

Ruth 4:1-12 “The Romance of Redemption” [**](#)

Main Idea: Through the actions of Boaz in Ruth 4 we see the romance of redemption. We also see a beautiful illustration of four characteristics of true love.

I. True love takes action (1-4).

A. Boaz took steps to provide redemption (1-4a).

1. He made contact with the nearer kinsman (1).
2. He recruited elders (2).
3. He informed the nearer kinsman about Naomi’s land (3-4).

B. The nearer kinsman said he would provide redemption (4b).

1. It is natural to do what is good for yourself.
2. It is love to do what is good for others.

II. True love is willing to pay the price (5-6).

A. Boaz informed the nearer kinsman of the price of redemption (5).

B. The nearer kinsman decided the price was too high (6).

1. He said he *could* not do it.
2. He meant he *would* not do it.

III. True love is willing to be accountable (7-10).

A. The nearer kinsman gave up his right to redemption.

B. Boaz made a public commitment to be a faithful redeemer.

1. He promised to be a good husband to Ruth.
2. He promised to maintain the name of the dead.

IV. True love receives God’s blessing (11-12).

A. The people asked the Lord to bless Ruth.

B. The people asked the Lord to bless Boaz.

C. The people asked the Lord to bless their offspring.

1. The prayer was immediately answered through Obed (17).
2. The prayer was eventually answered through David (22).
3. The prayer was ultimately answered through Jesus.

Last week a piece of mail came across my desk with one of those “kids say the craziest things” kind of lists. [11](#)

Apparently a group of 7-10 year olds was asked a variety of questions about marriage. One of the questions was “How do you decide who to marry?” 10 year-old Alan said, “You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and should keep the chips and dip coming.” 10 year-old Kristen answered, “No person really decides before they grow up who they’re going to marry. God decides it all way before and you get to find out later who you’re stuck with!” Another question was: “Is it better to be single or married?” 9 year-old Anita said, “It’s better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them.”

This morning we’re returning to a wonderful love story in God’s Word, the story of Ruth. Of course, the story of Ruth is really a story about *God*, the God who work through providence to accomplish His good plan for His people.

The book of Ruth begins during the time of the judges in Israel . Due to a famine, a Jewish man named Elimelech moved with his wife, Naomi, and their sons, Mahlon and Chilion, away from the promised land to Moab in search of food. While there, the father and his two sons died, leaving Naomi alone with her two Moabite daughters-in-law. When Naomi decided to return back to Bethlehem , she urged Ruth and Orpah to stay in Moab . She convinced Orpah to do the logical thing and stay, but she couldn’t shake Ruth who had become a believer in the Lord God of Israel .

After returning to Israel , Ruth went looking for food in the grain fields of Bethlehem and met Boaz, a kinsman of her deceased husband. In our last study we watched Ruth as she carried out Naomi’s plan, went to Boaz, and made it clear that she would marry her kinsman redeemer if he was so inclined. Boaz instantly expressed his willingness and eager desire to do so, but then dropped this shocking piece of news. There was a nearer kinsman, another man who according to the laws of levirate marriage in Israel had first dibs. “If he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it,” Boaz told Ruth (3:13).

Now we come to the final chapter in the story. My aim is to look at verses 1-12 this week and conclude next week by looking at verses 13-22 as well as by summarizing the key lessons from the book. Through the actions of Boaz in Ruth 4 we see the romance of redemption. We also see a beautiful illustration of four characteristics of true love.

I. True love takes action (1-4).

Before we read the story allow me to point out what you’re about to see. There’s a contrast in chapter 4, a contrast between two redeemers There’s a loving redeemer named Boaz, and there’s a self-focused, unnamed redeemer. Both men had the proper qualifications to help a destitute family, but only one did so. As we see Boaz in action the Scriptures are giving us a type of another redeemer, One who exhibited perfect love for a destitute world, the Lord Jesus Himself.

The first thing we learn about true love from Boaz is that it *takes action*. John later would write in 1 John 3:18, “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” That’s what Boaz did in chapter 4.

You may recall the final words in chapter 3 where Naomi said this to Ruth about Boaz, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.” Naomi was right. As chapter 4 begins...

