

*Faithful Love:*  
*Studies in the Book of Ruth*

A 31-Day Bible Study

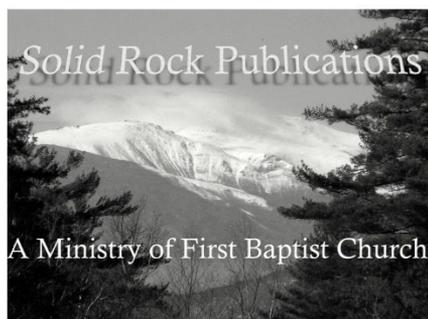


by  
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*Faithful Love:*  
*Studies in the Book of Ruth*  
A 31-day study



By Rachel D. Brown  
*For the glory of God*  
*and the edification of my sisters in Christ.*

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## *Introduction*

In this little booklet, we'll be studying the lovely little book of Ruth. It's a love story—but not the fluffy Hallmark movie kind of love story, nor the wicked Hollywood kind of love story. No, this love is the biblical kind: faithful, sacrificial, active, enduring. Ruth is also a book of sorrow and bitterness, grace and faith, hard work and reward. All that in four short chapters, you say? Let's dive in and see!

*RDB, November 2021*

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*Second edition: Spring 2025*



## Day 1

*Hold on a second! You'd better pray before starting this time in God's Word. Pray for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying it.*

If you're like me, when you open to the book of Ruth, you tend to think of it as its own isolated story. Let's see how it's connected to the rest of the Old Testament and what was happening to God's people at the time.

**Read** Ruth 1:1; Judges 21:25.

*I encourage you to make notes in your Bible as we go. For example, you could write the reference to a similar passage in the margin, note the passage of time, underline important words or phrases, write questions, or even color-code key words. Don't leave that Bible blank!*

### **Question Time**

*While you can read any version you like, the wording of my questions is based on the ESV.*

1. *In whose days is the book of Ruth set? \_\_\_\_\_*
2. *Israel had no \_\_\_\_\_, and*
3. *everyone did what was \_\_\_\_\_ in his \_\_\_\_\_ eyes.*
4. *Look up Proverbs 16:25 and write it down: \_\_\_\_\_*

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### **Let's Dig In**

The narrator of Ruth sets the stage by telling us the time: the days of the judges of Israel. And what were those days like? There was no central authority, and every man "did what was right in his own eyes." This might sound fine

and dandy until you read Judges. In fact, that note about everyone doing what he thought was right is repeated three more times in Judges (17:6; 18:1; 19:1), and each is linked with a story more horrible and sinful than the last: first, a man stole silver from his mother, made an idol, and decided his son was that false god's priest. Second, the tribe of Dan, unable to conquer the land God gave them because of their sin, wander by and adopt those idols as their gods and a Levite as their priest. Finally, a Levite shoved his mistress outside to be abused and killed by wicked men; this snowballs into war and the near-destruction of one of the tribes of Israel.

Our culture encourages us to “follow your heart.” The world says that man is good—or at least, more good than bad. They want to believe even the worst criminals can be reformed with enough love, the right programs, or “support.”

What does God say? “The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9) and “None is righteous, no, not one; no one does good” (Romans 3:10, 12) and “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Wise King Solomon noted, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 16:25).

God alone is truth (John 14:6) and speaks truth (John 17:7); we can trust all His words written down for us in His Word. We cannot trust what the world tells us about mankind and our nature. We cannot even trust our own hearts (thoughts, emotions).

So should we make decisions based on what looks right to us? Absolutely not! In order to please and glorify God, we must do what is right in His eyes, not ours. Try asking yourself something like, “Would doing this thing please Him or grieve Him?” “Would making that comment help or hinder my testimony as God's child in front of my unsaved

coworkers?” “Would God smile if I decided to do this task with grumbling and complaining?”

I’m not saying this easy, but it’s right—in God’s eyes—and if we depend on Him, God gives us the desire and the ability to obey Him (Philippians 2:13), one little decision at a time. Just do the next right thing—in God’s eyes.

### **Personal Application Time**

- Consider some of the little decisions you made today (or yesterday, if it’s early morning). Were they right in your eyes? Were they right in God’s eyes? Acknowledge any sin if necessary, and ask God for help in glorifying Him—He loves answering that kind of prayer!
- Optional “homework:” grab an index card, a pretty stationary note, or just some scrap paper. Write yourself a reminder about making sure your next decision is right in God’s eyes. (For example: “Would this action glorify God or grieve Him?”) Carry this card in your pocket or purse, keep it in your car, or tape it up by your desk.
- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 2

*Hold on a second! You'd better pray before starting this time in God's Word. Pray for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying it.*

**Read** Ruth 1:1-2.

### **Question Time**

1. *There was a \_\_\_\_\_ in the land.*
2. *What was Elimelech's wife's name? \_\_\_\_\_*
3. *Who were their two sons? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_*
4. *What tribe of Israel were they from? \_\_\_\_\_*
5. *Where did Elimelech take his family to live? \_\_\_\_\_*

### **Let's Dig In**

God allowed a famine to strike the land of Israel, probably as a consequence of the people's sin (Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24). Famines, just like today, meant scarce harvests and therefore scarce food (and inflated prices). However, unlike today, food could not just be shipped in on an overnight truck from halfway across the country. People in ancient days undergoing a drought or famine could do little: tighten their belts and ration what little food they did have while paying more for it, or travel and stay for some time—perhaps even years--where the rain was still falling and growing crops and grasses for the livestock to eat. You might recall Abram and Sarai traveling to Egypt and staying there to avoid a famine (Genesis 12) and Jacob sending his sons to buy food from Egypt during another famine (Genesis 42). This one must have been severe, as even the fertile area around Bethlehem, which means "house of bread," was hit.

So one Israelite, Elimelech from the tribe of Judah, decided that instead of suffering in his native town of Bethlehem, he would move his family out of Bethlehem to live in Israel's pagan neighbor, Moab. This might sound like a perfectly logical solution to us, but we must remember that God had commanded His chosen people Israel to have nothing to do with several of their neighbors, including Moab. (In fact, it's possible some of Elimelech's friends and relatives warned him not to go to Moab.) But the idea was "right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), so that's what he did. He packed up his little family and left his God-given inheritance (his land) behind. They traveled about fifty miles to the country of Moab and "remained there." He failed to live up to his name, which means "My God is King."

We are not Jews (most of us, anyway), and we don't have special land from God, nor are we commanded to avoid intermingling with our neighbors. In fact, avoiding all those who don't believe in Christ as their Savior would be impossible, as the apostle Paul notes (I Corinthians 5:9-10). But we Church Age believers are commanded to keep separate from the world—or, more precisely, what we might call "the world system." The ideas, culture, beliefs, lifestyle, and even humor of fallen mankind want to squeeze us to be just like them: they want us to laugh when they laugh, agree with them, applaud their decisions, and so on. Instead, we are to be transformed into the image of Christ (Romans 12:2; 8:29).

But God says, "Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world" (I John 2:15-16). (Again, this doesn't mean we are to hate sinners, but sin.) We live physically in the world, but Christ says we are not "of" the world; He sent us into the world to glorify Him through faithful obedience (John 17:14-18).

So we could use the metaphor that the world system is “Moab,” while time spent studying one’s Bible, praying, with faithful believers, at church listening to the pastor, singing, and worshipping God is the place of God’s blessing, or “Israel.” We all make daily forays into “Moab” in the form of errands, work, and media. But do we “remain” there, in that realm of ungodly thinking?

**Personal Application Time**

- Consider where your heart has been today (or yesterday, if it’s early morning). If you were surrounded by ungodly coworkers, family, or acquaintances, did their ideas, humor, and speech sweep you along? Or did you stand out as different and separate?
- Remember that God, as soon as you confess any sin, casts it behind His back (Isaiah 38:17), forgives any other sin you were unaware of (I John 1:9), and His mercies are new (Lamentations 3:23). However, this is not any excuse for deliberate sin (Romans 6:1-2), but God gives grace to those under temptation and always provides a way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13). Choose one or more of these verses (or another one the Holy Spirit brought to your mind) to write out:

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 3

*Hold on a second! You'd better pray before starting this time in God's Word. Pray for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying it.*

**Read** Ruth 1:3-5.

### **Question Time**

1. *Who died?* \_\_\_\_\_
  2. *Naomi's sons took* \_\_\_\_\_ *wives.*
  3. *They lived in Moab about* \_\_\_\_\_ *years.*
  4. *What happened next?* \_\_\_\_\_
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### **Let's Dig In**

Perhaps it was a few days after the family's move to Moab; perhaps it was a few months. But it seems like not much time passed before Elimelech died. We're not told how: a work accident? City violence? A fatal sickness? In any case, we can speculate (but not assume) that God allowed this early, "tragic" death because Elimelech had disobeyed God's command to dwell in the land He had given His people (Psalm 37:3); Elimelech had failed to trust God and had decided to live among a wicked people instead.

Poor Naomi! Suddenly she was a widow in a foreign land. Thankfully she still had her late-teenage or young adult sons, who could work and take care of her. (The parent-child bond was strong in that culture, and adult children usually provided for their aging parents. There were no nursing homes in the ancient world.)

Did Naomi object when her sons started courting Moabite girls? We're not told, but it was extremely unwise—and perhaps even sin—for Mahlon and Chilion to marry

them. God forbade His people Israel from intermarrying with the wicked, idol-worshipping nations around them (Deuteronomy 7:1-4) because they would turn their hearts away from the one true God (Malachi 2:11). The Moabite people, while not mentioned by name in the Deuteronomy passage, also worshipped false gods. In addition, they had treated Israel harshly on their journey into the Promised Land and had tried to curse Israel through Balaam. Besides that, it is extremely unlikely that these brides had believed in God and had denounced their native false gods. (Of course, as we'll see, God can turn even sin and ugliness into grace and use it in His grand plan.)

The narrator of the book summarizes about ten years: the young men almost certainly brought their new wives into the family home, building new rooms if necessary. During the day while their husbands were at work, Ruth and Orpah would have done chores together with Naomi. Undoubtedly, she (and her sons) taught the Moabite pair much about Israelite history, customs, and the Law. Perhaps they celebrated the normal Jewish feasts together (without the travel to the Tabernacle). We can guess that the little family of five was quite close and loving. Apparently, however, neither young couple was blessed with any children from God.

Then, after those ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion died. Again, we're not told how or why. Now Naomi, wearing sackcloth and ashes again, was bereaved of her sons: she was left without blood relatives in a foreign land. In fact, she was left without hope, because without sons, who would provide for her in her old age? Who would protect her? Would she even last that long? (We'll read later about the custom of Levirate marriage, but Naomi was too old for that, too.)

I've heard people say that "death is just part of life," but if you look closer, that's not true. God never intended for death to be part of His perfect creation. It was

man's sin that brought spiritual death (separation between man's spirit and God) and eventually physical death (separation between one's spirit and one's body). As James says, "Sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death" (1:15). But for the believer, death has lost its sting and its power (I Corinthians 15:54-57), because Christ has conquered death! Upon the moment of placing faith in Christ, God gives that person spiritual life, and promises a glorified body one day which will never face physical death or decay. Death for the believer is merely stepping through a doorway to our real, permanent home in the presence of the One who saved us.

