

STUDY

Ruth Bible Study Questions and Answers (Free PDF)

Leader's Edition — with Answers

A 5-session walk through Ruth, from a famine in Bethlehem to the birth of Obed, with an answer key for leaders. Free to print, no sign-up.

A 5-session study of Ruth for groups or solo reading.

Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.

Ruth 1:16 (NIV)

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter."

Ruth 1:20 (NIV)

May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Ruth 2:12 (NIV)

The study guide

SESSION 1 • RUTH 1:1-22

Empty and Bitter

A famine drives Naomi's family to Moab, where her husband and sons die. She returns to Bethlehem with Ruth, a Moabite widow who will not leave her side, and she arrives bitter and empty-handed.

1. What losses does Naomi suffer in Moab, and what does Ruth say to her in Ruth 1:16-17?

Naomi's husband Elimelek dies, and then both of her sons, Mahlon and Kilion, die after about ten years in Moab (Ruth 1:3-5). Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to go home (Ruth 1:8). Orpah leaves, but Ruth clings to her (Ruth 1:14). Ruth pledges to go where Naomi goes, to make her people her own, and to make her God her own, and she vows to be buried where Naomi is buried (Ruth 1:16-17).

2. How does Naomi describe God in Ruth 1:20-21, and why do you think Ruth chooses him anyway?

Naomi says the Almighty has made her life very bitter and that the Lord has brought her back empty (Ruth 1:20-21). She does not hide her pain, and the book does not scold her for it. Ruth chooses the God of Israel in the same breath that Naomi accuses him. Faithful readers see in this how real faith can hold grief and trust together.

3. Where have you felt like Naomi, full when you left and empty when you came back, and who stayed beside you?

Leader's note: This question asks for an honest answer, not a tidy one. Naomi's bitterness is on the page, and Scripture leaves it there. Psalm 34:18 says the Lord is close to the brokenhearted. Give the group time, and let people name both the emptiness and the one who stayed.

SESSION 2 • RUTH 2:1-23

Gleaning in Boaz's Field

Ruth goes to glean behind the harvesters and finds herself in the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband. He shows her kindness and protection beyond anything she could have asked.

1. How does Boaz treat Ruth in Ruth 2:8-16, and what has he heard about her according to Ruth 2:11?

Boaz tells Ruth to stay in his field, to stay close to his women workers, and to drink from what the men have drawn (Ruth 2:8-9). He warns the men not to touch her (Ruth 2:9), shares his meal with her (Ruth 2:14), and quietly tells the harvesters to leave extra grain behind (Ruth 2:15-16). He has been told all she has done for her mother-in-law, how she left her father, her mother, and her homeland to live among a people she did not know (Ruth 2:11).

2. Ruth 2:3 says she happened to come to Boaz's field. Why might the writer tell it that way, and what does Ruth 2:20 show about who was really leading her?

The book never names God as the one who guides her steps, and yet the story is full of his hand. Ruth just happens to come to the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3), and Naomi sees the truth of it at once. She says the Lord has not stopped showing his kindness and that Boaz is one of their guardian-redeemers (Ruth 2:20). Most readers take the phrase as a quiet sign of providence.

3. Where has God met a need in your life through someone's plain, everyday kindness?

Leader's note: This question invites gratitude, not guilt. Boaz's kindness reached Ruth through ordinary work in an ordinary field. Ruth 2:12 speaks of taking refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. Ask the group to name a person whose kindness felt like God's, and consider praying a blessing over them.

SESSION 3 · RUTH 3:1-18

At the Threshing Floor

Naomi sends Ruth to Boaz at the threshing floor to ask for his protection as a guardian-redeemer. He blesses her and promises to see the matter settled, though a nearer relative stands first in line.

1. What does Naomi tell Ruth to do, and what does Ruth ask of Boaz in Ruth 3:9?

Naomi tells Ruth to wash, dress in her best clothes, go down to the threshing floor, and wait until Boaz has finished eating and drinking (Ruth 3:3-4). Ruth does as she says (Ruth 3:6). She asks Boaz to spread the corner of his garment over her, since he is a guardian-redeemer of the family (Ruth 3:9). It is a plea for the protection of marriage.

