



## New Vision

Reaching the Lost

Ruth 4

5.27.18

### Main Point

God's plan for redemption has always included reclaiming what was lost, or finding what was lost

Getting to know me

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you tend to respond when things don't go the way you planned?

Share about a time when you struggled to see God's purpose in a difficult situation. Looking back, what did you learn from that situation?

Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi's lives did not go the way that they had hoped. However, through their story we see that God was constantly at work, bringing about His plan of redemption for them and for the entire world. From Genesis to Judges, God speaks creation into being and lays a foundation of life of faith through a people called Israel. God rescues them from brutal slavery and he raises up leaders to continue to lead them through.

### Into the Bible

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:1-12.

Take a look back at Ruth 3. What business matter did Boaz settle at the city gate? Why do you think he was interested in taking care of this matter so quickly (v. 18)?

How did Boaz's generous responsibility ensure security for both Naomi and Ruth? Why was this beneficial for their entire community?

Boaz took a risk by bringing Ruth into his family by marrying her. Boaz began the process of settling the matter by going to the gate of the town. While this practice might seem strange to us in modern culture, it was rooted in three necessities. First was the need to preserve a man's family name through his offspring. Second was the need to pass the family property from one generation to the next through a line of male descendants. Third was the need for a deceased man's widow to have a son to provide for her in her old age.

What happened to Ruth in verses 11-12? Why is this important for us to understand?

In Ruth 4:11-12, the men of Bethlehem responded to Boaz by pronouncing a blessing on Ruth and Boaz, invoking the names of the patriarchs of Israel ("Rachel and Leah") and of the patriarch of the tribe of Judah ("Tamar"). This was a word of affirmation from the community, and the blessing also effectively brought Ruth into full membership in the covenant community of Israel, since they were treating her as a woman who could be grouped with Rachel, Leah, and Tamar. Ruth was officially a part of their community.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:13-15.

What hardships had Ruth and Naomi faced? How did they respond to those hardships?

How did God redeem Ruth's past (v. 13)? What about Ruth makes her a surprising recipient of God's grace?

How did God redeem Naomi's pain? Compare Naomi's response to the birth of Obed in verses 14-15 with her response to the death of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:15,20-21).

Read Psalm 127:3-5. Why was the birth of Obed such a precious gift? How did his birth demonstrate God's grace?

Ruth wasn't an Israelite, she was from Moab and yet God wrote a beautiful love story with her life. As a recently widowed woman in a foreign land, Ruth faced a difficult future. In the midst of her pain, God graciously led her to Boaz who married her and provided for her. Furthermore, the Lord blessed them with a son. In ancient Israel, sons were considered tremendous blessings as they would continue the family name. By giving Ruth a husband and a son, the Lord graciously redeemed Ruth's seemingly hopeless situation.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ RUTH 4:16-22.

Why do you think the story of Ruth concludes with a genealogy of David?

Read Matthew 1:5. Ruth was one of only five women Matthew named in Jesus' genealogy. Why is this significant?

What does this genealogy reveal about God's plan for lost humanity?

The story concludes with a linear genealogy linking the child, Obed, backward and forward. It traces his roots back to Perez, the child born in Genesis 38 out of the dubious relationship between Judah and a foreign woman, Tamar. It also traces his progeny on to King David, who is highlighted not simply because he was a great king but also because he was the Lord's answer for the anarchy of the days of the judges, in which this story took place (1:1). The genealogy thus shows us that the Lord had been pursuing bigger plans than just bringing together two worthy individuals or restoring the emptiness of a Judean widow. Their story formed part of the bigger plan to provide the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, whom Israel needed. Ruth stands out as an example of God's heart for the lost and their key involvement in His plan.

God used Ruth, someone who was at one time outside of the Jewish faith, as an integral part of His plan for redemption. What does the gospel teach us about God's concern for all people?

### **Application**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How has your own life been changed because God's story includes seeking the lost? How can God's plan for the world change our church's story?

