

## INTERVARSITY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

*Ruth 3:1-18 NIV, Bethlehem, Sound Familiar? (60 minutes)*

### **WELCOME (7 minutes)**

Icebreaker: What is the best thing about the town or city that you grew up in? What is a favorite childhood memory you can recall from that place?

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

### **GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)**

Each time we meet, let's be careful to work well together as a group. We are coming from many different backgrounds, so the purpose of these group norms is to help everyone feel welcome so they can fully participate:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

As your leader, I will help us remember our group norms. Also, as members of this group, feel free to speak up if you notice we are straying from these norms.

### **INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)**

Not much time has passed from the end of chapter 3 to the beginning of chapter 4. Boaz is determined to settle the matter of the guardian-redeemer and provide an answer for Ruth and Naomi. Much of this chapter takes place at the gate of the city, the usual place where business and meetings took place.

You may want to reference the following texts for more understanding (that the original readers of this text would already have had).

- Genesis 29:16-35 – narrative of Rachel and Leah
- Genesis 38:11-26 – narrative of Tamar
- Leviticus 25:25-54 – laws about redeeming property

### **SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Ruth 4:1-22 NIV –

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 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** Then 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.

### **DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)**

Let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. What is Boaz's mindset at the beginning of this chapter? What aspects of his character are especially in play during this final chapter?
2. What strategy does Boaz use with the nearer kinsman? Why is the nearer kinsman so eager to redeem the land, but not Ruth?
3. The elders and all the people bless Boaz and Ruth, referencing famous Old Testament figures like Rachel, Leah, Perez and Tamar. What is notable about these characters and why are they in particular being incorporated into this blessing for the new couple?
4. Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem when his father and mother, Joseph and Mary, had to return to their hometown for a census. What does the story of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz tell us about who God is in light of what we know to be true, that Jesus is a direct descendant of Ruth and Boaz?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

### **RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

There is no question, as we study this final chapter of Ruth, that God is a Redeemer! He redeemed Naomi and Ruth from the great losses of their husbands and enabled them to return to their hometown. He then went on to provide for Naomi and Ruth, through Boaz as guardian-redeemer, and enabled the family line to continue through Obed, Jesse, David and ultimately Jesus. We also see that Jesus's direct lineage includes those on the "inside" and "outside" so to speak. God's family is one formed through love, sacrifice, grit, and friendship. In fact, the name Ruth means "friend." We see deep friendship form between Ruth and Naomi as well as Boaz and Ruth.

Through everyday people in everyday life, God brings purpose and redemption.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. How do you yearn to see God redeem your life, those in your family, or people and situations around you on campus?
- B. What friendships draw you closer to God and encourage and inspire you to hope and trust more in Jesus? What can you do to nurture those friendships more in the coming weeks?
- C. Do you feel like more on the "inside" or "outside" of the community right now? Who might God be identifying for you as someone to invite to check out this small group?

### **CLOSE (2 minutes)**

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

*Tips for leading the group discussion (and more tips are available at [howto.bible](http://howto.bible)):*

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*



this material and more can be found at [tiny.cc/biblestudyguides](https://tiny.cc/biblestudyguides)  
contact [christy.gates@intervarsity.org](mailto:christy.gates@intervarsity.org) or [sara.chang@intervarsity.org](mailto:sara.chang@intervarsity.org) with any questions