A. Boaz took steps to provide redemption (1-4a). Three steps, to be specific...

1. *He made contact with the nearer kinsman (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.”

In Israel the town gate was the equivalent of our court house. It’s where legal business was settled. What’s more, in a day before cell phones and pagers, the best way to make contact with someone was to wait at the city gate. Sooner or later everyone passed that way.^[2]

As the story begins Boaz exhibits wisdom, tact, determination, a commitment to do things the right way, and a selfless love for the one he hopes to marry, Ruth. He makes contact with the man who is legally first in line to marry and provide protection for Ruth.

It's worth noting that the writer never gives the name of the nearer kinsman anywhere in the story. He simply identifies him by a Hebrew phrase that rhymes, *paloni almoni*. The NIV translates it 'my friend' but the AV's 'such a one' is more accurate. Mr. 'So and so' would be the sense. For sure, Boaz knew his name—he was related to him—but the author of Ruth doesn't give us his name, for a reason we'll discuss shortly.

When Boaz saw Mr. So and so, he greeted him and beckoned him to sit down on a bench at the gate. Then he demonstrated his love for Ruth by taking a second step.

2. *He recruited elders (2)*. "Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, 'Sit here,' and they did so." It's obvious Boaz has thought this through. He is setting up a court for legal proceedings. The elders (which comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to have a beard") held a significant place in Jewish society. They possessed clout both politically and judicially. With Mr. So and so seated and the elders in place, Boaz moved to step 3...

3. *He informed the nearer kinsman about Naomi's land (3-4)*. Verse 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.'" The word 'brother' seems to be used loosely here. There is rabbinic tradition, however, that says that Boaz was a nephew of Elimelech and the other man an actual brother of Elimelech, but that is merely conjecture.^[3]

Although we didn't know it until now in the story, Naomi had a piece of property. It was actually Elimelech's before he died and would have been their sons' if they had lived. But since they were gone, it was now Naomi's, and since she was so poor she was selling it. One explanation is that Elimelech sold this property before taking his family to Moab, and that Naomi is now trying to exercise the family's right to redeem the land—remember, the law in Israel stipulated that land was not to be sold permanently but was to be recovered by the rightful family through the payment of the redemption price. According to this explanation, Naomi is now trying to "buy back" the family land, but since she has no money, she is requesting a kinsman redeemer do it for her. In other words, she is "selling" the right of redemption.^[4]

Boaz continues his explanation to Mr. So and so in verse 4. "I thought I should bring the matter to your attention [lit. 'I thought I should uncover your ear'] 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."

You say, "What is Boaz doing bringing up this land issue? I thought he was taking steps to marry Ruth." Just wait. It will soon be apparent. For now, allow me to restate the obvious. Boaz is taking steps to provide redemption, even if he ends up not being the one who provides the redemption. He will make sure that Ruth and Naomi are provided for. That's what love does. Love demonstrates itself *through action*. Talk is often cheap, but action speaks loudly.

In contrast to Boaz who took action, notice what the nearer kinsman did.

B. The nearer kinsman said he would provide redemption (4b). He *said* he would. Notice the end of verse 4, "I will redeem it," he said." And why did he say he would do it? Because Mr. So and so is a good businessman. It's a good deal to get this piece of property back in the family. Land means more crops. More crops mean more money. More money means more potential for the good life.

Nothing wrong with being a businessman who's got a nose for a good deal. Nothing wrong with buying land from a widow. Nothing wrong with making the most of God-given opportunities. But there's a contrast here, a day and night contrast between two men who were qualified to redeem a piece of property. By looking at the actions of these two men we can make two simple observations.

1. *It is natural to do what is good for yourself*. That's what Mr. So and so did. He assessed the situation,

decided the land purchase would be good for him, and said, “Sure, I will redeem it.” He did what came naturally to him, and to us. It is natural to do what is good for yourself. On the other hand...

2. *It is love to do what is good for others.* And that’s what Boaz did. He took steps to do what would be in the best interest of Ruth, a family that had no male descendant, and a nation whose God received honor when its citizens did the loving thing by obeying the laws He gave them.

