

Unshaken

Lineage of Grace #3

Francine Rivers

Study Questions

Seek and Find

DEAR READER,

You have just read the story of Ruth as perceived by one author. Is this the whole truth about the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz? Jesus said to seek and you will find the answers you need for life. The best way to find the truth is to look for yourself!

This “Seek and Find” section is designed to help you discover the story of Ruth as recorded in the Bible. It consists of six short studies that you can do on your own or with a small discussion group.

You may be surprised to learn that this ancient story will have applications for your life today. No matter where we live or in what century, God’s Word is truth. It is as relevant today as it was yesterday. In it we find a future and a hope.

Peggy Lynch

DECLARATIONS

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a man from Bethlehem in Judah left the country because of a severe famine. He took his wife and two sons and went to live in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. During their stay in Moab, Elimelech died and Naomi was left with her two sons. The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her husband or sons.

Then Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes instead of coming with me. And may the Lord reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me. May the Lord bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.

"No," they said. "We want to go with you to your people."

But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord himself has caused me to suffer."

And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi. "See," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same."

But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” So when Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Ruth 1:1-18

- There are many life-changing events that come into our lives. List all the life-changing events you find in the above passage.
- How many of these events were the result of Naomi’s choices?
- What is her response to these events?
- What do you learn about Naomi’s daughters-in-law?
- What choices did they make?
- With whom do you identify?

Find God’s Ways for You

- What life-changing events have you experienced?
- Who helped you through these events?
- What kind of counsel did you receive?

Naomi and Ruth needed wisdom to make their decisions. Contrast worldly wisdom and godly wisdom from the following passage:

If you are wise and understand God’s ways, live a life of steady goodness so that only good deeds will pour forth. And if you don’t brag about the good you do, then you will be truly wise! But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your hearts, don’t brag about being wise. That is the worst kind of lie. For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and motivated by the Devil. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness.

James 3:13-18

Stop and Ponder

- Based on your contrast of wisdom from the passage you just read, which kind of wisdom do you seek? Which kind of wisdom do you impart to others?

PROVISIONS

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was stirred by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the women asked.

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why should you call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy?"

So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth 19-22

- When Ruth and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem, how are they received?
- What is Naomi's attitude? Whom does she blame for her misfortunes?

Read the following passage:

Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech.

One day Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go out into the fields to gather leftover grain behind anyone who will let me do it."

And Naomi said, "All right, my daughter, go ahead." So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

Ruth 2:1-3

- Describe Ruth's plan to take care of her mother-in-law.
- Who owned the field where she worked? Who was he?

Read the following passage:

Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the women working in my field. See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to

bother you. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well.”

Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. “Why are you being so kind to me?” she asked. “I am only a foreigner.”

“Yes, I know,” Boaz replied. “But I also know about the love and kindness you have shown your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers. May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully.”

“I hope I continue to please you, sir,” she replied. “You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not as worthy as your workers.”

Ruth 2:8-13

- What did the landowner offer her and why?
- What is Ruth’s response?

FIND GOD’S WAY FOR YOU

- When you are faced with life’s misfortunes or even the everyday “calamities,” how do you respond?
- Whom do you blame? Why?
- Do you identify with either Ruth or Naomi? Why?

Read the following verse:

Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

Ephesians 6:7

- Ruth accepted the circumstances that had placed her in a humbling, subservient position. What does Ephesians 6:7 say about serving?

STOP AND PONDER

- Read Ephesians 6:7 again. What kind of servant are you?

REPUTATIONS

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. “The Lord be with you!” he said.

“The Lord bless you!” the harvesters replied.

Then Boaz asked his foreman, “Who is that girl over there?”

And the foreman replied, “She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes’ rest over there in the shelter.” . . .

At lunchtime Boaz called to her, “Come over here and help yourself to some of our food. You can dip your bread in the wine if you like.” So she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her food—more than she could eat.

