

Redemption

BOAZ PLAYED THE ROLE OF KINSMAN-REDEEMER BY MARRYING RUTH, POINTING TO JESUS AS THE ULTIMATE REDEEMER.

I am frequently grateful for the time I spend with senior adults in my church, and a recent lunch was no exception. In that gathering, I learned that the mother of one of my members was German by birth, but moved to France prior to World War II. As a German nationalist living in France, she had hidden Jewish people in her home from both Germans and French Nazi sympathizers. That dynamic amazed me.

Imagine my further surprise when I learned of a Japanese man who did something similar. Chiune Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat stationed in Lithuania during World War II. As the Nazi regime expanded its grip over Europe, thousands of Jewish refugees sought ways to escape the impending horrors. Defying his government's strict orders, Sugihara issued transit visas to Jewish families, allowing them to escape via Japan to safe territories. His actions, driven by compassion and integrity, saved approximately 6,000 lives, earning him the title "Japanese Schindler."

After the war, Japan faced monumental challenges. The country was devastated by bombings, including the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was in this period of rebuilding that Sugihara's legacy mirrored the theme of redemption. His courageous choices during the war became a beacon of hope and moral fortitude for Japan, symbolizing not just individual redemption but also collective renewal.

This redemption story extends beyond Sugihara's immediate actions. Post-war Japan embraced profound change, reconstructing its society through democratic reforms, industrial innovation, and a focus on peace. The country transformed from a militarized nation into a global symbol of economic success and technological advancement—a profound redemption on the world stage.

Sugihara's story resonates with the narrative of Ruth through its themes of courage, moral conviction, and the broader impact of individual actions on future generations. Sugihara's life's work became part of Japan's moral fabric, contributing to a narrative of redemption from its wartime past to a future of peace and prosperity.

Ruth 3:1–4:22

The book of Ruth, nestled within the historical narratives of the Old Testament, offers a rich tapestry of themes that transcend cultural and temporal boundaries. Among these, the theme of redemption stands out, especially in Ruth 3:8-13 and Ruth 4:13-17. These passages not only illuminate Ruth’s personal redemption story but also point to the larger narrative of God’s redemptive plan for His people.

Naomi advised Ruth to seek out Boaz at the threshing floor, urging her to uncover his feet and lie down. This culturally rich act expressed Ruth’s appeal for Boaz to fulfill the role of the “kinsman-redeemer,” a provision in Israelite culture that allowed a close relative to marry a widow to preserve the deceased’s family line and property. The cover of night enveloped them as Ruth approached Boaz with a mixture of boldness and humility. When Boaz awoke to find Ruth at his feet, the text captures a moment where time seems to pause, laden with the suspense of potential rejection or embrace.

Boaz acknowledged Ruth’s kindness and noble character, praising her loyalty not only to Naomi but also her choice to seek a prosperous future through the proper channels. Here, redemption is not only about securing an heir and future for Ruth and Naomi but also about restoring dignity and hope. Boaz’s commitment to act as her kinsman-redeemer, contingent upon the approval of a closer relative, underscores a structured process of redemption that adheres both to personal virtue and societal norms.

The culmination of this redemption unfolds with Boaz marrying Ruth, symbolizing a new beginning birthed from prior losses. The society that once may have viewed Ruth with suspicion due to her foreign status came to witness a divine orchestration of acceptance and inclusion. The birth of Ruth’s son, Obed, ignited joy that surpasses individual triumphs, affecting the entire community. Naomi, once enveloped in despair, now cradled a grandchild, a living testament to God’s restorative power. The women of the village became vocal witnesses, recognizing not just a renewal of Naomi’s lineage but an echo of God’s faithfulness through generations.

The theme of redemption in Ruth signifies a foretaste of the grand narrative of God’s redemptive work through Christ, who is remarkably descended from Ruth’s line. Boaz may have redeemed Ruth, but the two of them would help bring about the Ultimate Redeemer. Ruth and Boaz’s

union, resulting in the lineage of King David, anticipated the messianic hope that finds fulfillment in Jesus. This genealogy embedded within the text is more than a historical detail—it serves as a reminder that God’s plans surpass human limitations and expectations.