Have you believed in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Have you acknowledged that you are a sinner before God? All of us are sinners. Have you believed that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in your place, taking the punishment we all deserve? That He died, was buried, and rose again the third day? This belief in what God has already done for us is all that is needed to accept God's gracious gift of salvation from eternal punishment and hopelessness and slavery to sin.

If you have believed, praise God! You need not fear death. You never have to sin. You are free to serve Him and love Him!

### **Personal Application Time**

- If you're not sure if you're going to heaven, look up these verses (either in a physical Bible, or go to BibleGateway.com): Romans 3:10-12; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-9; John 3:16-17; I Peter 2:24; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Isaiah 52:13-53:12.
- If you have believed, praise and thank God! How about writing down blessings and gifts associated with salvation, and then praying and thanking God for them? Here are some verses to start you out: I Peter 1:3-4; John 6:37; Romans 8:1-2; James 1:5; Ephesians 2:7, 13,

18-19; 3:12; Colossians 1:12-14.

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 4

*Pray before starting this time in God's Word. Pray for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying it.*

**Read** Ruth 1:6-10.

### **Question Time**

1. *Where did Naomi set out to go to?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Why?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *What did Naomi tell Ruth and Orpah? “\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ each of you to her mother’s \_\_\_\_\_”*
4. *Why do you think she told them to go home? (speculate)*  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

Back in Israel, God had graciously provided food and ended the famine. This almost certainly occurred after the people cried out to God for help, and possibly after a God-appointed judge delivered them from the power of an oppressor (Judges 10:10). And the good news—the barley harvest had actually come in well that spring—eventually spread to surrounding areas, including Moab.

We can almost picture Naomi packing up her few belongings, leaving the house, and getting a way out of town, utterly self-absorbed in her grief, before she realized her daughters-in-law were still with her. Perhaps she thought they were accompanying her for a short way out of respect; this was common in their culture. (In our culture, it's a bit like escorting your guests to the door, or maybe even to their car, as they're leaving your home.)

Then Naomi stopped in the middle of the road and turned and told them to go, to return to their people. She also blessed them in God's name: “May God show you

faithful love and give you rest (peace, safety, comfort, the ceasing of striving and trouble) in the form of new husbands.” But why did she send them home? Perhaps she thought she was showing them kindness: surely these young widows would easily find new husbands among their own people, as opposed to among hers, where they would be Gentiles and foreigners. Or, as one scholar suggested, perhaps she didn’t want to take her Gentile daughters-in-law home where they would serve as living proof that her sons had married outside the people of Israel.

In any case, let’s pause here and consider the phrase “God grant that you may find rest.” The word “rest” (Hebrew *menuchah*\*) can be used as a resting place, a home, peace from enemies, relief from anxiety, or security. It can also mean quiet, or ease. The word has an interesting trail throughout Scripture: God took a day of rest after creation (Genesis 2:2-3) and later established it as part of the Law (Exodus 20:8-11). God offered rest to the Israelites in the form of the Promised Land.

But the picture becomes clearer in the New Testament: Christ said, “Come to Me, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28-30). Christ is the ultimate rest: peace, safety, security, fulfillment, lack of striving or worrying or questioning. A personal relationship with God’s Son—through faith alone in Him alone—brings quiet contentment and trust, like a small child resting on his mother’s lap (Psalm 131).

Have you found your rest in God’s Son? If you’ve never believed in Him, there is no better day than today. And if you have believed, are you resting in Him? It actually takes work to set aside our human pride to strive, to do things on our own, to be “independent.” (Read Hebrews 3 and 4 for more on this.)

God wants us to rest in Him, to wait on Him and His perfect timing. He wants us to do what He’s already commanded us while waiting patiently for further

instructions. There is great blessing and peace when one is fully dependent on God.

\*Pronunciation: the “ch” is actually a guttural sound like the “ch” in “Loch Ness:” *meh-NOO-cha*.

### **Personal Application Time**

- Consider your mind and heart as of the past day or so. Have you been working hard to get things done all by yourself? Or are you turning each task over to God and asking for His help and guidance?
- Look up Psalm 46:10 and write it down here or on another piece of paper. (Try looking it up in another Bible translation as well.)

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 5

*Don't forget to pray for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying God's Word.*

**Read** Ruth 1:10-14.

### **Question Time**

1. *Did Ruth and Orpah leave when Naomi told them to go home? \_\_\_\_\_*
2. *Naomi was too \_\_\_\_\_ for a husband.*
3. *Even if Naomi remarried immediately, and even if she was able to bear more children, Ruth and Orpah would have to wait \_\_\_\_\_.*
4. *"It is \_\_\_\_\_ to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out \_\_\_\_\_ me."*
5. *Who left? \_\_\_\_\_*

### **Let's Dig In**

After Ruth & Orpah's initial refusal to go home (perhaps politely, perhaps sincerely), Naomi launches into the hopelessness of her situation. There is no human reason for Ruth and Orpah to stick with Naomi, because, as an older (childless) widow, she has no means of support whatsoever. Her life will be a hard one: she has no one to provide food, shelter, and money for her (and women could do little to earn a living on their own in that time). She is past child-bearing years and therefore of no use as a wife—no man would marry her. But even if that happened, and even if she somehow conceived and bore sons, Ruth and Orpah would have to wait in impoverished widowhood and abstinence for almost twenty years.

Do you think Naomi has the right focus? I don't think so, especially since she concludes that "it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD

[Yahweh] has gone out against me.” There are a couple of adjectives that spring to mind here: selfish, bitter, angry. And it sounds to me like she’s blaming God.

Do you remember Job? After Satan killed all his children, wiped out his entire fortune and livelihood, and struck him with terrible illness, Job grieved but worshipped God. He acknowledged that God has the right both to give and to take (Job 2:10). He did not “charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22). However, after a little time had passed, he started blaming God, implying that God had made a mistake, and grew self-righteous.

When suffering great loss and pain, it is okay to pour out one’s soul to God. In fact, that’s one kind of prayer (Psalm 62:8). The psalms are full of prayers that could be paraphrased as something like “God, it feels like You have turned Your back on me. I’m in a great trial and I can’t stop crying. It seems everyone is against me, and even my body is affected. I am helpless!” Confessing known sin and examining oneself for hidden sin are also good responses to a trial. But it is never okay to blame God or accuse Him of wrongdoing. The Psalms are again a good example because even the darkest of them turn a corner by remembering God’s deeds in the past, calling upon God to act, or focusing on God’s character.

### **Personal Application Time**

- Look up a few lament psalms. On a separate paper, summarize the psalmist’s trouble, and then summarize what he chooses to focus on in the middle of the trial. Here are a few to start with: Psalm 6, 10, 42, 54, 74, 77.
- If you are currently in a trial, how about writing your own psalm? You don’t have to use flowery language or rhyme (unless you want to). Keep in mind the principles above, and simply pour out your soul to God on paper. Then move the focus by talking about how God has

helped you in the past, meditating on His character, or talking to Him directly.

- If you're not currently in a trial, collect a few of these principles and some meaningful verses. Put them somewhere (such as on one of those blank pages in the back of your Bible) to have on hand the next time a trial shows up, to help you maintain the right mindset.
- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 6

*Don't forget to pray for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying God's Word.*

**Read** Ruth 1:15.

### **Question Time**

1. Naomi told her daughter-in-law to \_\_\_\_\_ to her \_\_\_\_\_ and to her \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Look up I Kings 11:7. One of the main gods in question is described as “\_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Moabites.”
3. Look up what “abomination” means.

### **Let's Dig In**

Naomi's speech was half successful: Orpah kissed her goodbye and left. She presumably walked back into town and likely went to her parents' house. It's a safe guess that her father arranged a second marriage to a Moabite young man, and that she lived the rest of her life in Moab with him. But Ruth hadn't left yet. So Naomi told her to follow Orpah's example, and to return to her people and her gods.

But what kind of people would she be returning to? A wicked, materialistic, pagan people descended from incest. What gods? The pantheon of the Canaanite peoples, including Moab, were a particularly nasty bunch. Deities such as Baal, Asherah (goddess of fertility), Dagon, and many others were angry and violent. The people created twisted stories and relationships for them, as if they were powerful, wicked humans. It seems Chemosh was the national god of both Moab and Ammon, and was a god of war and destruction. Worshipping—even merely appeasing—Chemosh and those other gods required not just animal sacrifice, but child sacrifice (II Chronicles 28:3). In

desperate times, a man might kill his own child in order to “appease” Chemosh or Molech (II Kings 3:27)!

In Naomi’s haste, she had forgotten how vile Ruth’s people and native gods were. Although Ruth had believed in Yahweh at some point, living among her own people without the light of an Israelite nearby might have dragged her back into darkness. (This is not to say that Ruth could have lost her salvation—that is impossible—but she could have turned her back on God.)

How does this apply to us today? Very few of our neighbors worship false gods openly. Suppose a new coworker shows up at my job. “April” is about my age, and is very friendly. We get to talking and discover we have some similarities: we both like video games and reading. April is aware I’m a Christian, but she never asks questions about the Bible. A friendship develops—and in fact, we spend time together outside of work a few times. But if I never bring up spiritual things, talk about church and the Bible, and how God has saved me and helps me every day—am I truly loving her? Or is talking to her just a pleasant way to pass time between waiting on customers? It’s almost as if, at the end of every shift, I tell her to “return to her gods:” “Go home to your own personal idols and obsessions. Keep ignoring God; it’s fine.” But sooner or later, April will meet her Maker face to face—and so will I. How will I answer God when He asks me why I never told April about the hope that is within me?

**Personal Application Time**

- Do you have an “April” at work (or among your family or neighbors)? Someone you talk to, but not about God? Or multiple “Aprils?” Write down any names that come to mind:

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- Pray about how you might tell each person the good news about Jesus Christ—not in a pushy, preachy way, but in a loving way.
- Pray for unsaved family and friends, but also pray that if God gives you an opportunity to witness, that you would see it, take it, and speak truth clearly.
- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 7

Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.

**Read** Ruth 1: 16-17.

### **Question Time**

1. Did Ruth want Naomi to keep trying to persuade her to go home? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where did Ruth promise to go? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Whose people did Ruth say would be her people? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Whose God did Ruth say would be her God? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where would Ruth die and be buried? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What would part Ruth and Naomi? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

Ruth replies to Naomi's persuasions with poetic, beautiful promises: a pledge of loyalty and love. She promises to follow and stay with Naomi for the rest of her life. It was an unconditional covenant, promised out of a faithful heart. English doesn't have a good word to sum up Ruth's heart, but Hebrew does: it's the word *chesed*.<sup>\*</sup> Translators of the Bible have used various phrases to try to convey this word, which is filled-to-the-brim with meaning: "mercy" (KJV), "lovingkindness" (NASB), "faithful love" (CSB), "unfailing love" (NLT), and "steadfast love" (ESV). It's a selfless love that's not just a warm fuzzy feeling or nice thoughts, but a useful love that's an action and a promise. *Chesed* is a commitment to another person or party: a loyalty. Here Ruth proclaims her *chesed* toward Naomi, and we'll see her prove it by sticking with Naomi through thick and thin.

