

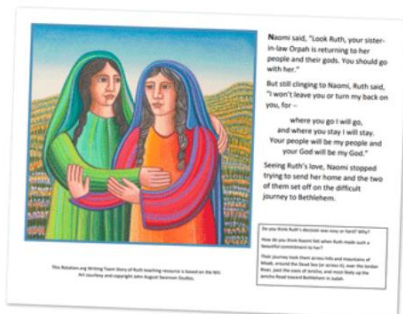
# The Story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz

## Lesson Summaries

Welcome to an overview and links to the lessons in the Writing Team's Ruth lesson set. The [Bible Background](#) is open to all. Our *Ruth-faithful* Supporting Members can view, download, and/or print the lesson plans, their resources, and the Ruth Storybook we created for this set. [Go where Supporting Members go! Join today.](#) 😊

## Scripture for the Set:

### *The Book of Ruth*



Because we wanted to teach Ruth's whole story, and not just part of it, **we created an abbreviated and illustrated [kid-friendly Ruth Storybook](#)** based on the NIV and illustrated with the artwork of John August Swanson. The storybook's PDF is designed to be displayed on a big screen *or* printed out in color. Several of the lessons in this set creatively integrate the reading of the Storybook with activities. Each page of the Storybook includes additional questions and insights into the story. Check out [this sample](#) of how we made the opening of Ruth 3 simpler for kids to read and shorter.

## [Bible Background and Lesson Objectives](#)

[Read our teacher-friendly Bible Background](#) for all sorts of insights and relevant teachable details! It is especially helpful in explaining the special Hebrew title that describes Boaz's responsibilities—a title which the NIV properly translates as "*Guardian-Redeemer.*"

## [The Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz Paint and Printmaking Art Workshop](#)

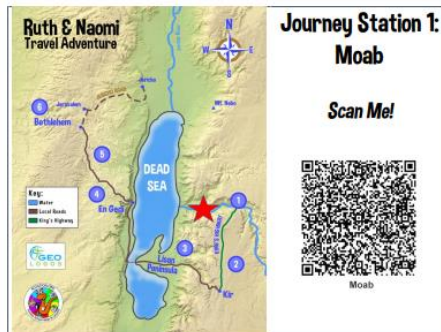


In this lesson, your students will learn and express key ideas and understandings about the story through a feather-point Bible study and feather painting and printmaking project.

Yes, feathers! This biblical imagery is found twice in the Book of Ruth and in many other scriptures, expressing the protection that God and godly people like Boaz and Ruth and us provide

for one another. See the Bible Background and Art Workshop lesson plan for more details about this memorable insight!

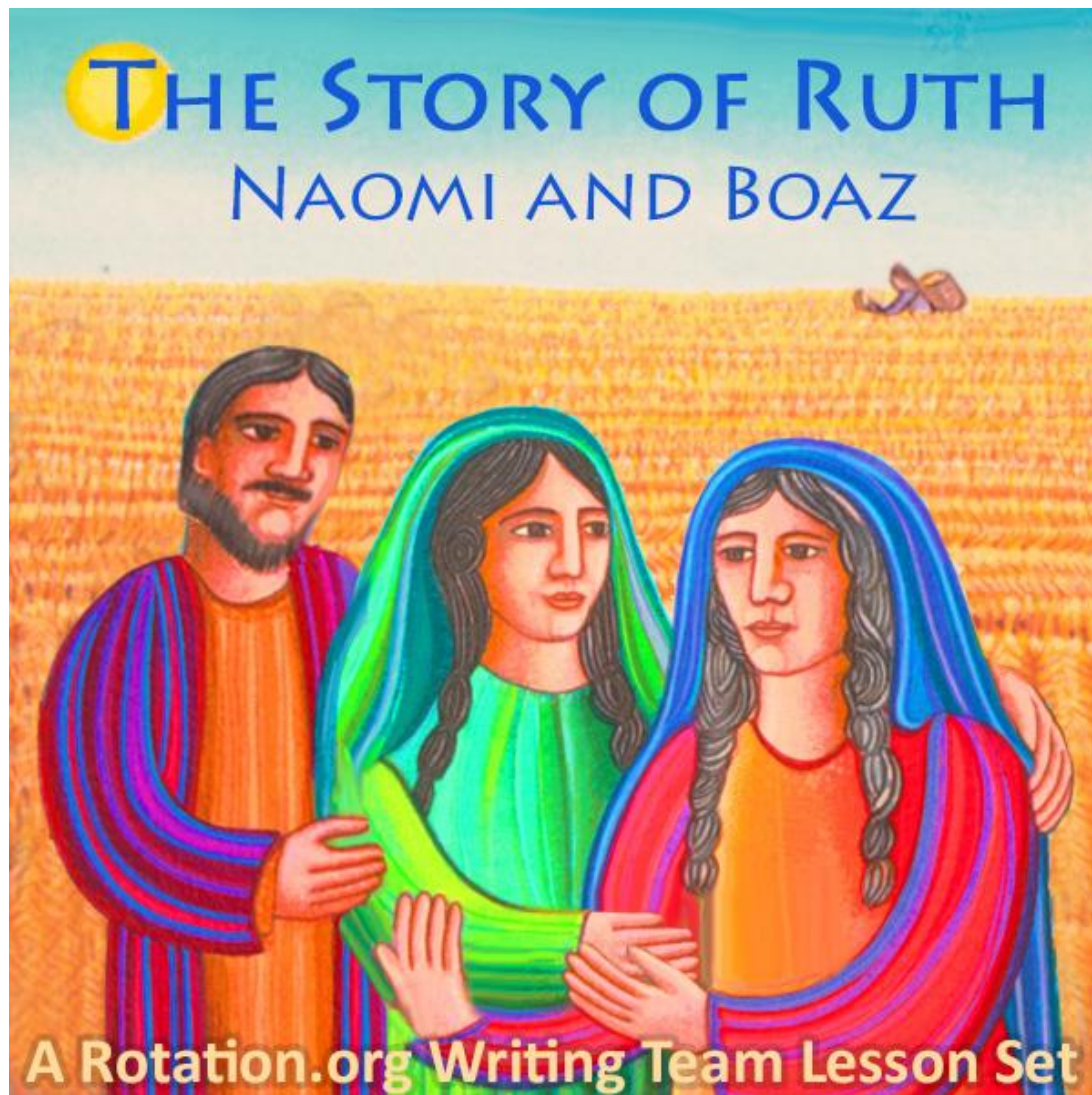
### Ruth and Naomi's "Geo Journey" Workshop



