

Ruth Chapter 4 – John Karmelich

1. Let me start with my lesson title: "What should we do when we don't know what the outcome of our situation will be?" As we all know, that's usually how our life works. We all make plans, we do the "footwork" that we believe is the right thing to do, and then we often just have to watch the results play out. In effect, that's what the heroes of this story have to do in this final act of a four-scene play. Let me explain the story and how it ties to our lives:
 - a) The story focuses on two women who have lost the men in their lives: an Israelite widow and her foreign born daughter in law. They both lived in a foreign country for ten years during the time the men died in that family. Then they return to Israel to the hometown where the older widow grew up. In that hometown, the older widow discovers there's a relative of her late husband who has the power to redeem what the older widow lost if he is willing to marry the younger widow. The younger widow proposes marriage to him in a very submissive way. That's the story of this book of the last three chapters. Ruth is the younger widow who submits to a man named Boaz, who's a relative of the older widow's (Naomi's) late husband.
 - b) My point here is that Naomi and Ruth have done all the work necessary to improve their lot in life. Now in this final chapter or "final scene" of this little drama, the two heroes of this story have to literally sit out the final scene and watch the results unfold.
2. All that leads back to you and me. There are often times in life where we find ourselves stuck in a situation where we're not happy. We analyze the situation, or as I called it in the last lesson, we take two steps forward and one back. After looking at the situation, we figure out what's the best course of action and we do the footwork to improve our situation. Then we often come to a point where there's not much left we can do other than effectively sit still and watch what plays out. In this final chapter of the book of Ruth, that's what the two man women of this story have to do.
 - a) But what if our situation isn't exactly like Ruth's here? What if we're not sure what we are supposed to do next? What if we've thought out our situation and are convinced there are still things we can do? Of course we still have to do what's necessary. However, we often find ourselves in situations where we have to stand back, trust in others and just see how the situation is going to play out. It's kind of like those moments in life where we realize there's nothing more we can do here but watch and see.
 - b) What I've found is that's often when God does His best work in our lives. When we do all we can do and then have to watch to see how a situation unfolds. It's a great way to pray for the outcome of a situation. It's like saying, "God, I've done all I can do here, I trust that You'll work this out for Your glory. No matter what the outcome, may Your will be done as You're in charge of my life." If we take an attitude to do whatever's best in a situation, assuming we're not violating any of God's laws for our lives, I've found that a prayer that God loves to answer is when we've done all we can do and now we have to wait and see how a situation plays out once we put the results in His hands.
 - c) That's exactly what Ruth and her mother in law Naomi are facing in Chapter 4. Ruth did propose marriage to an older man named Boaz in the last chapter. In Israel, a law of that land is that if a married man dies childless, the nearest relative should raise children with the widow on behalf of the late husband so that a family line may continue. Think of that law as God's way to grow a family after a tragedy occurs. Remember God allowed those tragedies to occur. When we deal with tragedies, is when often have to do the "footwork" to improve our lives. Naomi and Ruth realize all of that by this point in the story, and do what they can to make their life better. It's now time for that dead man's relative, Boaz, to finalize the deal and publicly state of his desire to marry Ruth. The story "twist" is there's another relative closer to Naomi and he must turn down marrying Ruth for Boaz to do so.

3. As you read through the final chapter of this story, try to picture yourself being any of the three main characters in this story. None of them know what's going to happen that day. Both Naomi and Ruth realize at this point that Boaz desires to marry Ruth. However, because of this relative who's closer to Naomi than Boaz, this final scene of who's going to marry Ruth has to play out in front of other witnesses so that all three of the main characters will know the results.
 - a) Think of this from the standpoint of Ruth: She knows she'll have a future husband who'll take care of her, but she doesn't know who that'll be yet. She'll know that scene will take place that day. You can just picture her and Naomi nearby watching this final scene play out, wondering whom they're going to have to live with for the rest of their lives.
 - b) Also think about this scene from Boaz's standpoint. He was impressed with Ruth. She's much younger than Boaz and because he's eligible not as a bachelor, but as someone who is a "kinsmen redeemer" (the English translation of the Jewish law where if one's nearest male relative dies, one should take that woman for a wife oneself.) Imagine how much we'd closer examine our brother's potential wives realizing we may have that duty, if our brother literally dies. In this final scene, Boaz has to ask this unnamed closer relative if he wants to marry Ruth. Boaz desires to marry her, but he realizes this unnamed person has the first right of refusal. Therefore he wants to frame the issue in a way that the unnamed closer relative would turn down that right so that Boaz can claim it for himself.