Has anyone ever promised *chesed* toward you? If you have believed that Jesus Christ died for your sin, then you are a recipient of God's *chesed*, His loyal, unending, useful love. God is the source of true love (I John 4:7), and He loved us (mankind) first. God loved fallen mankind so much that He sent His Son to be the propitiation (full payment) for our sins (John 3:16; I John 4:10). And this useful love doesn't stop with "mere" salvation from an eternity in the lake of fire; God also gives His children everything we need for life and godliness (II Peter 1:3), the desire and ability to grow spiritually (Philippians 2:13), our daily needs such as food and clothing (Matthew 6:25-33), the indwelling Holy Spirit to comfort and guide us into truth (John 14:16-17; 26), and so, so much more. A scholar I respect described God's *chesed* toward us as "better than unconditional," because it is unsatisfied with our current position; it wants us to "excel still more" (I Thessalonians 4:10).

Praise God for this incredible love! He has blessed His children richly with salvation, gifts, and blessings. He deserves unending thanks and praise!

\*Pronunciation: The "ch" is actually a guttural sound, like the "ch" in "Loch Ness:" *ches-sed*.

### **Personal Application Time**

- Spend some time thanking God for His sacrificial love toward His people in general and you in particular. How has He helped you in the past? What trials has He given you grace to endure?

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- How can you show *chesed* to other believers? (Hint: read I Corinthians 13).

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 8

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

Today we'll be looking at references across the Old Testament that contain the word *chesed* ("loyal love, steadfast love, lovingkindness, unchanging love"). This will help us learn more about the word and answer questions about it. It will be a lot of flipping in your Bible, but I promise it will be worth it!

### **Question 1: How is God's *chesed* described?**

1. To God \_\_\_\_\_ power and ***chesed*** (Psalm 62:12).
2. God is \_\_\_\_\_ in ***chesed*** (Exodus 34:6).
3. It is \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 36:7) and \_\_\_\_\_ than life (Psalm 63:3).
4. It \_\_\_\_\_ to the heavens (Psalm 36:5).
5. God \_\_\_\_\_ in ***chesed*** (Micah 7:18).
6. It never \_\_\_\_\_ (Lamentations 3:22); it endures \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 136).
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ is full of God's ***chesed***! (Psalm 33:5)

*To sum up: God's ***chesed*** is part of His character--and it is vast!*

### **Question 2: To whom does God show (or keep) *chesed*?**

8. Those who walk \_\_\_\_\_ Him with \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_ (I Kings 8:23)
9. Those who \_\_\_\_\_ Him and \_\_\_\_\_ His commandments (Nehemiah 1:5)
10. Those who \_\_\_\_\_ Him (Psalm 103:11)

*To sum up: God shows ***chesed*** toward those who wholeheartedly love and obey Him.*

### Question 3: What is God's love for His children (believers) like?

11. God commands His **chesed** to be present with His children \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 42:8)
12. God's **chesed** (here translated "mercy") \_\_\_\_\_ His children \_\_\_\_\_ their days (Psalm 23:6)
13. God's **chesed** \_\_\_\_\_ the one who trusts in Him (Psalm 32:10)
14. God \_\_\_\_\_ His children with **chesed** and mercy (Psalm 103:4)
15. God's **chesed** is \_\_\_\_\_ toward us (literally "prevailed over us") (Psalm 117:2)
16. God's **chesed** \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 90:14)
17. God will not remove His \_\_\_\_\_ from His children (Isaiah 54:10)

To sum up: God's love for us is deep, protective, good, and constant.

### Question 4: How should we respond to God's **chesed** for us?

18. God's **chesed** is worthy of \_\_\_\_\_ (remembering, recalling, mentioning, marking) (Psalm 63:7)
19. God's **chesed** is worthy of \_\_\_\_\_ on (in other words, meditating) (Psalm 48:9)
20. God's **chesed** is worthy of \_\_\_\_\_ to Him (Psalm 107:8)
21. God's **chesed** is worthy of being \_\_\_\_\_ in public (Psalm 40:10)
22. God's **chesed** is worthy of \_\_\_\_\_ singing, \_\_\_\_\_ service, thanksgiving, and worship (Psalm 100)
23. It is good to declare God's **chesed** \_\_\_\_\_ and night (Psalm 92:2)

To sum up: Thank God! Praise Him for His amazing love toward us! Shout it from the rooftops! Tell all your friends what God has done for you! Sing joyfully about it!

## Personal Application Time

- What new things did you learn?

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- Write a prayer of praise to God for His indescribable love:

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- Bonus: Singing praise to God is mentioned all the time in the psalms. What hymns do you know praise God for His love? How about singing one to God right now? There are also some newer spiritual songs about God's love you might not know: "How Deep the Father's Love for Us," "O the Deep Deep Love of Jesus" (this one has an old and a new version). I printed off several favorites, laminated them, and stuck them in the shower to remind me of the words.

- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 9

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 1:16-18.

### **Question Time**

1. Was Ruth a Jew? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did she grow up in Israel? \_\_\_\_\_
3. By whose Name does she invoke a curse on herself if she doesn't keep her promise? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

Déjà vu, you might be saying. But let's take a look at Ruth's words from another angle: that of faith. Ruth was born and raised in a pagan home and taught to fear and worship horrible, angry gods who were worshipped with violence and wickedness. But then a newcomer, a young Israelite man, took notice of her, bargained with her father for her hand, and married her. Through her new family, Ruth certainly learned about Israelite laws and history—and their God. She learned that Israel's God, Yahweh, is not just the mighty God who brought Israel out of Egypt with plagues and miracles, but also a kind God who shows *chesed* (eternal love) to thousands. Yahweh's laws called not just for holiness, but also for honesty, justice, and provisions for poor folk. They commanded kindness to widows, orphans, and foreigners. And, Ruth learned, Yahweh had made some very special promises regarding the Offspring of the first woman, the Seed of Abraham, who would descend from Judah... this special Son would save His people from their sins!

Sometime during those ten years of marriage to one of God's chosen people, Ruth—descended from a man who had

turned aside from the place of God's blessing (Genesis 13)—believed in Yahweh and His promise. (And since God instituted the Law to reign during that era, Ruth doubtless began obeying its rules.)

Fast forward to today's verses: after the deaths of her husband and brother-in-law, after packing up the house and leaving town with her remaining in-laws, Ruth heard Naomi tell her and Orpah to go home to their people and their gods. Orpah left, but Ruth had a choice: go home to the people and customs and gods she grew up with—go home to security from a human perspective, but abandon the God whom she had believed. Or, leave everything familiar and cling to her mother-in-law and her God. She would, in a sense, become a Jew.

And that latter option is what Ruth chose. She wholeheartedly declared her loyalty to Naomi and Naomi's people and Naomi's God. She made an unconditional covenant of loyalty to Naomi and to her God, binding it in Yahweh's personal name (not in Chemosh's).

Such faith! Such bravery! Such simple trust in God! And yet I am sure that this was not the first time Ruth exercised faith in God. Just as David's experience trusting God to help him fight wild animals later led to him trusting God to defeat an enormous warrior (I Samuel 17:34-37), I'm sure that smaller tests of faith led to this one. (As a side note: Naomi's response to Ruth's moving, probably emotional, pledge of loyalty was to stop talking to her. The Hebrew gives the impression that it was curt—you might paraphrase it as "Naomi shut up.")

How are you doing with trusting God? If you trust Him in little things (His grace to get you through a tough day at work, all the pieces to fall into place for an important event, safety in traveling out of state and back), He may one day provide you with a bigger opportunity to trust Him.

**Personal Application Time**

- List two or three big or little things you need to trust God with right now. (For example: money to pay the bills, health situation in yourself or someone else, you long to-do list, how busy work will be on such-and-such a day, etc.) Turn each one over to God in prayer, asking Him for His help to trust Him:

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 10

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 1:19-22.

### **Question Time**

1. *Who recognized Naomi?* \_\_\_\_\_  
*of Bethlehem*
2. *Naomi wanted to be called “*\_\_\_\_\_“
3. *According to Naomi, what had God done?* \_\_\_\_\_  
*against her and* \_\_\_\_\_  
*upon her.*
4. *What time of year did Naomi and Ruth arrive in*  
*Bethlehem?* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let’s Dig In**

Naomi, with Ruth following faithfully, had to travel north and then west to get around the Dead Sea. The author gives us a time marker: the beginning of barley harvest. This is the first harvest of the year, in spring: the middle of April by our calendar. The temperature can be up to 76° F, but even in spring, the Middle Eastern sun is a force to be reckoned with, and I’m sure their journey was a hot, sweaty, and dusty one.

In any case, the pair finally arrived at Bethlehem. The town sits on a spur of land above fertile fields; various grains, as well as olives, figs, and grapes, were grown there. (The name Bethlehem means “house of bread.”) As a small town, the residents doubtless all knew each other, and thus newcomers stood out immediately. And some of the women — former friends and neighbors of Naomi — recognized her. But I’m guessing that Naomi had aged beyond her years, given her losses (and her response to her losses). Naomi and

Ruth may have been wearing sackcloth as well—scratchy goat hair “cloth” worn by the grieving, similar to our custom of wearing black when in mourning. (Ruth is not mentioned in the narrative here; perhaps the Israelite women ignored a Gentile foreigner, or perhaps they were so focused on Naomi that they missed her. Or perhaps there’s some other reason. But Naomi almost certainly didn’t introduce her right then.)

Naomi’s response to the women reveals her heart. Naomi’s name means “pleasant,” so she renames herself “Mara” instead, which means “bitter,” because God had “dealt very bitterly” with her. She also accuses God of “testifying against” her and “bringing calamity” upon her! It’s pretty clear who she’s blaming for her trials, isn’t it? And her new name certainly fits; she has become a bitter, angry woman.

Did you know that your response to trials can shape your life? Naomi had placed all the blame for the deaths of her husband and sons squarely on God, and that angry spirit had eaten away inside of her until it was her sole focus, her sole way of viewing the world.

What does the Bible say about bitterness? Other examples of bitter people include Esau (Hebrews 12:15-17) and Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:23). While a “bitter cry” and “bitter weeping” are reasonable human reactions to terrible news (Genesis 27:34; II Kings 20:3), long-term bitterness is not an attitude that pleases God. Believers are commanded to put away bitterness (Ephesians 4:21) and warned against “bitter jealousy” (James 3:14), which is evidence of earthly wisdom. Believers are also to watch out for a “root of bitterness” which can cause trouble and bring many into sin (Hebrews 12:15): bitterness can be contagious! Bitterness is like a fast-spreading fungus on the leaves of your houseplants: if you don’t deal with the source quickly, it can bring many to ruin.

## Personal Application Time

- How have you responded to the little “bumps in the road” that God allows? When your pet made a mess, when you tried a new coffee and it was very disappointing, when a stranger was rude to you? Did you fuss over the offense, or did you give it over to God?

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- The “put off, put on” principle says that we should replace sinful habits and responses with God-glorifying ones. Instead of grumbling under your breath, how about quoting Scripture, pondering on the character of God, singing (or humming) a spiritual song, or finding something to thank God for? Choose one or more godly responses you can have the next time something goes wrong.

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- Is there a brother or sister in Christ you suspect or know has a “root of bitterness?” Pray for wisdom on how to help him or her.

