

# God Promises

## a Life of Blessing

*Written by Dr. Ken Hemphill*

**T**he book of Ruth contains a beautiful story of two women, Naomi and Ruth, and their God. Because of famine Naomi moves with her husband, Elimelech, to the land of Moab. While there, Naomi's husband and her two sons die, leaving her destitute.

Naomi determines to return to her homeland and instructs her two daughters-in-law, who are both Moabite women, to return to their homes and to remarry. One of them, Ruth, decides to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem and declares that she desires to serve Naomi's God.

Naomi goes to her homeland and settles near Elimelech's relatives. There, Ruth meets Boaz (a relative of Elimelech), and he allows Ruth to glean among the grain left by the harvesters. Boaz then serves a meal and instructs his servants to pull out grain and leave it for her. God's blessing is always more abundant than we expect or deserve.

Boaz's generosity is manifest when he offers to redeem (buy back) the land of Naomi's husband, Elimelech. Redeeming the property of a kinsman may seem strange to us, but Old Testament law provided for it because land was seen as a gift from the Lord to be held in stewardship (Lev. 25:23–24).

Elimelech is dead and Naomi is destitute, but God is gracious to prompt Boaz to redeem the land and provide for both Naomi and Ruth. Isn't this just like our God? God paid a price for us! "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). It is this sort of extravagant generosity that we are to mimic in response to all that God has done for us.

# We Discover God's Blessings Through a Life of Stewardship

*Written by Dr. Ken Hemphill*

**W**hat motivates you and captures your attention and focuses your energy? We see that Ruth was passionate about pursuing a relationship with Naomi and her God.

Following the deaths of Ruth's and Naomi's husbands, Naomi determines to return home, so she encourages her daughter-in-law to remain with her own people and remarry. Ruth refuses to leave her mother-in-law, declaring: "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16). Ruth's declaration suggests that she had counted the cost and realized that this decision would require her to leave all that was familiar and trust God fully.

After Naomi and Ruth settle near the family of Elimelech, Naomi's late husband, they discover again how relationship is the basis of God's loving redemption. They meet Elimelech's relative Boaz, who treated Ruth with kindness by letting her glean from his harvest. This causes Naomi to break forth in praise to God (Ruth 2:20). She prays for a blessing on Boaz but the praise focuses on a God who has not withdrawn His loving-kindness. Boaz becomes a source of provision for Naomi and Ruth and as a close relative of Elimelech, he has the right of redemption—on the land and the family.

In Ruth 4:4–10, we see that Boaz is willing to use his resources in compliance with God's redemptive mission. This story points to several fundamental truths. First, God is a God of redemption who has the desire and the power to redeem the downtrodden and needy. Second, God uses those who are willing to invest their time, talents, and treasures in His redemptive mission.

Similarly, when we live a life of faithful stewardship unto God, He brings us into His redemptive mission. If we will act like Boaz and be willing to use our resources for God's glory, our lives will overflow as a blessing to many.

## The Community of Faith Extends God's Blessings Through Missions

*Written by Dr. Ken Hemphill*

On the surface, you might think that the book of Ruth is simply a beautiful love story. It speaks of Ruth's love for Naomi and for the one true God Ruth found through her relationship with Naomi. It is also the story of Boaz's love for Ruth, which makes him willing to pay the redemption price for the land of his kinsman. But do you know the rest of the story?

Matthew gives us some of the details as he begins his gospel with a lengthy genealogy that links Jesus back to David—the lineage through whom the Messiah was prophesied to come. The genealogy demonstrates that God's plan of redemption has been in process from the beginning, as chronicled in the Old Testament from ages past. Listen to the lineage, and you will hear a few familiar names: “Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king” (Matt. 1:5–6).

Isn't God incredible? Rahab, a harlot, and Ruth, a Moabitess, are both found in the lineage of the Savior. Ruth, who passionately sought a relationship with the one true God, would become the great-grandmother of King David. It is wonderful to know that there is room for everyone in the plans and blessings of God.

God has demonstrated His generosity to the Rahabs and Ruths of every generation. After all, He became poor so that we might become rich. So what should be the response of His people who today have experienced His generosity in Christ Jesus? We can tell the world of His goodness! You can proclaim His Good News to those who have yet to hear the Gospel by sharing your story and your resources. Your generous stewardship through your church advances the cause of Christ around the world and magnifies His name.

