



CrossWise Living | *Bible Study Series*

The Book of
Ruth

Dr. Gail Bones

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The Book of **Ruth**

An intergenerational study of love, loyalty, & redemption.

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Dedication

For my beloved children's spouses, Caleb and Karen, who, like Ruth, have shown great love and care for their mother-in-law.

The Book of Ruth

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About the Author

Dr. Gail Nelson Bones is the founder of CrossWise Living, a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. She has been engaging audiences as a speaker, songwriter, and worship leader for over thirty years. Formerly a professor of education at San Diego Christian College, Dr. Bones is the author of *Cross Wise Living: Navigating Transition* (TBP 2013).

Gail and her husband Jeff have been married for over 30 years and together have recorded seven albums of original Christian music. Along with their now-grown children, they spent many years presenting family concerts at churches across the United States. Gail is currently a women's ministry leader and member of the worship team at her home church in La Mesa, California.



About the Study

After the first introductory lesson, for each of the four weeks ahead you will have 5 days of homework to complete. Although you may wonder now how you will find the time to do this, you cannot imagine how beneficial it will be until you actually make a commitment to study the Word of God for yourself. When you ask God to help you fit this in to your daily schedule, he will show you, giving you the time and energy to keep your commitment. You will be discovering the delights of searching the Scriptures on your own, using both the Old and New Testaments to find answers to questions that will range from historical information to personal application.

Class sessions will start with a whole group discussion, where you may be asked to volunteer to share your answers or look up Bible verses to read aloud. The focus during this part of the class will be on gaining and sharing knowledge.

The second part of the class session, you will meet in your small group for discussion of the personal application questions (marked AQ). The focus here will be on gaining wisdom, which is the ability to apply the knowledge you have gained. Because you will be in a smaller group, you will have more opportunity to share the details of how God is working in your life as a result of your study of his Word.

The final 15-20 minutes of your small group time will be devoted to sharing prayer requests. It is best if you come prepared with your request written down so that you can share briefly and concisely with your group members. This workbook contains a place for you to record prayer requests as each member shares.

Tips for Leaders

Suggestions for First Class Session – Introduction

1. The first lesson will provide the historical and cultural context that will widen and deepen your students' understanding of this Old Testament book. You can keep it simple and just go through the passages in the workbook with your students, or you can add your own touches like PowerPoint maps and graphics. Feel free to inject your own style and personality into the presentation.
2. The study is meant to be interactive, so take full advantage of opportunities to get your students participating. Depending on the number of students you have, as they come in, you can hand out slips of paper with the passages you'll be referring to (about 30 in this lesson). Ask them to find their verses ahead of time and be ready to read when you call on them.
3. During the first session, two activities allow students to interact with those sitting near them. Monitor the time, keeping it brief. The timeline questions answers are as follows :

2 Abraham

8 Joshua

9 Gideon

1 Noah

3 Lot

10 Samuel

7 Moses

12 David

4 Isaac

6 Joseph

11 Saul

5 Jacob

13 Solomon

4. Application Questions (AQ) for discussion are provided in the shaded boxes for the second half of class, when students will meet with their small groups. Keep these groups small – ideally about six – which will give everyone a chance to share. For the first session, there are plenty of questions to choose from in the shaded boxes. During the next 4 weeks, students will have written their answers out, but this time, just ask for group members to volunteer their thoughts about any or all of these questions.

Suggestions for Weekly Sessions

1. Continue to invite participation during the whole group sessions. You will note that most of even the informational, textual questions require critical thinking.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you each week as you choose the questions you want to emphasize in your whole group lesson, since you will probably not have a chance to go over each question.
3. Ask participants to mark the AQ questions they are most interested in discussing in their small groups before they come to class. You may rotate the facilitation of discussion within the small groups each week.
4. Prayer Requests. As the leader, monitor the time. When you have about 15-20 minutes left for your session, announce that it is time to transition to prayer requests. Ask participants to come to class with their requests already written out so that their sharing will be concise enough for everyone to have a turn. Space is provided for recording these in the workbook. Have a plan for those times when someone needs some extra TLC or prayer- does your church have a counseling or prayer ministry? Is there someone who is willing to stay late to meet with ladies who might need extra support?