Beloved, we live in a world that doesn’t know what love is, where love is finding someone who will give you what you want—sex, a good time, image, and so on. That’s not love. Love focuses *outward*. Love thinks about what is good for the *other* person and does that. For God so *loved* the world that He *gave His only Son*. That’s love.

True love takes action. Here’s a second characteristic illustrated by Boaz.

II. True love is willing to pay the price (5-6).

The contrast between Boaz and Mr. So and so continues...

A. Boaz informed the nearer kinsman of the price of redemption (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.’”

Boaz is a wise man. He knows that pleading for mercy from Mr. So and so won’t work, that saying, “Please! I love Ruth! I want to marry Ruth, but I can’t unless you help me because you are the nearest kinsman. Please let me redeem her!” won’t get anywhere. But this will. The bottom line. Money talks. Boaz informs Mr. So and so of a footnote in the contract of the land purchase. “If you get the dead man’s land, you also get his widow,” Boaz explains. “And the child you have with her will get the land.”

It was called Levirate marriage, and as we learned last week, it was a God-given law in Israel to protect widows and families (Deut. 25:5-6). That piece of information gave Mr. So and so second thoughts.

Verse 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.’” In other words...

B. The nearer kinsman decided the price was too high (6). At first, the nearer kinsman was willing to buy Naomi’s land, for although it would cost him some up front money, the expense would be worth it to him. His property holdings would increase. What’s more, Jewish law stipulated that after Naomi and Ruth died, the land would return to the clan of Elimelech anyway. That meant the land would revert to him and his sons (and perhaps partly to Boaz). The nearer kinsman saw this as a win-win situation.

Until Boaz mentioned the part about Ruth. If the nearer kinsman bought the field AND acquired Ruth, the field would belong not to his family but to the future son of Ruth. Furthermore, this meant he would have to spend his own children’s inheritance (his words indicate he already had children) to buy land that would end up belonging to Ruth’s future son. That changed everything. If he married Ruth and fathered a son by her, that meant he would lose money now and the land later.^[5] This was no longer a bargain, but a liability.

For the nearer kinsman it boiled down to money. He could not afford to buy the field *and* support a widow. Notice that...

1. *He said he could not do it.* That’s not really true. He *could* do it if he wanted to. It’s just that the care of Ruth would cost him. The truth is...

2. *He meant he would not do it.* Although he was qualified to be the redeemer, and furthermore had the means to fulfill the role of redeemer, he was not willing to pay the necessary redemption price. “It might endanger my

estate,” he said.

I remind you we don't even know Mr. So and so's name. Do you see the irony in this? As one commentator observes, “It remains...an instructive fact that he who was so anxious for the preservation of his own inheritance, is not now even known by name.”^[6]

It's possible that something else influenced the nearer kinsman's change of mind, Ruth's nationality. “Ruth *the Moabite*,” Boaz stressed. The fact that Ruth was a Gentile and not a Jew seems to be a factor in the kinsman's decision. He's not quite sure about having a son with this Gentile woman. The price was too high.

Of course, Boaz knew better. He'd taken time to get to know Ruth. Granted, she was a Moabite. That was in her past, and that's the point. That was *in her past*. She may have been born in Moab, but now she is in Israel. She didn't believe any longer in the Moabite god of her parents, Molech, but in the true God, Yahweh, the Savior of Israel whom she loved and committed herself to serve until death (1:16-17). And she didn't live any longer as she used to in Moab, in sense-driven violation of God's Law, but she now delighted in obeying the Law of the Lord.

When the Living God enters a person's life He makes them *new*. Aren't you glad of that fact? 2 Corinthians 5:17—“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

According to Mr. So and so the price was simply too high. But Boaz thought otherwise! True love is willing to pay the price!

III. True love is willing to be accountable (7-10).

The writer gives us a piece of cultural information in 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.)” In other words, there were no sales receipts. A sandal did the trick.

Verse 8—“So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, ‘Buy it yourself.’ And he removed his sandal.” In Psalm 60:8 God says, “Moab is my washbasin, upon Edom I toss my sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph.” Here Mr. So and so removed his sandal to make it official that he was not going to fulfill the duty of the kinsman redeemer. By giving it to Boaz...

