

WHERE IS GOD WHEN LIFE IS SO MESSED UP?

the story of Ruth



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WHAT'S INSIDE

The experience of suffering in our lives and in our world can make us question: Where is God? What is God doing?

The story of Ruth is one book of the Bible that addresses this question of what God is doing in the midst of suffering. It is titled: "Where is God when life is so messed up?".

There is another in this series called The story of Job.

The book of Ruth in the Bible is set in Israel, about 1000BC. At one level it's a simple story about how a woman finds a husband. But at another level it teaches how God works at a personal and national level, through some quite ordinary life circumstances.

Session 1	Ruth chapter 1	Pain
Session 2	Ruth chapter 2	Hope
Session 3	Ruth chapter 3	Faith
Session 4	Ruth chapter 4	The Big Picture

Each study has the passage of the bible to be studied, discussion questions and some explanatory notes.



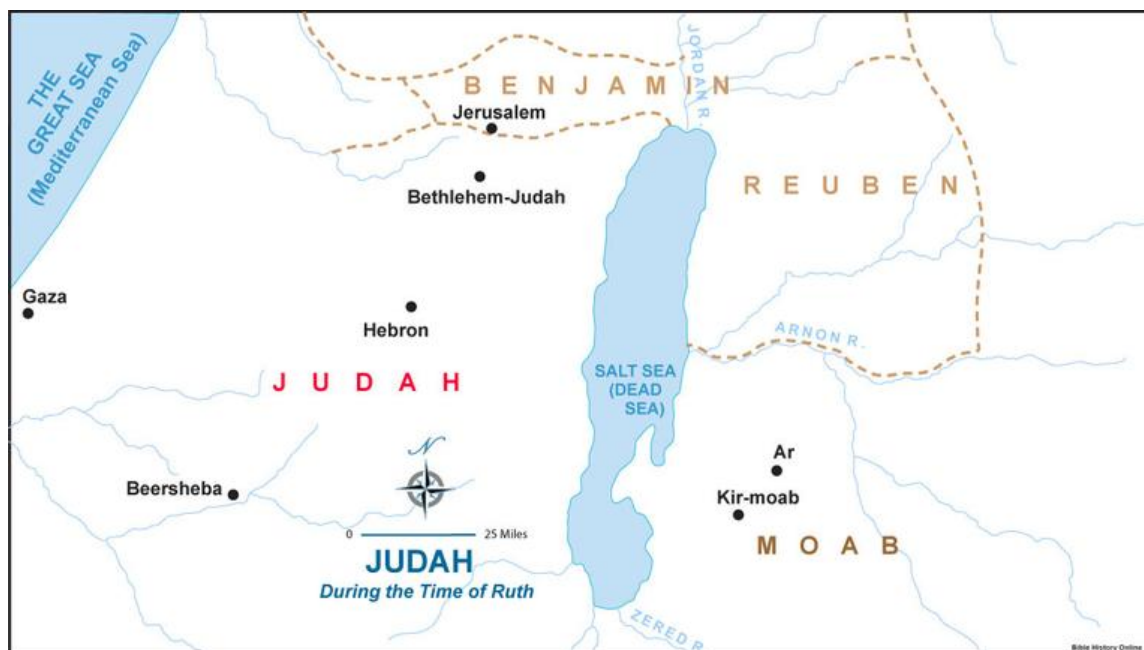
WEEK 1: PAIN

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT TO LEARN?

The book of Ruth in the Bible is set in Israel, about 1000BC. At one level it's a simple story about how a woman finds a husband. But at another level it teaches how God works at a personal and national level, through some quite ordinary life circumstances

CONTEXT FOR THE STORY

In this session we're right at the beginning of the book of Ruth. "Moab" is a country mentioned in the following text. It would be helpful to know that in Ancient Near East times, Moab was the land south east of Israel. As neighbouring countries, they did not get along, The God of the Israelites told his people not to associate with the Moabites, because the Moabites hadn't helped the Israelites (then called Hebrews) after their release from slavery in Egypt, 300 years earlier [Deuteronomy 23:3-5].



Map from www.visualunit.com

WEEK 1: PAIN



BIBLE READING: RUTH 1:1-22

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. 3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth.

After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. 6 When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then she kissed them and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons- 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" 14 At this they wept again.