 - c) My point is none of the main characters in this story know how it'll play out in this final scene. In effect they've all done the "footwork". The footwork that Boaz will do, I'm sure he played out in his mind how exactly he'll approach this closer relative and how to frame his questions to make it less appealing to this unnamed relative. I'm pretty positive Ruth and Naomi are nervously watching this scene in the background. In that society, it's the men who have to make all the big decisions. To quote one of my favorite movies on this idea, "Men are like the heads, who make all the decisions, but their woman are like the "necks" that can control the heads to lean one way or the other." That line is from "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" if you care.
 - d) My point is all the main characters have done all they could to make life work out the way they've wanted it to go. At this point, they've all had to effectively let go of control and to watch the results play out. That's the main point of Chapter 4.
 - e) Oh, and before I start, the final part of this chapter is an epilogue to what happens to these main characters after the big scene plays out. However, I'll get to the epilogue after we do watch this scene play out.
 - f) With that said, I encourage you to read along with me as we watch this scene play out.
4. Chapter 4, Verse 1: Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.
 - a) To explain this scene, I need to talk a little about the way business got done in that culture at that time. Visualize a medieval town with a wall surrounding that town. The way that significant public business is done in that town is that the leading men of that town would decide who could buy and sell in that town. The point here is that Boaz wants to do some "business" that required a good handful of witnesses to realize what was happening. To start that process, first he has to get that closer male relative to Naomi to cooperate.
 - i) The reason this is done publicly is that it involved land being transferred from one party to another. Therefore witnesses were needed for this transfer. Think of it as life before there was a "county recorder's office" as public notice of a transfer.
 - ii) While this "deal" did involve the marriage of Ruth, apparently Naomi (her mother in law) was the owner of land that her late husband had before he left town. What this business deal essentially means is, if Boaz was to act as kinsmen redeemer, he would have the right to own that land so it would stay in the same family. Yes it'd involve Ruth as a bride, but the question's being framed here as a land deal.

- b) Anyway, even though this closer relative to Naomi didn't know any of these details yet, it was obvious that Boaz wanted him there for some sort of business deal, as Boaz interrupts the other man's life in order to conduct this business. The other unnamed person must be thinking, I don't know what's going on here, but whatever it is, it's important enough that Boaz wants me to pause and pay attention for a few moments.
 - c) Let me also discuss why this closer relative to Naomi isn't named. The original Hebrew of this text literally refers to this unnamed man as "Mr. So and So". For all we know he may have been Boaz's older brother or first cousin. Commentators believe the reason he's not named here is probably to "save his honor" since he failed to do the duty of the kinsman redeemer in this story. My point is to realize the next scene of this story will be a dialogue between Boaz and "Mr. So and So".
5. Verse 2: Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. ³ Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. ⁴ I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."
- a) The first thing to realize here is that this piece of business was being done publicly. Boaz asked ten elders who lived at that town to sit (probably by the gate of the city) so that they can be witnesses to the transaction. Why ten? In Jewish thought, "ten" is the number of a public witness. Just as there are 10 Commandments, so the number ten is associated with God's public witness to man. Therefore, ten men are associated with being a witness here. There's a Jewish tradition that in order for a town to have a synagogue, there needs to be at least 10 men to form that synagogue. That's where that idea of "10 men" comes from.
 - b) Anyway, with the scene set, it's time for Boaz to make a public speech so "for the record" the town would know what to do with the land that belonged to Naomi's late husband. That's why in Verse 3 we get a mention of Naomi's late husband Elimelech. Notice that Boaz refers to Elimelech as "our brother". It could be that Boaz and "Mr. So and So" are the brothers of this man, or they could be cousins. The point is simply that Boaz and Mr. "So and So" are somehow related to Naomi's late husband.
 - c) One can see how Boaz is "baiting a trap" by offering the land to "Mr. So and So" without any mention of marrying Ruth as part of the deal. My guess is Boaz thought up this plan before calling the meeting. Maybe he knew that the unnamed man wouldn't want to have another wife to feed, so by setting up the deal this way, Boaz suspected he'd turn it down. If I had to guess, I suspect the unnamed man is Boaz's older brother, which is why he has the first right of refusal for the land and to marry Ruth. However they're related, I think that Boaz knew enough about this man that Boaz knew how he'd react.
