




*discover*  
**RUTH**  
Appendices



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*discover*  
**RUTH**  
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*CoffeeBreak*



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## **Supplemental Study Material for Coffee Break Groups**

We thank Kathleen Evenhouse for contributing to the following supplemental material to the lessons presented in *Discover Ruth*. We also thank Sarah Schreiber, assistant professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, for providing a theological review of the content.

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# Digging Deeper into Ruth 1

From the following, choose whatever you think may be most helpful for your group or for personal study.

## **Widows in the Old and New Testaments**

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The following verses cover some of the stories about widows in the Old and New Testaments. Read the following passages and build a description of the circumstances and lives of widows. Consider how God cared for them.

- 1 Kings 17:7-16
  
- 2 Kings 4:1-7
  
- Luke 7:11-17
  
- Luke 21:1-4
  
- Acts 6:1-7
  
- Acts 9:36-42
  
- James 1:27

What responsibilities do we as Christians and churches have to people who are widowed? To single parents?

## Levirate Marriage and Inheritance

Recall the discussion about levirate marriage in connection with Ruth 1:11-13. The levirate marriage law was an ancient emergency plan to preserve the family name of a married man who died without children. The deceased man's brother would marry the surviving widow, and a son born from this union would inherit the name and property of the deceased man.

This complicated law meant the widow couldn't just move on but was honor-bound to preserve her deceased husband's name. Further, the brother-in-law faced a moral decision that could affect the inheritance he could pass along to his own children.

For example, in a family with three sons, the first son would normally inherit a double portion of the father's estate (see Deut. 21:17), and the other sons would inherit equal portions of what remained (see Fig. 1).

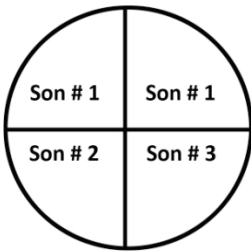


Figure 1

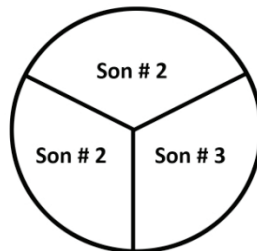


Figure 2

If the first son died and was not married, the second son would then be considered as the firstborn and would receive two-thirds of the father's estate. The third son would then receive one-third (see Fig. 2).

However, if the first son was married and died without an heir, levirate law called for the second son to marry the surviving widow in order to provide an heir for the first son. In that case, the second son and his own descendants would receive only the original one-quarter inheritance (as pictured in Fig. 1). The first son's share would be held for his heir (by widow and brother) when the heir came of age.

If you and your group members like mathematical puzzles, consider the following questions (or come up with some of your own):



- A decade passed, and neither of Naomi's sons and their wives were blessed with children. In those times it was generally considered a disgrace for a couple not to have children.
  - Naomi experienced a mother's worst nightmare—her sons died. Without a male relative, she had no place in society and would have no source of income. A woman who had no protection or support would have little choice but to beg or become a prostitute.
1. Some commentators compare Naomi's life story to that of Job. Read and reflect on Job 1-2. In what ways are Job's circumstances similar to Naomi's? In what ways different?

2. Has there been a time when struggles in your life prompted you to wonder about yourself or about your relationship with God? Read Psalm 13. Have you had questions similar to the psalmist's cries? What answers about God have you found?

3. Ruth and Naomi had reasons to fear and dread the future. Are you facing a situation now that fills you with dread? What do you know about God that offers you hope, no matter what may lie ahead?







3. Explore these Scripture verses on taking refuge in the shelter of God's wings, and choose one to memorize.

- Psalm 17:8
- Psalm 36:5-7
- Psalm 57:1
- Psalm 61:4
- Psalm 63:7-8

# Digging Deeper into Ruth 3

## God's Fingerprints

Look through chapters 1-3 of the book of Ruth for God's fingerprints in Naomi's life. By doing so, you may also gain insight into God's presence and work in your own life—through both good and bad times. The incomplete list below may help get you started.