The Book of Ruth is a wonderful story of God's faithfulness. Where have you seen God faithfully at work in your life in the past? Where do you need to trust His faithfulness now?

Who do you know that needs to be reminded that God is in control and has a purpose for their lives? How might you encourage them to trust Christ in the midst of their difficulties this week?

Pray

Close in prayer for your group members to grow in experiencing and living in faithful love. Continue to pray for the lost people in your life who have been on your hearts and minds over the past few weeks. Pray that God will give you all the courage and boldness to take the initiative in reaching out to them.

### **Commentary**

Ruth 4:1-22

4:1-2. Boaz immediately went to the gate of the town, the place where important legal and social matters were transacted in the presence of the town elders. When Boaz summoned the other redeemer, he literally said, Come over here (Hb) poloni 'almoni, a rhyming phrase equivalent to our "Mr. So-and-So." Boaz gathered a quorum of 10 elders as official witnesses.

4:3-4. As a widow Naomi could not sell Elimelech's land; however, she could assign someone else the right to use that land until the next Jubilee Year. Rather than have control over the land go (or remain) outside the family, Boaz requested an intervention in the spirit of the family redeemer laws to buy... back the use of the land. Since "Mr. So-and-So" was the primary relative entitled to redeem that property, Boaz was bringing the matter to his attention. If he did not redeem the property, Boaz himself was willing to act.

4:5-8. Along with the financial cost of redeeming the land, there was a social cost. The transaction also included a commitment to marry Ruth the Moabitess and thereby to seek to perpetuate the dead man's name on his property. This is a reference back to the practice of levirate marriage in Dt 25:5-10, by which the brother of a man who died without male offspring was required to marry his widow and raise up a family in the name of the dead man. In this case, there was no legal obligation on either "Mr. So-and-So" or on Boaz, yet Boaz asserted a moral obligation to do so. At this, "Mr. So-and-So" backed away from his earlier enthusiasm. Ironically, his concern to protect his own name rather than committing to raise up heirs to the name of Elimelech led to him being left nameless. In seeking to serve self first, he inadvertently undermined his best interests. It is instead Boaz whose name would become famous (Ru 4:11) in Bethlehem. His decision was confirmed by a legal gesture that was archaic even at the time of the writing of the book—the removal of a sandal, which was given to the other party.

4:9-12. By receiving the sandal, Boaz committed himself to redeem Naomi's property, to marry Ruth, and to perpetuate the names of Elimelech and Mahlon on their patrimony. The blessing of the elders (vv. 11-12) may simply have been conventional for married couples in Bethlehem, but it had a greater significance for Boaz and Ruth. Through Ruth, Boaz would indeed become famous and have his name remembered in Bethlehem. The link with Perez, the son Tamar bore to Judah, invites a comparison and contrast between Ruth and Tamar, two foreign women who became part of Judah's genealogy through very different means.

4:13-17. Although for 10 years in Moab, Ruth had been unable to bear a son for Mahlon, through the Lord's direct intervention she immediately conceived and bore a son for Boaz. The child would be a comfort for Naomi in her old age (lit "would sustain her grey hair"); he would be her family redeemer who would provide for her needs in her declining years. He was named Obed, a short form of Obadiah, which means "servant of the Lord." Though no one could bring back Naomi's husband or sons, now she had a daughter-in-law whom all recognized as better to you than seven sons—an astonishing accolade in the ancient world.

4:18-22. The story concludes with a linear genealogy linking the child, Obed, backwards and forwards. It traces his roots back to Perez, the child born in Genesis 38 out of the dubious relationship between Judah and a foreign woman, Tamar. It also traces his progeny on to King David, who is highlighted not simply because he was a great king but also because he was the Lord's answer for the anarchy of the days of the judges, in which this story took place (1:1). The genealogy thus shows us that the Lord had been pursuing bigger plans than just bringing together two worthy individuals or restoring the emptiness of a Judean widow. Their story formed part of the bigger plan to provide the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, whom Israel needed.