When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, “Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her. And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don’t give her a hard time!”

So Ruth gathered barley there all day, and when she beat out the grain that evening, it came to about half a bushel. She carried it back into town and showed it to her mother-in-law. Ruth also gave her the food that was left over from her lunch.

“So much!” Naomi exclaimed. “Where did you gather all this grain today? Where did you work? May the Lord bless the one who helped you!”

So Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man in whose field she had worked. And she said, “The man I worked with today is named Boaz.”

“May the Lord bless him!” Naomi told her daughter-in-law. “He is showing his kindness to us as well as to your dead husband. That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers.”

Then Ruth said, “What’s more, Boaz even told me to come back and stay with his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed.”

Ruth 2:4-7, 14-21

- In the previous lesson, we read that Boaz was “a wealthy and influential man.” What evidence do you find in this passage to support that statement?
- What report did Boaz receive from his foreman regarding Ruth?
- What did Boaz offer Ruth and why?

- Why do you think Boaz gave special orders to his young men regarding Ruth?
- How did Naomi respond to Boaz's provision?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

- What does it mean to you to have character?
- Difficult situations in life reveal our real character. What kind of report could be given about you?
- What opportunities have you had to encourage people less fortunate than yourself? How have you treated them?

Read the following passage:

Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can't save anyone. Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing, and you say, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." I say, "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds."

James 2:14-18

- According to this passage, how important are your actions toward others in need?

STOP AND PONDER

"For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me. And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'"

Matthew 25:35-36, 40

- What would the King have to say about you?

COLLABORATION

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

One day Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, it's time that I found a permanent home for you, so that you will be provided for. Boaz is a close relative of ours, and he's been very kind by letting you gather grain with his workers. Tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor. Now do as I tell you—take a bath and put on perfume and dress in your nicest clothes. Then go to the threshing floor, but don't let Boaz see you until he has finished his meal. Be sure to notice where he lies down; then go and uncover his feet and lie down there. He will tell you what to do."

"I will do everything you say," Ruth replied. So she went down to the threshing floor that night and followed the instructions of her mother-in-law.

After Boaz had finished his meal and was in good spirits, he lay down beside the heap of grain and went to sleep. Then Ruth came quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Around midnight, Boaz suddenly woke up and turned over. He was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet! "Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer."

"The Lord bless you, my daughter!" Boaz exclaimed. "You are showing more family loyalty now than ever by not running after a younger man, whether rich or poor. Now don't worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are an honorable woman. But there is one problem. While it is true that I am one of your family redeemers, there is another man who is more closely related to you than I am. Stay here tonight, and in the morning I will talk to him. If he is willing to redeem you, then let him marry you. But if he is not willing, then as surely as the Lord lives, I will marry you! Now lie down here until morning."

So Ruth lay at Boaz's feet until the morning, but she got up before it was light enough for people to recognize each other. For Boaz said, "No one must know that a woman was here at the threshing floor." Boaz also said to her, "Bring your cloak and spread it out." He measured out six

scoops of barley into the cloak and helped her put it on her back. Then Boaz returned to the town.

When Ruth went back to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “What happened, my daughter?”

Ruth told Naomi everything Boaz had done for her, and she added, “He gave me these six scoops of barley and said, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

Then Naomi said to her, “Just be patient, my daughter, until we hear what happens. The man won’t rest until he has followed through on this. He will settle it today.”

Ruth 3:1-18

- According to this passage, what is Naomi’s concern for Ruth?
- Describe Naomi’s plan.
- What evidence do you find that Ruth trusted the advice of her mother-in-law?
- What did Ruth ask of Boaz when he discovered her at his feet?
- What was Boaz’s response, and what does he reaffirm about Ruth?
- What surprising information did Boaz tell Ruth, and what did he plan to do about it?

FIND GOD’S WAYS FOR YOU

- What concerns do you have for your loved ones?
- What plans have you tried to make for them? How did they turn out?
- How have you handled awkward situations with loved ones? What was their response?
- Share how you have carried out special promises.

