The Hope of Redemption

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God provided a family redeemer for Ruth, demonstrating His love for all people.

MAIN PASSAGES: Ruth 1:6-9,16-17; 2:2-3,8-12; 4:13-17

One of The Beatles’s most well-known songs says: “All you need is love.” Even without a biblical worldview, they were right: To do good in the world, all you need is love. But their perspective was off, their vision short-sighted. We don’t just need love to do, we need love to be—we need the love of God for the well-being of our bodies and our souls. If we know the love of God in Jesus, then our eternity is settled. We may lose our jobs, retirement accounts, and even loved ones, but the love of God helps us endure the sufferings in this world, giving us a bright hope for tomorrow and the world that is to come. It’s because God is love that we can love others.

Voices from Church History

“When we fully believe in our Savior’s love, then our own hearts respond with perfect love to God and our neighbor.”

–Martin Luther (1483-1546)

What are some characteristics of God’s love?
Group Time

Point 1: God’s perfect love is steadfast (Ruth 1:6-9,16-17).

6 She and her daughters-in-law set out to return from the territory of Moab, because she had heard in Moab that the LORD had paid attention to his people’s need by providing them food. 7 She left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, and traveled along the road leading back to the land of Judah.

8 Naomi said to them, “Each of you go back to your mother’s home. May the LORD show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant each of you rest in the house of a new husband.” She kissed them, and they wept loudly.

10 But Ruth replied:

Don’t plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

The Book of Ruth records the account of a family seeking to understand God amidst a time of suffering. Famine and death had wrecked this family. Naomi wanted to spare her daughters-in-law from any more hardship, so she spoke up. One tearfully returned to her home, but Ruth chose to stay with Naomi. In God’s plan, this choice of love would bring blessing not only to Naomi and the Israelites but to the whole world.

How have you seen God provide for someone during a time of suffering?

Suffering brings doubts and fears to the surface, but we can know that God is always present, always loving, and always providing for us. This is what Ruth would come to learn, but it was also what Ruth would demonstrate. Her love for her mother-in-law was steadfast, and nothing—neither famine, alienation, nor homelessness—would lead her to sever their relationship. Ruth’s love was a shadow of the love God has for His people.

God Is Love: Perfect love both ______________ and __________________ within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim ________________, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God.
Point 2: God’s perfect love is gracious (Ruth 2:2-3,8-12).

2 Ruth the Moabitess asked Naomi, “Will you let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favor?” Naomi answered her, “Go ahead, my daughter.” 3 So Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She happened to be in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech’s family.

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Don’t go and gather grain in another field, and don’t leave this one, but stay here close to my female servants. 9 See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven’t I ordered the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled.”

10 She fell facedown, bowed to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me, although I am a foreigner?”

11 Boaz answered her, “Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband’s death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and your native land, and how you came to a people you didn’t previously know. 12 May the LORD reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest (1:22). Showing her love for Naomi and her character, Ruth went to gather grain for their food, and she “happened” to end up in a field owned by a relative named Boaz. With God there are no coincidences. Boaz gave Ruth, a Moabite stranger, the credentials to work as if she were a part of his own group. Why? Because Boaz heard about her faith and reflected the grace of God to her.

What are some ways we should identify with Ruth?

In her time of suffering, Ruth found refuge and provision in the **actions** of Boaz, who provided her with grain and protected her from the men in the field. Yet the **words** of Boaz pointed to the Lord as the source of her greater refuge and greater provision (2:12). What she needed most only the Lord could provide.

What are some metaphors to describe the Lord as our refuge?
Point 3: God’s perfect love is redeeming (Ruth 4:13-17).

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. 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. 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.” 16 Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became his nanny. 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.

God used Boaz to renew Ruth’s life. She went through a complete transformation when he acted as her family redeemer. The second before, she was poor, widowed, and an alien in a foreign land. But in an instant, Ruth became a wife, wealthy, and part of a new people in a land of her own. This was the change brought about by the love of Boaz, but more than that, by the renewing, redeeming power of the love of God for Ruth.