WEEK 1: PAIN



BIBLE READING: RUTH 1:1-22

Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. 15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." 16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.

May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realised that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" 20 "Don't call me Naomi, " she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." 22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.



QUESTIONS

- 1 What caught your attention in what you just read?
- 2 What questions do you have?

WEEK 1: PAIN



NOTES

The event that sends Naomi's family into the land of Moab is a famine in Bethlehem ("Bethlehem" ironically means "house of bread"). To leave and go to the land of Israel's/God's enemies is a desperate move for survival. And yet good things happen there: they survive for 10 years, and the sons find wives. Naomi insists that her daughters-in-law go back to their family because their options of finding husbands in Israel are very limited. The only option is for Naomi herself to have more sons whom in time they could marry. But this is not a realistic option. It could only be Naomi's offspring because no Israelite man is going to marry a Moabite woman in Israel, when there are plenty of Israelite women to choose from.

Ruth's decision to stay with Naomi is very significant. She's turning her back on her family, her country and her country's gods. Interestingly, Ruth uses the word "LORD" in her discussion with Naomi. "LORD" in capitals is the personal name of God. So in some way, Ruth has already attached herself to Israel's God. Naomi is incredibly bitter over her time in Moab. "Naomi" means "pleasant", "Mara" means "bitter". She's lost her husband and her sons – this means she has lost her means of support and also hope for the future. So much has been taken away from her and she's feeling so empty that she has even lost her name, her identity. She is no longer the person she once was because of all that she has lost. Whereas once her life was full – now it is only full of bitterness.

WEEK 1: PAIN



NOTES

Naomi knows where God is in her suffering – it is God who has afflicted her and brought this misfortune upon her. The whole situation is not as negative as Naomi thinks it is. She doesn't have the complete picture of what God is doing – she can only see her misfortune. But there is hope! Naomi is not alone – she has Ruth with her. And Ruth's loyalty, faithfulness and kindness are invaluable. They are also returning when the barley harvest is beginning – which it seems even Naomi recognises as the provision of God.



QUESTIONS

1 The suffering in our world can be seen as evidence that God isn't there – or as Naomi believed, that God doesn't care. How does Naomi's story help us with the questions we have about God and suffering?

As we consider an answer, it can be helpful to know that arguing for the existence of God based on the existence of suffering is tricky because it assumes that there can't be a good purpose behind suffering. But what if there is? After all, even at a human level we can see that with some things, good results from suffering.

2 How does Naomi's story help us with the questions we have about God and our own particular suffering?

WEEK 1: PAIN



TAKEAWAYS

What will you think/feel/do differently based on what you have learned today?

WEEK 2: HOPE

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT TO LEARN?

The book of Ruth in the Bible is set in Israel, about 1000BC. At one level it's a simple story about how a woman finds a husband. But at another level it teaches how God works at a personal and national level, through some quite ordinary life circumstances.

CONTEXT FOR THE STORY

Last session we saw Naomi (with her husband and two sons) flee Israel to Moab because of famine. Both sons married local girls. In time Naomi's husband and sons died. Meanwhile, the famine in Israel has passed. Naomi returns there with one daughter-in-law, Ruth. Naomi is bitter at what God has taken from her. Ruth knows she will always be seen as a foreigner.

GOOD TO KNOW

- An "Ephah" was about 22 litres
- A guardian-redeemer had a legal obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty [Leviticus 25:25]



BIBLICAL WEIGHTS

cab	1 litre
omer	2 litres
seah	7.3 litres
epah	22 litres
tethek	110 litres
homer	220 litres

WEEK 2: HOPE



BIBLE READING: RUTH 2:1-23

1 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."

3 So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. 4 Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" "The Lord bless you!" they answered. 5 Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?" 6 The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. 7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

8 So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. 9 Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." 10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" 11 Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12 May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." 13 "May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord," she said. "You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants."

WEEK 2: HOPE



BIBLE READING: RUTH 2:1-23

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.” When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. 15 As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. 16 Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”

17 So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. 18 She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough. 19 Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!” Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said. 20 “The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.” 21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’” 22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.” 23 So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

WEEK 2: HOPE



QUESTIONS

- 1 What caught your attention in what you just read?
- 2 What questions do you have?



