Unit 9, Session 5

The Hope of Redemption

Summary and Goal
In the previous session we saw God humiliate the proud in Samson, and in the Philistines. Once again God used the weaknesses of His people to reveal His true strength. In this session we turn our attention to the story of Ruth, a Moabite woman who lived during the period of the judges. Here we will see how God loves and cares for the humble, the needy, and the lonely. God wanted to make His matchless love known to Ruth, and God continues to want to make His redeeming love known to every tribe, language, and nation. No matter how hopeless and desperate the situation may be, the Lord’s redeeming love is ever-present and stronger still.

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

Session in a Sentence
God provided a family redeemer for Ruth, demonstrating His love for all people.

Christ Connection
Boaz was a family redeemer who showed undeserved kindness to Ruth, a foreigner. In a similar manner, Jesus is our Redeemer who has showed unmerited kindness to us and adopted us into His family.

Missional Application
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.
READ the paragraph on page 121 of the DDG to help your group orient themselves to the focus of this session on God’s perfect love. You might consider playing The Beatles’s song “All You Need Is Love” as group members arrive for this Bible study so you can address its human-centered worldview with this introduction.

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.

INTERACT: Ask the group the following question.

What are some characteristics of God’s love? (eternal; sacrificial; giving; patient; kind; personal; faithful; redeeming)

SUMMARIZE: In this session we turn our attention to the story of Ruth, a Moabite woman who lived during the period of the judges. Here we will see how God loves and cares for the humble, the needy, and the lonely. God wanted to make His matchless love known to Ruth, and God continues to want to make His redeeming love known to every tribe, language, and nation. No matter how hopeless and desperate the situation may be, the Lord’s redeeming love is ever-present and stronger still.

For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit www.GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
**Point 1: God’s perfect love is steadfast (Ruth 1:6-9,16-17).**

**SAY:** During the time of the judges, a severe famine broke out in the land of Israel, forcing a family of four—a father, mother, and two sons—to migrate to Moab, where the father died. The two sons married Moabite women, but the sons also died in the land of Moab. The three remaining women—Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth—were left helpless and hopeless, so they set out toward Israel.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read Ruth 1:6-9,16-17 (DDG p. 122).

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.

**EXPLAIN:** Comment on some typical temptations depending on one’s season of life: ignore God in blessing or blame Him in adversity. Then use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) to set up the Book of Ruth as a story of adversity, but one in which God is still clearly working for the benefit of His people.

- We are most tempted to ignore God when life is going great. In these seasons, we may not feel a need for God and sometimes, if we are honest, not even a desire. We are quick to believe that we are the cause of the goodness we are experiencing, and deep down, we worry that God could come along and mess all of that up by calling us to do something we would rather not do.

- On the other hand, we are most tempted to blame God when life is difficult. We hold Him responsible for causing our seasons of adversity, or at least for failing to pay attention and keep us out of them. In these moments, we may question God’s power and doubt His love.

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 also to the whole world.
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How have you seen God provide for someone during a time of suffering? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) and the Leader content below to show how Ruth was a shadow of God’s love for His people.

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.

- Naomi knew the journey to Bethlehem and a new life there would be challenging. She was homeless, broke, and alone. Any woman would have had a hard time making it in that culture, but for Ruth, being a Moabite widow living in Israel would only compound the difficulty. Sure the situation was dire for them in Moab, but it would have been better than in Israel, Naomi thought. So Orpah went, but Ruth stayed.
- The steadfast fellowship of Ruth and Naomi was a gift from God. Ruth didn’t bail; God doesn’t bail. Ruth went forward into difficulty with Naomi; God goes forward into difficulty with us. Even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us, comforting us, leading us, and guiding us.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 122).

God Is Love: Perfect love both resides and resonates within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God.

Essential Doctrine “God Is Love”: To say that God is love is to say that God is the essence of love, or that perfect love both resides and resonates within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God. The greatest act of love by God toward humans isn’t the giving of earthly goods but the giving of Himself in Christ so that we might become reconciled to Him.
Point 2: God’s perfect love is gracious (Ruth 2:2-3,8-12).

READ Ruth 2:2-3,8-12 (DDG p. 123).

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.”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 123) to emphasize Ruth’s character and Boaz’s gracious treatment of Ruth.

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.

• Ruth desired to avail herself of the gleaning system of the Israelites. God had commanded that landowners harvest the grain of their fields but leave untouched the edges and the corners and the leftovers dropped from the baskets of the harvesters; this was so the poor and the foreigners in their midst could gather grain for themselves (Lev. 19:9-10).