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 11

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 2:1-3

### **Question Time**

1. *What did Ruth ask Naomi permission to do?*
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
*Whose field did she “just so happen” to come to?*
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
*What clan did he belong to?*

### **Let’s Dig In**

It was the beginning of barley harvest (in the middle of our April), and workers—landowners and their servants—would have marched out from town into the fields around Bethlehem to reap the harvest, starting early in the morning. Reapers used a curved, sharpened metal tool called a sickle to cut the stalks of grain—barley in this case. Then they (or other workers) would collect the stalks into bundles (sheaves) and tie them. These sheaves could then be carried or carted to the threshing floor. All this was hot, sweaty work: we’ll see later that the workers brought water with them to be able to take a break once in a while. It was, however, a time of joy, especially after a famine: food for the year had been supplied!

Reapers might miss some stalks of grain, especially around the edges of the field. And the gatherers might drop some. But God told them not to go back or go through a second time; the missed grain was reserved for gleaners (Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22). In fact, gleaning was ordained by God as a right for the disadvantaged, such as the very poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners. Gleaners came through

and gathered the leftovers of a grain or fruit harvest after the reapers had gone through and collected the main bulk of the harvest. So Ruth went to glean, but first she revealed more godly character by asking permission to go glean—even though she and Naomi had basically no other way to get food. (Naomi did own the land Elimelech had had, but it was either fallow and full of weeds after sitting unused for ten years, or squatters had claimed it in the landowner’s absence.) Ruth left the house and followed the streams of workers out of town into the fields. Once there, she apparently picked one at random and started gleaning after the reapers and bundlers.

Ruth almost certainly didn’t have a sickle (although maybe she had a knife), and she probably had to walk further to collect the leftover stalks. When she had enough for a bundle, she may have had to keep moving it with her, or walk back and forth to add to her little pile. I bet her hands grew sore from handling the stalks. Her back probably hurt from constantly bending over.

And although she had a right to glean as a widow and a foreigner, that did not protect her from potentially being shouted at, harassed or mocked, chased out of a field, or even assaulted. She was, after all, a lone young woman with no male protector.

But whose field did she “just so happen” to work in? The field of Boaz, a “worthy man” of Elimelech’s clan of Judah. (The narrator is employing a literary technique called “foreshadowing” by introducing him and his connection to Naomi now.) But was it chance or coincidence or fate? No. Who really guided her there? God. God led her to the right field, in a great swath of fields around the town, that belonged to a godly man. God was already beginning to bless and reward Ruth for her *chesed* (loyal love) to Naomi!

## Personal Application Time

- We as believers know that God is in charge of all things, including “chance” (Proverbs 16:33), but how often do we say “What a funny coincidence” or “knock on wood?” How about wishing someone “good luck?” Our culture is steeped with “innocent” superstitions, but these are not appropriate for the child of God. Are there any sayings or habits that you need to adjust?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 12

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word. Pray for your church family, too.*

**Read** Ruth 2:4-7.

### **Question Time**

1. *What kind of employer does Boaz seem to be?*
2. *Had Ruth asked permission before starting to glean?*
3. *What did the head servant emphasize about Ruth?*
  - A. *Her nationality*
  - B. *Her accent*
  - C. *Her hard work*
  - D. *A and C*

### **Let's Dig In**

Introducing Boaz!

It was perhaps now mid-morning, and Boaz came from town to check on his staff. He blesses them, and they respond in kind: we can guess that he was a kind employer who cared about his servants. In fact, he knows them well enough that he notices a stranger among them, so he goes to ask his head servant. This head servant reports that the stranger is Ruth; he mentions her nationality twice. (Undoubtedly the whole town knew about Naomi's return by now.) Then, even though Boaz didn't ask, the head servant tells him how polite and hard-working Ruth has been.

Are you a hard worker? Would a stranger watching you for half a morning applaud you? Of course, rest is necessary,

but God is honored when we do a task to the best of our ability (II Thessalonians 3:6-13; Colossians 3:23-24).

### **Personal Application Time**

- Look up these verses: Philippians 2:14-16a; Galatians 6:9; Psalm 90:11; Colossians 3:17; II Thessalonians 3:6-13; Colossians 3:23-24. Choose one or more to write out (or type & print) and put in your work area (locker, desk, pocket of work clothes, etc.)
- How about starting a new habit? Before you get out of your car at work, put on your apron, or walk through the door, or after morning coffee for those who work at home (or whatever time works for you), devote the workday to God in prayer. Ask for His help to glorify Him, work hard, and be a good testimony to others. (Another excellent habit would be to thank God for His help at the end of a shift!)
- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 13

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 2:8-10.

### **Question Time**

1. *Where did Boaz tell Ruth to glean?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *What did he offer her?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Did Ruth appreciate his kindness?* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

After checking in with his head servant and learning about Ruth gleaning behind his reapers, Boaz apparently went to talk to his male servants, probably the reapers. He commanded them not to touch this vulnerable young woman, in case their sin nature suggested such a thing.

Boaz then went to Ruth. He calls her “my daughter,” a respectful term for a younger woman. He tells her to stay in the fields that he owns and follow after his servants—because he has power to protect her on his land. He also offers her free access to the water his servants worked to draw from the well and carry out to the fields.

Ruth’s response is humble gratitude. Bowing to one’s social superior was customary in that culture, but Ruth amplifies this by bowing so deeply that her face was to the ground. She knows she’s very low in the social pecking order and she wasn’t expecting any favors. In fact, she seems surprised by Boaz’s kindness. (Other ancient peoples had law codes like the Israelites had the Mosaic Law, but theirs do not mention foreigners at all. God gave many protections—and some responsibilities—for foreigners living in Israel.)

Humility and gratitude are always good responses to any kind of grace for us, too. Our sin nature wants to think we're the most important person around, but we know from God's Word that we, too, were headed for hell before God intervened and rescued us. As for gratitude, God tells us it is His will for us to give thanks in all circumstances (I Thessalonians 5:18).

### **Personal Application Time**

- How's your view of yourself before God? In my experience, pride is a sin that must be knocked down periodically. Consider your words, thoughts, and attitudes recently. (One example: interrupting others because what you have to say is "more important".)

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- Are there some practical ways you can "count others more significant than yourself?"

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- Fill up these lines with things, people, and blessings you're grateful for.

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 14

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 2:11-13.

### **Question Time**

1. *What had Boaz heard about Ruth?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *Paraphrase Boaz's blessing of Ruth.*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. *What character traits did Ruth show?*  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

Word spreads, especially in a close-knit community. Ruth already had a reputation as the young woman who had shown great sacrificial love and loyalty to her mother-in-law, the one who had left her native land to be with her. Once Boaz had a name to go with a face, he knew who Ruth was and offered protection and kindness to her, honoring her *chesed* to Naomi.

Boaz also blessed her: “May Yahweh (God) reward you—the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” This unusual imagery—that of God as a protective bird—is used elsewhere in Scripture. It’s possible Boaz borrowed it from the song of Moses, who compared God’s care and protection of Israel to a loving eagle caring for its young (Deuteronomy. 32:10-12). The metaphor seems to have become a family saying: David, Boaz’s great-grandson, employs this beautiful imagery several times in his poetry (Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7). (The psalmist of Psalm 91 also uses it in verse four; this psalm’s author is

unknown, but it might also be David.) And then, centuries later, Jesus Christ, descendant of David, also spoke similarly in His lament over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37).

What does this metaphor mean? God is a protector of those who take refuge in Him. Those who look around for places of security—important friends, a security system, a guard dog, stockpiles of supplies or money—and then place their trust wholly in God will find He is a rock and a fortress, a very present help in time of trouble (Psalm 46:1)

### **Personal Application Time**

- Who or what do you look to for safety and peace? Imagine if you received bad news: would your initial reaction be to pick up the phone and call your friend So-and-so? Or would it be to flee to your loving, all-powerful heavenly Father for comfort and peace?

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- The biblical authors used many other metaphors and titles for God. For example: my Rock, my Fortress, my Deliverer, my Shield, the Horn of my salvation, my Stronghold (Psalm 18:2). Pick one of the titles of God and pretend you're describing it to a new believer

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 15

*Pray for understanding and insight, that you may behold wondrous things from God's Word.*

**Read** Deuteronomy 32:10-14.

1. God \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness. (v. 10)
2. How many guides were with Israel? (v. 12) \_\_\_\_\_
3. When Israel got to Canaan, what kind of land was it? (vv. 13-14) \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Psalm 17:6-9.

4. David calls upon \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 6), who is the \_\_\_\_\_ of those who seek \_\_\_\_\_. (v. 7)
5. Where does David ask to be kept? (v. 8) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where does he ask to be hidden? (v. 8) \_\_\_\_\_
7. What can God's wings protect one from? (v. 9)  
Deadly enemies \_\_\_\_\_ you.

**Read** Psalm 36:5-9.

8. What extends to the heavens? (v. 5) \_\_\_\_\_
9. What extends to the clouds? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is exceedingly precious? (v. 7) \_\_\_\_\_
11. The refuge of God's wings is connected with (vv. 8-9):
  - a. Feasting on abundance
  - b. Drinking from the river of God's delights
  - c. The fountain of life
  - d. God's light

**Read Psalm 57:1-3,9.**

12. *How long would David take refuge in the shadow of God's wings? (v. 1)* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. *Where would David give thanks to God? (v. 9)*  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Psalm 61.**

14. *How long did David want to dwell with God? (v. 4)*  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. *God had \_\_\_\_\_ David's vows, and He had given him the \_\_\_\_\_ of those who \_\_\_\_\_ God's Name. (v. 5)*

**Read Psalm 63:1-8.**

16. *What is better than life? (v. 3)* \_\_\_\_\_
17. *When would David remember and meditate on God? (v. 6)* \_\_\_\_\_
18. *What would David do in the shadow of God's wings? (v. 7)* \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Psalm 91:1-6.**

19. *Those dwelling in the refuge of God's wings don't need to fear*
- a. *Entrapment*
  - b. *Deadly disease*
  - c. *The terror of the night*
  - d. *The dangers of day*
  - e. *Destruction*

**Read Matthew 23:37.**

20. *God mourned that His people were \_\_\_\_\_ to be gathered under His wings.*

# Let's Dig In

We're taking a little parenthesis away from the book of Ruth to briefly study the context of other uses of "the shadow of God's wings." There's so much rich truth here even in these few short passages!

So I said that "God's wings" is a metaphor that means He is a refuge to those who flee to Him. Sheltering under God's wings is such a place of blessing and protection that the child of God doesn't need to fear anything—in fact, he or she can sing for joy! And unlike other possible sources of protection in our lives, God is both completely able and completely willing. In fact, He longs to gather us under His wings and mourns when we are not willing—when we stubbornly refuse to trust Him.

Are you willing to shelter under God's wings? Are you resting, confident in His perfect protection?

## Personal Application Time

- What other truths do you see in these precious verses?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 16

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 2:14-16.

### **Question Time**

1. *What did Boaz do at mealtime?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Did Ruth get enough to eat?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *What did Boaz tell his reapers?*
  - a. *“Let Ruth glean from the sheaves”*
  - b. *“Pull out some from the bundles for Ruth to glean”*
  - c. *“Do not shame her”*
  - d. *“Do not rebuke her”*

### **Let’s Dig In**

After the conversation in the previous verse, Ruth got back to work. But at the noon mealtime, Boaz again initiated kindness to Ruth: he invited her over to share in the food and fellowship of himself and his servants. (Ruth likely had little or nothing with her to eat.) The meal consisted of hearty pita bread dipped in hummus (the ESV translates it as “wine;” other versions as “vinegar,” but the Hebrew word is actually *hometz*) and roasted grain—perhaps some of the freshly harvested barley had already been threshed and roasted in a mudbrick oven. Maybe they had some raisins or dried figs afterward. Ruth “ate until she was satisfied, and had some left over.” It seems she packed this up and stored it for the rest of the day.