Why might people consider renewal and redemption in their lives to be impossible?

God’s renewal and redemption in Ruth’s life meant something larger than just a new husband and a new child. With the Book of Ruth, we actually see that all the hardships and all the great things that happened to Ruth, as impressive as they were, paled in comparison to what would come. The book’s closing six verses, beginning with verse 17, reveal that Ruth and Boaz were part of a larger story, one that preceded them and would continue after them. Through their son Obed, they would become the great grandparents of King David, through whom would come God’s promised Redeemer to bring renewal to God’s people and the world: Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ family tree reveals His redemptive purpose: to reconcile ______________ people—Jew and Gentile, man and woman, wealthy and poor—to the Father.
My Mission

Because we have been redeemed by an act of God’s love, we extend the same kind of steadfast, gracious love to others so that they too might find redemption through Jesus Christ.

- How will you respond to God’s redeeming love on display in the cross of Jesus Christ?
- In what ways can your group love one another as God has loved us?
- How will you show love to others this week with the goal of pointing them to the love of God in Christ, who is our Refuge and Redeemer?

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Day 1: Read Ruth 1:1-22

The name Naomi means “pleasant,” but by the end of the opening chapter of the Book of Ruth, pleasant was not an adjective Naomi saw fit to describe her life, having lost her husband and two sons. She was poor and had been out of her land, away from her people for about ten years. Even now, as she returned to her land and the people who knew her, she still did not have much hope for what would come. She had left Bethlehem full, but the Lord had brought her back empty—or so she believed.

For this reason, Naomi told her neighbors not to call her by that name any longer; apparently she could not handle the irony. Instead, they were to call her Mara, the same name for the place where God’s people had come across bitter water in the wilderness after Egypt (Ex. 15:22-26).

Naomi’s life was not pleasant—she had lost almost everything in her life that she loved—but she should have been equally concerned about the bitterness growing in her heart. That is something we can learn from Naomi here: We too are in great danger of allowing our circumstances to dictate the posture of our heart. When we succumb to bitterness, we fail to remember the constant love, grace, mercy, and kindness of God poured out on us in the person of Jesus Christ. Our days may be bitter, but the love of Christ should compel us to recognize that our condition before God is always pleasant.

How have you allowed your difficult circumstances to embitter your heart? What can you do to prevent that from happening in the future?

Voices from the Church

“Jesus cried out in thirst and was offered gall to quench it. He turned his face away … Jesus was unwilling to shorten or diminish his appointed suffering by the smallest amount. He had come single-mindedly to do the will of the Father. In the bitterest trial of his incarnation, Christ refused the cup of bitterness raised to his lips.”

—Jen Wilkin
Day 2: Read Ruth 2:1-23

You may be familiar with the infamous infomercial catch phrase, “But wait! There’s more!” Boaz could have originated it. As we read through Ruth 2, he could have bellowed that several times. To restate a couple of examples: “Ruth, you aren’t merely to glean grain from the edges of my field; follow my workers and get the good stuff. But wait! There’s more! I’m going to have my men give you some grain to take home!”

None of this was required or expected, apart from leaving the edges of the field to be gleaned by the poor. Everything else was proverbial icing on the cake. Why did Boaz do all of this for Ruth? Some suspect there were romantic motives, but we don’t see a hint of that in the text. It was more likely that God moved in Boaz’s heart, resulting in his abundant kindness toward Ruth. Boaz seems to have been a man who recognized God’s generous provision in his life. May we be a people who are quick to recall God’s kindness to us and seek ways we can be kind to others in turn, namely, by sharing God’s greatest act of kindness in providing Jesus Christ.

How can you be abundantly kind to someone this week?

Day 3: Read Ruth 3:1-18

When Ruth reported to Naomi what had happened between her and Boaz, her mother-in-law made an interesting prediction in verse 18: Boaz would not rest until the issue of a family redeemer for Ruth was resolved. And Naomi wasn’t wrong. It seems that Boaz went right away to the town gate, where business was transacted, and indeed resolved the matter that day.