STOP AND PONDER

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

- Who directs you?

OBLIGATIONS

Seek God's Word for Truth

Read the following passage:

So Boaz went to the town gate and took a seat there. When the family redeemer he had mentioned came by, Boaz called out to him, "Come over here, friend. I want to talk to you." So they sat down together. Then Boaz called ten leaders from the town and asked them to sit as witnesses. And Boaz said to the family redeemer, "You know Naomi, who came back from Moab. She is selling the land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. I felt that I should speak to you about it so that you can redeem it if you wish. If you want the land, then buy it here in the presence of these witnesses. But if you don't want it, let me know right away, because I am next in line to redeem it after you."

The man replied, "All right, I'll redeem it."

Then Boaz told him, "Of course, your purchase of the land from Naomi also requires that you marry Ruth, the Moabite widow. That way, she can have children who will carry on her husband's name and keep the land in the family."

"Then I can't redeem it," the family redeemer replied, "because this might endanger my own estate. You redeem the land; I cannot do it."

In those days it was the custom in Israel for anyone transferring a right of purchase to remove his sandal and hand it to the other party. This publicly validated the transaction. So the other family redeemer drew off his sandal as he said to Boaz, "You buy the land."

Ruth 4:1-8

- According to this passage, where does Boaz go and what does he do?
- Initially, what does Boaz tell the next of kin? What is the relative's response?
- What information does Boaz withhold at first?
- What excuse does the relative offer for his change of mind?
- What does the relative finally tell Boaz?
- How was a transaction of this kind legalized?

Find God's Ways for You

- How do you go about making major decisions?
- From whom do you draw support and wise counsel?
- What excuses do you offer people when you don't want to do something?

- How would you speak the truth in love? Give an example.

Stop and Ponder

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.

Romans 12:2

- Have you let God transform you?

CELEBRATIONS

Seek God's Word for Truth

Read the following passage:

Then Boaz said to the leaders and to the crowd standing around, "You are witnesses that today I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion, and Mahlon. And with the land I have acquired Ruth, the Moabite widow of Mahlon, to be my wife. This way she can have a son to carry on the family name of her dead husband and to inherit the family property here in his hometown. You are all witnesses today."

Then the leaders and all the people standing there replied, "We are witnesses! May the Lord make the woman who is now coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, from whom all the nation of Israel descended! May you be great in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem. And may the Lord give you descendants by this young woman who will be like those of our ancestor Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah."

So Boaz married Ruth and took her home to live with him. When he slept with her, the Lord enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. And the women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the Lord who has given you a family redeemer today! May he be famous in Israel. May this child restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you so much and who has been better to you than seven sons!"

Naomi took care of the baby and cared for him as if he were her own. The neighbor women said, "Now at last Naomi has a son again!" And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

This is their family line beginning with their ancestor Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Ram.

Ram was the father of Amminadab.

Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

Salmon was the father of Boaz.

Boaz was the father of Obed.

Obed was the father of Jesse.

Jesse was the father of David.

Ruth 4:9-22

- Boaz is sitting with the elders, and the relative has declined any right to Naomi's property. What does Boaz announce to this assembly of elders?
- What further claim does he extend regarding Ruth?
- The elders respond by saying, "We are witnesses!" What is their blessing for Boaz?
- Finally, Ruth and Boaz marry. When they have a baby son, how do the townswomen react? How do they bless Naomi?
- Who would this new baby's grandson be?

Find God's Ways for You

Read the following passage:

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

- Who has offered to give us rest from the burdens that weary us?
- A yoke is used to help oxen share a burden. What kind of yoke does Jesus offer?
- What is the weight of the burden Jesus will give us?
- What is the nature of Jesus' character?

Stop and Ponder

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

- Are you yoked to Jesus? If not, what hinders you?