NOTES

In chapter 2, straight away our hopes are raised: a new character is introduced who could potentially help Naomi and Ruth's situation. He's Naomi's relative and he's a man of standing. In chapter 1 we learned that the only possibility of Ruth the Moabitess acquiring a husband in Israel would be if Naomi herself had another son. Boaz is the next best thing! This is reinforced at the end when Naomi identifies Boaz as a "guardian-redeemer". Boaz is family, with a special obligation to help.

Ruth is enterprising. Perhaps she is aware that as an alien she is able to access the harvest-fields and collect leftover grain. She works hard. She is also humble – she knows that she is not entitled to anything more than access to the fields. Ruth ends up in Boaz' field, "as it turned out". Another way of translating this is: "it just so happened". Our hopes are raised further: Boaz is there (he's not an absentee landlord); Boaz notices Ruth (surprising as she isn't the only servant girl present); Boaz is generous towards Ruth (he tells his workmen not to touch her, he tells his workmen to make it easy for her to glean, he gives her a meal, he gives her a very generous 13-25 kilograms of grain).

WEEK 2: HOPE



NOTES

Boaz goes above and beyond what the law requires – and Ruth knows this. Boaz values the loyalty and faithfulness that Ruth has shown towards her mother-in-law – this is why he says he has noticed her.

Boaz' line about Ruth taking refuge under God's wings is significant – leaving us anticipating how exactly Ruth will be richly rewarded. Will Boaz be the means of blessing? Our hopes are dashed slightly by the end of the chapter, as Boaz hasn't yet embraced his role as guardian-redeemer. Plus it's the end of the harvest, and the harvest is what brought Boaz and Ruth into contact with each other. We don't know if they will meet again.

Interestingly, in chapter 1 Naomi was the central character, but in chapter 2 she has become the supporting role. Ruth's story and Naomi's story are inextricably tied. Also what's interesting is that God seems to be the missing character in the story - his name is not mentioned. "It just so happened" that Ruth ends up in Boaz' field – sounds like chance or fate. The other option is that it is God working behind the scenes. What we gain from God being "missing" from this chapter is that we see that God can work in ordinary ways, through ordinary means, and not just through the spectacular.

WEEK 2: HOPE



QUESTIONS

1) It is one thing to say that God is behind the events of Ruth chapter 2, but how do we know that God works the same way with the events that happen in our lives?

To answer this question, it could be helpful to think about which part of Ruth's story is prescriptive (what happened to Ruth must happen to us) and what part is descriptive (what happened to Ruth is an example for us). After all, Ruth's circumstances are particular to her; we are not all Moabite women living in 1000BC in need of a husband!

2) Thinking about the parts of the story that are descriptive...what assumptions are we making about the character of God?



TAKEAWAYS

What will you think/feel/do differently based on what you have learned today?

WEEK 3: FAITH

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT TO LEARN?

The book of Ruth in the Bible is set in Israel, about 1000BC. At one level it's a simple story about how a woman finds a husband. But at another level it teaches how God works at a personal and national level, through some quite ordinary life circumstances.

CONTEXT FOR THE STORY

Naomi, with her foreign daughter-in-law Ruth, are impoverished. Naomi is bitter towards God about this. At harvest Ruth goes out to glean (collect leftover grain) in the fields. She works in fields belonging to Boaz. Boaz is a distant relation of Naomi, with an obligation to help impoverished family members. He notices Ruth and is kind to her.

GOOD TO KNOW

- In what you are about to read, Ruth's statement: "spread the corner of your garment over me" translates to "spread your wings over me". In the previous chapter, Boaz had said to Ruth: "May you be richly blessed by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have taken refuge" [Ruth 2:12].



De Brailles, William; Ruth Meets Boaz as she gleans (Ruth 2:4-16)(detail), circa 1250.
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

WEEK 3: FAITH



BIBLE READING: RUTH 3

1 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. 2 Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. 7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

9 "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family."

10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. 11 And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. 12 Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. 13 Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."

WEEK 3 FAITH



BIBLE READING: RUTH 3

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”

15 He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

16 When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her 17 and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” 18 Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”



QUESTIONS

1 What caught your attention in what you just read?

2 What questions do you have?

WEEK 3: FAITH



NOTES

There does appear to be at least the hint of sexual innuendo here. Ruth dresses up, she appears before Boaz at night when presumably he's alone, and she leaves in secret in the morning.