 - d) I can't help but think of the board game "Monopoly" when I think of this scene. It's like it is our turn to move our piece and we land on a square where the property associated with that square hasn't been sold yet. We have the cash and the opportunity to buy it. In order to win that game, one needs to acquire property to make money off of rent. Here we read of Boaz offering property to "Mr. So and So" so over time he'll grow in wealth as a larger landowner. The question is framed as, "Look either you buy this land, or I buy it as I have the next right to buy it after you." Boaz left out the part about marrying Ruth as he wants this deal to sound enticing at this point in the story.
6. Verse 4 Part 2: "I will redeem it," he said.
- a) This is "Mr. So and so" saying in effect, "I have the cash, I'm willing to buy it and fulfill my role as the kinsman redeemer to our late relative who died in the last 10 years. Obviously he hadn't thought about having to raise children for Naomi, he just thought of it as a good business deal. He probably just thought, I'll be the hero by keeping that land within our family. This will be a winning proposition for my family and myself.

7. Verse 5: Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." ⁶ At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it."
- a) Here is where Boaz "lowers the boom" and hits this unnamed relative with the fact he'd be required to marry Ruth in order to have that land. For married men who are reading this, imagine having to go home to tell your wife, "The good news is I bought a piece of land as an investment for our future. The bad news is you won't be the only wife in the house." I doubt that scene would go over well in any marriage. For all we know this unnamed man may already have grown sons and now they'd get less with a new young woman being in the family let alone whatever children they'd have together. It's a sad reality that grown children think about what they'd get as an inheritance and fear losing it if there are others who are now part of that scene.
 - b) Before I move on, I want you to consider why this man isn't named. Yes it's because he's publicly shamed when he turns down Ruth for marriage. My question is, if Boaz is a type of "Jesus" in the sense that Jesus redeemed us from our sins just as Boaz "redeemed" Ruth from a life of being a beggar, what does that make this unnamed man?
 - i) As most of us know by now, "Naomi" is a type of Israel as she's redeemed by the fact a gentile woman marries a Jewish relative of her husband. Naomi becomes a model of the redemption of the nation of Israel after the "redeemer" takes a non-Jewish bride as a wife. One can read the entire story of Ruth as a model of how we see God working out salvation for Gentiles as well as the Jewish nation.
 - ii) My question is if this model is true, what does "Mr. So and So" represent? As I've stated in a previous lesson, I'm convinced he represents "God's laws" in the sense that we can't perfectly obey those laws in order to achieve salvation. Just as "Mr. So and So" can't redeem Ruth for marriage, so God's laws can't redeem us to our eternal salvation even though they're designed as the best way for us to live.
 - iii) As I like to point out every now and then, God's laws are there as that's the best way for us to live our lives. We aren't saved by obeying them, but they're still "on the books" as the best way to live and when we sin, we're to acknowledge God is right and we're wrong about whatever law we broke. Yes we're forgiven, but we still may suffer the consequences for breaking that law. As an obvious example, if we steal something, we may feel guilt and confess it as sin, however we still must face the consequences for our actions.
 - iv) Now that I've made that point, we can get back to the story.
 - c) As this scene unfolds in front of witnesses, can't you just see Naomi and Ruth nervously in the background somewhere watching this play out maybe pretending to be shopping nearby? Even though women weren't allowed back then to be among the "witnesses", as this is going to affect the rest of their lives, I'm pretty sure they'd be close enough to watch it or just listen in on the conversation as whatever was being decided would affect the rest of their lives. I can just hear the sigh of relief of both women when "Mr. So and So" turned down the marriage offer.
 - d) OK, time for Boaz to step up to be the hero of the story:
8. Verse 7: (Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) ⁸ So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.
- a) Remember that in those days, there were no papers to sign to make a deal official. Here we read of the official method of transfer: A sandal was removed from one's foot. It was given from one party to the other as a symbolic gesture to say, "Done deal". The unnamed relative removed a sandal as if to say, "no deal" and Boaz removed one to say "Done deal".

- b) I can't resist moving on without sharing a cute story about the original law. If you read of the law about the kinsmen redeemer in Deuteronomy 25:9, the law says that not only was a sandal to be removed, but the man who failed to perform this duty was to have his face spit upon as a public sign of shame. I mentioned in an earlier lesson, if one failed to fulfill the role as a kinsmen redeemer, it wasn't a death sentence or time in jail, but one was put to shame for failing to do that duty, and that's what we read of here in these verses.
 - c) One has to admit if nothing else, the book of Ruth is a cute story of being redeemed after a horrible tragedy of the loss of life. In a sense, that's the end of the big scene. In effect, the rest of the book of Ruth is the epilogue of that decision Boaz made here. I'm reminded of an old expression that real change often happens in a quick moment of time. The results of that significant fact take years to play out.