In this **location-stations journey**, your kids will travel from Moab, cross the Dead Sea, stop in the En Gedi oasis, and climb the Ascent of Ziz to arrive in Bethlehem. Along the way, they'll explore the story, participate in activities, and enjoy video and photos of these places as they appear today using QR Codes embedded in the station signs.

### **The Story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz**

### **Bible Background & Lesson Objectives**



### **Scripture**

[The Book of Ruth](#)

### **Memory Verse:**

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, NIV)

### **Themes:**

Family, steadfastness, loyalty, honor, virtue, redemption, seeking protection and providing protection to others, and just treatment of the poor and “foreigners.”

### **Summary of Meaning**

The story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz begins as a story about steadfast love in the midst of tragedy and becomes an exemplary tale about two virtuous people who will become the great-grandparents of King David and ancestors of Jesus. If you ever wondered how David became “*a man*

after God's own heart," it started with Ruth and Boaz! Without mentioning God, their story is a subtle reminder of how **God's redeeming work continues through redeeming people.**

**On a personal level, the Book of Ruth is a story about family, loyalty, and protecting those in need**—subjects that are as relevant today as ever. Unlike stories of other flawed Bible heroes (Jacob, Moses, and David, for example), the Book of Ruth depicts good people living godly lives without miracles or God's voice telling them what to do.

**On a historical level,** the Book of Ruth was written to remind the exiles returning from Babylon (and all of us) that "foreigners," "immigrants," and the poor should be treated with respect, and indeed are part of God's family tree. It also functions as an instructive genealogy of King David's "pedigree."

**On a theological level,** Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi's virtuous actions are a metaphor for God's relationship with Israel and an example to all of us. Eight different times in the Book of Ruth, Boaz is referred to as the **Gaw-al'**—a title that in Hebrew means "**Guardian-Redeemer.**" Boaz is not only obligated by tradition to be the Guardian of his family, he goes out of his way to do so.

### גאל **Gaw-al'** = "Guardian-Redeemer"

In addition to eight times in Ruth, the title of *Gaw-al'* is used 18 times in Leviticus and over 40 times in Isaiah to describe the role and work of God—our Guardian, Protector, and Redeemer. Like Boaz, God is our Guardian-Redeemer, **the One who watches over us** and the One to whom we humbly return seeking protection.

#### **Ruth also acts as a Guardian-Redeemer when she:**


- pledges her steadfast love to Naomi, "*Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay.*" (Ruth 1:16)
- accompanies Naomi on the difficult journey back to Bethlehem.
- gleans in the fields to provide for Naomi.
- knows that her marriage to Boaz will provide Naomi with security in her old age.

Naomi's acceptance of Ruth and willingness to bring her Moabite daughter-in-law back to Bethlehem is also exemplary.

Connecting the Guardian-Redeemer dots in this story and other places in the Old Testament, we can see the thematic origins of Jesus' message of inclusion, care, protection, and redemption.

Jesus' very last words in Matthew echo Ruth's to Naomi, "**Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.**" (Mt 28:20)

*Learn more about the phrase and role of "Guardian-Redeemer" below.*

 **TAKE NOTE!** Many English versions of the Bible translate *Gaw-al'* rather weakly, using terms like "kinsman" or "relative." Fortunately, the NIV gets it right by using "Guardian-Redeemer," which is one of the reasons we picked the NIV for this lesson. If your translation doesn't use the proper title, make sure you take time to teach its meaning.

Here's a [terrific animated and narrated overview of the Book of Ruth](#) for teachers:

### **This Set's Lesson Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to tell the Story of Ruth in their own words to the best of their ability.
2. Students will be able to recite the memory verse ("Where you go..." Ruth 1:16) to the best of their ability, and understand that it is an example of how we should be steadfast in our relationships.
3. Students understand the concept of "Guardian-Redeemer," are able to identify people in their lives who function as such, and consider their role as a protector and redeemer within their own family and community.
4. Students will know and believe that God (Jesus) goes with them too!—and is their Guardian-Redeemer.

### **Historical Setting and Significance:**

The story of Ruth and Boaz takes place in the waning days of the era of Judges (circa 1100 B.C.) when Israel is essentially a group of hill country tribes surrounded by other tribes and religions. Ruth and Boaz are presented as exemplary “founding great-grandparents” **of the Davidic dynasty.**

Traditionally said to have been written by Samuel, scholars believe the story was crafted during or after the Babylonian Exile in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., perhaps as a reminder to Israel's anti-foreigner impulses that its greatest king had a foreign ancestor, Ruth from Moab. In that way it served as a strong reminder (and rebuke) to both the returning Jews and those who had stayed behind during the Exile **that it doesn't matter where you are from or where you have been; what matters to God is who you are and how you treat others.**

Behind the story are a number of Levitical laws regarding inheritance and marriage that would have been understood by Ruth's Jewish readers. Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz are portrayed as navigating these requirements with exemplary virtue and kindness. Together, they and the great king they will eventually produce are a counterpoint to other voices in scripture and history that speak with a less redemptive tone toward outsiders and people "not born here."