When everyone was done and gearing up to work again, Boaz had some special instructions for his servants: make sure Ruth has plenty to glean, and don’t reproach (shame, mock, insult) or rebuke (tell her no, yell at her) her. Boaz went out of his way to show kindness and grace to Ruth, a

lowly widow and foreigner. He was generous with the barley harvest that was rightfully his—sown by his servants months ago from his valuable seeds after years of famine in his fields, carefully tended and protected. But he didn't clutch them like a Scrooge. He gave, and gave generously.

Boaz was imitating his God well: Yahweh is a generous God. He loves to bless us: He has blessed us “with every spiritual blessing” (Ephesians 1:3). He “lavished” His grace upon us (Ephesians 1:7-8) and “richly provides all things for us to enjoy” (I Timothy 6:17). He does not withhold good things from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11); He gives good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:7-11). And if anyone asks for wisdom, He gives generously (James 1:5).

Praise God! As David says, “My cup overflows” (Psalm 23:5).

### **Personal Application Time**

- Write out Psalm 31:19.

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- How about you? Are you a Scrooge or a Boaz? Generosity to others—whether they deserve it or not—honors God. I'm talking about more than just money, by the way. You can also be generous with your time, energy, talents, and even your spouse (for example, when a friend needs his expertise or listening ear). Is God bringing something to mind?

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- Bonus! Here are some more verses about God's generosity. Look them up and circle your favorite(s):  
Philippians 4:19; Psalm 36:7-8; II Corinthians 9:8;  
Hebrews 11:6; Psalm 81:10; II Corinthians 8:9.
  - Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 17

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 2:17-19.

### **Question Time**

1. *How long did Ruth glean?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *How much had she gleaned?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *What did Ruth give Naomi?* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *When Naomi saw how much Ruth had gleaned, what did she say? “\_\_\_\_\_ be the \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ of you.”*

### **Let’s Dig In**

More gleaning for Ruth. I wonder how long it took her to notice that there was more “missed” and “dropped” barley than that morning? It was still hard work, of course, but I’m sure she was praising God as she went.

Finally, evening came, and with it the end of daylight to work. Ruth carried her hard-earned sheaf to a good spot, found herself a stick, spread out the barley stalks, and beat the heads. This was necessary to extract the seeds—the actual edible part—from the rest of the plant, the chaff. Then (although the narrator of the book doesn’t mention it, everyone in the original audience would have known this) Ruth had to winnow the seeds from the chaff. She probably didn’t have a winnowing fork, so she likely collected the valuable seeds by hand. (The seeds would be crushed into flour to make bread later.) As for how much it was, biblical measurements like “ephah” are notoriously difficult to determine, but it seems this amount would be enough for the two of them for at least a week—much more than the just-barely-enough Ruth had probably been hoping for.

I can almost picture Ruth, with aching feet, carefully carrying her seeds home in her skirt under a beautiful sunset. There she showed Naomi the fruit of her labor. She also gave Naomi her lunch leftovers (which may have been all she herself had to eat for supper). Apparently, Naomi had a sense of how much Ruth might have gathered on her own and realized that a man must have “taken notice” of her. She even blesses him—the first positive thing we’ve heard her say. Then she asks who it was. Ruth’s answer must have come as a surprise to Naomi: Boaz, her husband’s relative and a godly man. If he had taken notice of Ruth and showed her kindness, then perhaps more could be arranged? (As a side note: Boaz would’ve missed a huge opportunity to be a blessing if he hadn’t been paying attention that day—if he’d been “too busy” or “too important” to help someone in need!)

What a huge difference Boaz’s kindness and special instructions to his servants made to these two women! His generosity probably made the difference that day between growling stomachs and happy ones, between quiet desperation and hope. Boaz was obeying God’s command (and beyond). God made special provisions in the Law for orphans, widows, and foreigners, and Israelites were never to be harsh to foreigners because they had once been foreigners in the land of Egypt (Exodus 22:21). God also commanded Israel to care for widows (Deuteronomy 27:19; 14:29) because He Himself cares for them (Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 146:9).

Those commands carry over into the New Testament: “true religion” includes caring for widows and orphans (James 1:27). And Christ says caring for needy strangers is like caring for Himself (Matthew 25:34-40). You may not know any true orphans, but let’s broaden that to those who don’t have both parents in the picture due to divorce and separation as well as death, absent or neglectful parents, and abusive parents. “Foreigners” would certainly mean those from another country temporarily or permanently living

here, but “strangers” simply means those you don’t know, especially those in need. And of course, widows, while not usually financially adrift as in ancient times, need extra care. God Himself cares for these people—do you?

**Personal Application Time**

- Write down names of orphans, “orphans,” foreigners, and widows that you know:

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- How can you help these people and show them *chesed*? How can you pray for them? What practical things can you do to help?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 18

Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.

**Read** Ruth 2:20-23.

### **Question Time**

1. Was Naomi thankful that Boaz had shown *chesed* to Ruth? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long had Boaz told Ruth to glean in his fields? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did Naomi think that sticking to Boaz's fields was a good idea? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long did Ruth glean in Boaz's fields and live with Naomi? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

God's kindness (*chesed*) through Boaz had cracked the ice of Naomi's bitter heart. She now recognized that God had not abandoned her. And the very man who had been generous to Ruth was a kinsman-redeemer. And Naomi tells Ruth what we, the readers, have already been told: Boaz is a "close relative," one of their "redeemers."

The word that ESV translates as "redeemer" is the Hebrew word *go'el*. (Other translations say "kinsman-redeemer," "close relative," or "family redeemer.") A *go'el* was a male relative (starting with a brother or brother-in-law and expanding to cousins, uncles, and nephews) who had special responsibilities given to him by the Law. If a man died childless, his *go'el* had the responsibility to marry his widow; the first son born legally carried on the dead man's name. This provision was called "Levirate marriage" (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). If a man was murdered, the victim's *go'el* had the responsibility to avenge blood (Numbers 35:9-

29). If a man fell on hard times and had to sell his land, his *go'el* had the responsibility to buy it so it would stay in the family clan (Leviticus 25:25-28). Someone who had been forced to sell himself into slavery could be redeemed by a *go'el* (Leviticus 25:47-49).

So Boaz was closely related to Elimelech, Naomi's husband; he was probably in Elimelech's generation, as he was an older man by this point. We're not told how exactly he was related, so it's not important. He was one of the relatives who could be a *go'el* for Naomi and therefore for Ruth.

Back to the present conversation. Boaz had apparently told Ruth to keep gleaning in his fields not just that day, but for the entirety of the harvest (including both barley as well as wheat, which ripens right after barley). Naomi agreed this was a fine plan; Ruth would benefit from Boaz's generosity and protection. So that's what Ruth did. Every day (except on Sabbaths, the day of rest), she went and gleaned under the hot sun. She gathered the leftovers of the barley harvest behind Boaz's servants. She probably threshed (beat out) each day's sheaves afterward, before returning home to Naomi. When the barley was gathered, the whole crew migrated to the newly ripened wheat fields. The wheat harvest ended around the end of May or the beginning of June. Therefore, Ruth lived with Naomi for about two months.

Do you think Naomi was an easy person to live with? Although she expressed praise toward God and Boaz after that first day, she had fully embraced a bitter mindset some time previously, and such a position rarely changes quickly. I bet Naomi complained a lot. I bet she found something wrong with everything. I bet she rarely (or never!) thanked Ruth for all she did. But based on Ruth's character, we can also guess that Ruth bore up under such treatment with grace and compassion: her promise of *chesed* lived out daily by sweetly caring for her mother-in-law, working hard to

provide food for her, and speaking kind words, never complaints.

**Personal Application Time**

- Do you have a “Naomi” in your life—a bitter soul who is hard to live with? How can you imitate Ruth’s example (and ultimately God’s) of showing *chesed*?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 19

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Philippians 3:12-14; II Timothy 2:3-13.

### **Question Time**

1. *What does God not want us to grow weary in? (II Thessalonians 3:13) \_\_\_\_\_*
2. *God wants us to keep the commandment \_\_\_\_\_ and free from \_\_\_\_\_ until the appearing of our \_\_\_\_\_. (I Timothy 6:14)*
3. *Be \_\_\_\_\_ to be found without spot or \_\_\_\_\_. (II Peter 3:14)*
4. *God can use a chipped vessel, but He doesn't like using a \_\_\_\_\_ one. (II Timothy 2:20-21)*
5. *What two things does God want us to never deny? (Revelation 2:13, 19; 3:8) His \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in Him.*

### **Let's Dig In**

Have you figured out the theme of today's side study? It's faithfulness. Although it's easy to miss, Ruth is a beautiful example of faithfulness.

Our culture has no use for faithfulness—simply obeying God one day at a time until He calls us home. But God values simple endurance in His children deeply. Consider Christ's letters to seven local churches in Revelation: while Christ "has something against" most of them for certain things, He also commends the faithfulness of several of them (Revelation 2:2, 10, 13, 19; 3:4-5, 8). He even promises amazing rewards in the next phase of life.

But faithfulness requires focus (Philippians 3:13-14); one can't get distracted ("civilian pursuits") (II Timothy 2:4). Faithfulness is like a marathon (Philippians 3:12-14), a career as a soldier (II Timothy 2:4), or as a farmer (II Timothy 2:6).

This might sound like too much hard work. But enduring—just continuing in obeying God one day at a time—brings good things in this life, too. Faithfulness brings spiritual maturity (James 1:1-4) and prevents uselessness (II Peter 1:8).

And later, if we endure, our light momentary afflictions will not even compare with how God will bless and reward us. What kind of reward, you ask? Instead of a paper certificate or a gold trophy, imagine:

- the crown of life (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10)
- the prize of the upward call (Philippians 3:14)
- reigning with Him (II Timothy 2:12)
- we will be like Him (I John 3:2)
- will walk with Christ in white (Revelation 3:4)
- an "eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17)

We don't know when Christ is returning, so we must be ready. How? By purifying ourselves (I John 2:3), continuing in what we have learned (II Timothy 3:14), forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, and pressing on toward the goal (Philippians 3:13-14)!

Just trust and obey God right now, today. And tomorrow, get up and do the same. One day at a time.

**Personal Application Time**

- How are you doing with being faithful to God day after day? Are there entanglements holding you back from your race?

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- Daniel’s first decision to be faithful to God didn’t have a threat of a lions’ den; he simply chose to obey God in the matter of following the Mosaic Law’s food requirements. Are you choosing to obey God in small, “unimportant” matters?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 20

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 3:1-6.

### **Question Time**

1. *What was Naomi seeking for Ruth?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *“Boaz is \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_”*
3. *Did Ruth obey these odd instructions from her mother-in-law?* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

The barley and wheat harvests are done. Ruth and Naomi are well supplied with seeds to process into flour to make their daily bread. But their long-term wellbeing is still uncertain.

Naomi has apparently been thinking. She now tells Ruth the plan she has come up with to secure “rest” for her: peace, safety, a home, a family. Boaz would be winnowing barley that night at the threshing floor.