Ruth’s story invites us to participate in God’s redemptive work, recognizing that every act of kindness, every decision to uphold another’s dignity, can lead to belief in the One who ultimately redeems us from sin and restores us in relationship with the Father. May our study of the redeeming work of Boaz for Ruth lead us to worship Jesus who redeemed us to the Father!



Future Unclear (Ruth 3:8-10)

As Boaz awoke in the middle of the night, he was startled to find a woman lying at his feet. Ruth, in an act of boldness and vulnerability, identified herself and requested Boaz to spread the corner of his garment over her as a symbol of protection and redemption. Her actions reflect a deep trust in Boaz’s integrity, yet they also underscore the uncertainty of her future, reliant on Boaz’s response. Boaz, recognizing Ruth’s kindness and loyalty, assured her of his willingness to fulfill her request, praising her for seeking security under his care instead of pursuing younger men. This interaction highlights the delicate balance between faith and uncertainty, as both Ruth and Boaz navigated the unknown paths their lives were about to take, grounded in hope and mutual respect.

VERSE 8

At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman!

In the Old Testament, language is rich and layered, often using euphemisms to convey deeper meanings, particularly in matters of intimacy. One such instance is the use of the term **feet**, which can serve as a discreet reference to sexual organs. Similarly, the phrase “spread the edge of the garment” carries significant weight, especially within the context of betrothal (see Ezek. 16:8). It’s not merely about physical

covering but symbolizes a covenantal act with profound implications. Still, in the greater context of the narrative and the arc of the story, it is highly unlikely the author intended to communicate anything suggestive. Rather, this was about Ruth's humility and submission. Sound asleep, Ruth's bold but simple action (uncovering Boaz' feet and laying at them) startled Boaz.

VERSE 9

So he asked, “Who are you?” “I am Ruth, your servant,” she replied. “Take me under your wing, for you are a family redeemer.”

For reasons not stated, Boaz was not able to identify Ruth on his own. For a moment, he had no idea who sat at his feet. In response to Boaz's inquiry, **Ruth** employed language charged with the weight of covenantal commitment—language that resonates with themes of betrothal and marriage. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family” (NIV, see also KJV, NASB). As Ruth asked Boaz to spread his garment over her, it was more than a plea for protection; it was an audacious request for marriage. Boaz's response reveals that he understood the gravity of her request—he saw her seeking not just refuge but a lifelong partnership. While Naomi's guidance was more reserved (3:1-4), anticipating a hopeful outcome, Ruth's boldness propels the story forward. Naomi likely envisioned this path, but Ruth's courage in seizing the moment reflects a profound step of faith and reliance on God's providence.

VERSE 10

Then he said, “May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more kindness now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor.”

Ruth's uncertainty quickly faded as Boaz responded with a blessing—**“May the LORD bless you,”** acknowledging her extraordinary kindness. Initially, Ruth's loyalty to Naomi was evident in her refusal to leave and her dedication to gleaning. Her decision to seek Boaz, her family redeemer, over pursuing **younger men** showcased her faithfulness to family obligations rather than personal preference. Boaz appreciated her steadfastness and regard for familial ties, recognizing her actions as deeply faithful and kind. By prioritizing family connections over personal desires, Ruth upheld her commitment, reflecting a dutiful heart.

This choice spoke profoundly of her character and dedication to doing what was right, aligning her actions with covenantal faithfulness.



Explore Further

Read the article “Redeem, Redemption, Redeemer” on page 1339 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. Are you still living as though you need to “redeem yourself,” instead of resting in the full and finished redemption that Christ has already purchased? How does understanding redemption as both a “present reality” and a “future promise” change the way we deal with suffering, failure, or frustration?