A. The nearer kinsman gave up his right to redemption. Can't you see this fellow walking home that day wearing one sandal? He wasn't a bad guy. He didn't do anything illegal. He assessed the situation and did the rational thing.

Nonetheless, the contrast is striking. Mr. So and so was willing to take, but Boaz was willing to give. Mr. So and so was concerned about himself and endangering his estate, but Boaz was selfless and concerned about the care of two widows. Mr. So and so did the logical thing, but Boaz did the loving thing. Whereas Mr. So and so gave up his right to redemption...

B. Boaz made a public commitment to be a faithful redeemer. Verses 9-10—“Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people [in a time when few written records were kept it was important to have witnesses who could attest that a transaction was legal], ‘Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, 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!’”

The author makes it clear that Boaz made two public commitments that day...

1. *He promised to be a good husband to Ruth.* And...

2. *He promised to maintain the name of the dead.* He actually mentions Ruth's first husband by name, Mahlon. A lesser man might avoid the subject, but Boaz talks openly about the first husband of the woman he intends to marry.

And he talks openly about her past. Note the words, "Ruth the Moabitess" again. There's no derogatory intent in Boaz's words. He's simply stating a fact. Some say that love is blind, but Boaz wasn't blind. He knew exactly who he was marrying. He knew about Ruth's past and her new life in the present.

Huey comments about the author's repeated reference to 'Ruth the Moabitess' in the book: "He may have wanted to suggest that if a mere human being could love an outcast, redeem her, and bring her into fellowship with himself, God could love all the outcasts of the world, redeem them, and bring them into fellowship with himself."^[7]

Goslinga observes, "Boaz here stood revealed as a great and selfless man, a splendid contrast to the petty, self-seeking figure of the nearest kinsman redeemer."^[8] The nearer kinsman operated by the philosophy, "What's the *least* I can do? How little is enough?" By contrast, Boaz models true love, "What's the *most* I can do to implement God's good law for the good of others?"^[9]

May I say a word to those who are contemplating marriage? Marriage is a huge commitment and not to be entered into lightly. We would do well to receive godly counsel before entering marriage to make sure we have come to grips with the truth about the person we are marrying. Do we know who the person really is, their past, their character in the present, their aspirations for the future? Warren Wiersbe tells the painful story about John Wesley's marriage:

While crossing a bridge in London, John Wesley stumbled and sprained his ankle. Some friends carried him to the house of Mrs. Mary Vazielle on Threadneedle Street. She was a widow with several children. She cared for Wesley and his response to her concern was to ask her to marry him. If we were writing fiction we might say that the sprained ankle was God's providential way to bring those people together. But the marriage was a disaster, and Mary finally left John.

Had Wesley consulted with his brother Charles, and asked for the prayers of the brethren, he might have avoided that unfortunate situation. Mary was accustomed to her quiet home, and it was difficult for her to travel with her husband and stay in uncomfortable inns. It is unfortunate that Mary was not content just to ignore John's ministry; she actually opposed it. She gave certain personal letters to his enemies and even made additions to them that made them worse! Once she even pulled her husband around on the floor by his hair! "I felt as though I could have knocked the soul out of her!" one of Wesley's friends said. Wesley concluded that his unhappy marriage encouraged him to work harder and not complain about missing the comforts of a home. Certainly it encouraged him to be away from home more!^[10]

How tragic! And how refreshing to see the way Boaz approached marriage! He didn't marry out of infatuation. He faced reality concerning Ruth and made a commitment to love her. True love takes action. True love is willing to pay the price. True love is willing to be accountable. Finally...

IV. True love receives God's blessing (11-12).

In response to Boaz's public commitment, the people at the gate called upon Yahweh and asked Him for three blessings...

A. The people asked the Lord to bless Ruth. 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.'" Notice that the people affirm that *the Lord* is the giver of children, that He is the One who gave children to Rachel and Leah, the wives of Jacob, children through which the Lord formed the nation of Israel. Note also the people's view of the purpose of marriage, to have children and thereby populate the promised land. In stark contrast, think about how many few marriage today. They marry seeking *personal gratification*. "The purpose of marriage is *to satisfy me*," they believe. No wonder so many marriages fail.