The barley had been harvested and gathered into sheaves, but it was hardly ready to eat in that form. The next step was threshing to free the seeds from the rest of the plant. Small quantities could be beaten out by hand with a stick or club as Ruth had done, but this large amount required more power. In this case, Boaz probably supervised oxen pulling a heavy threshing sledge, a weighted wooden sled with rocks embedded on the underside. Finally, one had to separate the seeds from the chaff, the stalk of the plant.

Threshing floors sat near the tops of hills to take advantage of seasonal breezes coming in from the

Mediterranean Sea—particularly in the evening. Workers would take a scoop of the mixed plant matter from the floor and toss it into the air, where the breeze would blow away the lightweight chaff, but the heavier grains would fall back down. Over and over the workers would toss, and eventually switch to a shovel and then a sieve. It was dusty and hard work, but joyful work.

Boaz would be supervising all this, and perhaps working himself at the threshing floor. Naomi gave Ruth special instructions. She was to bathe (a special occasion in a water-poor land) and anoint herself (probably with olive oil as a skin treatment--Ruth's skin had probably suffered from her weeks of work in the hot sun). She was to bring her cloak: her outer garment (somewhat like our modern-day full-length jacket, but without sleeves), which could double as a blanket for sleeping away from home. Then Naomi told Ruth to go to Boaz's threshing floor, but keep herself out of sight for the time being. (The secrecy was possibly for privacy and avoiding embarrassment: Ruth could quietly ask Boaz to redeem her instead of publicly.) Boaz and his servants would be threshing and winnowing barley, as well as celebrating God's provision for a good harvest, but after they lay down to sleep (and protect the barley from theft), Ruth was to go uncover Boaz's cloak from his feet and lie down there. (I hasten to add that there is nothing sinful or sexual about this ancient custom. We'll discuss its meaning later.)

This ancient Israelite custom may seem bizarre to us, and it probably was new to Ruth, too—but she trusted Naomi and obeyed her exactly. She didn't complain, offer excuses, or even give Naomi a funny look. What a worthy example to follow—that of simple trust and obedience. God says “do this” in His Word, and we do it.

### **Personal Application Time**

- What's your reaction when you read a command in God's Word or hear a pointed application in a sermon?

Excuses and justification as to why it doesn't apply to you? Muttered complaints? A grim sense of duty and obligation? Prayerfully consider your recent actions and attitudes in this area.

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- If you're ready, write out Ruth's words in verse 5—not as a quotation of Ruth, but as your own commitment to God:

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- Bonus! Look up I John 5:3.
- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 21

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 3:7-13.

### **Question Time**

1. *Had Boaz expected Ruth?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Was Boaz a younger man or an older man?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Was Boaz willing to redeem Ruth?* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *What was the complication to the plan? There was a redeemer \_\_\_\_\_ than Boaz.*

### **Let's Dig In**

Boaz and his servants threshed and winnowed grain that evening, using the breeze blowing in from the sea. It was dusty, hard work, but a happy occasion: God had provided a bountiful harvest! I can imagine there was laughter and teasing—maybe forkfuls of half-sifted barley occasionally ended up on the head of one's fellow worker. Afterward, everyone gathered to eat and drink in celebration. That Boaz's "heart was merry" just means he was happy (and probably praising God), not drunk. Then the threshing floor grew quiet and dark as everyone went to sleep. Ruth crept over to where she had seen Boaz lie down, at the end of the heap of grain (to protect it). She pulled his cloak (outer garment, currently serving as a blanket) off his feet and lay down there: a place of humility and supplication. Maybe she was rehearsing what to say. Maybe she was praying.

I bet Ruth hardly slept for those several hours until Boaz startled awake (with chilly toes, I'm sure) and realized someone—a woman—was at his feet. "Who are you?" he said. "It's me, Ruth," she said, her heart pounding in her chest. "Spread your wings over me—you are a redeemer."

With these words, Ruth was asking him to redeem her through marriage. Naomi was not eligible for Levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) due to her age, but Ruth could take her place. The word translated “wings” (Hebrew *kanap*) can also mean “the edge of a garment.” Perhaps Ruth was following a formulaic phrase used in this ancient custom, as there are some connections of “uncovering” or “spreading” one’s garment in connection to marriage (Deuteronomy 22:30; Malachi 2:16). This phrase also connects with taking pity on, taking charge of, and claiming someone (Ezekiel 16:8; I Kings 19:19)—in other words, “redeeming” or “taking under one’s wing.” It’s also possible that Ruth was referencing Boaz’s own words to her in 2:12: (to paraphrase) “May God bless and reward you, you who have come to take refuge under His wings!” (“Wings” is the same Hebrew word.)

Boaz blesses her in God’s Name because of her “last kindness:” she had not pursued redemption through one of the young men. Evidently, Boaz was an older man, and possibly not a particularly attractive one. (But God says the “inner beauty” of godliness is far more valuable than physical appearance.) “Kindness” by the way, is *chesed*: faithful love. Boaz goes on to gently reassure her: “Do not fear, my daughter.” (I know I would be on edge if I was in Ruth’s sandals!) He promises that he will redeem her—if he can. It turns out there’s a nearer relative to Naomi. He also says that he—along with the whole town—knows that she is a “worthy woman.” This adjective (Hebrew *chayil*) could also be translated as “valiant, strong, heroic, valorous, or virtuous.”

Now, where have we read about a virtuous woman? Proverbs 31! It’s the same Hebrew phrase. The woman described there is hard-working, kind, wise, dignified—and most importantly, she fears the Lord. I’d certainly agree with those townspeople that Ruth was a Proverbs 31 woman.

Say, how's your reputation? What adjective might your coworkers, neighbors, and friends use to describe you?

**Personal Application Time**

- The world says we're not supposed to care what people think about us. While the most important thing is one's standing before God, not others, a good reputation is a valuable thing. Look up and summarize these verses: Ecclesiastes 7:1; Proverbs 22:1; I Peter 2:12

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- Are there any behaviors or habits you do that are innocent, but might look worldly to others (I Thessalonians 5:22)?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 22

Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.

**Read** Proverbs 31:10-31.

### **Question Time**

1. What kind of traits does the world value in a woman?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The **chayil** (excellent, virtuous, worthy) woman puts her hands to the distaff and spindle (v.19), makes bed coverings (v.21), makes linen garments (v.24), plants a field (v. 16), and looks well to the ways of her household (v. 27). In other words, she is \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you think she complains about all these chores? (v.13) \_\_\_\_\_
4. The **chayil** woman is impulsive (v.16): True or false.
5. The **chayil** woman is prepared for the future, including “rainy days” (vv. 21, 25): True or false.
6. How does she manage her household? (v.27) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Is she only concerned about her household? (v.20) \_\_\_\_\_
8. How does she treat her husband? (vv.11-12) \_\_\_\_\_
9. What does her excellent testimony bring her husband? (v.23) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Is she beautiful? (v.30) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

The excellent woman or wife (the Hebrew word can mean either) is famous for good reason. In Hebrew, this poem is an acrostic: each pair of lines starts with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (verse 10 starts with the letter

*alef*, verse 11 starts with *baet*, and so on). It's possible it was written as a teaching poem: for young men to know what to look for in a bride, and young women to aspire to be.

And although her industrious tasks are “outdated” to most of us in our time and culture, she is still very worthy of imitating. She is industrious, hard-working, and is even able to bring in a little extra money from her chores (v.18).

She loves her husband with active love, a lifelong commitment (v.12): *chesed*. In fact, her excellent testimony brings him respect (v.23). She never speaks down of him.

The *chayil* woman strengthens herself (v.17). Maybe this one seems difficult, as it does to me. But God knows the limitations of my body because He knows what chronic health conditions He has allowed. However, even with my weaknesses, there are things I need to do to take care of my body (the temple of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 6:19-20). For example, avoiding “trigger foods” and not neglecting stretches.

The *chayil* woman also cares well for her household and is so well-prepared for “rainy days” that she can laugh at the future (v.25).

But she's not just concerned about her husband, children, and household: she is also compassionate to the poor and needy (v.20). Again, this implies active, useful love and not just “thoughts and prayers.” I bet she gives some of those garments she made (v.24) to the poor.

The *chayil* woman is not action only. She is able to teach wisdom and kindness to others (v.26). Why? She fears Yahweh (God)! This is her “secret” to her virtue (v.30); she may or may not be physically beautiful, but her relationship to God is praiseworthy.

## Personal Application Time

- What character traits of the *chayil* woman (by God's grace!) already apply to you?

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- What character traits do you need to work on?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 23

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 3:14-18.

### **Question Time**

1. *Did Boaz want everyone in town to know that Ruth had been there?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *What gift did Boaz give to Ruth?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. *How did Ruth carry it?* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *True or false: Boaz was as a man of action.* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

After that conversation at midnight—Ruth asked Boaz to redeem her and he promised to do so if the nearer redeemer would not—I'm guessing Ruth didn't sleep much. Would Boaz keep his promise? What if this other redeemer chose her? What was he like? Was he as godly and kind as Boaz? Finally, in the pre-dawn darkness, Ruth got up. Boaz asked his servants who had woken up not to spread word of Ruth's visit, probably to protect both their reputations. (As a side note: this reveals more of Boaz's character: he was such an honorable boss that he could trust his servants not to spread "juicy gossip," and his servants trusted that his deeds were not questionable.)

Then Boaz had Ruth hold out her cloak as a carrying device, and he gave her a generous gift: six measures of barley seeds. Ruth left—after thanking him, I'm sure—and went home to Naomi, who was probably already up, eagerly awaiting her. (Fun fact: the ESV translates Naomi's initial words to Ruth as "How did you fare," but it's literally "Who

are you?” It must have still been pretty dark in the house! I bet they lit a lamp.) Upon hearing the news and seeing Boaz’s gift, Naomi reassured Ruth that Boaz was a man of action; he wouldn’t put off dealing with the matter but would see it through that day.

Are you a woman of action? I admit I have long struggled with procrastination, but God is honored when we strive to order our time well.

### **Personal Application Time**

- How are your time management skills? Do you use a planner (physical or digital)? If so, is it working well for you? If not, research other kinds of planners or productivity apps. How about looking up some productivity tips online? You can find articles or videos on YouTube, whichever you prefer. Find systems that work for the way God has made you and use your time and energy—however much God has given you—to serve Him and others.

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- Pick one of these verses to write out: Ephesians 5:15-17; Colossians 4:5; James 1:5; or Psalm 90:12. Consider also writing one of these verses on the front of your planner (or on a post-it note to move to the current week in your planner) in your favorite color ink.

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 24

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 4:1-4.

### **Question Time**

1. *Who did Boaz collect at the gate? The \_\_\_\_\_ and ten \_\_\_\_\_ of the city.*
2. *Did Boaz mention Ruth to the redeemer right away?*
3. *Did the redeemer agree to buy Naomi's land? \_\_\_\_\_*

### **Let's Dig In**

The gate of a town or city was the place of business (as well as a place to trade and gossip), so that's where Boaz gathered the nearer relative in question, the redeemer, as well as ten elders to serve as witnesses to a legal transaction. There were also townspeople around, sitting and listening.

As a side note, the redeemer is not named, but instead called "friend," which is better translated "so-and-so" or "a certain one." It's possible that the author did not name him to save him and his descendants embarrassment. Or perhaps it serves as a sort of judgment.

