

When Trying Times Come

"Finding God's Hope and Help in Trying Times"

Week 1 - Ruth 1:1-5

True or not? 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."

Truth from Ruth: We cannot control what happens to us but we can control how we respond.

- ◆ **Note:** We can respond to trying times by saying something like, "Instead of panicking, I am going to respond by praying. Instead of stressing out, I choose to respond by believing that my God is great enough to see me through what I'm going through!" And if the devil whispers worries into your ear just tell him, "Devil, I'm not only practicing social distancing with you, but I am also practicing spiritual distancing with you. In Jesus' name, get at least six feet away!"

Section 1 - Why these times were trying times.

(Ruth 1:1-3)

- ◆ **Note:** We are at a time in our nation when the need for law enforcement and law enforcement officers is being challenged. But God is very clear on this matter. The Bible tells us in places such as Romans 13:1-5, that God has established governing authorities to PROTECT those who obey the law and to PUNISH those who rebel against the law. God not only affirms that we need law and order but He also affirms the need for officials to administer law and order.

Section 2 - Not what things were supposed to be like.

(Ruth 1:4-5)

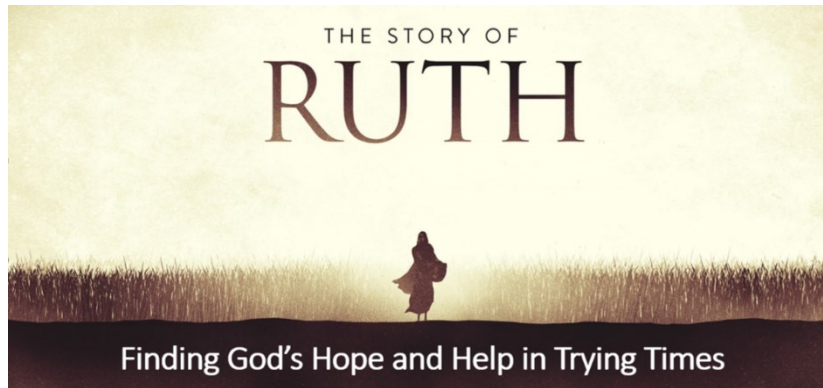
Today's Take-Away Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - We can't run from our problems because our problems will follow us wherever we go.

Truth #2 - Good motives can't cancel the impact of bad decisions. Galatians 6:7 reminds us that we will reap whatever we sow.

Truth #3 - God will sometimes use unlikely people and circumstances for His purposes.

Truth #4 - We should not hope less, or consider a situation hopeless, if God is involved.



When a Heart Feels Broken and Bitter
"Finding God's Hope and Help in Trying Times"
Week 2 - Ruth 1:6-22

Last Week's Truth from Ruth: We cannot control what happens to us but we can control how we respond.

Section #1 - Heading back to Bethlehem. (Ruth 1:6-10)

Section #2 - Naomi pleads with her daughters-in-law not to move from Moab. (Ruth 1:11-15)

Section #3 - Ruth affirms her loyal love to Naomi and Naomi's God. (Ruth 1:16-18)

Section #4 - When God doesn't seem to make sense, a broken heart can become a bitter heart. (Ruth 1:19-21)

Section #5 - God was working on a blessing in Bethlehem for Naomi and Ruth. (Ruth 1:22)

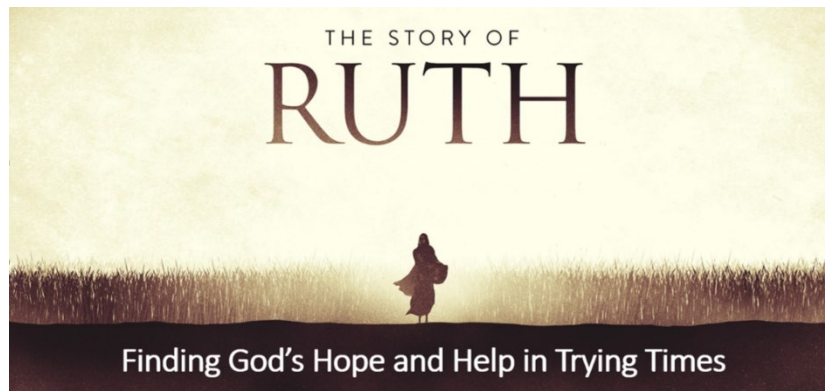
Today's Take-Away Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - Real security can only be found in the Lord. Therefore, it is better to go through a famine with the Lord than to be anywhere else without Him.