 - d) Before I move on stop and consider how God worked in the background of this story. We don't read of any divine miracles. We don't read of God stepping in and saying, "Boaz is going to marry Ruth, everybody deal with it." God put the idea in Boaz's head to lay out the deal this way, and the three main characters probably fired up some quick prayers for this deal working out not only to God's glory but based on the way the three main people in this story wanted the deal to play out. My point is once we do the "footwork" and once we trust God with the results, we can give God the glory if things work out for His glory as we obey His laws.
 - i) OK, what if it doesn't work that way in our life? What if we do the footwork, and things go from bad to worse? Welcome to life. God never promises things will go greatly when we let go and trust Him. He promises to guide us through whatever we're dealing with for His glory. My point is when we trust God to guide our life, we submit to His will whatever it is and realize He's got a purpose for our lives in ways we may not comprehend in this lifetime. The point is we're to make the best decisions we can in life as if God's not there, and then trust that He's working out the results for His glory realizing He is there guiding us the whole time. We see that being played out in this little play here and that's how our life works as well.
 - e) In the meantime, now that two sandals have been exchanged to indicate the deal is done, it is time to see the epilogue of what happens in this story.
9. Verse 9: Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!"
- a) Realize that this scene is not the wedding of Boaz and Ruth. It's the public declaration of Boaz's intention to marry Ruth. Which brings up the issue, why are marriages performed publicly? Yes it's to have a big party. It's also to publicly recognize when a couple wants to spend the rest of their life together. One of the best pieces of advice I've ever heard on when a couple should be married is, "The time to get married is when effectively you are already married". That means you know each other well enough that you're willing to go spend the rest of your lives together. One of my "bucket list" items is that God will let me live long enough that I'll see both of my girls get married. My prayer for both of them is they both pick God fearing men who'll love them as much as they realize God loves those men as much as their wives. Of course, I want both of them to be happy. What's equally as important is that they marry good men who'll take care of them the rest of their lives.
 - b) OK, how did I drift into that topic? Because I'm reading of Boaz publicly declaring of his intention to marry Ruth. I'm convinced at this point in the story, its more than just to do his duty of the kinsmen redeemer, but because he truly loved Ruth. What I hope both of my daughters realize one day is "emotions follow a decision and not vice-versa". First is a decision to commit to a spouse and then the emotional feelings follow that decision.

- c) I don't know why, but I picture Naomi and Ruth hiding somewhere listening to this scene play out. If it was your future at stake here, I'm sure at the least you'd be listening to the dialogue and if you can, you'd be watching the action. I can just hear the silent cheers of the girls as Boaz makes this public announcement of his intent to marry Ruth.
 - d) A few final thoughts on these verses, and then we'll move on. Notice in Verse 10, Boaz is naming by name, the three men who died in the opening chapter of this book. We get the names again of Naomi's late husband and the other two were her sons that died in the last 10 years. They're named by name as if to say, that property that Boaz bought would have been their property if they'd lived to see this day let alone chosen to return to the land of Israel. Remember how I said, Naomi is a "type" of the nation of Israel, notice how she has been "redeemed" herself by her choice to return to the land of Israel. Now think of all the Israelites choosing to return to that land today. Could that be God working on His timing to redeem that land that God gave to the descendants of Abraham? I'd argue yes, but we will have to watch history play out to see how God will work out the details.
 - i) In the meantime, the 10 witnesses to the sandal-exchange deal now consider this to be a "case closed" situation and everyone can move on with their lives. That's what we'll read of in the next few verses. These 10 witnesses now get "dialogue lines" in the story, as we'll read of in the next verse.
10. Verse 11: Then the elders and all those at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."
- a) The first thing to catch here is that there are now more than 10 witnesses. What occurred here is this scene got interesting and it drew the town's attention to watch the proceeding. Anyway, someone from that group decided to speak up and proclaim a blessing on this event by saying effectively, "May Ruth be like Rachael and Leah who were the mothers of the nation of Israel." For the non-biblically literate, that refers to the 12 tribes of Israel who all came from one man the grandson of Abraham named Jacob. He had two wives as well as two "concubines" (a legal term for "sort-of a wife" with less rights). The point is both of these women were responsible for bringing in the 12 tribes of Israel into existence.
