



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

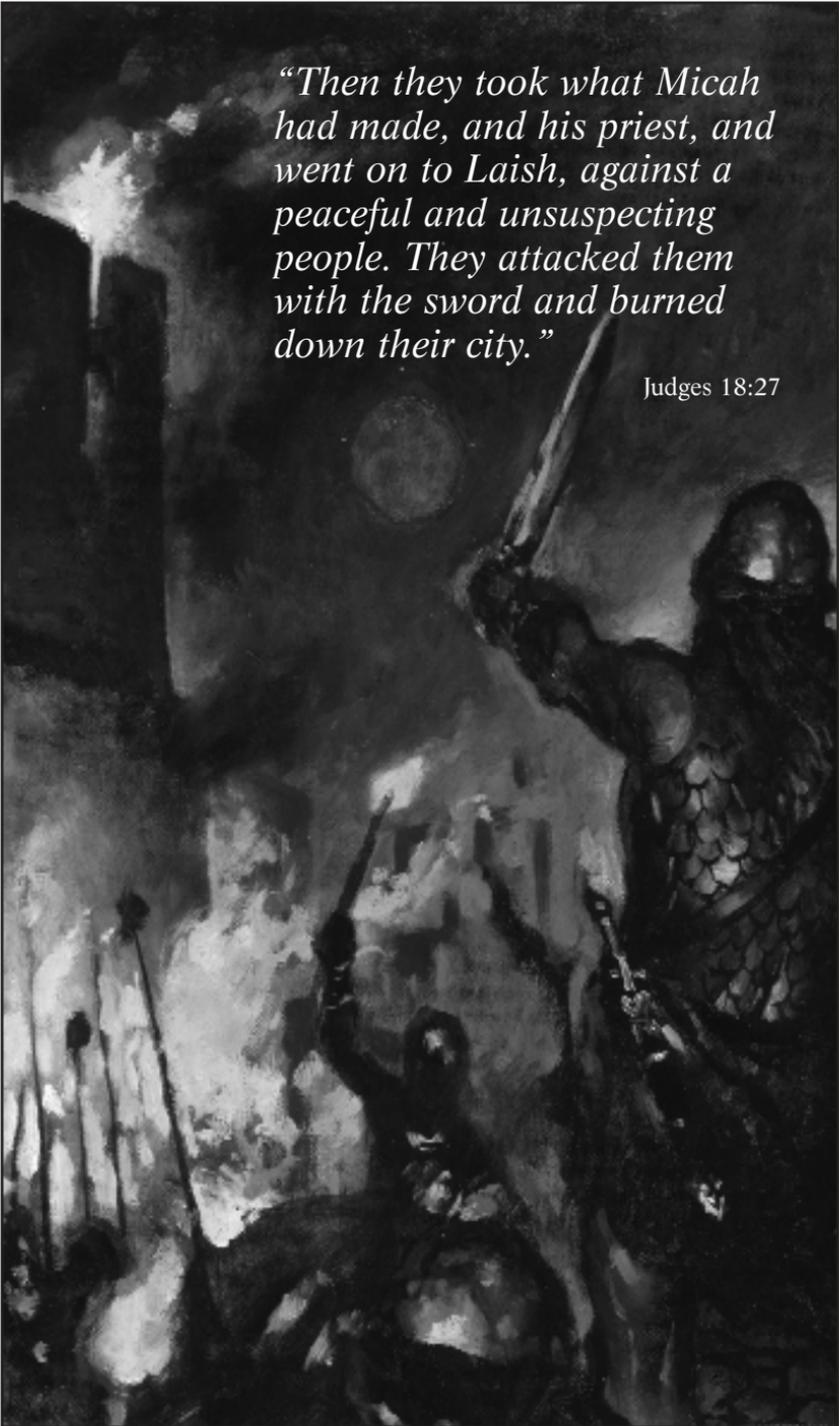
THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

JUDGES & RUTH

Week 4

*“Then they took what Micah had made, and his priest, and went on to Laish, against a peaceful and unsuspecting people. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city.”*

Judges 18:27



# An Offer He Couldn't Refuse

DAY 22

Judges 18:11-31

Is there a job offer you would find impossible to turn down?

1. Why would the Danites want to take Micah's idols? (a) they were made of valuable silver, (b) they would bring good luck in the coming battle, (c) as an incentive for the priest to come with them, (d) the Danites weren't very creative and couldn't come up with idols of their own.
2. What invitation was extended to Micah's priest? How does he respond?
3. What was Micah's reaction to all this? Why did he give up so easily?
4. How did this saga end? Who won, who lost? The Danites were successful, just as the priest predicted. Does this mean that they were being blessed by God?

1. Have you ever been the victim of a robbery or theft? Were you able to recover your property? Were the thieves brought to justice? If so—or if not—how did that make you feel?
2. In this story everyone seems to want to use God for selfish reasons. Is it possible that you are merely “using” God while you are going through the “religious motions”?