Truth #2 - It is God who stocks the shelves. To those who trust in Him, He will provide.

Truth #3 - No matter what the mistake, the answer is always to draw closer to the Lord, not going further from Him.

Truth #4 - How we see God is one of the most important things in life. An incorrect view of God can make us miserable in every season of life. But a correct view of God, as revealed in the Bible, will be a blessing to us in every season of life.



As It Happened - Ways God Works In our Lives

“Finding God’s Hope and Help in Trying Times”

Week 3 - Ruth 2:1-7

A definition of God’s providence. The word “providence” refers to “God’s oversight of the whole world.” The word “oversight” means that God directs the course of affairs (Psalm 103:19; Proverbs 16:9; Proverbs 19:21). It affirms that God is in complete control of all things at all times and in His wisdom and love, He directs all things. This means, God not only sees the big picture; but He is also concerned with the smallest details (Matthew 10:29). Through divine providence God accomplishes His purposes for His glory and our good (Romans 11:36).

Section 1 - God works in our lives by preparing people.
(Ruth 2:1)

God is with us and ahead of us. We often limit our thinking to the fact that God’s presence goes with us as we go through life. This is true, but it’s only part of the truth. God is not only with us in the “now,” but He is also ahead of us in the “future.” Deuteronomy 31:8 says, “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you ...” To say it another way: God is at work in the future while we live in the present. That means that God already has solutions for any problems we don’t even know we have yet!

Section 2 - God works in our lives by arranging plans.
(Ruth 2:2-3)

- ◆ **Note:** Ruth experienced a very NATURAL moving of the SUPERNATURAL hand of God. She didn’t just “happen” to choose the field of Boaz. God directed her there because God had arranged plans for Ruth’s life and it involved her being at that field.

Section 3 - God works in our lives by overseeing the results. (Ruth 2:4-7)

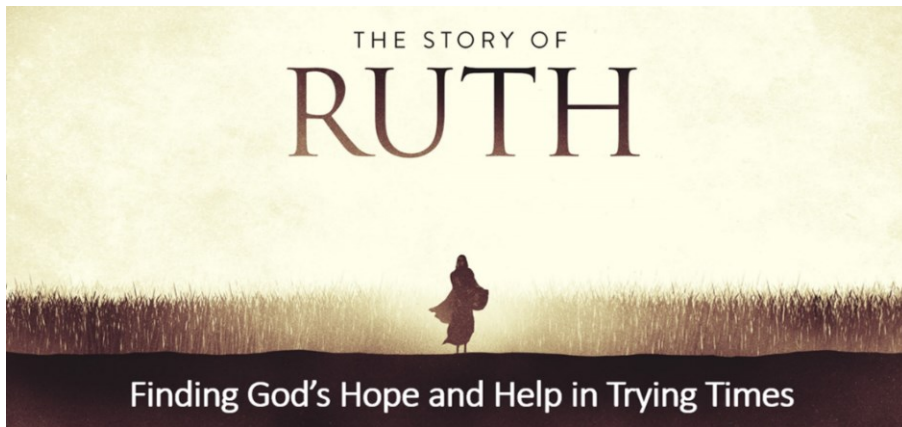
- ◆ **Note:** Let’s make sure we don’t miss this: God even used the foreman’s report on how hard Ruth worked in the field to make a good impression on Boaz. This foreman’s report is what prompted Boaz to go to Ruth and begin their first conversation together!

Today’s Take-Away Truths from God’s Word

Truth #1 - The characters in the story of Ruth teach us about the character of God.

Truth #2 - God doesn’t do things by accident but by appointment.

Truth #3 - The story of Ruth teaches us not to jump to conclusions. When God is a part of our story, there is always more to the story!



A Love Story for Everyone

“Finding God’s Hope and Help in Trying Times”
Week 4 - Ruth 2:8-16

→ **Note:** Here is how the Israelite society worked. Each individual was a part of a FAMILY - your immediate relatives by blood or marriage. Each family was a part of a CLAN - your extended relatives. And each clan was part of a TRIBE - one of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. For example, Naomi was a part of the FAMILY of Elimelech, which was a part of the CLAN of Boaz, which was a part of the TRIBE of Judah.

