a nice story about a girl who was fortunate. But in reality, the events recorded in Ruth were part of God's preparations for the births of David and of Jesus, the promised Messiah. Just as Ruth was unaware of this larger purpose in her life, we will not know the full purpose and importance of our lives until we are able to look back from the perspective of eternity. We must make our choices with God's eternal values in mind. Taking moral shortcuts and living for short-range pleasures are not good ways to move ahead. Because of Ruth's faithful obedience, her life and legacy were significant even though she couldn't see all the results. Live in faithfulness to God, knowing that the significance of your life will extend beyond your lifetime. The rewards will outweigh any sacrifice you may have made." (p.429).

Bible teacher, John MacArthur, writes that there are at least seven major themes in the book of Ruth. They are:

1. Ruth the Moabitess illustrates that God's redemptive plan extended beyond the Jews to Gentiles (2:12).
2. Ruth demonstrates that women are co-heirs with men of God's salvation grace (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7).
3. Ruth portrays the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10 (cf. 3:11).
4. Ruth describes God's sovereign (1:6; 4:13) and providential care (2:3) of seemingly unimportant people at apparently insignificant times which later prove to be monumentally crucial to accomplishing God's will.
5. Ruth along with Tamar (Gen. 38), Rahab (Josh. 2) and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12) stand in Christ's genealogy (4:17, 22; cf. Matt. 1:5).
6. Boaz, as a type of Christ, becomes Ruth's kinsman-redeemer (4:1-12).
7. David's right (and thus Christ's right) to the throne of Israel is traced back to Judah (4:18-22; cf. Gen. 49:8-12). [*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, p.73]

Major Lesson: The family redeemer. Ruth is redeemed by **BOAZ**, a relative of Ruth's late husband. It was customary for a Jewish next of kin to bring up children in the name of the childless Israelite who had died. This was done to perpetuate the deceased relative's name (cf. Deut. 25:5-10. Also Ruth 4:10). This is a picture of Christ who is our kinsman/family-redeemer. He bought us from the ruin of sin and made us his family for all eternity. *Have you received Christ as your Redeemer & Savior?*

Central Lesson: God's love can turn the bitterness of life into a blessing - if we make Him **first in our life.**

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.