 - i) So why would they proclaim that blessing on Ruth? Does that mean they all want her to have lots of sons? Sort of. A better way to look at it is the Jewish concept of a couple is that they are the beginning of a new nation of people. If you murder a person, no not only murdering them but also the potential descendants of who got murdered. Therefore, a blessing to give when a marriage occurs is that the couple go on to start a "new nation" based on having children together.
 - b) Let me give some more technical notes about these verses before I explain why we should care about what they mean. The word "Ephrathah" is kind of like a last name. Think of it as a town where lots of people have that name as a last name, even though last names are not used in those days. It's a "sub-tribe" of Judah. It's like saying if lots of people have the name "Smith or Jones" in this town, may you and your family be a well-respected member of that family name.
 - i) Speaking of having a good name, the next place named is Bethlehem. All of us do know of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus. Back then it was a small little town near Jerusalem and other than being famous as the birthplace of King David and of course for Jesus, there wasn't much significance to that town back then. That's why someone in the crowd was giving this wonderful blessing that Ruth who is now accepted as an Israelite be "famous" in that town. At the time that blessing is given, little did anyone realize how famous Ruth would be throughout recorded history, not only for bringing Jesus into the world, but having her own bible book.

- c) Now we come to the "strange" blessing in Verse 12. Someone yells out to Ruth that "may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." As Chuck Missler loves to joke about that line, the proper response might be a sarcastic, "Yeah, same to you buddy".
- i) To explain that reference, one has to know a little about a story that takes place in Genesis Chapter 38. The short version is that Tamar was a widowed daughter-in-law of a man named Judah. Yes it's "that Judah", one of the 12 sons of Jacob who's the leader of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. In this chapter we learn that Judah had 3 sons. All three died over a long time period including the husband of Tamar who was Judah's first son. The point as it relates to this story is Judah didn't have any sons left to keep the family line going through his only daughter in law.
 - ii) The key point of that story is God allowed a strange thing to occur for there to be a male descendant of Judah that will keep the family line leading to Jesus going. In that story, Judah's daughter in law then covered herself fully up so nobody would recognize her and she pretended to be a prostitute. Judah himself didn't recognize her and to put it simply, had sexual relations with her. When Judah found out she was pregnant, he was ready to kill whoever did this, until he figured out he's the guilty party. Did that mean God condoned this immorality? Of course not. Still God uses our mistakes at times for His glory. God wanted that family line to go on, and since Judah's two younger sons failed to be the "kinsmen redeemer", they were both killed and God allowed this to happen so the family line continued all the way to Jesus over a 1,000 years later.
 - iii) OK John, that's a strange story, and we can see now why if someone at a wedding party said "May your family be like Judah's family by which Tamar who was born due to illicit affair", would get someone to react, "Yeah, same to you buddy!"
 - iv) With that said, now let me explain why someone did bring up that story. Realize that Ruth was not an Israelite. One of the Old Testament laws is that a foreigner is not allowed to be in "God's house" for 10 generations. (See Deuteronomy 23:2.)
 - v) The reason God had that law on the books was that God wanted the Israelites to only marry other Israelites. The same way God desires Christians to only marry other Christians as taught in 2nd Corinthians 6:14. The reason non-Jewish people were not allowed to collectively worship God for 10 generations is to remind all of the Israelites how seriously God takes the idea of not letting foreigners corrupt His collection of people being set aside to worship Him.
 - vi) So does that mean foreigner's couldn't adopt Judaism? Well we just read of Ruth being accepted into that community, so that isn't the issue. The issue is by making foreigners not part of the "voting" community, it reminds us that God called them to be separate from non-believers just as God called Christians to not live as others who aren't believers to live. So if Deuteronomy 23:3 specifically prohibits anyone who is a Moabite to not "enter the congregation" of God, was it wrong for Boaz to marry her here? Since she's officially converted to worshipping God, I don't think she's even considered a Moabite in a religious sense.
 - vii) What I'm getting at is even though God discouraged the marriage of Israelites to those of other countries, it's not a "death sentence", but it does lower the rights of Israelites who do marry nonbelievers in order to discourage that act.
- d) All of that leads us back to this verse. Why did someone in that crowd "bless" Boaz and Ruth by mentioning the fact that one of their direct ancestors did something immoral when one had a child by her daughter in law? Remember my lesson title about there is times in our lives when we do the footwork and then watch the results play out? That's what this blessing is asking. That sin of their ancestors means that for 10 generations no descendant of Judah's illegitimate son could "enter" God's sanctuary. Boaz was already cursed as part of that line. As we'll read in a few verses, David was the 10th generation of this group.