Future Secured (Ruth 3:11-13)

The narrative shifts to a tone of assurance and certainty concerning Ruth’s future. Boaz reassured Ruth, commending her virtuous reputation throughout the community, which likely bolstered her confidence in the path she had chosen. He acknowledged her as a woman of noble character, promising to fulfill her request for redemption if the nearer kinsman-redeemer declined the responsibility. Boaz’s commitment to resolving the matter promptly reflected an unwavering determination to secure Ruth’s future. His promise to act in accordance with the laws of kinship marked a pivotal moment where uncertainty transformed into trust in the unfolding plan. Ruth’s and Boaz’s actions emphasized reliance on God’s providential design, assuring that whatever the outcome, it would align with divine purpose.

VERSE 11

“Now don’t be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say, since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character.”

Boaz reassured Ruth, promising to fulfill her request, citing her excellent reputation as the reason. Over her time in Bethlehem, Ruth had become well-known to the villagers. There was widespread respect for Ruth among them. Her Moabite origin wouldn’t be a barrier, as her

virtuous character was recognized by all. This recognition would aid in the legal proceedings Boaz intended to initiate. The Hebrew phrase describing Ruth as **a woman of noble character** conveys more than just virtue—denoting comprehensive excellence similar to the ideal woman portrayed in Proverbs 31. Ruth was esteemed as a woman of notable character, admired by the entire community, which deemed her a bride worth winning.

VERSE 12

“Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer closer than I am.”

Boaz emphatically affirmed his role as Ruth’s kinsman-**redeemer**, using a Hebrew form similar to taking an oath. However, he mentioned a **closer** kinsman who had the first right of redemption. Traditionally, in cases of childless widows, the closest kin had the primary right to marry and preserve the family line, as seen in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. While that passage centered on a brother fulfilling this duty, it implies a broader order of kinship. If the closest refused, another could assume the responsibility. Thus, Boaz highlighted both his willingness and adherence to the proper sequence of kinship obligations in securing Ruth’s future.

VERSE 13

“Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that’s good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn’t want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie down until morning.”

Boaz instructed Ruth, **“Stay here tonight,”** ensuring her safety through the night. By morning, Boaz promised to act. The closer kinsman held the right to “do the part of a kinsman” (**“wants to redeem you”**), from a Hebrew term that emphasizes family duty over marriage. If the other man fulfilled this role, Boaz would accept it. However, if that man declined, Boaz emphatically vowed to take on the responsibility himself, underscored by the phrase **“as the LORD lives.”** With this assurance, he instructed Ruth to rest **until morning**, leaving no question about his determination to secure a proper resolution.



Explore Further

Read the article “Kinsman” on page 973 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What is the meaning of the term “kinsman”? What were the various roles and responsibilities that a kinsman had in his extended family?

Future Redeemed (Ruth 4:13-17)

The theme of redemption reaches its joyful fulfillment as Boaz takes Ruth as his wife. The Lord blessed their union, and Ruth bore a son, creating a new chapter of hope and continuity not only for her but for Naomi as well. The women of the town praised God for providing Naomi with a redeemer in this newborn, highlighting the restoration of her family line. This passage beautifully illustrates God’s providential hand, redeeming the lives involved and weaving them into His greater plan, ultimately pointing to David, and through him, to Jesus—the ultimate Redeemer.

VERSE 13

Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. He slept with her, and the LORD granted conception to her, and she gave birth to a son.

Boaz wed **Ruth** at the conclusion of the court case, and the two conceived a child. Importantly, the **son** born to them was regarded as a divine gift. Throughout this narrative, there is a consistent acknowledgment that God orchestrates all events. This overarching theme underscores the providential hand of God weaving through the lives of these individuals His purposes, affirming His role in bringing redemption and blessings.

VERSE 14

The women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel.”