• Boaz, however, put a stop to this when he saw Ruth. He had something better for her. She didn’t need to glean like a beggar on the edges; she could glean in the field like one of the family. Amazingly, Boaz addressed her as “my daughter.” What Boaz did for Ruth, God did for us, only to a much greater degree.
PACK ITEM 14: GOD’S HEART: Point group members to the Kelly Minter quote on this poster as you use the encounter between Ruth and Boaz to apply the gospel to the hearts of your group members.

Application: The Father has brought us undeserving sinners into His family through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. Therefore, we don’t enter His field timidly; we don’t get the edges or scraps of His provision. We are coheirs with Christ; we suffer with Him so we may be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:16-17). What’s Christ’s is ours. We don’t hope for scraps, we confidently expect God’s best. How can this good news be true? Because God’s way has always been and always will be redeeming love: moving outsiders to become insiders, orphans to become coheirs, strangers to become family, sinners to become saints.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some ways we should identify with Ruth? (as sinners apart from Christ, we are outsiders, foreigners, and enemies of God; we are shown grace and welcomed into God’s family by faith in Jesus; God’s grace shown to us as undeserving sinners should humble us and lead to grateful worship)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 123) to highlight the significance and relationship between Boaz’s actions and words: he acted as a refuge for Ruth, but her true refuge was the Lord.

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.

SAY: The Lord longs to be a refuge for us as well. He desires to be a shelter, a shield, a covering in our times of affliction. Ruth was in the process of discovering a peace that surpasses understanding in the care of God, and so can we if we trust Him and His grace, specifically in Jesus Christ.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some metaphors to describe the Lord as our refuge? (a home; a roof; a shelter; a storm shelter; a shield; a mother’s wings; the Father’s arms)
Point 3: God’s perfect love is redeeming (Ruth 4:13-17).

SAY: Boaz had been a refuge to Ruth, but he would also become her family redeemer and marry her. The Lord had given Ruth the blessings of food, a new people, and even a new husband, but He still had more in store for her.

READ Ruth 4:13-17 (DDG p. 124).

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.

EXPLAIN: Contrast the experience of visiting the Department of Motor Vehicles with the revitalizing reality of God’s love in the gospel. Then using the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 124), connect the renewing power of the love of God with Ruth’s new circumstances through Boaz.

• By way of illustration, one of the most soul-draining places on the planet has to be the Department of Motor Vehicles. When it’s time to renew your registration or your license and you have missed the window to renew it online, prepare yourself for the longest, slowest line you’ll ever stand in. This line will sap the joy out of the best of us. It will turn the staunchest optimist into a pessimist. It will make the biggest of extroverts question whether other people really are such a good idea.

• God’s love in the gospel, on the other hand, brings renewal to the soul. God’s love is exhilarating. It’s an adventure. The love of God enlivens embittered hearts. The cross of Christ gives joy to the downtrodden soul. The empty tomb refashes struggling faith. The Spirit of God testifies that you really are forgiven, made new, and declared righteous before God, free from the enemies of sin and death. You have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Rejoice!

• What, then, can spoil our new reality in Christ? This is the very question the apostle Paul asked in Romans 8:35: “Who can separate us from the love of Christ?” Famine? Loss? Joblessness? Cancer? The DMV? The love of God revealed in the gospel provides a clear and emphatic answer: No! Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:37-39). This is the renewing, redeeming power of the love that Ruth experienced from God through Boaz.

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.
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

Why might people consider renewal and redemption in their lives to be impossible? (renewal would mean overcoming overwhelming odds and circumstances; some believe they are too broken or sinful to be redeemed and blessed by God; they don’t believe in the God who has the power to renew a life; stories of renewal and redemption seem to be the stuff of fairy tales)

PACK ITEM 8: JESUS’ LINEAGE: Recall this handout and use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 124) to highlight the larger story surrounding Ruth and Boaz—their descendants would lead to the coming of God’s promised Redeemer: Jesus Christ.

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.

SAY: From the Davidic line of kings would come the King of kings. We are quick to connect Jesus with the great King David, but we need to be just as quick to connect Him with David’s great grandmother, a poor Moabite widow named Ruth. Jesus’ family tree reveals His redemptive purpose: to reconcile all people—Jew and Gentile, man and woman, wealthy and poor—to the Father.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answer for the call-out in their DDG (p. 124).