Boaz introduces the matter to the redeemer by bringing up Naomi's land: two women physically could not plow, sow, maintain, and harvest crops, but they could live on the money selling it would bring. (Redeeming land and redeeming a widow are covered separately in the Law, but they hang together. Maybe Ruth had passed a message from Naomi to Boaz, not recorded in Scripture, that Naomi wanted to sell Elimelech's land, too.) The land had to stay within Elimelech's tribe and clan, so it was his *go'el's*

(relative/redeemer) duty to buy it. This man, as nearest single relative of Elimelech, was first in line to become the *go'el*—and in fact, he should have already approached Naomi about the land and marrying her (or in this case, her daughter-in-law). He was supposed to take the initiative (Deuteronomy 25:5)! Undoubtedly he had heard Elimelech's widow had returned to Bethlehem (with a Gentile daughter-in-law) and had decided to do nothing about it. (Boaz, who was not first in line, had no responsibility to act as *go'el* to Naomi; all that he had done for Ruth and Naomi was out of his *chesed*.) Naomi had sent Ruth in her stead to request Boaz instead of the redeemer to be their *go'el* out of *chesed*: Ruth would gain a loving, godly husband if the venture succeeded. It is clear by this point that Boaz loves Ruth and was honored to be asked instead of the nearer relative, and thus speaks wisely by mentioning the land first.

The redeemer thought “More land equals more crops, which equals more money and luxury for me” and said “Yes, I will redeem Naomi's land.” Meanwhile, it seems that Ruth and Naomi were not present while their fate was being decided. Ruth had to wait to find out who her husband was going to be: the selfish redeemer, or loving, kind, generous, godly Boaz? Do you think she was pacing the house? Worrying and fretting? Sitting and praying? Peacefully doing a chore?

How do you handle waiting on important news?

### **Personal Application Time**

- Waiting on the Lord is a skill to develop for both big matters (closing on a house, getting the job) and small things. God wants us to wait patiently for His perfect timing, taking contented, peaceful rest in Him, taking strength in Him—while doing good. How do you handle waiting? How can you excel still more?

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- Choose one of these verses to write out: Lamentations 3:25-26; Isaiah 64:4; Psalm 25:4-5; Psalm 27: 13-14; Psalm 37:7; Matthew 6:33; Isaiah 40:28-31

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 25

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 4:5-8.

### **Question Time**

1. *Buying Naomi's land also meant marrying \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_.*
2. *Did the redeemer agree? \_\_\_\_\_*
3. *What did the redeemer take off to confirm his refusal?*  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

Now Boaz brings up the heart of the matter: redeeming Naomi's land also means to redeem her daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabite, by marrying her. Suddenly the redeemer backs out. To paraphrase: "Oh, uh, I can't," he said. "That would damage my own inheritance." Does that sound like an excuse, or does that sound like an excuse? I think the redeemer was happy to spend some money on some additional land that would profit him within a year, but he balked at the idea of marrying a Gentile—especially a Moabite. And passing his land on to a half-Moabite son would "damage" it. This selfishness is ironic since one of his and Boaz's ancestors, Onan the son of Judah, refused to father a son in his brother's name (Genesis 38).

The redeemer confirmed his refusal with an ancient custom: he took off his sandal and handed it to Boaz. This sounds pretty odd to us, but it was a different time and a different culture. Think of it like a handshake or a signature: a formal sign of one's legal decision.

How about you—do you ever give excuses and back out of a ministry opportunity, a nudge from the Spirit to go talk with that brother or sister, or even a commandment written in God’s Word?

### **Personal Application Time**

- We humans are great at coming up with excuses, aren’t we? In the lines below, write down three excuses you hear often, and then three answers that glorify God. For example: “Oh, I don’t know anything about that.” versus “Just tell me what to do—I’m here to serve.”

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- Changing one’s mindset isn’t easy—but God gives grace to those who ask. Ask your Father for help to quit making excuses and to start taking delight in doing His will (Psalm 40:8). Write your prayer down if that helps you.

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 26

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 4:9-10.

### **Question Time**

1. *Who did Boaz speak to? The \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_*
2. *Boaz said to them, “You are \_\_\_\_\_ today.”*
3. *Boaz bought from Naomi all that belonged to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.*
4. *Boaz also bought \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, the widow of \_\_\_\_\_.*
5. *Boaz was concerned that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ not be cut off from among his brothers.*

### **Let’s Dig In**

This official statement from Boaz may sound boring at first: he’s audibly confirming his redemption of Elimelech’s land and his redemption of Ruth to the elders and other witnesses there at the gate. But it’s so much more than that. With these words, and the action that followed—payment to Naomi, marriage of Ruth—Boaz became Naomi and Ruth’s redeemer, their *go’el*, their savior from destitution, hopelessness, vulnerability, loneliness, and hard work for just barely enough food. He bought back Naomi from where she (with her family) had wandered into the wicked land of Moab. He “bought” Ruth to be his wife, redeeming her from lonely, impoverished widowhood.

This concern for “the name of the dead” is quite foreign to us, but it is mentioned several times in the Law, and was therefore important to Boaz: he didn’t want the names of

Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon to be forgotten because they had died without sons.

Did you know that Boaz is a type or picture of Christ? Boaz was willing to redeem a poor foreign woman who had nothing to offer—he was not forced by anyone, but he did it anyway. Christ is our spiritual redeemer, and He wasn't forced, either (Hebrews 10:7). Boaz was under no obligation to redeem, but he acted out of love—*chesed*. Christ too had no obligation to die for us; He paid the price of our sin out of His incredible *chesed* for us.

It's not mentioned directly, but this redemption did not cost Boaz nothing. He paid a price to redeem Naomi and Ruth. God's cost to redeem His children was much, much greater. God the Father paid the price of His beloved Son, His only Son.

About two thousand years ago, Christ gave up the blessings and constant praise of angelic beings in heaven to take on human flesh (while not losing His divine nature; He never stopped being God, but also became a man). During those years on earth, Christ also gave up the independent use of His divine attributes, as well as His time and energy: He constantly healed, taught, and served people. In the garden of Gethsemane He gave up His free will ("Not my will, but Yours be done") and on the Cross, He gave up His dignity, body, and blood: His life. Father, Son, and Spirit sacrificed their perfect unity within the Trinity when Jesus took our sin in His body and God the Father poured out His wrath for our sin on Him. Many songs have been written to thank God for the incredible price He paid: we were redeemed—bought back from slavery to sin—by Christ's blood (I Corinthians 6:20). And we will praise Him in the future (Revelation 5:9-10).

Like Ruth the poor, foreign widow, we too were hopelessly lost in spiritual poverty—we could not save ourselves from the punishment we deserve. All of us Gentile

(non-Jew) believers were “separated from Christ, alienated from the blessings of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:12-14). “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (I Peter 2:9-10).

Boaz gave generous gifts and protection to Naomi and Ruth. God gives even more generous and amazing gifts. He gave eternal life and salvation from eternal punishment to those who believe that Christ, the Son of God, took our punishment, died, and rose again. God gives good gifts to His children and blessings for us to enjoy. Sunshine and rain are from Him, even on the wicked (Matthew 5:45).

To sum up: “thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” (II Corinthians 9:15)!

### **Personal Application Time**

- Spend some time thanking God for all He gave up for us, what He endured for us, and all the blessings He bestows on us. Thank Him for redeeming you from the power of sin and death!
- List a few phrases describing yourself before and after your redemption by God:

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 27

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 4:11-12.

### **Question Time**

1. *Did the people and the elders approve of Boaz's choice?*
2. *Which three women of Israel's past did they hope Ruth would be like? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_*
3. *The people's blessing also wished Boaz well: "May you \_\_\_\_\_ in Ephrathah and \_\_\_\_\_ in Bethlehem."*

### **Let's Dig In**

The elders Boaz had gathered, plus the Bethlehemites who happened to be present at the gate that morning, heartily approved of Boaz's redemption of Naomi and Ruth. They blessed Boaz, wishing him fame and honor in return for his (continuing) virtuous, worthy deeds. They blessed Ruth and asked God to make her as fruitful as Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. (In other words, they bore many sons who became important men.) They also blessed Boaz's "house"—not his physical dwelling place, but his descendants, his legacy: children. The "house of Perez," descendants of Judah, had grown into one of the bigger tribes of Israel.

The inclusion of Tamar brings up another point: Tamar was not an Israelite, but a foreigner, just like Ruth. Her husband had also died, leaving her childless. Both were joined to older Israelite men. Tamar's acts were shameful; Ruth's were virtuous. God did use the Gentile Tamar—He



- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 28

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 4:13.

### **Question Time**

1. *Who got married?* \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_
2. *What did God give Ruth?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *She bore a* \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Let's Dig In**

I can't imagine Boaz stood around after concluding his business at the gate. Within short order he officially paid Naomi for the value of Elimelech's land (and likely more, given his previous generosity). Then he hurried to make preparations for a wedding: sending out servants with invitations, preparing lots of food including the fattened calf, and finding wedding clothes. (It is likely he bought wedding clothes for Ruth, since she was still poor.) Weddings were an even bigger deal in that culture than they are in ours—and especially between a well-known, influential, wealthy man and a woman with a reputation like Ruth's. I bet pretty much all of Bethlehem showed up to celebrate when it was time.

Finally, when everything was ready, Boaz, resplendent in wedding clothes and with his wedding party, left his house in a procession with joyful singing, gathering friends along the way. Ruth was ready and waiting at Naomi's house, beautifully adorned and veiled. The procession returned with the bride to the groom's house, where the couple sat under a canopy—like a king and queen—and all the guests celebrated with festivities such as dancing and feasting. All this could last a week.

Naomi’s plan succeeded, by God’s grace and *chesed*! Ruth now had “rest:” a home and a marriage to a godly husband. She no longer had to glean, laboring hard under the hot sun, for just barely enough food. She had security and peace. (Naomi moved in as well, also enjoying the peace, safety and love of a godly household.)

Ruth had had no child. She had been barren for ten years with her first husband. But now God richly rewards Ruth for her *chesed* by giving her conception. Can you imagine her joy and delight a few months into her new marriage to discover that she was expecting? How she must have praised and thanked God for this beautiful gift! I can picture her weeping tears of joy before God, who showed her great *chesed*. And she gave birth to a son.

This is nothing short of a miracle! But “with God, nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). Praise Him!

**Personal Application Time**

- What other “impossible” things has God done? Write down a few and praise Him for His great strength and power:

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- What children has God blessed you with? Not just any of your own, but also nieces and nephews, grandkids, kids of friends, and kids at church. Write down their names and thank God for each little one:

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 29

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Ruth 4:14-17.

### **Question Time**

1. *Who spoke to Naomi?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Whom did they bless?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *God had given Naomi a* \_\_\_\_\_.
4. *He would be to Naomi a* \_\_\_\_\_ *of*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *and a* \_\_\_\_\_ *of her*  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. *Ruth was* \_\_\_\_\_ *to Naomi than* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
6. *What did the neighborhood woman name the baby boy?* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

I am positive that the kind, loving new bride of the influential, respected Boaz quickly made friends with all the neighborhood women. Suddenly she had the resources to show *chesed* to others besides Naomi—although of course, she remained loyal to Naomi. She did not abandon her mother-in-law now that she had a husband. Instead, I'm sure she used her new time, energy, and resources to be an even greater blessing to her mother-in-law. Whereas before she had to leave and work all day to get food for Naomi, now she could spend time with her, take her to call on old friends, and bless her with gifts, such as new clothing or an edible treat.