That **most of the story takes place in Bethlehem** is a detail not lost on Jews or Christians, because this is the town and people who *"are from of old, from ancient times"* who will give birth to the Messiah:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me one who will have dominion over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2)

## Summary of the Story

Ruth the “foreigner” from Moab pledges steadfast loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi amid their loss and uncertain future. Seeking protection, Ruth humbles herself before Boaz, a virtuous kinsman and their family’s Guardian-Redeemer who responds with kindness and protection (marriage). In addition to teaching us about virtue and inclusion, the very last word in the Book of Ruth signals another reason for telling a story about our faith family tree. That word is **דָּוִד**, "**David**" (Ruth 4:22), whose great-grandparents are none other than the virtuous Ruth and Boaz.

The story is organized using a classic and ancient storytelling format that today we would call a **three-act play**:

1. **The Setup**, introducing the people and problem. Ruth Chapter 1.
2. **The Confrontation** or "Dramatic Question"—will she or won't she? Chapters 2 and 3.\*
3. **The Resolution**, also known as the Climax or happy/tragic ending. Chapter 4.

\*Keep in mind that the four chapter divisions of Ruth were added MUCH later. Also keep in mind that shaping a story into a well-known form doesn't mean it's not true.

The story can be read in about 10 minutes. Here’s an overview of what’s in Ruth's four-chapter three-act play.

### Chapter 1:

We meet Naomi and her husband Elimelech and their sons Mahlon and Chilion, who flee Bethlehem because of a famine and move to Moab where there is food and where their sons will marry two Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. Within ten years, Naomi's husband and sons are dead, and she prepares to release her two daughters-in-law back to their Moabite families and return to Bethlehem as an old, self-described “bitter” widow. But one daughter-in-law, Ruth, insists on staying with Naomi, famously saying:

***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, NIV)

### Chapter 2:

Naomi has arrived back in Bethlehem with Ruth -- her foreign daughter-in-law. Ruth sets out to provide for them by gleaning behind the harvesters in a local field. She meets Boaz, an older relative of Naomi's and her dead father-in-law. Impressed by the story of her love and sacrifice for Naomi, Boaz tells his servants to leave behind extra stalks of grain for Ruth to glean and orders his workers not to give her trouble. Naomi praises Boaz' kindness to Ruth and identifies him to Ruth as the family's Guardian-Redeemer.

### Chapter 3:

Naomi instructs Ruth saying, “wash, put on perfume and fresh clothes, and when Boaz has fallen asleep on the threshing floor where he has been working all day go lie at his feet, and when he awakes, he will tell you what to do.” In effect, Ruth is making herself presentable and available for marriage.

When Boaz awakes, he praises Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi and their family, and promises to fulfill his obligation as the family’s Guardian-Redeemer by marrying Ruth.

### Chapter 4:

Boaz convenes the tribal elders at the town gate and settles with another closer member of the family who releases his obligation to marry the widow Ruth by giving his sandal to Boaz (an ancient tradition). Boaz marries Ruth and they have a baby boy named Obed, who will be the father of Jesse, who will be the father of King David. Boaz' exemplary virtue would later become enshrined in the Temple itself when his great-great-grandson Solomon named one of the two Temple pillars guarding the Temple entrance after him.

### Insights and Word Studies

The Bible is at its best when it is telling stories, and few stories are as compelling and full of hope as the story of Naomi the destitute Jewish widow, Ruth her widowed Moabite daughter-in-law, and Boaz the virtuous older man from the tribe of Benjamin who agrees to marry Ruth. Their story teaches us that being virtuous and steadfast is its own blessing. And it reminds us that God works through trouble and tragedy, good people, and key moments to fulfill his promises.

All three had known loss. Naomi lost her husband Elimelech and her two sons Mahlon and Chilion. Ruth lost her first husband. And the older Boaz was undoubtedly widowed himself. (Ancient rabbis held that it would have been unthinkable for a tribal leader like Boaz to have been unmarried, [as explained in the Midrash.](#))

Though Ruth is a foreigner from neighboring Moab, **there is little in the story itself to suggest that being a foreigner was a problem for Boaz and the people of Bethlehem.** Though some modern retellings have the townspeople murmuring or raising their eyebrows at Ruth, the scripture doesn't mention it (perhaps as a way of making "foreign status" a non-issue). Rather, it's Ruth's status as a poor unattached widow without a protector that's the problem for both her and Naomi, based on the social and economic traditions of their day. Boaz is the first to address this problem when he tells his workers not to bother her.

**Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz’ story is also a wonderful example of how the Bible allows different voices to speak within it.** Where other parts of the Old Testament *vociferously oppose* marriage to foreign wives and Ezra will even attempt to force Jewish men to divorce their foreign wives (Ezra 10:10-11), Ruth’s story unabashedly reminds us that King David’s great-grandmother was a foreigner.

**Ruth's story also gives voice to women** in the Bible and Church whose stories are under-represented (and sometimes mistreated). Ruth's story is the embodiment of "the noble woman" described in the powerful prose of [Proverbs 31:10-31](#). It probably isn't a coincidence that Boaz calls

Ruth "noble" in Ruth 3:11, using "*hayil*" which is the same word that Proverbs 31:10 uses to describe the virtuous woman.