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SESSION 1

Introduction

*“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.”
Psalm 119:105 (NLT)*

INTRODUCTION

The story of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi is filled with reverses, hardships, and loss, and yet their loving relationship provides a wonderful example of the beauty of generations living CrossWise, reaching out to help each another navigate life's difficult transitions (see page 64). Above all, we see the loving hand of a sovereign God who directs our paths when we acknowledge him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:6).

As you begin this study, where are YOU on life's zigzag path? Can you relate to any of the difficulties or transitions experienced by Ruth and/or Naomi? Mark any of the following that apply:

- ☐ You've struggled to understand why God would allow misfortune or suffering to enter your life.
- ☐ You've had to make a difficult choice of which path to follow, and made a sacrifice in order to choose the one that honored God.
- ☐ You've experienced grief because of a death in the family
- ☐ As a young woman, you wondered when, how, and even if God would send you a husband.
- ☐ You've experienced financial hardship and had to humble yourself and work hard, perhaps at a menial job in order to make ends meet.
- ☐ You've had to become the caretaker for a family member.
- ☐ You've moved to a new place and had to adapt to a new culture or way of life.
- ☐ You've relied on the advice on someone older and wiser to help you find your way in a new situation.
- ☐ You've had to wait patiently and hang on during trying circumstances when God's hand of help was your only hope.

As you invest time in an in-depth study of the lives of Ruth and Naomi, you'll discover will solid scriptural truths to help you to navigate the constant transitions all must face in a life where "all things flow; nothing abides" (Heraclitus).

In the space below, write about a time when a major decision you made turned out to be the right one, then share it with your group.

I. HISTORICAL SETTING

The Book of Ruth, whose author is unknown, is set in the time of the Judges, possibly during the period of either Gideon (Judges 6-9) or Jephthah (Judges 11).

- A. Read over the following list and jot down two or three words about each individual. Then, collaborate with others sitting near you, placing the following individuals in the correct historical order (1-13).

___ Abraham
___ Noah
___ Moses
___ Joseph
___ Jacob
___ Joshua
___ Lot
___ David
___ Saul
___ Solomon
___ Gideon
___ Samuel
___ Isaac

- B. Read the following to gain insight into the moral climate of those times.

1. Judges 10: 6-8 – “...the Israelites did _____ in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Astoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites _____ and no longer _____ him, he became _____ with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites who that year shattered and crushed them.”
2. Judges 17:6 NASB – “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what _____ in his _____ eyes.”

- C. As the story begins, Naomi and Elimilech have gone to live in Moab due to a famine in Israel. According to Leviticus 26:14-20, what might have been the reason for the famine?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Timothy Keller (2009), in his excellent book, *Counterfeit Gods* says, “What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. A counterfeit God is anything so central and essential to you life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living”(xviii).

AQ1. What similarities do you see in our day and age?

AQ2. What are the false gods of the people around us, which we might be tempted to place above God?

II. GENEALOGY

Jewish genealogies typically did not include the names of women, so it is remarkable that the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew includes the names of five women.

Identify the four women, in addition to Mary, the mother of Jesus, who are named in Matthew 1:1-16.

1. Rahab (v. 5)

a) What do we learn about her from the following passages?

Joshua 6:22-25

Hebrews 11:31

James 2:25

b) Who was her son?

c) What was her nationality?

2. Uriah's Wife – Bathsheba (v.6)

- a) What do we learn about her from the following passages?

2 Samuel 11:2-5

2 Samuel 12:24,25

3. Tamar (v.3)

- a) What do we learn about her from the following passages? (If there is time, it would be well-worth it to read the entire chapter).

Genesis 38:2

Genesis 38:13-18

Genesis 38:26

- b) What was her nationality?

4. Ruth (v. 5)

- a) What do we learn about her from the following passages?

Ruth 1:4

Deuteronomy 23:3

- b) What was her nationality?

- c) Who was her great-grandson?

AQ3. What do you find significant about this group of women?

AQ4. What is encouraging about this list?

III. LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

Genesis 38 and the story of Tamar illustrate the concept of a levirate marriage, first set forth in Deuteronomy 25:5-7 (*Levir* = brother-in-law). What was the purpose of this law? Who was being protected?