Was Ruth's plan to seduce Boaz in order to manipulate him into marriage? What works against this is that so far, both Ruth and Boaz have been presented as honourable characters. They are both, in a sense, the ideal of what God's people should be.

The action in chapter 3 needs to be read in light of Boaz' words in chapter 2. Boaz says to Ruth: "May you be blessed by the God under whose wings you have taken refuge". Ruth says to Boaz: "Spread your wings over me". So Ruth is challenging Boaz to put his words into action – to be the physical means by which the promise of blessing from God will be fulfilled.

With Ruth's secret visit in the night, so much could have gone wrong. For example Boaz could have taken advantage of her – had sex with her and then discarded her. Ruth does something that is potentially so dangerous because she is prepared to take great risks to produce what is a good and right outcome - in this case, Boaz fulfilling his responsibility and acting as guardian-redeemer.

Ruth is one of a number of women in the Bible who are prepared to take great risks in order to achieve a good and right outcome. Another example is Tamar in Genesis 38. Tamar disguises herself and sleeps with her father-in-law after he refuses to marry her to any more of his sons. (In those days it was the duty of the brother to produce offspring for their dead brother to continue the family line).

WEEK 3: FAITH



NOTES

It's a great risk, but in several ways it is a calculated one. Ruth has already seen what Boaz is like in his treatment of her in the fields. And she isn't going after any available man, but rather a kinsman who had an obligation to help.

Rather than being annoyed or affronted by Ruth's actions, Boaz sees Ruth's challenge to him as an act of kindness to her mother-in-law – because she hasn't run after anyone but the one who should, by rights, help. It is almost as if he is pleased that she is encouraging him to do the right thing. This enhances our already positive impression of Boaz.



QUESTIONS

1 What does the introduction of the new character (the man who has a closer claim as guardian redeemer) do to our hopes for Ruth?

2 If Ruth is also a model of what God's people are supposed to be, does that mean that God's people are free to engage in risky behaviour to produce certain outcomes? That the end justifies the means?

In answer to this question, faith will look different in different circumstances. For God's people, risks should be an expression of faith, and will work within the guidelines that God has given (Ruth didn't go and seduce any man – she approached the guardian-redeemer).

WEEK 3: FAITH



TAKEAWAYS

What will you think/feel/do differently based on what you have learned today?

WEEK 4: THE BIG PICTURE

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT TO LEARN?

The book of Ruth in the Bible is set in Israel, about 1000BC. At one level it's a simple story about how a woman finds a husband. But at another level it teaches how God works at a personal and national level, through some quite ordinary life circumstances.

CONTEXT FOR THE STORY

Naomi and her foreign daughter-in-law Ruth are in desperate circumstances. Ruth collects harvest scraps from Boaz's fields. Boaz is honourable and kind, and a distant relative with a special responsibility to provide for Naomi and Ruth. However there is also another closer relative with the obligation of being "guardian-redeemer". Boaz must negotiate.

GOOD TO KNOW

- A guardian-redeemer had a legal obligation to redeem a relative in serious difficulty. [Leviticus 25:25-55]



De Brailes, William; Ruth at Boaz's Feet (detail), circa 1250.
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland.

WEEK 4: THE BIG PICTURE



BIBLE READING: RUTH 4

1 Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down. 2 Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so.

3 Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. 4 I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.”

“I will redeem it,” he said.

5 Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.”

6 At this, the guardian-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.”

7 (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) 8 So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal.

9 Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!”

11 Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. 12 Through the offspring the Lord gives you by

WEEK 4: THE BIG PICTURE



BIBLE READING: RUTH 4

this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! 15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

16 The Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. 17 The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 This, then, is the family line of Perez:

Perez was the father of Hezron,

19 Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

20 Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

21 Salmon the father of Boaz,

Boaz the father of Obed,

22 Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of David.



QUESTIONS

1 What caught your attention in what you just read?

2 What questions do you have?

WEEK 4: THE BIG PICTURE



NOTES

Boaz is shrewd in his dealing with the rival guardian-redeemer. He knows that Ruth will be the sticking point, because she is of child-bearing age. By talking about the property first, and making that all appear very attractive – when he finally gets around to mentioning Ruth he has in fact heightened what is at stake. Ruth could have children!