- e) OK, John, so Boaz is already partially cursed, as his family line is part of that group. Now realize that Boaz was blessed in this story as a successful landowner and he helps Naomi and Ruth draw back to God, as being their kinsman redeemer. One of the reasons Ruth is part of the bible so that the Israelites would know that the great king as promised to them by God was not "cursed" as he was the 10th generation from Judah's illegitimate act.
 - i) But doesn't Boaz marrying Ruth start that curse line all over again? No, because of her "adoption" of the God of the Jews, she's no longer seen as a Moabites.
- f) OK John, one more time: Ruth's an interesting story and it shows how God picked David to be the king whose descendant was the Promised Messiah. That's all well and good and we believe Jesus is God and came from that line. As you love to say, now what? Since we already believe Jesus is God and is from this family line, why should we care about all of this ancient Jewish stuff about family rituals and who was and wasn't blessed thousands of years ago? To come back to my lesson theme, what are we standing back to watch?
 - i) First, consider your spouse or someone else you really love. If you really love that person, you want to find out everything you can about them. Because you care for that person, you want to know all you can about their background. Now realize we Christians are to love Jesus "that way" and care about His Jewish background as well as the fact He was brought into the world as God Himself.
 - ii) All right, even if we're supposed to learn of Jesus' family history, how does any of this stuff apply to whatever we're dealing with at the moment? When I first began this ministry I followed what a great bible teacher once said, "Who cares about the Ammonites, Hittites and Jebusites, I have bills to pay and my kids are sick."
 - iii) The answer is when our "kids are sick and we got bills to pay" we do the footwork to deal with our issues, and then we often have to just "stand back" and watch the results play out. That's what Ruth and Naomi do in this final chapter of this book and that's what we're to learn from this story. If you get that, you have just gotten the key point of this lesson.
- g) OK, I've talking for two pages here to explain the significance about how Boaz's ancestor is a curse on that family line and how King David ended that curse. Let's get back to Ruth:
 - 11. Verse 13: So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."
 - a) What we have here is the epilogue of the story. I admit when I see a good move or read a good book, I love the epilogue. That's usually the final scene where they explain what did happen to the main characters as a result of the story itself. In effect, the story ended with Boaz ended up being the kinsmen redeemer of Ruth and Naomi. These verses tell of the epilogue of the result of that scene. Remember how I said sometimes after the "footwork" we stand back to watch the results. Often after the results take place, then of course it is time for us to do the "footwork again" based on those results. That's what we have here.
 - b) The epilogue to this story is after Boaz became the kinsmen redeemer, we read of the fact there was a wedding ceremony as implied in the first sentence of Verse 13. In the second sentence, the two of them have a son together. So if Boaz is a model of Jesus, and Ruth is a model of us Christians being "redeemed" by Jesus, does that mean we're going to have children together? Not exactly. What it does mean is when Christian couples get married and have children, those children are more likely to become believers as they've grown up in a home that understands the Gospel message. For example, my two daughters are now grown up in a home where the Gospel was preached, so effectively they have no excuse to reject Jesus as they've learned the truth. As to Ruth, she's now gotten a son, that she never got from the years she lived with her first husband. She's been "redeemed" with a family.

- c) So after the happy epilogue of Ruth and Boaz getting married and having a son, we next read of the women of that town "praising Naomi" for having a grandchild.
- i) Back in Chapter 1, Ruth came back to Bethlehem being "bitter" because she came back empty handed. She was thinking she'd have to beg for a living for the rest of her life. Now, thanks to Ruth who adopted her religion, and Boaz, a relative of her late husband, Naomi now not only has a grandson, but a man of the house who'll help to take care of her in her old age. That'll be Boaz until the boy grows up and eventually the boy himself as he'll inherit Boaz's property.
 - ii) The point for you and me is we, as Christians may not think of ourselves as being rich beyond measure. Yet by being the "united bride of Christ" we get everything that God has. My point is the riches of the eternal life with Jesus is going to be far greater than any and all suffering in this lifetime. That's why many people in the last 2,000 years accepted martyrdom for Jesus as their willing to "bet on that horse" for their eternity just as you and I do. As the classic Christian joke goes, "The easy thing is to be a martyr for Jesus as it's over pretty quickly. The hard thing is to go on living being a witness for Him". That's what most of us are called to do in life.
 - a) While I'm in the neighborhood, how do we go on living for Him? That's all about using our lives to make a difference for Jesus. It's all about putting the needs of others ahead of our own needs. That's the greatest way for us to have joy in our lives as we bring joy to others around us. That's another "now what" for this lesson.