It may surprise that **Naomi** takes the spotlight in the narrative near its end. Ruth had her husband and child, and **the women** congratulated Naomi, attributing the blessing to God’s hand, echoing the consistent theme of divine involvement in the narrative. This blessing emphasized

that God had not left Naomi without a **family redeemer**, referring to the newborn, not Boaz, as the community's future hope. They prayed for the child to gain fame, just as earlier prayers were lifted for Boaz (vv. 11-12), showcasing ongoing faith in God's providence.

VERSE 15

“He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

The women prophesied that the child would bring great significance to Naomi, describing him as one who **“will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.”** These expressions are best understood as general statements of broad hope rather than specific promises. The women emphasized the term **“daughter-in-law,”** highlighting Ruth's exceptional love for Naomi. Declaring Ruth as better **than seven sons** underscored her immense value, defying cultural norms where numerous male offspring were highly prized. This tribute emphasized Ruth's profound impact on Naomi's life, demonstrating that true worth transcends traditional expectations and pointing to a future filled with hope and fulfillment through steadfast love and God's provision.

VERSE 16

Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a mother to him.

Naomi naturally took a special interest in **the child**, cradling him lovingly and becoming his caregiver. Some have suggested that Boaz's primary role as kinsman-redeemer to Elimelech connected the child to Naomi even more deeply. Others see it as Naomi adopting the child, but the emphasis of the text is likely love over legality. After losing her husband and sons, she had faced a future filled with loneliness. Yet, Ruth's unwavering devotion transformed her life, restoring her sense of belonging and purpose within a family. The baby symbolized this newfound hope, and Naomi devoted herself to his care. This act reflected her recognition of the child as part of her own legacy, marking a profound shift from despair to joy, as the community acknowledged the child as hers, restoring her place within the narrative of love and redemption.

VERSE 17

The neighbor women said, “A son has been born to Naomi,” and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

The village women (**neighbor women**) remained engaged after blessing **Naomi**, taking part in naming the baby. The women named him **Obed**, meaning “Servant,” a gesture showcasing their affection and hope that Obed would serve Naomi, hinting at deeper community ties. The story concludes by connecting Obed directly to King **David**, underscoring the surprising lineage born from these unexpected events and God’s redeeming work.

This passage underscores God’s ability to redeem brokenness and fulfill His promises in unexpected ways. In light of this, it is appropriate for us to respond to God in prayer in relation to three specific areas.

First, praise God for His sovereign provision. Thank the Lord for His faithfulness in orchestrating events for our good and His glory. Acknowledge that, like Naomi and Ruth, we may not always see His plan unfolding, but we can trust His timing and purpose.

Second, seek a heart of obedience and trust. Ask God to help you remain faithful and obedient, even when circumstances seem bleak. Pray for the strength to trust in His redemptive power, knowing He can bring restoration from any situation.

Finally, intercede for others awaiting redemption. Lift up those who are in seasons of loss or waiting, asking God to reveal His presence and plan to them. Pray that they, too, would experience the joy of God’s restoration and become testimonies of His grace.



Explore Further

Is there anyone in your life—family, friends, co-workers—who needs to hear about Jesus, our Redeemer, and the forgiveness and new life that is available in Him? Commit to praying for that person or those persons that they would be open to hearing about the gospel of salvation that is available through Jesus and that God would

- provide you with opportunities to share the gospel with them.

The Conquest of Canaan



"The Conquest of Canaan" is adapted from "The Conquest of the Promised Land," *The Old Testament Bible Handbook* (Holman Reference, 2023), p. 79. Used with permission.

JOSHUA; JUDGES; RUTH

In this life, leaders come, and leaders go. No matter who we are or what we do, we answer to a leader one way or another. In fact, the question really isn't if we will follow a leader, but what kind of leader we will choose. The biblical history books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth examine the highs and lows of leadership. While Joshua celebrates the blessings of leadership at its best, Judges offers a cautionary tale of leadership gone wrong. And Ruth reminds us that even in the worst of times, God is still at work, raising leaders from the most unlikely of places. By studying Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, we see leadership from every angle—and we're challenged to reserve our ultimate loyalty for our ultimate Leader.

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