Jesus’ family tree reveals His redemptive purpose: to reconcile all people—Jew and Gentile, man and woman, wealthy and poor—to the Father.
EXPLAIN: God’s love is steadfast; it never wavers. God’s love is gracious; it’s a gift to the undeserving. God’s love is redeeming; it rescues us from our plight. God’s love is all of these things and more because God Himself is our steadfast, gracious Redeemer (Ex. 34:6-7). This is the God Ruth came to know, and this is the vision of God we must make known to the world. Since we’ve experienced the perfect love of God, we can love our neighbors, coworkers, and others in the way God has loved us, all while pointing them to the God who is love. He is compassionate to the brokenhearted and overflowing with faithful love toward sinners. We know this because the supreme testimony of God’s love is the cross of Christ (Rom. 5:8). Christ is our family redeemer. He became one of us to save us, and by faith in His death and resurrection, we are brought into the family of God.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 125), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

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?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, like Ruth, we know You as a redeeming God who receives sinners from all backgrounds and nations. Thank You for Your kindness in providing Jesus as the Redeemer who brings us into Your covenant people. Help us by the Holy Spirit to extend this same kindness toward outsiders as we proclaim the message of Your redeeming love in Christ. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 126-128), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 129) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 129) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 2 as a part of point 2 in the session: 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.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- Day 1: “Our days may be bitter, but the love of Christ should compel us to recognize that our condition before God is always pleasant.”
- Day 5: “We are to live in such a way that God’s work is evident to all those around us.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 129) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to help one another find an opportunity to share the gospel with someone from a different cultural background than their own.
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

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

“Naomi had little choice but to leave Moab and return home, a move encouraged by the news that the Lord was providing food there. This points to repentance on the part of the Hebrews and their restoration. Naomi asked the Lord’s blessing upon her daughters-in-law in the form of his kindness (Hebrew, chesed). This is a covenantal term that combines love and faithfulness, mercy and grace—all the positive aspects of committed relationship. It is a remarkable request that the Lord’s favor should be shown in this way to covenant outsiders like these foreign women. The women were sad to part. They wept loudly as they embraced.”

“Orpah tearfully kisses Naomi good-bye, but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi. She declares her faithful, loving commitment to Naomi, her people, and her God until death. Ruth is willing to leave her native country and its worship of the pagan god Chemosh to become a part of the people of God in the land of Judah—despite poor earthly prospects there. In these ways, Ruth not only demonstrates the reality of her faith in God by her actions, she also becomes a living demonstration of his covenant love to Naomi.”

**Point 2: God’s perfect love is gracious (Ruth 2:2-3,8-12).**

“Ruth is overwhelmed by such grace given to a foreigner (v. 10). As a Moabite, she would have been considered an enemy of God’s people and forbidden to enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3). But as one who put her faith in the Lord and his covenant promises—ultimately fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ—she is a child of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:13-16; Gal. 3:7-9).”

“Ruth expressed surprise at the favor she, a foreigner, had found with Boaz (2:10). In response, Boaz appreciated her commitment to her mother-in-law and blessed her in the name of the God of Israel, uttering the words that constitute the climax of the second chapter and summarize the message of the whole book of Ruth: May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge (2:11-12). In the sight of Boaz, Ruth was not a refugee but a Gentile who had come to take refuge under the wings of Yahweh.”
“Ruth was not wrong in bowing down before Boaz. Falling down or bowing before another person was a common ancient gesture of honor, respect, gratitude or submission. The Bible condemns the offering of worship to any being (whether human or angelic) other than God (Lev. 26:1; Deut. 6:13-15; Josh. 23:7; 2 Kings 17:35-36; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9; cp. Acts 14:11-15), but gestures of respect in normal interpersonal relations are not ‘worship’ in the usual sense.”

Point 3: God’s perfect love is redeeming (Ruth 4:13-17).

“Regarding an Israelite marrying a Moabite, see Judges 3:5-7 and Ruth 1:1-4. Ruth had become a believer in the true God (1:16-17), so Boaz was not marrying the adherent of a false religion, which would have been prohibited (cp. Judg. 14:1-4).”

“Although for ten years in Moab, Ruth had been unable to bear a son for Mahlon, through the Lord’s direct intervention she immediately conceived and bore a son for Boaz. The child would be a comfort for Naomi in her old age (lit., ‘would sustain her grey hair’); he would be her family redeemer who would provide for her needs in her declining years. He was named Obed, a short form of Obadiah, which means ‘Servant of the Lord.’ Though no one could bring back Naomi’s husband or sons, now she had a daughter-in-law whom all recognized as better to you than seven sons—an astonishing accolade in the ancient world.”

“This genealogy shows us the Lord’s sovereignty over our private and seemingly ordinary decisions, such as Ruth’s decision to go with Naomi and worship the God of Israel. Little did she know when she set out from Moab that day that she would become great-grandmother to Israel’s King David, ancestor to David’s Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer of all of God’s people.”

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Trevin Wax
General Editor—The Gospel Project
Author of multiple books, including
This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in Light of the Gospel

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.

A Word from the Editor

EDITOR

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