### **More about the *Gaw-al'* -- The "Guardian-Redeemer"**

Eight times in the story of Ruth, Boaz is referred to as [the "\*Gaw-al'\*"](#) –which the NIV properly translates as "Guardian-Redeemer." A *Gaw-al'* or Guardian-Redeemer was a close, influential relative to whom members of the extended family could turn for help. It could include paying another's debts or buying their land to keep it within the family. And in some circumstances, it could also include marrying a widow to protect her honor and secure her future. Some translations use less explanatory words such as "next of kin" or "kinsman" which don't carry the full legal and redeeming sense of the fifty other passages in the Bible where *Gaw-al'* is translated as "redeemer." The only question is whether or not Boaz will fulfill his responsibilities as the *Gaw-al'*, which of course he does.

The role of *Gaw-al'* is patterned after God's own responsibilities as head of our family. God is the one we can turn to, the one who forgives or pays our debts, the one who protects us. The prophet Isaiah uses *Gaw-al'* as a title for God 25 times. Wherever you see the word "Redeemer" in Isaiah, it's most likely the Hebrew word *Gaw-al'*. "*Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer (the Gaw-al'), the Holy One of Israel*" (Is 48:17), and "*The Redeemer (The Gaw-al') shall come to Israel*" (Isaiah 59:20).

Of course, if the role of Guardian-Redeemer is good enough for God and Boaz, then it's meant to be an example to us too!

- How do each of us "protect" our family members? Our friends? The dispossessed and destitute?
- What daily actions and words can remind people that you are someone they can look to for safety, protection, and help?

(Note: *Gaw-al'* is sometimes spelled "Go-el" and [pronounced "Ga-el"](#))

### **"Where you go, I will go"**

**The heart of the story** is found in Ruth's famous pledge to her mother-in-law Naomi found in Ruth 1:16 -- "*Where you go, I will go.*" Throughout the Book of Ruth, Ruth also acted like a Guardian toward Naomi, and the sentiment of her words in 1:16 are the same attitude a Guardian would have -- ***you are not alone, I am with you.***

*Ruth's Hebrew is very brief, memorable, and rather fun to say. Here's a shortened form of the verse phonetically spelled out:*



'el-	אֵל-	where
'ā-šer	אֲשֶׁר	... ..
tê-la-kî	תֵּלְכִי	you go
'ê-lêk,	אֶלְךָ	I will go
ū-ḅa-'ā-šer	וּבְאֲשֶׁר	and where
tā-li-nî	תֵּלִינִי	you lodge
'ā-lîn,	אֵלַיִן	I will lodge
'am-mêk	עַמְּךָ	your people
'am-mî,	עַמִּי	[shall be] my people
wê-lō-ha-yîk	וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ	and your God
'ê-lō-hāy.	אֱלֹהֵי:	my God

Asher teleki, elek  
(Where you go, I will go)

Uba asher talini, alin  
(Where you lodge, I will lodge)

Ammek ammi  
(Your people (will be) my people)

We-lo-hay-yik, e-lo-hay  
(Your God, will be my God)

## The chapter about "gleaning" (Ruth 2)

**Each chapter of the story offers some famous verses and memorable scenes.** Chapter 1 has the pledge: "*where you go I will go.*" Chapter 2 features the wonderful scene of Ruth gleaning behind the harvesters in Boaz' field. Chapter 3 finds Ruth lying at Boaz' feet. Chapter 4 has the "sandal pledge" and marriage.

Behind the gleaning scene in chapter 2 is the Law of Moses in [Leviticus 19](#) which requires harvesters to leave something behind for "*the poor and foreigner.*" But Boaz the *Gaw-al'* goes the extra mile when he is told that Ruth is the Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi his long-lost kinswoman. Hearing their story, Boaz invites Ruth to eat at his table (which is faintly reminiscent of the parable of the uninvited guest in Luke 7:36-50), orders his workers not to harass Ruth, and tells them to give her extra grain. When Naomi hears of it, she exclaims, "*The Lord bless him! ...He has not stopped showing his kindness.* And then Naomi identifies Boaz to Ruth as one of their family's *Guardian-Redeemers.* (Ruth 2:20)

On its own, the gleaning scene seems like a wonderful story about sharing your food with others, and indeed, many Sunday School lessons simply teach it as such. But there's a much bigger picture here. When you add them all together -- the Levitical imperative to "leave extra" for others, Boaz' invitation to Ruth to sit at his table, his promise of protection, and his going beyond the Levitical requirement by **giving her more than leftovers**, the chapter becomes a template for what a *Gaw-al'* is and does -- and by example, how we should act toward others in need. In this way, "letting people glean the leftovers" is only the beginning of **how we are to guard and redeem one another**. (Like Boaz and Jesus, we are to invite them to our table and share our abundance.)

Hidden away in the gleaning scene is a surprise reference to the imagery behind the word *Gaw-al'* and foreshadowing of the threshing floor scene that's coming in chapter 3. In Ruth 2:12, Boaz says, "*May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, **under whose wings you have come to take refuge.***" This reference to wings and refuge are the *Gaw-al'*/Redeemer's wings and promise of protection found in Psalm 91. *See more about that below!*

### **Ruth 3: 5-11 ~ The part about Ruth "lying at Boaz' feet"**

A lot has been written about a possible euphemism for sex implied by the scene in chapter 3 when Ruth lays at the feet of the sleeping Boaz. This scheme created by Naomi suggests to some that she wanted to create a situation that would force Boaz to marry Ruth, and Ruth went along with it. **But that is not what happened.** Ruth does physically lay at Boaz' feet, but the threshing floor was a public space, not a romantic getaway. When Boaz wakes up and finds her there, she asks to be "covered by his robe" which harkens back to Boaz' "wings and refuge" blessing in Ruth 2:12 and the "wings and refuge" imagery of the Redeemer in Psalm 91. (★ See the word study below about the meaning of "cover" and its imagery.)

