

Ruth

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Ruth using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Historical Books* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shinin 12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure. 14 Do all thi tioning, ¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu 2:15 pervers • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

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Prepare

Read the Introduction to Ruth, paying particular attention to the *Literary Genre* and *Themes and Characteristics* of the book and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Ruth to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Ruth, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Ruth as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1.** Who are the judges in the period before the founding of the Davidic monarchy? When in this period is the story of Ruth set? With what does the loyalty of its main characters stand in contrast? At the beginning of this story, what is ironic about the name Bethlehem? Where is Moab? Although intermarriage with Moabites was not strictly prohibited, what were Moabites forbidden to join? To what union does Scripture trace the origin of the Moabites?
2. **1:8.** What does the Hebrew word *hesed* denote? Why will the Lord manifest his loving concern for Ruth, and how? What, in part, is the lesson?
3. **Word study: Clung (1:14).** What does the Hebrew word *dabaq* mean? What sorts of actions can it describe? In a relational context, what does it describe? What does it indicate in theological contexts?
4. **1:16–17.** How does Ruth pledge lifelong loyalty to Naomi? In so doing, what legal and religious effects result? What does Ruth do by forsaking her home and native religion, and of what does she become a model? According to St. Paulinus of Nola, what is signified by Ruth and Orpah going their separate ways?

For application

1. **1:1–5.** Have you or your family ever been forced by necessity to move to an unfamiliar location? If so, what were some of the financial, emotional, social, and even spiritual consequences of the move for you personally and for the family?
2. **1:8–9.** To which side of your family—the maternal or paternal side—do you feel closer? If you are married, how would you characterize your relationship with your in-laws (as compared with your relationship with your own parents), and why? How does the commandment to honor one’s father and mother apply to the parents of one’s spouse?
3. **1:16–17.** Conversion can entail making a complete break with certain relationships and with former attitudes toward faith. Have you yourself experienced such a conversion? What sorts of breaks with the past have you made, and with what did you replace the former attachments?
4. **1:20–21.** Naomi calls herself Mara, meaning “bitter”, a name that describes how she regards what God did to her in Moab. How do you regard yourself when your fortunes turn sour or disaster strikes? What questions do you ask of God under those circumstances?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:2.** What is someone who *gleans* doing? What did the Torah require landowners to do? Why?
2. **2:8–16.** What, according to the note, indicates that Boaz is going beyond the call of duty in showing kindness toward Ruth? According St. John Chrysostom, Ruth is an allegorical prefigurement of what? How are the two similar?
3. **2:12.** The Lord responds favorably to what virtues, and to what does the expectation of Boaz for blessings to a foreigner give witness? If the God of Israel is the God of all nations, what can every person who responds to his goodness expect? Looking forward to the New Testament, what do the words of Boaz anticipate? To what does the mention of wings suggest that Yahweh is likened?
4. **2:20.** What does the Hebrew word *go’el* mean? For what was this close relative responsible? What are the two laws that govern his role in the story of Ruth? How will Boaz fulfill his responsibility?

For application

1. **2:4.** Read the note for this verse. Does your relationship with the Lord carry over into your workplace? How should it do so?
2. **2:11–12.** What impresses Boaz about Ruth? What characteristics most often impress you about other people? What characteristics might impress God?
3. **2:13.** In her answer to Boaz, Ruth’s language shows that she is aware of and accepts her low social status. How aware are you of your status as a creature before God? How heartfelt is your acceptance of that status? How does it influence the way you address God in prayer?

4. **2:20.** Review the note for this verse. How does the Hebrew concept of a *go'el* apply to extended family situations today? What responsibility do you have for disabled or elderly members of your own family? How willing are you to take on such a responsibility if it does not now exist?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:2.** What was a threshing floor, and how was it used? Why would farmers such as Boaz spend the night at their threshing floors?
2. **3:3.** What are the actions of washing, anointing, and putting on her best clothes meant to signal? What is Ruth supposed to be doing? To what does the Hebrew for “best clothes” refer?
3. **3:9.** What does the spreading of Boaz’s garment symbolize? What might be suggested by the fact that the word translated “garment” here is rendered “wings” in 2:12?
4. **3:13.** What does the oath formula “as the Lord lives” do? What does Boaz thereby give Ruth by using it?

For application

1. **3:3–4.** (For both men and women:) How do you make yourself attractive to those whom you want to notice you for both personal and occupational reasons? Does your way of making yourself attractive accord with the virtue of modesty?
2. **3:5–9.** What character traits does Ruth display through her behavior in these verses? What indications of romantic love for Boaz do you see in her asking him to marry her? How might the absence of romantic love (at least at this point) not be an obstacle to a happy marriage?
3. **3:10–13.** What character traits do you see in Boaz’s response? What appear to be his motives in accepting her proposal? What is his attitude toward Ruth, and how does he show it (see also v. 15)?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1.** What function did the entryway into a walled settlement serve in ancient Israel? How are readers meant to view the timing of the arrival of Naomi’s next of kin? Why is the expression “friend” (better translated “so-and-so”) used as a substitute for a man’s proper noun?
2. **4:5.** Why does Boaz refer to Ruth rather than Naomi, his surviving wife, as legally the widow of the deceased Elimelech? Of whom is Ruth the widow, strictly speaking? What is the stated purpose of levirate marriage? What does it mean that responsibility for Elimelech’s land and ancestral line go together?
3. **4:7.** What does the gesture of removing the sandal indicate? What does handing the sandal to another kinsman indicate?
4. **4:16.** How do some interpret the gesture of Naomi placing the newborn child “in her bosom”? What would the gesture explain?
5. **4:18–22.** What purpose does closing the book of Ruth with a genealogy of Judah spanning ten generations from Perez to David accomplish for the story? Unknown to Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi at the time, what impact would their story have on the future of Israel? How was the ultimate purpose made clear in the opening of the Gospel of Matthew?

For application

1. **4:1.** What is “divine Providence” (see CCC 302ff.)? Have events in your own life illustrated God’s Providence? Have there been some happy “coincidences” that have encouraged you to trust in God even more?
2. **4:3–6.** Why do you think Boaz discloses only gradually what is involved in buying Elimelech’s property? What are the advantages and disadvantages for both buyer and seller in handling transactions this way?
3. **4:9–11.** What is the function of a *witness* in a transaction such as the one being narrated here? in a court trial? in an evangelistic presentation? In your personal circumstances, how are you being called to witness to your faith?
4. **4:18–22.** How far back can you trace your ancestry? What does your ancestry tell you about yourself? What might it indicate about your family’s future? Can you see the Providence of God entering into your family’s history?