

# Ruth's Loyalty and Love

A Moabite widow refuses to abandon her mother-in-law, follows her to Israel, and through faith and faithfulness becomes an ancestor of King David and Jesus.

Ruth 1:1-22 • Ruth 2:1-23 • Ruth 3:1-18 • Ruth 4:1-22

CHARACTERS: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, Orpah, Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion

THEMES: Loyalty, Redemption, Providence, Love, Faith

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DURING THE TIME of the judges, a famine struck Israel. A man named Elimelech took his wife Naomi and their two sons from Bethlehem to live in Moab. There the sons married Moabite women—Orpah and Ruth. But tragedy followed: Elimelech died, and within ten years, both sons died too, leaving three widows with no means of support.

When Naomi heard the famine had ended in Israel, she decided to return home. 'Go back to your mothers,' she told her daughters-in-law. 'May the Lord show you kindness.' Orpah kissed her goodbye through tears and left.

But Ruth clung to Naomi. 'Don't urge me to leave you,' she said. 'Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.'

So they traveled to Bethlehem together, arriving at the beginning of barley harvest. To provide food, Ruth went to glean—gathering leftover grain behind the harvesters, as was permitted for the poor.

She happened to glean in a field belonging to Boaz, a wealthy relative of Elimelech. Boaz noticed her and asked about her. Moved by her loyalty to Naomi, he showed her exceptional kindness. 'Stay in my fields,' he said.

'I've told the men not to touch you. When you're thirsty, drink from our water jars.'

'Why are you so kind to me, a foreigner?' Ruth asked.

'I've heard about everything you've done for your mother-in-law,' Boaz replied. 'May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully.'

Ruth gleaned in Boaz's fields throughout the harvest. Then Naomi devised a plan. Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer—one who could marry Ruth and preserve the family line. Following Naomi's instructions, Ruth went to the threshing floor and lay at Boaz's feet while he slept.

When Boaz awoke, Ruth said, 'Spread the corner of your garment over me, for you are a kinsman-redeemer.'

Boaz was honored by her request but explained there was a closer relative with first rights. The next day, he met with this man at the city gate. When the relative declined his right to redeem, Boaz announced before the elders, 'I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess as my wife, to maintain the name of the dead.'

Ruth and Boaz married, and God blessed them with a son named Obed. Naomi, once empty and bitter, now held a grandson in her arms. The women of Bethlehem celebrated: 'Naomi has a son!'

Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David—the great king of Israel. And through David's line would come Jesus, the Messiah. A foreign widow's faithful love had woven her into the very ancestry of the Savior.