When Boaz sees Ruth humbling herself and asking to be protected, he once again praises Ruth for her "noble character." He undoubtedly understands that her bold move is a proposal for marriage and not a one-night stand.

Frankly, it would have been unthinkable for Boaz to have relations with Ruth at the very public threshing floor—especially because, as he notes, there is another kinsman with a claim to her. Boaz had too much to lose. So why did Boaz invite Ruth to stay until the morning? Probably to keep an unattached woman from having to risk being discovered outside in the middle of the night. Like the revelation of Ruth's virtuous character when she commits to Naomi, the threshing floor scene reveals the character of Ruth AND Boaz.

For more about this threshing floor scene, [read Rabbi Sabato's article](#).

### **Other Interesting Hebrew Words and Images Behind Chapter 3's Threshing Floor Scene**

#### **Shiphchah and A'mah**

When Ruth first met Boaz in the fields, she identified herself using the Hebrew word **shiphchah** which means "*lower than the lowest servant*" (Ruth 2:13). But in chapter 3 on the threshing floor at the feet of Boaz, Ruth describes herself as an **a'mah**, a term used for a woman eligible to be a wife or concubine. In effect, she's asking Boaz to marry her.

### **Kaw-nawf -- "covering of your garment" = "wings"**

In chapter 3 when Ruth asks Boaz on the threshing floor to "Spread the corner of your garment over me" (Ruth 3:9), she is not asking Boaz to cuddle with her. Instead, in the Hebrew she literally asks Boaz to "spread his (protective) wings over me." The word "cover" used by Ruth is *kaw-nawf* in Hebrew. And *kaw-nawf* is translated 74 other times in the Bible as "wings" --a [metaphor for protection most often ascribed to God](#). In fact, Ruth is echoing Boaz's praise that he gave to Ruth in Ruth 2:12 when he says, "May you be richly rewarded by the God of Israel under whose **wings** you have to come to take refuge."

Hebrew readers would have heard this "wings" connection and undoubtedly recalled the words of Psalm 91 where the protective wings of the Redeemer are beautifully described:



*Those who live in the shelter of the Most High  
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;  
he is my God, and I trust him.*

*He will cover you with his feathers.  
He will shelter you with his wings.  
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.*

*Psalm 91 (v 1, 2, 4 NLT)*

### **Final Thoughts**

#### **God doesn't appear or speak in the Book of Ruth.**

There are no miracles or visions. But God is all over their story, showing us how respect and love for one another make us part of God's redeeming work.

## **The Bethlehem, David, Jesus Connection**

Bethlehem means "House of Bread" and was home to several of the Bible's greatest heroes, including Ruth and Boaz, David, and Jesus the Messiah himself! "House" is also a Hebrew metaphor for "family" or "lineage." Ruth and Boaz' family were a "house of bread" to the nation that eventually produced the very "Bread of Life" himself. It is a town and family that continues to nourish us.

*Of course* there is more to say. And that is one of the miracles in the story of Ruth; it is the gift that keeps on giving.

*Written by Rev. Neil MacQueen with the Rotation.org Writing Team  
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## **Rotation.org Writing Team**

### **The Story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz**

### **"Geo Journey" Workshop**

## **Summary of Activities**

Students will journey with Ruth and Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem, stopping at various "location stations" to explore the story, participate in activities, and enjoy video and actual photos of these places as they appear today, using QR Codes embedded in the station signs.

Watch a brief [video of the lesson writer's class](#) taking the journey!

## **Scripture for the Lesson**

[The Book of Ruth](#)

### **Key/Memory Verse:**

"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 NIV

## **Lesson Objectives**

See the [Bible Background](#) at Rotation.org for insights on this story and this set's complete list of objectives.

## **Preparation and Materials**

- Read the Bible Background and scripture. (See additional background resource links at the end of this lesson.)

- [Use the Station Setup Instructions](#) to set up the "Journey" station tables, signs, and activities in advance. **The Station setup Instructions have the list of necessary station supplies.**
- Preview and prepare to show the [God's Story: Ruth](#) video on a TV or device in your classroom. (Need tech help? Check out the links at the bottom of the lesson.)
- Print color copies of the [Ruth and Naomi Journey Map](#) (attached) for Station 1. You (or the students) may carry a map to the other stations, or just reference the map included on each Station Sign.
- Print color copies of the [Station Signs](#) to place at the stations.
- Preview the QR Codes on the Station Signs to make sure you can access the media on the internet in your classroom. As a backup, we've placed the images and video in [a public folder](#) at Rotation.org. Optionally, you may print these images ahead of time or download them to your tablet/computer by scanning the QR Codes and saving them or copying them from [the folder](#) where they are all stored. (Short link: <https://bit.ly/3liFPcH>)
- Write the reflection statements (station 6) on a whiteboard or flipchart.
- Each group will need an iPad or tablet with a camera so that they can scan the QR Code and connect to the images and video online. See the tips at the end of this lesson plan in "Tech Help for Scanning a QR Code."
- Decide whether you will have just one instructor traveling with a single group of students, or place different instructors at each station to instruct the group(s) of students as they arrive at the station.
- Give all instructors a copy of this lesson plan.

## Lesson Plan

### Opening

**Welcome** students and explain the journey that they are about to take and what you hope they will learn—that like Ruth and Naomi, we need to love and trust each other. Family and friends should be to each other as God is to us: a "Guardian" and "Protector."

### The Journey Stations from Moab to Bethlehem

Each station features a different part of Ruth and Naomi's journey, including photos and videos of the locations! Each station also features an activity, usually involving *how to get to* the next station. Consult the [Station Setup Instructions PDF](#) for details. Each station takes between 5 and 7 minutes to complete.