Section 1 - The start of a love story. (Ruth 2:8-13)

→ **Note:** Boaz knew that if Ruth stayed in his fields, she would be blessed. One, she would find COMPANIONSHIP among the other young women. Two, she would find PROTECTION because he had warned his men, in essence, to practice six feet of social distancing around Ruth (“do not touch her”). And three, she would find REFRESHMENT whenever she was thirsty from his workers water jars.

→ **Note:** Ruth’s attitude is wonderful and worth following. We never see Ruth asking why bad things have come into her life. Instead, we find Ruth asking why good things come into her life. As we said in our truth from Ruth in week one, “Ruth could not control what happened to her but she could control how she would respond to it.” With God’s help, we can too.

Section 2 - Getting to know you. (Ruth 2:14-16)

→ **Note:** What Boaz ordered his men to do was more generous than the Leviticus chapter 19 command for the poor. This may be another hint that romance was beginning in the heart of Boaz. Boaz wanted to bless Ruth, but he didn’t want to dishonor her dignity by seeming to give her charity out of pity. So, he would have his workers allow some grain to fall to the ground, supposedly on accident, so that she could pick it up.

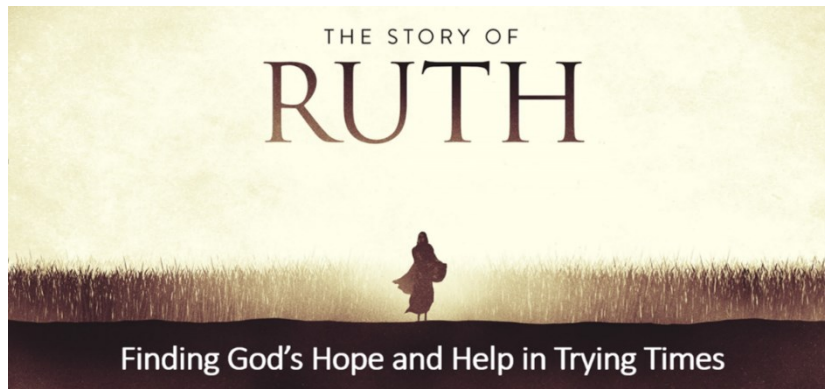
Today’s Take-Away Truths from God’s Word

Truth #1 - Nowhere in the story of Ruth do we get a physical description of her. However, every picture portrayed of Ruth portrays her as an beautiful woman. That may be true. But what the Bible emphasizes is not her looks but her character.

Truth #2 - Boaz walked with God, and his walk with God was not compartmentalized from the daily routine of his life (Ruth 2:4; 12).

Truth #3 - A Christian should never say, “That was lucky.” A Christian should always say, “That was the Lord.”

Truth #4 - The story of Ruth is ultimately a love story for everyone! It ultimately tells the story of God’s amazing love for all humanity.



God Can Come Through for You
“Finding God’s Hope and Help in Trying Times”
Week 5 - Ruth 2:17-23

- ◆ **Note:** We noticed last week that the author of Ruth stopped the story of Ruth in chapter 2, verse 1 to give us a heads-up about a very important detail: “Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.” The storyteller wanted us to know that Naomi “just happened” to have a relative in Bethlehem from her husband’s side of the family named Boaz. Ruth and Naomi are unaware of this at that moment, but by the end of chapter 2, this family tree fact will be very important and change everything for them!

Section 1 - And out of nowhere, something good from God happens that changes everything. (Ruth 2:17-19)

- ◆ **Note:** The words in this prayer in verse 19 show Naomi beginning to move from feeling bitter to feeling blessed. This expression of gratitude was a start in her heart in allowing the Lord to heal her bitterness.

Section 2 - Naomi goes from stressing over things to blessing the Lord for His provision. (Ruth 2:20-23)

- ◆ **Note:** The Old Testament law allowed a close relative to step in and “redeem” a family member under certain circumstances. One such circumstance mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 allowed a man to marry his deceased brother’s wife if the brother died without a son. This way the brother could provide children for his deceased brother and keep the family name alive. Boaz “just happened” to be one of Naomi’s family redeemers.