Boaz' shrewdness pays off. The guardian-redeemer is cautious rather than ambitious. He wants the property but isn't prepared to risk Ruth having any offspring – these would be considered Elimelech's/Mahlon's children rather than his own – and could endanger his existing children's share of his property if they made claims for it.

The detail about the sandals is interesting. It emphasises and underscores that Boaz' decisive action to redeem Ruth and Naomi came at a cost – he had to buy all of Elimelech's property.

The townspeople make mention of a number of significant women in the Bible. Rachel and Leah bore children to Jacob (Jacob was renamed "Israel" and his sons (one of whom was called Judah) became the 12 tribes of Israel – that is how these two women "built up the house of Israel"). Tamar bore a son by Judah – and Judah was told "the sceptre will not depart from Judah" meaning Judah would be the tribe from whom kings would come [Genesis 49:10]. In these good wishes, the townspeople are saying more than may this marriage be blessed with children. The townspeople are saying may Boaz and Ruth's offspring play a significant role in the unfolding story of God's people (and as we will see from the genealogy, they are speaking more than they realise!).

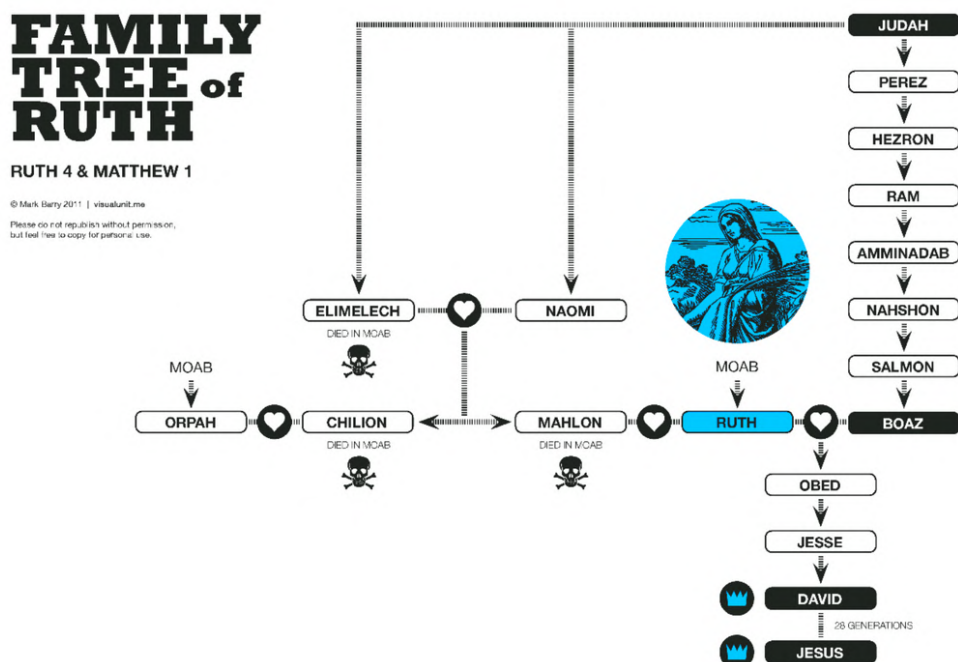
WEEK 4: THE BIG PICTURE



NOTES

The genealogy is more than just a tracing of a family line. The “David” mentioned at the end of the genealogy is the same David who appears later in the genealogy of Jesus: “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David...Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David” [Matthew 1:1, 5-6].

Therefore, this genealogy and its surrounding context shows that although this has been a personal story about Ruth and Naomi, there is also a bigger picture. God is working his purpose out in the lives of these two women, in the nation of Israel and ultimately for the world. Boaz and Ruth’s son will be the ancestor of Jesus. Jesus will be God’s king and saviour. At Jesus’ birth, Joseph is told: “You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” and Mary, Jesus’ mother is told: “You are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... his kingdom will never end” [Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:30-33].