Station 0: Watch and Discuss Video

Station 1: Moab - Map Orienting

Station 2: Walking down the King's Highway  
Station 3: Crossing the Dead Sea  
Station 4: The Oasis of En Gedi  
Station 5: The Ascent of Ziz to Bethlehem  
Station 6: Bethlehem and the Threshing Floor

### **Journey Station 0: Watch and Discuss [God's Story: Ruth](#)**

"Station 0" can be in your classroom or a fun viewing space. The three-and-a-half-minute Ruth video will introduce the story, its characters, and themes.

NOTE: Stations 0 and 1 (the Map Station) can be combined in one location.

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/irThVpdeSXk>

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

1. Why didn't Ruth want to leave Naomi? (love, loyalty, commitment)
2. According to the video, **what is a "Family Redeemer"?** (someone who takes care of the family, rescues/helps them)
3. In the Book of Ruth, the Hebrew word for "Family Redeemer" is *Gaw-al'* and more closely means "Guardian-Redeemer." **What is a guardian?** (a protector, a rescuer, someone who will help you) Boaz was his family's *Gaw-al'*, and that family included Naomi and Ruth!
4. How was **Ruth** ALSO Naomi's Guardian-Redeemer?
5. How can **you** be a Guardian-Redeemer, a Protector in your family?

**SAY:** Today we are going with Ruth and Naomi on their journey from Moab back to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem in Israel. The very first thing they would need to "pack" for this difficult journey is lots of love and trust. To arrive safely in Bethlehem, they will need to watch over and help each other, just like we need to care for each other as God's family.

### ***Let's go with Naomi and Ruth back to Bethlehem!***

Here's a **quick visual overview** of stations 1 to 4:

### **Journey Station 1: Map Orienting**

**ARRIVE** at the map station and gather around a globe, world map, Google Map, or Google Earth screen.

**ASK students to find** Israel, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan River.

**INTRODUCE** the **JOURNEY MAP** created for this lesson. If desired, give each student a map to carry.

**POINT OUT where Moab is today** (Jordan) on the Journey Map. (Note: Moab's boundaries changed over time as did its relationship with Israel and its neighbors. In general, Moab was the eastern side of the lower Dead Sea.)

**SAY and TRACE:** Ruth and Naomi's journey will take us down through the land of Moab, across a part of the Dead Sea that was very narrow and shallow in the time of Ruth. We'll cross and stop at a famous oasis of En Gedi, then hike up through the Judean wilderness to Bethlehem.

**SHARE THESE MAP FACTS:**

1. The trip would have taken Ruth and Naomi around **7-10 days to walk**, in part because some of it is through a wilderness, and there are many hills they would have walked down and up to get to Bethlehem.
2. **The walking would have been challenging.** The land of Moab is about 3000 feet ABOVE sea level. The Dead Sea is 1400 feet BELOW sea level, making it the lowest body of water on earth. Moab is about 4400 feet above the level of the Dead Sea. Then Ruth and Naomi would have to hike up from the Dead Sea to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is 3900 feet ABOVE the level of the Dead Sea. Quite a hike up! (See the "teaching tip" at the end of this lesson about visualizing the extreme elevations of the journey.)
3. Altogether, they were going about **50 miles** to get from Moab to Bethlehem.

**ASK:** How would you feel knowing you had a difficult journey ahead of you? How important will "trust" and "commitment" be to Ruth and Naomi's journey?

**SCAN the QR CODE to show the photo of Moab** (shown below)



**ASK:** Why did Naomi want to leave *green* Moab and move back to Bethlehem?

**SAY:** Not all of Moab is this green. In fact, today, much of Moab is a dry wilderness due to changes in the climate.

**READ ALOUD RUTH 1:16 and ASK:** How do you think Ruth's words of commitment made Naomi feel? What do Ruth's words tell you about what kind of person Ruth was? (committed, loving, protective, faithful)

## Journey Station 2: Walking Down The King's Highway

**MOVE** to the Station 2 sign.

**ASK:** Where are we on the map? The *King's Highway* goes through Moab.

**SCAN THE QR CODE** for the **KING'S HIGHWAY photo** (also shown here)



**POINT OUT** that this road has been in use for over 5,000 years! It was an important trade route connecting Africa through Moab and toward Europe. Moses and the Israelites used this road during the Exodus. It was called the "King's" highway because the kings in that area built and fixed it, protected travelers on it from bandits, and taxed the merchants and valuables that traveled it. You might say that the kings were the "guardian protectors" of the road.

**SAY:** In a few miles, the journey is going to get difficult. Ruth and Naomi will leave the safety of the King's Highway and descend down the dry hills toward the Dead Sea.

**ASK:** Who do you depend on to keep you safe when you go on a trip?

**SAY & DO:** See how fast you can **run** down the zig-zag line (our King's Highway) without stepping off of it. When you get to the end of the line, slow down, **crouch** as low as you can, and continue walking down the "wadi" (ravine) to the next station.



### Journey Station 3: Crossing the Dead Sea

**ARRIVE & ASK:** Where are we on the map? We've arrived at the Lisan Peninsula which sticks out into the Dead Sea. We're now 1,400 feet BELOW sea level!

**SCAN the QR code** to show the photo of the Dead Sea (seen below).



**SAY and DO:** "Lisan" is the modern pronunciation of "lashone," which is the Hebrew word for "tongue." Stick out your tongue to discover why they called this piece of land "Lisan." (A peninsula is a point of land that sticks out into the water like a tongue!)

**POUR** a large handful of salt into your hand and let the students see and feel it. Then stir it into about a **QUART** of water.