(This practice was alluded to also in Matthew 22:23-32, wherein the Sadducees asked Jesus what they thought to be a trick question).

AQ5: From your knowledge of the New Testament, how did the teachings and practices of Jesus indicate that women are to be valued and protected?

AQ6: How does this contrast with the status of women in other religions and cultures, both historical and current?

AQ7: How have you been treated as a woman within the church?

IV. AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

- ♦ **Gleaning** – see Leviticus 19:9-10
- ♦ **Threshing** – “beating the stems and husks of grain with a flail to separate the grains or seeds from the straw.” (*American Heritage College Dictionary*)
- ♦ **Winnowing** – “the separate the wheat grain from the chaff by means of a current of air.” (*American Heritage College Dictionary*)

V. OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND REDEMPTION

Leviticus 25:14-17 decrees that property ownership is actually a lease arrangement until the year of Jubilee. Leviticus 27:24 says that in the year of Jubilee (occurring once every 50 years), the land reverts to the person who originally sold it.

Leviticus 25:23-25 says, “The land must not be _____ because the land is _____ and you are but aliens and my _____. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the _____ of the land. If one of your countrymen becomes _____ and sells some of his _____, his nearest _____ us to come and _____ what his countryman has sold.”

Note: The nearest relative was obligated when redeeming, or buying back the property, to both marry the widow and support the family. We will see that Boaz was willing to do both.

AQ8: What was God intending to teach his people through these regulations?

AQ9: How might this affect our view of stewardship of our possessions today?

VI. KINSMAN –REDEEMER

- A. The law provided a way through which an inheritance that had been lost could be redeemed through a “kinsman-redeemer.”

From *Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible*:

ga’al, “to redeem, deliver, avenge, act as a kinsman.” The responsibility to “redeem” belonged to the nearest relative-brother, uncle, uncle’s son, or a blood relative from his family. He was known as the kinsman-redeemer. The Book of Ruth is a beautiful account of the kinsman-redeemer. (Vine, W.E. (2005) *Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 304).

- B. There were three requirements that had to be met in order for this transaction to occur:

1. The redeemer had to have the right to redeem.

Leviticus 25: 47-49 (on what was this right based?)

Ruth 3:12-13

Romans 1:3 (who was Jesus?)

Hebrews 2:11-14 (who was Jesus?)

2. The redeemer had to be able to pay the price.

Ruth 4:4-10

1 Peter 1:18-19

3. The redeemer had to be willing to do so.

Leviticus 25:25 (who initiates the redemption?)

Ruth 3:9 and 11

Galatians 4:4-5

Hebrews 10:7

John 10:11-18

AQ10: What do you hope to gain from your study of the Book of Ruth?

AQ11: How extensive is your knowledge of the Old Testament?

AQ12: What questions have been raised by this introductory session?

AQ13: What kinds of transitions are you currently facing?

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WEEK 1 Homework

*“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.”
Ruth 1:16*

DAY ONE

1. Read Ruth 1:1-22. What are your predominant impressions after reading this chapter? What stands out to you? What puzzles you?
2. What do you learn about Naomi from each of the following verses? What character qualities do you see in her?
 - v.6
 - vv.8-9
 - vv.11-13
 - vv.20-21
3. What does Ruth's dedication to her mother-in-law imply about the kind of person Naomi was?
4. How do you imagine Ruth came to have such strong faith in the God of Israel?

AQ1: How have your family members influenced your faith?

AQ2: Have you lead anyone in your family to the Lord or seen answers to your prayers on their behalf?

AQ3: Name those in your family you would like to impact for Christ.

DAY TWO

1. As Naomi says in v. 21, “I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty...the Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune on me.”

List her losses.

What light do these verses shed on the subject of afflictions?

Luke 22:31

Job 1:12

Job 2:6

Psalms 66:10

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

2. How would you describe Naomi's attitude toward God at the end of this chapter?
3. Did Naomi's discouragement cause her to turn away from God or to doubt his existence? What evidence for your answer do you find in this chapter?

AQ4: Have you ever had the kinds of feelings Naomi expresses? What were your circumstances at that time?

AQ5: Have you or anyone you know begun to doubt God because of the question of suffering? What has helped?