Infographic from www.visualunit.com

WEEK 4: THE BIG PICTURE



QUESTIONS

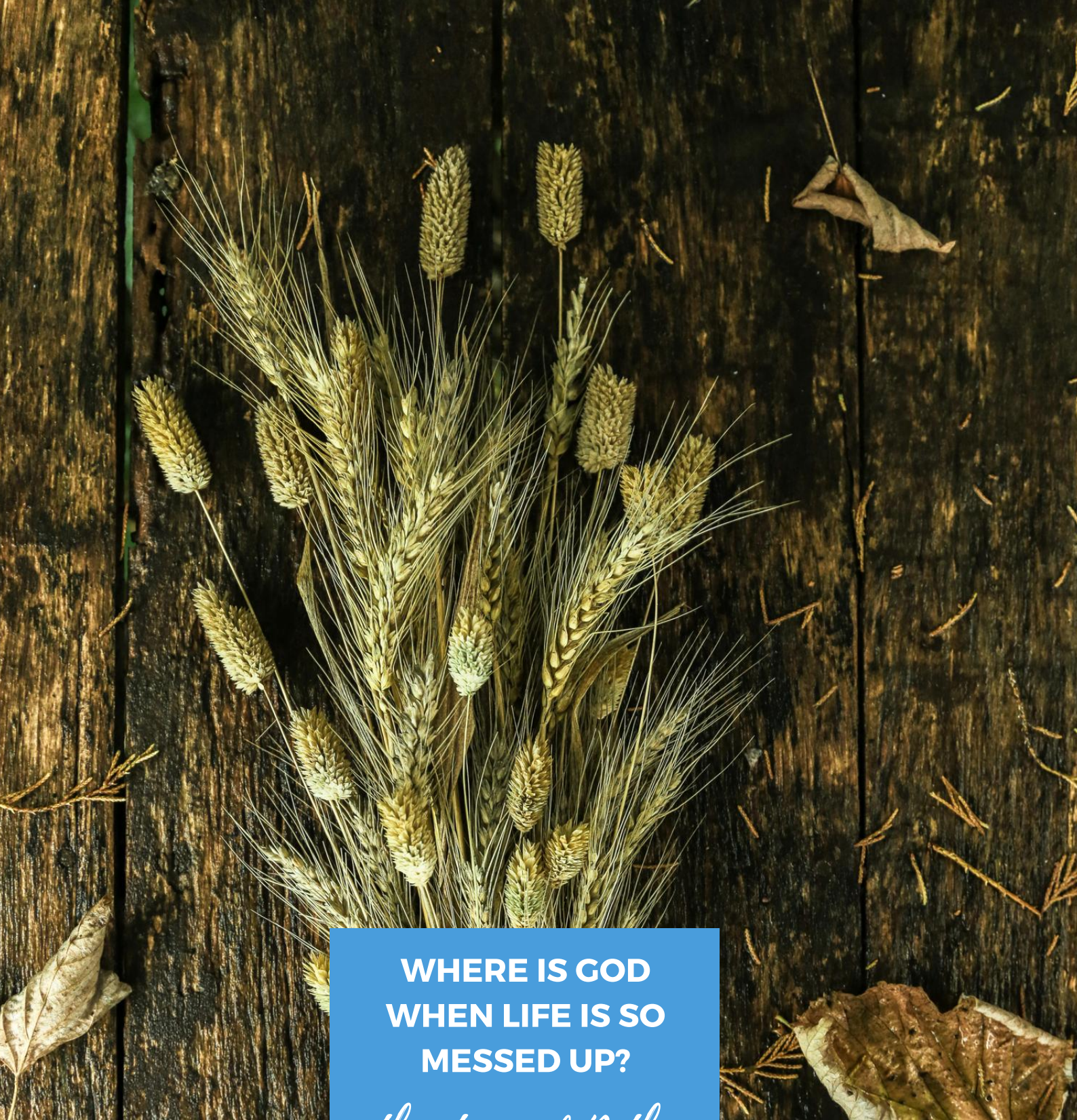
1) According to the Bible, God's agenda is to provide the world with a saviour and a king - Jesus. Outside the work of Jesus as saviour and king, how do we interpret the hand of God in world events?

In coming to an answer, we must be careful not to think just because something happens, it must have the blessing of God (this is how some churches in Germany endorsed Hitler and the rise of National Socialism). All world events do "cross God's desk" so to speak, but that's different to saying they have God's positive endorsement. What we do know from the Bible - and from Ruth's story - is that God can bring good from situations of pain, suffering and hardship.



TAKEAWAYS

What will you think/feel/do differently based on what you have learned today?



**WHERE IS GOD
WHEN LIFE IS SO
MESSED UP?**

the story of Ruth



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