**POINT OUT** that the water of the Dead Sea is about 1/3 SALT. (34%! 🤯) By comparison, ocean water is only about 3.5% salt. The Dead Sea is one of the saltiest bodies of water in the world.

**You can have students TASTE the "Dead Sea water" on their "lashone"** 😬 if you mixed some salty water that they have not put their hands into...

**SAY & ASK:** This area of the Dead Sea was very shallow during the time of Ruth. They could have walked through it, or taken a very short boat ride. How do you think Ruth and Naomi felt wading through this salty water that may have been up to their waist? Do you think it would make their skin soft? Itchy?

**FUN FACT:** The water of the Dead Sea is so **dense** with salt that if you lay down in it, you float almost on top of it! It's so thick you really can't swim in it, plus its super-saltiness will burn your eyes. So some people bathe in it, but won't splash around.

**ASK:** Do you think Ruth or Naomi took a break for a float?

**REFLECT** In what ways does God buoy us up and protect us? (God gives us comfort when we are afraid, forgiveness when we make mistakes, guidance when we are listening, hope when we are unsure, and gives us helpers.)

**WALK** to the Oasis of En Gedi. The road here is flat and safe.

#### **Journey Station 4: The Oasis of En Gedi**

**ARRIVE** from the Dead Sea at En Gedi. (En Gedi is pronounced "*In geddy*.")

**ASK:** Where are we on the map?

**EXPLAIN** what an "[oasis](#)" is.

**SCAN the QR CODE** and show the students the picture of the waterfalls at En Gedi. (shown here)



**ASK:** How do you think Ruth and Naomi felt when they arrived here from the salty Dead Sea?

**POINT OUT** that En Gedi is filled with several freshwater springs that are cold and safe to drink. En Gedi also had many fruit trees.

**GIVE out fresh water** to "quench your thirst from the hard journey." Remind the students that people didn't have gas stations or restaurants they could stop at back then! Water and watering places were understood as "gifts from God."

**POINT OUT** that many years later, Ruth's great-grandson David hid in En Gedi's deep valleys and steep sides to escape from a jealous King Saul.

**ASK:** In what ways did God provide for Ruth and Naomi here at En Gedi?

**ASK:** In your own life and journey, what simple gifts, companions, and guardians has God given to help and refresh you?

**SCAN the QR code for EN GEDI** and show the students **the video of an ibex at En Gedi**. (This video can also be [viewed or downloaded here.](#))

En Gedi means "Spring of the Kid," only in this case the "kid" is a type of wild goat known as an ibex. Ibex are very nimble and can leap 6 feet straight up with no running start. This helps them climb steep cliffs and get away from predators. Their horns were used to make "shofars" -- the ritual Jewish horns that signal the start of the Sabbath and festivals in Jerusalem.

**SAY:** Ruth, Naomi, and all of us are **going to need to be like ibex** for this next part of the journey. Ruth and Naomi could have traveled all the way up to Jericho, then taken the Jericho Road to Jerusalem, and then gone down to Bethlehem, but **there's a famous "shortcut" through the wilderness called the "Ascent of Ziz"** that they would have probably taken. It's a steep valley but would have been a much shorter trip to Bethlehem.

**LEAP** like an ibex jumping from rock to rock on the steep hills of En Gedi making your way to Station 5: The Ascent of Ziz! (Put squares or marks on the floor and see if you can jump to each one.)

## **Journey Station 5: The Ascent of Ziz**

**ARRIVE** at the Ascent of Ziz from En Gedi by leaping like an Ibex.

**ASK:** Where are we on the map?

**POINT OUT** that this ascent is a steep 1,300-foot climb straight up to the plateau above. This would have been a difficult climb for Ruth and Naomi. They needed strong leg muscles!

**"Ziz" is the Hebrew word for "flower petals,"** and is pronounced like "tsits." Given the rocky climb, calling this shortcut *"the way of flower petals"* may be a joke.

**ASK:** What are Ruth and Naomi concerned about as they get closer to Bethlehem? (how they will be received) How does it feel to be "the new person"? The Law of Moses teaches us to welcome newcomers and people in need (immigrants, widows). How can we do that?

**SCAN the QR Code** to see what this climb looks like. (shown below)

**STUDENTS WILL CLIMB** the steep zigzag pathway known as "The Ascent of Ziz" by **walking like a "crab"** (on all fours) following a zig-zagging obstacle course. If possible, arrange objects for them to crawl up and over, such as two folding tables -- one to crawl up and one to slide down, cushions, a couch, folding chairs, etc. (For fun, you can sprinkle flower petals along the route.)

The "Ascent" will lead them to Station 6 in Bethlehem, and the end of their journey.

## Journey Station 6: Bethlehem and the Threshing Floor

**ARRIVE** at Bethlehem from the Ascent of Ziz.

**ASK:** Where are we on the map?

**SCAN** the QR code for the Threshing Floor Photo (pictured below).



**POINT OUT** that Bethlehem means "house of bread" and that bread can be made from either barley or wheat. This threshing floor was where they harvested, threshed, and winnowed the grain to separate the grain from the chaff. Then they would grind the grain to make flour to use for baking bread. The famine was over and there was plenty of grain for everyone to bake lots of bread again!

**EAT** the deliciously soft pita bread after your tiring journey (kids will ask for seconds!) as you relate the story of Bold Ruth going to the threshing floor to ask Boaz to take care of her and Naomi. (If you like, read the abbreviated kid-friendly version of this part of the story on pages 9 and 10 of the Ruth Storybook. [Link to this free resource](#)).

**ASK:** Who in your life is like "bread" -- who feeds your stomach, brain, feelings, and sense of safety? In other words, who takes care of all your needs?