Perhaps Naomi understood that the same character that Boaz had shown in his generosity to Ruth would compel him to act quickly for her benefit. Surely Boaz understood how anxious Ruth would have felt. She had taken a great risk in uncovering his feet and asking him to take her under his wing (v. 9).

It is easy for us to be self-absorbed and fail to humble ourselves for the sake of others. But we are a people called to follow a greater example than Boaz—we are called to follow Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself on our behalf and who does not delay in saving those who call on His name.

Whose needs are you slow to respond to? What steps can you take to humble yourself for others’ sake?
Day 4: Read Ruth 4:1-12

Earlier in the book, Naomi balked at her name. She did not want to be called Naomi any longer because it meant “pleasant.” Instead, she wanted to be called Mara because her life had become so “bitter” by God’s hand.

Here we see another name being emphasized. This time, the city elders and others at the gate blessed Boaz and called on the Lord to make his name well known in Bethlehem (v. 11). The lineage of Jesus is recorded in two different places in the Gospels, and we don’t recognize many of the names listed, but Boaz is one that we do. His name had indeed become great in Bethlehem, but because of one of his descendants who would later be born in Bethlehem, the name Boaz is known far outside of the modest town. Boaz appeared to be a man who lived in a way not to make much of his own name but the name of another—the Lord.

How have you sought to make your name great only to see it backfire? When have you sought instead to make God’s name great and have seen Him bless you?

Day 5: Read Ruth 4:13-22

Sometimes we forget that we don’t live in a vacuum. We forget that God’s work in our lives is not meant to end with us but rather we are to be a conduit to reveal His goodness to those around us as well. Yes, we are to delight in God’s kindness to us. But we are also supposed to be quick to share what He has done for us with others so they might share in our rejoicing and worship of the Lord.

We see an example of this as the Book of Ruth winds down. Notice who speaks in these final verses. Not Ruth, whom the book is named after. Not Boaz. Not even Naomi. The final spoken words recorded belong to the women of the town, those who were spectators to what God had done.

This is to be our goal: We are to live in such a way that God’s work is evident to all those around us (Matt. 5:16). May we be quick to speak of the glory of God to others, but may they also be quick to speak of Him because of what they have seen as we have laid our lives bare before them.

What are some ways you can be more transparent with others around you so they might see God at work?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

• God’s perfect love is steadfast (Ruth 1:6-9,16-17).
• God’s perfect love is gracious (Ruth 2:2-3,8-12).
• God’s perfect love is redeeming (Ruth 4:13-17).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

When have you been blessed in an abundant manner? How can you pursue this type of kindness with someone you are discipling right now?

How can your local church or small group reach out to and welcome “foreigners” like Ruth in your community? What can you do this week to improve how people perceive you as a church?

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UNIT 7
SESSION 1
1. Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

UNIT 8
SESSION 1
1. Noël Piper, *Treasuring God in our Traditions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 64.

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
1. Betsie ten Boom, quoted in *The Hiding Place,* by Corrie ten Boom with Elizabeth and John Sherrill (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2006), 84.

EASTER SESSION

UNIT 9
SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5
In these sessions of The Gospel Project, we experience some of the most exciting narratives in Scripture. There are accounts here of sin and judgment, of moral decline and merciful intervention, and of rescuers who need rescue. Through it all, one thing is clear: God is with His people and He is faithful to His promise.

It’s important to keep that central theme in mind because many people read these stories about the conquest of the land and try to find examples for emulation. To be clear, we can learn a lot from these Old Testament heroes (see 1 Cor. 10), but we cannot implement their virtues apart from our connection to the Vine—Jesus Christ Himself, the One who bears fruit in us and through us.

As we walk through our present wilderness, struggling against sin and encountering sorrow, we know that the God who has gone before us is faithful. He is the One who prepares the way for us to be His ambassadors. He is the One who breaks the chains of our idolatry and lifts our gaze to His unchanging glory.