 - iii) Before I move on, let me share with you my favorite jokes about why there's so much love between grandparents and their grandchildren: There's a great bond between those two as their "united against the common enemy". Just as parents and children struggle, there's less of a struggle with their grandchildren as it's not usually the job of the grandparents to discipline grandchildren. I've watched my parents who were "tight fisted" with me, "throw money" at their grandchildren. My point is simply that there is a different kind of love between grandparents and grandchildren that you don't see with parents and children.
 - iv) The second classic joke is "God blessed us with grandchildren as a thank you gift for not killing our children when we seriously considered it."
- d) All of that leads me back to the verses themselves. The final verse listed mentioned that the grandson of Naomi through her "adopted" daughter and son in law Ruth was better to Naomi than if she had seven sons still living. Let me explain that one with a story.
- i) My mother had four boys. All four of us stay in contact with her and help her out in different ways and at different times. Yet she jokes that, "none of us care or stay in contact with her". My point is grown men tend to focus on their own families as they put their own mother's second at that point. By having the grandson, Naomi is helping to raise will make a bond between them that's different from a bond we have with our parents. Those grandchildren that get spoiled by grandparents will think of their grandparents as something special and don't think about all they did to get to a point of being a grandparent.
 - ii) My point is if you're lucky enough to have godly grandparents around or if you're lucky enough to see your grandchildren, appreciate that as a special bond and as a reward for raising your children right. It's the reward for not killing our children when we seriously considered it.
 - iii) OK, what if I didn't have godly grandparents or don't have any children that will raise grandchildren? In that case, realize God loves us despite our faults and He desires a close relationship with us. While we may not have the benefit of such a wonderful relationship, we always have the opportunity to bring joy to others and that's the goal that God wants us Christians to have.

12. Verse 16: Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. ¹⁷ The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.
- a) There are some who argue that Naomi miraculously "breast feed" her grandchild. I don't think that's what the text is saying. I just think that Boaz and Ruth had grandma's help in raising the boy. Verse 15 said that this boy, named Obed will "sustain Naomi in her old age". That just means that Naomi now has a purpose for living, more than just being on the welfare system of Israel.
 - b) Also notice that the women of that town gave the name of Ruth's son. It doesn't mean in all cases others are to name our children. The name Obed means "she knows" and it can also mean "worshipper". What's implied in that name is such a person has a desire to go and worship God and encourage others to worship God.
 - c) We don't know much about Obed other than the fact he was King David's grandfather.
 - d) I admit, I'm fascinated how the book of Ruth became part of the bible. Jewish tradition is that Samuel wrote the prophet it. Most likely David knew the details of this story. As he spent time with Samuel, David told that story of his great grandmother. We get this story as part of the bible, not just to make Ruth famous, but for us to learn that King David was the 10th generation of that illegitimate affair by his ancestor Judah, one of the 12 "leaders" that became the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - i) Realize that when the father of Judah was dying, he made predictions about each of his 12 sons. One thing said about Judah is that "Your father's children will bow down to you". (From Genesis 49:8.) The point is the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah despite the sin that Judah committed with his daughter in law. It shows how the story of Ruth "redeems" that line of people despite that sin and is leading that line to King David and eventually to Jesus coming into the world.
 - e) Again, why should I care about any of this ancient history? Yes, part of the reason is that if we care about Jesus, we care not only about Him as God, but to understand the trouble that God "went through" to bring Him into the world despite the sins committed by all of the ancestors of that line of people. It shows that just as God uses us faults and all, so He uses imperfect people in order to accomplish His will.
 - i) For example, was it wrong of Naomi's sons to marry Moabite wives? Yes it was and that may be the reason why they died in the land of Moab. Was it wrong for Naomi and her husband to abandon the nation of Israel in that famine? Yes it was and God proved that by having the town of Bethlehem survive through it. We do know that town grew again as Boaz was apparently fairly wealthy from the wheat grown there. However, God still used these people to bring a non-Jewish woman into the line of the Messiah despite their mistakes.
 - ii) So does that mean it's ok to sin because God still uses us? Of course not. We still suffer for our sins just as the main characters suffered when the men died in that family. The point is God uses us, faults and all and uses our lives for His glory. That's what we read in this book and that's an underlying point of this book. By the way, that concept of "it's not ok to sin as God can use it" is the main point of Chapter 6 of the Book of Romans.
13. Verse 18: This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, ²² Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.