**SAY:** At the threshing floor, Boaz promised to take care of Ruth and Naomi. He promised to be their "Guardian-Redeemer" as the scripture says. But Ruth also had promised to guard, protect and redeem (or rescue) Naomi, hadn't she?

Let's look again at Ruth's promise to Naomi in Ruth chapter 1, verse 16, and think about how WE can be other people's "Guardians, Protectors, and Redeemers" just like Ruth and Boaz were...

**DO: Have the following statements written in advance on the board.** Read Ruth 1:16 aloud, then have them complete the sentence. *The first one is completed as an example.*

- *If you are being bullied, ...I will not turn my back on you, I will stand up for you and be your people!*
- *If you make a mistake or say something bad about me, I will...*

- *If you share a problem with me, I will...*
- *If you are sad or sick, I will...*
- *If you are having trouble in school, I will...*
- *If you have to go away, I will...*

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God, give me the strength of Naomi and the commitment of Ruth. Help me to be a "Guardian" of other people on my life's journey like Boaz and Ruth were. And Lord, be my Guardian, Protector, and Redeemer throughout my life's journey. Amen.

### **Adaptations**

#### **For Younger Students:**

Give less background detail. Focus on one question per station.

#### **For Older Students:**

For older students, consider using the Google Earth presentation about the journey using "fly-in" maps, photos, videos, and street views as they follow the narrative. *See it described and linked in [the post below](#) at [Rotation.org](#).*

Consider having the older students set up, staff, and teach the stations to a younger group of students.

#### **For Those With More Class Time:**

Add the reading of the [Ruth Storybook](#) to the lesson.

Add a threshing floor activity (see suggestions in [the follow-up post](#) to this one at [Rotation.org](#)).

#### **For At-Home Use:**

Have different family members set up and lead each station.

Send home the link to a ["3D" Google Earth presentation of Ruth and Naomi's journey](#). It is described in more detail in the [extra options post below](#); note that depending on the computer, it may take a few minutes to load.

#### **For a Shorter/Simpler lesson plan:**

Eliminate the Kings Highway and Ziz Stations.

#### **For Those With Limited Space:**

Have each station in a box that you can switch out. Journey around the classroom or in/out of the classroom using the hallway outside the class.

Set up the journey stations out of doors.

**For those with MULTIPLE groups taking the journey at the same time:**

If you want to have MULTIPLE groups traveling the Journey Stations during the same class time, consider starting all groups with the video at Station 0. Then start the younger group at Station 1, and have the older group start at Station 6 and work backward.

**Tech Help for Showing a YouTube Video**

**If your classroom doesn't have wired or Wi-Fi Internet access**, you can use your cellphone or tablet's internet connection to access YouTube ([learn how here](#)) and play videos on a larger screen ([learn how to do that here](#)) by using a special inexpensive cable that connects your phone to your TV.

**If you won't have internet access and need to download a video** from YouTube and play it on a device in your classroom, [read this how-to article at Rotation.org](#). Likewise, you can download and print the photos in advance.

**Tech Help for Scanning a QR Code**

A "QR Code" is a symbol that you point your tablet or cellphone camera at. This prompts your device to open the image in your device's web browser. The QR Codes in this lesson open an image stored at Rotation.org, meaning, you can also view and save them to your device ahead of time if you won't have internet access in your classroom. You could print the images, but most are photos and one is video. All of the images used to make the QR Codes, plus the ibex video and some of the lesson plan graphics are in [this public folder at Rotation.org](#).

**Station 1 Map Tips:**

Use our version of Ruth and Naomi's journey map to visualize the journey and see where the stops will be. This map is also part of each station's printed sign. (The map will help students visually organize the story and journey.)

When describing the extreme elevations of the journey (its literal and figurative ups and downs), use your hands to accentuate the elevation changes and terrain shown in the cross section below. The challenge of the journey emphasizes the importance of Ruth and Naomi's commitment to each other, and is a metaphor for our own commitment to each other.

hequmjiribhly mppjg mmbxqjsh hq:

**"Sheket Bevakasha" = "Quiet Please!"**

As you arrive at each station, use the fun-sounding Hebrew phrase **"Sheket Bevakasha"** to cue your students to sit down (it is used in Hebrew Schools). You may also teach them to

respond "**Buhseder**," which means, "okay." (pronounced: "Shah-KET Beva-ka-SHAH" and "Buh-SAY-der")

### Notes and Sources

- Map template and printables created by Ryan Corcoran.
- Some photos copyright Todd Bolen [BiblePlaces.com](http://BiblePlaces.com). Used with permission and may only be used in your classroom.
- *Rose Then and Now Bible Map Atlas: with Biblical Background and Culture*, by Paul H. Wright.
- Scientists have discovered that the level of the Dead Sea has risen and fallen many times throughout history and prehistory. During the time of Ruth until Roman times, it was so low that the crossing at the Lisan Peninsula may have been walkable or wade-able. Archaeologists have also found remains of boats and boat anchors in that area. Naomi's journey to and from Moab and Bethlehem has been traditionally taught using the northern route largely because the Dead Sea was seen as a barrier. The southern route imagined in this lesson and supported by the scientific and archaeological evidence, was a very busy highway as well. For more information, see [Historical Levels of Dead Sea](https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aax6656), and "Role of Climate in the Rise and Fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire." *Science Advances*, Science, 13 Nov. 2019. <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aax6656>
- [Illustrated Guide to Biblical Geography](#) by Paul H. Wright.
- Wadi Hasasah / Ascent of Ziz location identified by [OpenBible.info](http://OpenBible.info).
- *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture*, by Keener and Walton.

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