Today’s Take-Away Truths from God’s Word

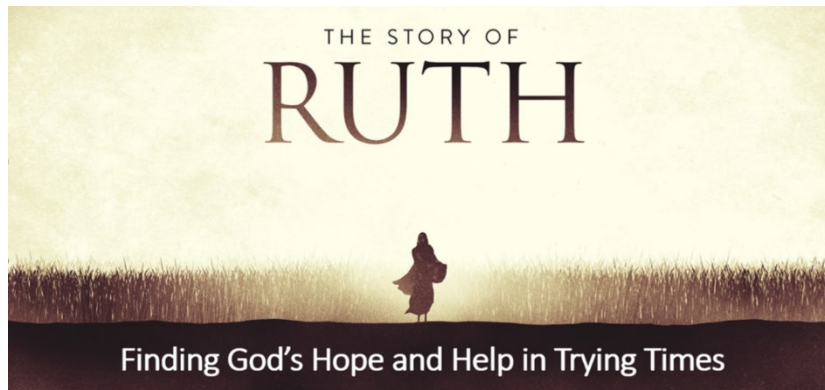
Truth #1 - The invisible God visibly cares for His people.

Truth #2 - A “God thing” happened in Ruth’s day but can also happen in our day!

Truth #3 - Whether we are aware of it or not, God is always demonstrating His nonstop kindness to us (Ruth 2:20).

Truth #4 - Look again at your view of God and make sure that what you think matches what your Bible says (compare Ruth 1:20 to Ruth 2:20).

Truth #5 - God can always come through because God does what only God can do!



No Shortcuts to Doing Things God's Way
"Finding God's Hope and Help in Trying Times"
Week 6 - Ruth 3:1-18

- ◆ **Note:** We know this truth in our head but don't always practice it in our actions: **God always has a plan** (Proverbs 19:21; Job 42:2; James 4:15; Isaiah 46:10) **and never needs help fulfilling it** (Romans 11:33-36). God has never put out a sign next to His throne in Heaven saying "Help Wanted." The plan which Naomi proposed to Ruth in chapter 3 was an attempted shortcut to doing things God's way.

Section 1 - Advice on how to hook a husband.
(Ruth 3:1-5)

- ◆ **Note:** The "goel," the Hebrew word for the family redeemer, was responsible to safeguard the persons, the property, and the posterity (that is, the future generations) of his other relatives.

Section 2 - A midnight marriage proposal.
(Ruth 3:6-9)

- ◆ **Note:** We might not recognize it yet in verse 9, but that is a straightforward marriage proposal. And it wasn't Boaz proposing to Ruth but Ruth proposing to Boaz! The phrase

"spread the corner of your garment over me" was Ruth's way of saying, "Would you marry me, and bring me under your protection as my husband?"

Section 3 - He loves me, he loves me not. (Ruth 3:10-11)

- ◆ **Note:** Although Ruth had bathed, put on perfume, nice clothes, and could have very well been a beautiful young woman, what Boaz found most attractive about Ruth was not her appearance, but her godly character.

Section 4 - A potential problem that could prevent this love story from happening. (Ruth 3:12-15)

- ◆ **Note:** Thankfully, Boaz wasn't willing to try to cut corners or find short-cuts to doing things God's way. Boaz would do God's will, God's way. He knew that if this was really from the Lord, then it could be done in the right way, and he could trust the Lord with the results.

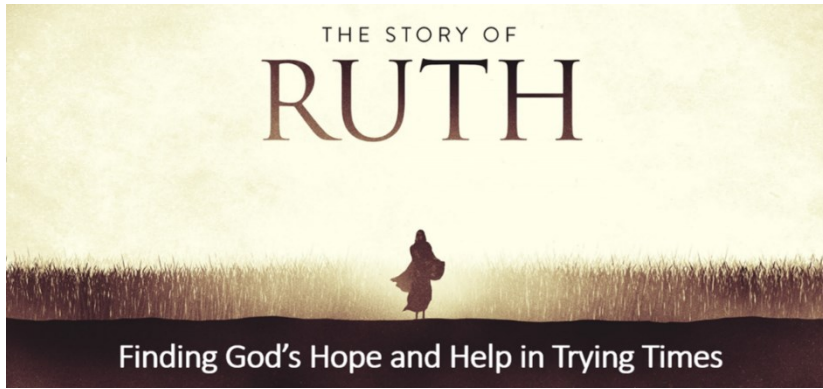
Section 5 - Ruth returns home and reports to Naomi.
(Ruth 3:16-18)

Today's Take-Away Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - It is always unwise to leave the Lord out of our plans. Naomi's proposition to Ruth mentions many things ... but there is no mention of the Lord in her plans.