- a) I could probably bore all of you to death to explain what each of these names mean and a little history on each person. However, odds are good that a few minutes from now, you won't remember the genealogy from Judah's illegitimate son Perez, to King David. All we should know is that God keeps His word as King David is that 10th Generation.

- b) OK John, one final time, we believe Jesus is God and He's a legitimate descendant of King David. Why should we care about any of this ancient history? First so that if anyone does question the legitimacy of King David as being the "10th Generation", we can show that the bible is true to it's word. Stop to consider that no other religion goes to the trouble to prove it's correct and is God's word besides Judaism and Christianity. If you had to show someone that Jesus is God and also was as a legitimate descendant of King David, we do have that proof as the bible lays out for us. This genealogy is simply one of many steps of that proof that Jesus is, who He claims to be.
- i) My point is one reason we study the bible is to validate our faith in who Jesus is. As I like to say, we don't walk by "blind faith" in the evidence of the bible, but we live by faith based on the evidence of the bible so we're willing to bet our eternal salvation "on the right horse".
 - ii) While I'm positive we have to be "Spiritually born again" in order to accept all of this as being true, once we are born again, we can study the evidence that Jesus is who He claims to be as it's laid out for us through the pages of the scripture.
- c) Oh, one more thing before I wrap this lesson up. Why is it so important for David to be legitimate as the 10th generation in order to be the king? Remember what the "curse" is: It prevented a Jewish person from being "counted" among those who could assemble to worship God. It's not about being a priest, it's about being allowed "in church". The idea is that an "illegitimate" person can still worship God, but couldn't go to "church" with all of the other Jewish people to worship Him as such.
- i) So does this mean we can't go to church if we've "married a nonbeliever, or stolen something or murdered someone?" If that were true, our churches would be even more empty then they are today. God doesn't expect us to be perfect, but He does want us to confess our sins to one another as to realize, "God's right and we were wrong in our behavior and we turn from that behavior." Yes we're forgiven of all sins, we've ever committed or ever will commit when we accept Jesus payment of all our sins, but the issue isn't salvation, it's our witness to God as a believer. That is why God wants us to be a "legitimate" witness for Him and confess our sins as we become aware of them.
 - ii) All of that leads back to King David. The book of Ruth was proof to the Israelites at the time of King David that he could legitimately be their king and be part of an assembly of people God accepts as one of His. That's why this genealogy is here in the book of Ruth and that's why the story ends the way it does.
 - iii) So what does all that mean for you and me as Christians, let me answer that in my closing prayer:
14. Heavenly Father, help us to see ourselves not only as forgiven Christians but also as a beginning of a legitimate nation of potential future believers in You. We don't know the day or hour when Jesus will return to rule on earth. We just accept it as true based on the evidence He stated it as part of His truth. Help us to see past our own issues so that we can use our lives to make a major difference in the lives of other believers and potential believers around us, so that our lives may be a glory to You in all that we do. Guide our lives as we watch You work the results of our lives out for Your glory in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name Amen.
15. Since this is the last lesson on Ruth, my biography of sources I've used is on the next page.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to them further via the places listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the bible is the bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in preparation of my lessons. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King Deuteronomy Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King Deuteronomy Version (KJV) (no copyright on that version); the English Standard Version. (ESV). The copyright information for the ESV is in point #5 below. The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189; "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text used in these lessons (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over these lessons. The specific commentaries on the book of Ruth are listed first, and then bible-wide commentaries. They're listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to audio commentary means I got this information via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Ruth by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>.
2. Commentary on Ruth by Bob Davis. They are available for free in MP3® format at <http://northcountrychapel.com/studies/>.
3. Commentary on Ruth by David Guzik. It is available for free in audio and text format. The web address is http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.htm Mr. Davis quotes a lot of famous authors from the 19th and 20th Century on these books and I've used some of those quotes.
4. Commentary on 1st, 2nd and 3rd by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
5. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229.
6. The English Standard Version Study Bible; Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers".
7. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every bible verse. It is available through Zondervan. Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this same source. The actual text that is copied and pasted is taken from this source.
8. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm.
9. I also refer sometimes to J.P. Moreland apologetic ministry which is at www.jpmoreland.com and Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org
10. I also make a number of references to Dennis Prager. He's a religious Jewish man, most famous for having a daily radio show syndicated around the United States. He also has lots of video's that I've seen of him via "Youtube" and some of his quotes do come from those video's and his talk show.
11. My apology if I have quoted someone else and I have forgotten to include them here.