### Chapter 1

- Naomi felt abandoned, yet God put a strong, faithful woman by her side to help provide and care for her.
- Naomi experienced the joy of knowing that Ruth had come to know and believe in God.
- The two women arrived safely in Bethlehem after a strenuous and dangerous journey.

### Chapter 2

- “As it turned out,” Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, a relative of Elimelek.
- Boaz provided food and protection for Ruth (and Naomi) and asked for the Lord's blessing on them.
- Naomi recognized God's kindness in providing Boaz to supply them with abundant food.
- Ruth remained true to her vow in caring for and living with her mother-in-law.

### Chapter 3

- Ruth followed Naomi's instructions to prepare to meet Boaz at the threshing floor and to propose marriage, calling upon him as their guardian-redeemer in honor of God's commands to his covenant people Israel.

- Boaz agreed to act on their behalf so that Naomi and Ruth would have a guardian-redeemer. He promised to take on the guardian-redeemer responsibilities if the closer relative was not willing.
- Boaz also provided a gift of barley so that Ruth would not return to her mother-in-law empty-handed. Consider the contrast here with Naomi’s assessment in Ruth 1:21.

At times you may ask yourself, “What can I do when I feel like God is far away?” Read and reflect on these passages in God’s Word:

- Job 23:8-10
- Psalm 139:1-12
- Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:5, 9; Hebrews 13:5-8

### ***Chesed***

Recall the study note about *chesed* in the discussion material for Ruth 3:10-14. Daniel I. Block defines *chesed* this way: “This is a covenant term, wrapping up in itself all the positive attributes of God: love, covenant faithfulness, mercy, grace, kindness, loyalty—in short, acts of devotion and loving-kindness that go beyond the requirements of duty” (*Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2008).

1. Where and when did Naomi practice *chesed* in our short story?



7. Read through this sampling of Bible texts that include the word *chesed*. How has God shown *chesed* to you?

- Exodus 34:6
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Psalm 136
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Isaiah 54:10
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Lamentations 3:31-32
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Hosea 2:18-19
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Hosea 6:6 (see Matt. 9:13)

# Digging Deeper into Ruth 4

## **Circumstance? Design? Providence?**

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Looking back over the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, think about their character traits and personalities. God made each one of these people quite different. Each one had a different combination of strengths and limitations, and yet each one had an important role in God’s plan for their lives in ancient Israel, “in the days when the judges ruled”—and in God’s plan to bring the Savior, Jesus.

Think about your own personality and character traits. You may be talkative or shy, open or private, a lover of details or one who sees mainly the big picture, a leader or a supporter, a nurturer, a provider, a planner, a problem solver, and much more. These traits and abilities all come out of the design God has for you and for the full life he wants for you. The story of your life is also influenced by family, DNA, and life events—and your belief or unbelief.

1. Look at yourself and identify one strong trait you have, even if it is one you are not especially fond of. How do you think God would like you to use this trait—in this season, in this situation, at this time in your life?

If we are honest with ourselves, we will notice that it’s usually when we have reached the limits of our own abilities that we call on God for help with great urgency, even desperation: “Help me, God! I need you now!”

God always hears and responds, even when we don’t recognize his working for us and for our good in the situations of our lives. His thoughts are not our thoughts, and his plans are not our plans, but his love is always directed toward us.





2. Note also that the genealogy mentions the names of some of the descendants of Obed. What might be the purpose of mentioning these names?

3. The genealogy in Ruth 4 turns up about a thousand years later within a listing of Jesus' ancestors in Matthew 1:1-17. Matthew includes some additional names in the section listing Perez through David. What does the mention of those names in Matthew 1 tell us?

4. Today we have the advantage of knowing that the Savior, Jesus, is a descendant of Ruth and Boaz. In what ways does this shed light on the story we have studied in the book of Ruth? What would you like to share with others about this story?