

# **Redeeming Ruth**

By Walter Norvell

***“...where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16 NIV).***

(Read Ruth 1–4)

**Why did Elimelech and his family move to Moab?**

**In what way did God use this family as missionaries to Moab?**

**Why was Naomi so bitter when she returned to her hometown?**

**How were Naomi, Ruth and Boaz related when the story began?**

**What city was Naomi’s ancestral home?**

Sometimes it seems that just when you think life can’t get any harder, it does! Naomi must have felt that way.

First, her hometown was decimated by a famine. Her family uprooted and moved to a foreign country to survive. Her sons married women there. Soon, she was grieving over the deaths of her husband and both sons.

Now, she was an elderly widow living alone in a foreign land. To an Israelite, all these calamities would seem like judgment from God. Death, poverty and shame were seen as God’s punishing this family for abandoning the land of promise and for intermarrying with heathens.

Naomi did have two loving daughters-in-law to support her in the land of Moab. But, returning to her homeland would likely be the best way to survive. One daughter-in-law decided to stay in Moab while the other insisted on returning with her to Bethlehem. Naomi returned as a bitter and defeated person, resigned to a life of poverty and shame.

**What is the most bitter time you have experienced in life?**

**How has God used that time to change your life?**

**How has God used your hard times to change the lives of others around you?**

The people of God had a law that required farmers to leave a little of their harvest in the fields so poor people without land could come gather enough food to survive. It wasn't welfare but a way for poor people to work with dignity for what they needed. It was an opportunity to minister to others. Ruth happened to go to the field of a man named Boaz who followed this practice. He spotted Ruth and was impressed by this young woman who worked hard to provide for herself and Naomi. But, more importantly, God was working to bring this foreigner from Moab into His family of faith.

God used Boaz to redeem Ruth and make her a respected member of the family of faith. Boaz was old enough to be Ruth's father. Nothing in the story implies that Ruth was physically attractive in any way. In fact, as a poverty-stricken widow and a foreigner from Moab, she was despised by the Israelites. She had cultural, language, social, political, and religious barriers between her and her new neighbors. But God used Boaz to redeem her and make her a respected member of the family of faith.

**Match the following verses with 10 things Boaz did for this poor woman who visited his fields looking for help:**

Ruth 2:5	Provided what she was looking for
Ruth 2:8	Protected her
Ruth 2:9	Noticed her
Ruth 2:9	Spoke kindly to her
Ruth 2:11	Fed her
Ruth 2:12	Invited her
Ruth 2:13	Gave her water
Ruth 2:14	Learned about her history and family
Ruth 2:15	Blessed her
Ruth 2:16	Defended her from embarrassment

**Naomi called Boaz a kinsman-redeemer. What was a kinsman-redeemer?**

**In what way did he illustrate what Jesus has done in your life?**

In Jewish law, when a married man died before having children, a relative was to marry his widow and have a child.

That child was treated as the dead man's child, inheriting all his property. This was a very unselfish practice because the second man would raise and care for the child and that child's inheritance but receive no real benefit.

Boaz was one of two kinsman-redeemers related to Naomi and Ruth. Ruth showed Boaz that she was interested and available for marriage to him. He approached the other relative who did not want the responsibility of marrying her and raising a son. Ruth became Boaz's wife and God brought her into His family. In fact, she became the great-grandmother of King David, the greatest king ever to rule in Israel.

In Matthew 1:5, we also see that Ruth was in the ancestral line of Jesus Himself. Naomi and Ruth were twice related to Boaz. Ruth became related to Boaz and Naomi by her faith as well. Naomi cared enough to direct her daughter-in-law to the God of Israel (the Great Redeemer) as well as to Boaz (her physical and material redeemer). Her effort had eternal results—not only in Ruth's life but also in the coming of our Savior.

**Who in your family needs to be directed to Jesus?**

**How can you be a spiritual kinsman-redeemer in your family?**