Truth #2 - God will use everything from a warm heart to good feet, to bring about His plans and purposes.

Truth #3 - Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God (Corrie Ten Boom).



Holding Out Hope for Better Things to Come
“Finding God’s Hope and Help in Trying Times”
Week 7 - Ruth 4:1-12

Section 1 - Not the news you were hoping for. (Ruth 4:1-4)

Section 2 - Deal or no deal? (Ruth 4:5-8)

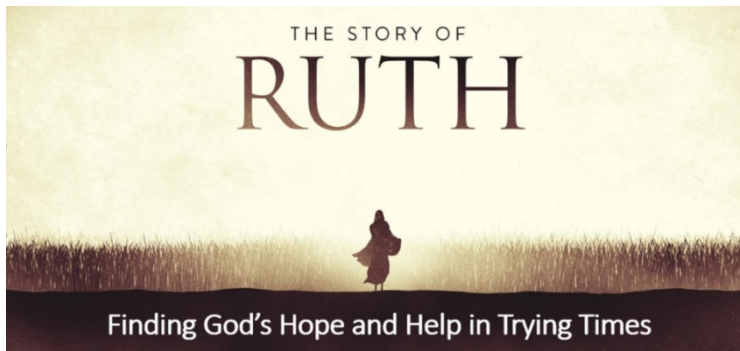
Section 3 - An old fashioned wedding announcement.
(Ruth 4:9-12)

Today’s Take-Away Truths from God’s Word

Truth #1 - We should always take time to remember where we came from to where we are now, and praise the grace of our God!

Truth #2 - Always leave room for what God can do. Try as we might, we cannot orchestrate all of life’s affairs. It’s wise to do what we can do and wait for the Lord to take care of the rest. If we follow God’s plan, we can expect God’s blessings.

Truth #3 - God can do more in our life than we can ever imagine when we put Him first.



History is His Story

"Finding God's Hope and Help in Trying Times"
Week 8 - Ruth 4:13-22

- ◆ **Note:** In trying times, if we really believe God loves us, cares about us, and can make all things work together for good for us, our trying times will turn into trusting times in a God who can get us through anything we're going through.

Truth from Ruth: When we look to God, His providential grace will never allow one page of our life to dictate the story of our life. There are several times in the story of Ruth that we could stop on a page of her life and incorrectly assume this is going to be the story of her life and it will not be a good story. But because God is the Editor of her life story, any one page of her life must never dictate the rest of the story of her life. The same is true for everyone who looks to and puts their trust in God.

Section 1 - From a wedding announcement to a birth announcement. (Ruth 4:13)

- ◆ **Note:** When conception is viewed as a work of God in the womb (Ruth 4:13), then the whole abortion debate changes. For the last 47 years, the abortion debate has largely been about a woman's right to choose what she wants to do with her unborn child. But when we understand that conception is a work of God in the womb (Psalm 139:13), then the value of life and the aborting of life take on far deeper ramifications. Then, abortion isn't about a choice - it's about a child. Some babies may die by chance, but if conception is a work of God, no baby should die because of a choice.

Section 2 - From feeling bitter to feeling blessed. (Ruth 4:14-17)

- ◆ **Note:** If Naomi had considered what the Lord could do next in her life, she never would have started a time of bitterness in her life. The same is true for us. We may see a piece of our life's puzzle that doesn't seem to fit and we can get upset with others or even upset with God. But what we need to learn with Naomi is this: When we can't figure out what God is doing, we need to remember that He always knows what He is doing.

Section 3 - The story of Ruth leads to the story of Jesus. (Ruth 4:18-22)

- ◆ **Note:** This genealogy shows us how God is always guiding history. It shows us how God is always working out His purpose, generation after generation. It shows us the continuity of God's purpose in all history. It shows us history is not haphazard. It shows us there is a purpose in all history and that purpose is the purpose of God.

Today's Take-Away Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - Here's how Jesus is our spiritual redeemer. Only Jesus has the right to redeem (Philippians 2:6); only Jesus has the resources to redeem (Philippians 2:7); and only Jesus has the resolve to redeem (Philippians 2:8).

Truth #2 - Although we live in a non-fairy-tale world, we do have a real God who can give us real hope and real help in life's trying times.

Truth #3 - History is not a mystery. History is always about His Story.