B. The people asked the Lord to bless Boaz. Verse 11b—“May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem .” God loves to give honor to those who honor Him. “Do that!” the people are saying. “Give honor to this man who has shown himself to be a man of honor!”

C. The people asked the Lord to bless their offspring. Verse 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 .” Since the first son would legally be reckoned as Mahlon’s, the people ask the Lord to give Boaz many more children who would legally be his. Again, the people affirm that children come from the Lord. They mention Tamar, an ancestress of Boaz who had a levirate son fathered by Judah . “Do for Boaz and Ruth what you did for Judah and Tamar. Give them offspring!”

Answer this. Did the Lord grant this prayer request the people offered that day? Indeed, He did! In three ways...

1. *The prayer was immediately answered through Obed (17).* 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.” Verse 17—“And they named him Obed.” God answered the prayer! But He wasn’t finished...

2. *The prayer was eventually answered through David (22).* Verse 17 continues, “And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.” As a result of the moral and spiritual decline during the period of the judges, it became obvious that Israel needed a godly leader to bring them back to the Lord. And the Lord was preparing that man long before he was born. King David, the man God Himself later called “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22) was the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

But there was another, even greater fulfillment to this prayer request. The kinsman redeemer Boaz foreshadowed another redeemer, the final one. Job announced in Job 19:25, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.” Boaz rescued two helpless widows. The final redeemer rescued a helpless humanity!

Here’s how He did it. The Son of God agreed to come to earth as a man. He came to make a redemption payment as Paul explains in Galatians 4:4-5, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” In order to redeem man, God became a man. There could have been no redemption if the Son of God had not become our kinsman. So that’s what He did. God the Son entered the world as a man through the virgin birth in the person of Jesus Christ. And while on the earth, the perfect God-man willingly paid the redemption price for sinners. The cost? His own life. Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross. On the third day God verified His acceptance of the payment price by raising His Son from the dead.

In the book of Ruth, the nearer kinsman *could have* but chose not to redeem. In contrast, Kinsman Jesus, like Boaz, not only *could have* but willingly and joyfully *chose* to redeem! Of this Redeemer Hebrews 12:2 states, “... Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

It’s one thing to be *able* to do something, but that’s not enough. For a task to be accomplished the one who is able must additionally be *willing* to do so. And Jesus was!

No wonder Paul praised Him in Ephesians 1:7—“In him we have *redemption* through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”

The theme of redemption is one of the great themes in the Bible. Redemption means “to purchase by paying a price.”^[11] Boaz redeemed some land and two helpless widows by paying some money. But Jesus redeemed a multitude of undeserving sinners by spilling His own blood.

Did you realize that’s the theme of heaven’s song? It is according to Revelation 5:9: “And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men [AV ‘have *redeemed* us’] for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’” Yes...

3. *The prayer in Ruth 4 was ultimately answered through Jesus.* The question is, have you done what Ruth did? Have you asked the Kinsman Redeemer to redeem you, and have you come to rest in His saving care?

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed thro' His infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am.*

*Redeemed, and so happy in Jesus,
No language my rapture can tell;
I know that the light of His presence
With me doth continually dwell.*

*I think of my blessed Redeemer,
I think of Him all the day long:
I sing, for I cannot be silent;
His love is the theme of my song.*

*Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
His child and forever I am.^[12]*

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] Letter from W. Paul Jackson, president of Evangelical Baptist Missoins, January 2007.

[2] Observation in Huey, p. 541.

[3] Goslinga, p. 543. J. Vernon McGee agrees, citing Kiel and Delitzsch who confirm this view.

[4] Explanation offered in *NIV Study Bible*, footnote on p. 366.

[5] Goslinga, p. 548.

[6] Cassel , taken from Leon Morris, p. 298.

[7] Huey, p. 544.

[8] Goslinga, p. 549.

[9] Goslinga, p. 550.

[10] W. Wiersbe, *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, Moody Press, 1984, p. 246.

[\[11\]](#) J. Vernon McGee, p. 167.

[\[12\]](#) Fanny Crosby, “Redeemed”