2. What does Boaz say about Ruth's character in Ruth 3:10-11, and what does his answer show about how he keeps the law and his word?

Boaz says Ruth's kindness is greater than her earlier kindness, since she has not run after younger men, rich or poor (Ruth 3:10). He calls her a woman of noble character (Ruth 3:11). He is honest that a nearer relative has the first right, and he will not go around him (Ruth 3:12-13). He also sends Ruth away before dawn to protect her name (Ruth 3:14). Readers see in Boaz a man who does the right thing the right way.

3. Where is God asking you to trust wise counsel and then wait for him to settle what you cannot?

Leader's note: This question is about trust and patience. Naomi says to wait until the matter is settled (Ruth 3:18), and Ruth waits. Proverbs 3:5-6 speaks of trusting the Lord and not leaning on our own understanding. Ask who the wise voices in the group's lives are, and where waiting feels hardest.

SESSION 4 · RUTH 4:1-12

The Redeemer at the Gate

At the town gate Boaz brings the matter before the elders. The nearer relative declines, and Boaz redeems Naomi's land and takes Ruth as his wife, while the people bless them.

1. What does Boaz put before the nearer relative in Ruth 4:3-5, and why does the man step aside in Ruth 4:6?

Boaz gathers ten elders at the gate and tells the nearer relative that Naomi is selling her husband's land (Ruth 4:2-3). The relative may redeem it, and whoever does must also acquire Ruth to raise up the name of the dead (Ruth 4:5). The man declines, saying he could endanger his own estate (Ruth 4:6). Boaz takes up the duty (Ruth 4:9-10).

2. What does Boaz's redemption cost him, and how do the elders and townspeople respond in Ruth 4:11-12?

Boaz pays for the land, takes on Ruth and Naomi's need, and does not count the cost above the people. The elders and all at the gate bear witness (Ruth 4:9-11). They pray that Ruth would be like Rachel and Leah, who built up the house of Israel, and that his house would be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah (Ruth 4:11-12). Many Christians read Boaz as a picture of Christ, who redeems at his own cost.

3. What would it mean for you to stand as a redeemer for someone this week, at some cost to yourself?

Leader's note: This question asks for a small, real step, not a grand gesture. The nearer relative held back to protect himself, and Boaz did not. Galatians 6:2 says to carry each other's burdens. Ask the group to name one person they could stand beside, and pray for courage to do it.

SESSION 5 · RUTH 4:13-22

A Son and a Line

Ruth bears a son, and the women of Bethlehem praise God for Naomi's restored joy. The closing genealogy shows that the boy, Obed, is the grandfather of King David.

1. What do the women say to Naomi in Ruth 4:14-15, and who is the child in Ruth 4:17?

The Lord enables Ruth to conceive and she bears a son (Ruth 4:13). The women praise the Lord who has not left Naomi without a guardian-redeemer (Ruth 4:14). They say the child will renew her life and sustain her in her old age, and that Ruth is better to her than seven sons (Ruth 4:15). Naomi takes the child in her arms, and the women name him Obed, the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David (Ruth 4:16-17).

2. Why do you think the book ends with a family line that reaches David, and what does Ruth's place in it say about God's welcome of outsiders?

The book ends by tracing the line from Perez to David (Ruth 4:18-22). Ruth, a woman from Moab, stands in the family line of Israel's greatest king. Matthew 1:5 names her in the family line of Jesus. Faithful readers see in this that God gathers outsiders into his people, and that he works his larger purposes through faithful, unnoticed lives.

3. Where has God turned your emptiness into something you could not have planned, and how will you thank him for it?

Leader's note: This question echoes Naomi's turn from bitterness to praise. Do not rush anyone to a happy ending. Psalm 30:11 speaks of mourning turned into dancing. Give each person a moment to name what God has done, and invite the group to thank him aloud.