Ruth's labor must have been assisted not just by the town midwife, but also by close friends and Naomi. After the birth of a beautiful baby boy—legally son of both Elimelech

and Boaz—the women turned to Naomi and exclaimed (to paraphrase), “Blessed be Yahweh, who has not left you empty! May this redeemer of yours be honored in Israel! He will serve you in your old age, this son of your daughter-in-law, whose love is greater to you than seven sons.”

It was these neighborhood women whose name for the baby stuck: Obed, which means “he who serves.” And he would serve Naomi in her old age; he would be her *go’el*. When he was grown, he would provide food and shelter for her (as well as his parents.) He would also serve God, which we’ll see tomorrow. And Naomi “became his nurse:” she had the enormous blessing of not just becoming a grandmother, but having a large role in raising the child. I’m sure she was a dotting, attentive, loving grandmother.

Ruth had pledged her loyalty, her *chesed*, to Naomi, and she had proved it—it was clear to all around her, including the neighborhood women. Ruth had shown incredible *chesed* to Naomi; she stuck with her through thick and thin and worked hard to provide for her. She had endured bitterness and complaints. Now God was showering Ruth with rich rewards: a loving, godly husband and a baby boy, among many other things. God had blessed Naomi too. Although Naomi had strayed from God, it seems she had returned to Him at some point. She had started looking beyond her own nose and thought up a plan to gain rest for Ruth, forgoing the possibility of a husband for herself. And now God was showing her *chesed* as well.

Did you know that God loves to bless His children? He is a loving heavenly Father who has abundant resources. He cannot, however, richly bless disobedient children—but He eagerly awaits a straying believer’s repentance and return, so that He can bless him or her.

**Personal Application Time**

- What are some of God’s blessings to you personally? Name them and thank God for them:

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- Do you feel that God is not blessing you right now? Is there, perhaps, something in the way? Is there a commandment that you haven’t been willing to obey, or are doing it grudgingly? Ask God to show you if there’s something wrong.

- If, as far you know, there’s nothing between you and God, and yet you still feel oppressed and un-blessed, that might be emotions lying to you. Remember that your heart can’t be trusted (I John 3:19-20; Jeremiah 17:9). Focus instead on what you know is true from God’s Word: truths like God’s *chesed* for you, that fact that your salvation is based on Christ and not you (Ephesians 1:13-14; I Peter 1:3-9), and so on. Search for the biblical truths that you need, write them down (here or elsewhere), and read those verses to yourself whenever your heart is lying to you.

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 30

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Read** Genesis 49:10; Ruth 4:18-22; Luke 1:30-33.

### **Question Time**

1. A son of \_\_\_\_\_ would become king.
2. Who was Boaz's father? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Look up Matthew 1:5. Who was Boaz's mother?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Ruth and Boaz's son Obed, when he grew up, became the father of \_\_\_\_\_, who in turn became the father of King \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Thousands of years later, an angel told Mary her son would be called the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ . God would give Him the \_\_\_\_\_ of His \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. How long will Jesus reign? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Let's Dig In**

These last two verses may be “just” a genealogy, but it’s a super exciting genealogy. About 750 years earlier, an elderly Jacob (also named Israel) had gathered his twelve sons to proclaim a sort of prophetic blessing on each of them (or in some cases, a curse for previous sins). Judah was not his firstborn (that culture’s position of honor), and yet Jacob prophesied that kings would come from Judah. In fact, Jacob said “the scepter shall not depart from Judah,” which implies either that a dynasty of kings would always rule, one after another (which did happen for about sixteen generations), or that one king in particular would rule forever. God had chosen Judah for something special: the line of the Promised One, the coming One who would save mankind from our sin.

Judah had five sons, but it was Perez that God chose. Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, and Nahshon's generations lasted from Israel's 400 years in Egypt and 40 years in the wilderness. Salmon was part of the generation who began conquering the Promised Land under Joshua; he married Rahab the Gentile prostitute, whose faith had led her to protect the two Israelite spies from her own king (Joshua 2). She became mother (or grandmother; genealogies occasionally skip less important names) of Boaz. So the godly, kind Boaz was the son of a Gentile—he was half Israelite, half Gentile! He had grown up seeing God's grace extended to a Gentile woman, so he was gracious to the one he met as an adult.

Ruth gave birth to Obed, who grew up and fathered Jesse, who grew up and fathered two daughters and eight sons, the youngest of whom was David. God chose David when he was just a teenager as a “man after His own heart” to be the next king of Israel. To David God promised an everlasting throne. And of David's sons, God continued picking those who would be in the line of the Promised Son, although He did not reveal any names beyond David.

Just over a thousand years later, the fullness of time had come. God sent forth His Son (He is 100% God), born of a woman (He is also 100% man), descended from the line of David (Galatians 4:4). He lived a perfect, sinless life on earth for thirty-three and a half years, then died on a cross, taking the punishment for mankind's sin, was buried, and rose again the third day. He is now in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, but one day—any day now—He will return, and the end times will begin. During and after that, Jesus Christ will reign physically on earth forever and ever.

Back to Ruth. Do you see now why that little genealogy is so exciting? A Moabite woman had placed her complete trust in God and proved it by pledging her loyalty to her

Israelite mother-in-law and to her mother-in-law's people and God. She then proved her pledge of *chesed* by faithfulness and hard work. God saw this and richly rewarded Ruth not just with a godly husband, a baby boy, and material things, but also the immense privilege of being in the line of the Promised Son: the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In fact, if Ruth was long-lived (and this is a distinct possibility), then she may have lived to see not just her grandson Jesse, but her great-grandsons, including the youngest. Ruth had no idea who her great-grandson would become, nor especially the most important of her descendants!

Who knows what blessings God has in store for those who simply trust Him and faithfully serve Him, one day at a time?

### **Personal Application Time**

- Either here or on a separate paper, write out I Corinthians 2:9. Whenever you're having a bad day or feeling like your labor is worthless, read this amazing (and exciting!) promise of God:

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Day 31

*Ask your heavenly Father for understanding, no distractions, and help in applying His holy Word.*

**Review** the book of Ruth.

### **Personal Application Time**

- What are some ways you can imitate Ruth?

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- Whom should you avoid imitating?

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- How are you like Ruth? How are you unlike her?

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- What topics came up in this study that you would like to study more?

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- What did you learn about God from this book?

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- What is your favorite verse from the book?

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- Is there a personal application that the Holy Spirit has told you to do, that you haven't yet?

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- What else have you learned from the book of Ruth?

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- Notes/questions/prayers:

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## Answer Key

### Day 1

1. *The judges*
2. *King*
3. *Right, own*
4. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*

### Day 2

1. *Famine*
2. *Naomi*
3. *Mahlon, Chilion*
4. *Judah*
5. *Moab*

### Day 3

1. *Elimelech*
2. *Moabite*
3. *Ten*
4. *Mahlon & Chilion died*

### Day 4

1. *Judah*
2. *She heard God had given His people food*
3. *Go, return, house*
4. *(Your speculation here)*

### Day 5

1. *No*
2. *Old*
3. *Till they were grown*
4. *Exceedingly bitter, against*
5. *Orpah*

### Day 6

1. *Return, people, gods*
2. *Chemosh, abomination*

### Day 7

1. *No*
2. *Where Naomi went*
3. *Naomi's*

4. *Naomi's*
5. *Where Naomi died*
6. *Death*

### Day 8

1. *Belongs*
2. *Abounding*
3. *Precious, better*
4. *Extends*
5. *Delights*
6. *Ceases, forever*
7. *Earth*
8. *Before, all, hearts*
9. *Love, keep*
10. *Fear*
11. *Day and night*
12. *Follows, all*
13. *Surrounds*
14. *Crowns*
15. *Great*
16. *Satisfies*
17. *Chesed*
18. *Recounting*
19. *Thinking*
20. *Thanksgiving*
21. *Proclaimed*
22. *Joyful, glad*
23. *morning*

### Day 9

1. *No*
2. *No*
3. *Yahweh (God)*

### Day 10

1. *The women*
2. *Mara*
3. *Testified, brought calamity*
4. *At the beginning of barley harvest*

### Day 11

1. *Glean*
2. *Boaz's*

3. *Elimelech's*

*Day 12*

1. *Kind, attentive, godly*
2. *Yes*
3. *D*

*Day 13*

1. *In his fields*
2. *Water*
3. *Yes*

*Day 14*

1. *Her loyalty to Naomi*
2. *(your paraphrase)*
3. *Respect, hard work, loyalty, love, humility*

*Day 15*

1. *Encircled, cared*
2. *One*
3. *An abundant land (sustaining flocks and herds and fertile enough to grow fine produce)*
4. *God, Savior, refuge*
5. *The apple of God's eye*
6. *In the shadow of God's wings*
7. *Surrounding*
8. *God's chesed (steadfast love)*
9. *God's faithfulness*
10. *God's chesed (steadfast love)*
11. *A, B, C, D*
12. *Til the storms of destruction pass by*
13. *Among the peoples*
14. *Forever*
15. *Heard, heritage, fear*
16. *God's chesed (steadfast love)*
17. *In the night*
18. *Sing for joy*
19. *A, B, C, D, E*
20. *Not willing*

*Day 16*

1. *Shared food with Ruth*
2. *Yes*
3. *A, B, C, D*

*Day 17*

1. *Until evening*
2. *An ephah*
3. *Her leftovers from lunch*
4. *Blessed be the man who took notice of you*

*Day 18*

1. *Yes*
2. *Until harvest was done*
3. *Yes*
4. *Until the end of the barley and wheat harvests*

*Day 19*

1. *Doing good*
2. *Unstained, reproach, Lord*
3. *Diligent, blemish*
4. *Dirty (or dishonorable)*
5. *Name, faith*

*Day 20*

1. *Rest*
2. *Winnowing barley at the threshing floor*
3. *Yes*

*Day 21*

1. *No*
2. *Older*
3. *Yes*
4. *Nearer (more closely related)*

*Day 22*

1. *Beauty, maybe smarts, charm*
2. *Industrious, hard-working*
3. *No*
4. *False*
5. *True*
6. *Well*
7. *No*

8. *She does him good and not harm*
9. *Respect, honor*
10. *Maybe, maybe not*

*Day 23*

1. *No*
2. *Six measures of barley*
3. *In her garment (cloak)*
4. *True*

*Day 24*

1. *Redeemer, elders*
2. *No*
3. *Yes*

*Day 25*

1. *Ruth the Moabite*
2. *No*
3. *His sandal*

*Day 26*

1. *The elders and all the people*
2. *Witnesses*
3. *Elimelech, Chilion, & Mahlon*
4. *Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon*
5. *Name of the dead*

*Day 27*

1. *Yes*
2. *Rachel, Leah, Tamar*
3. *“May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem”*

*Day 28*

1. *Boaz & Ruth*
2. *Conception*
3. *Son*

*Day 29*

1. *The women*
2. *God*
3. *Redeemer*

4. *Restorer of life and a nourisher of her old age*
5. *More, seven sons*
6. *Obed*

*Day 30*

1. *Judah*
2. *Salmon*
3. *Rahab*
4. *Jesse, David*
5. *Son of the Most High. God would give Him the throne of His father David*
6. *Forever*