*It is assumed that **Jonathan son of Gershom** (v. 30) is the actual name of the Levite previously mentioned in this chapter.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## The Levite and His Concubine

Judges 19:1-21

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever had to spend the night in an area that seemed unsafe and plagued with crime?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

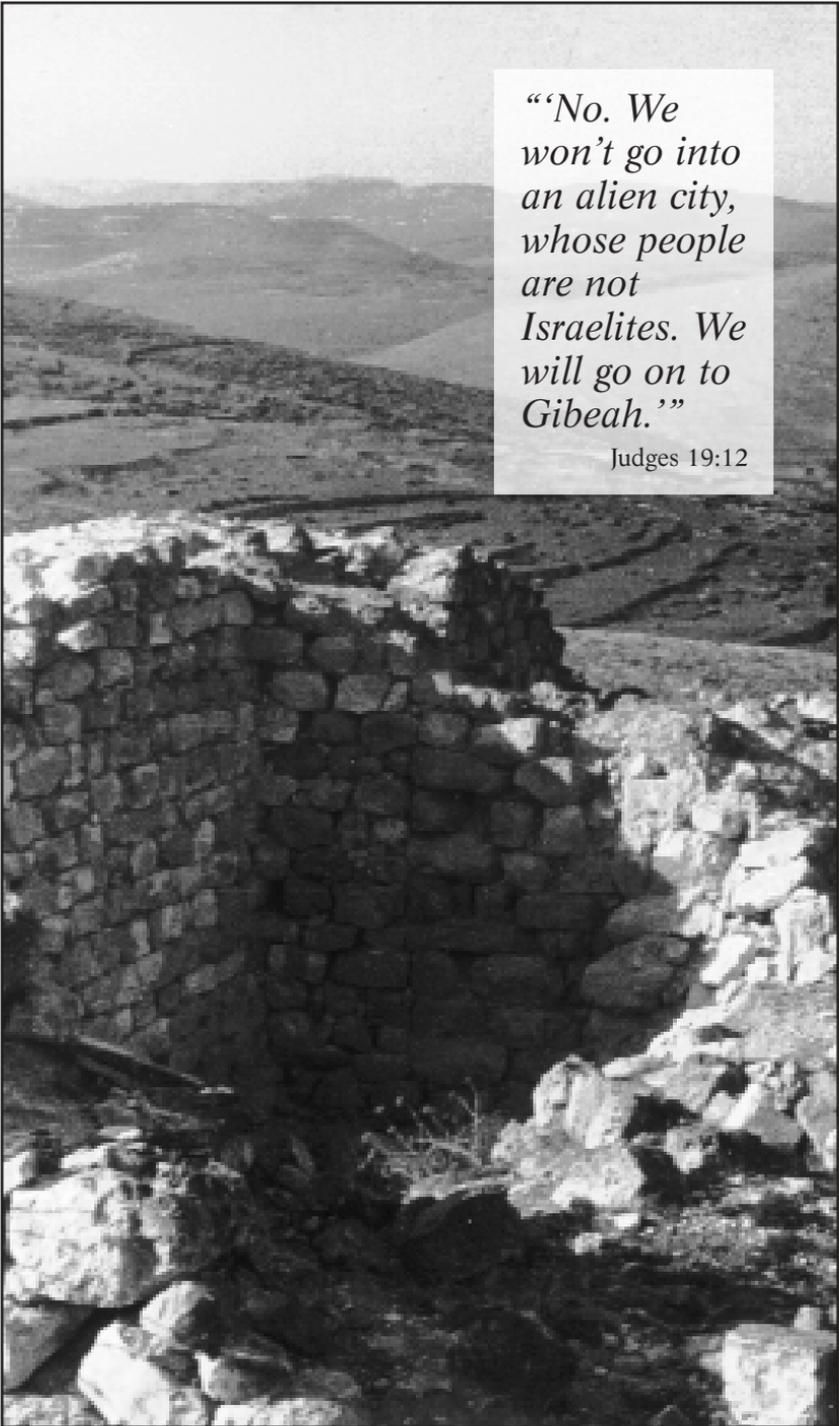
1. Consider the first verse of this chapter. How does this story relate to the fact that “Israel had no king.”
2. Why did the woman leave the Levite? Where did she go (v. 2)?
3. Why do you think the Levite waited so long to ask his concubine to return to him? What happened when the Levite visited her and her father?
4. It appears that the woman was not present as the two men feasted each day. Do you think the woman had any choice in the matter of whether to return to her husband?
5. Why did the Levite resist spending the night in Jerusalem? What problems might there have been with an Israelite spending the night in a gentile city? (a) danger from violence (b) a language barrier (c) non-kosher foods (d) non-observance of the Sabbath (e) lack of decent sanitation. Where did the Levite finally find lodging?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. When you are hurting, is there a friend you can visit who will “gladly welcome you” (v. 3)?
2. Because the concubine had shamed her father by being unfaithful to her husband, the father felt compelled to lavish his son-in-law with hospitality. Have you ever done something wrong to someone you love? Did you try to make amends?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Having **concubines** was culturally acceptable in ancient times. A concubine was legally bound to a man but did not have the inheritance rights of a legal wife. Also, the concubine's children did not receive inheritance from the father. Concubines were often prisoners of war carried off by conquering warriors.*

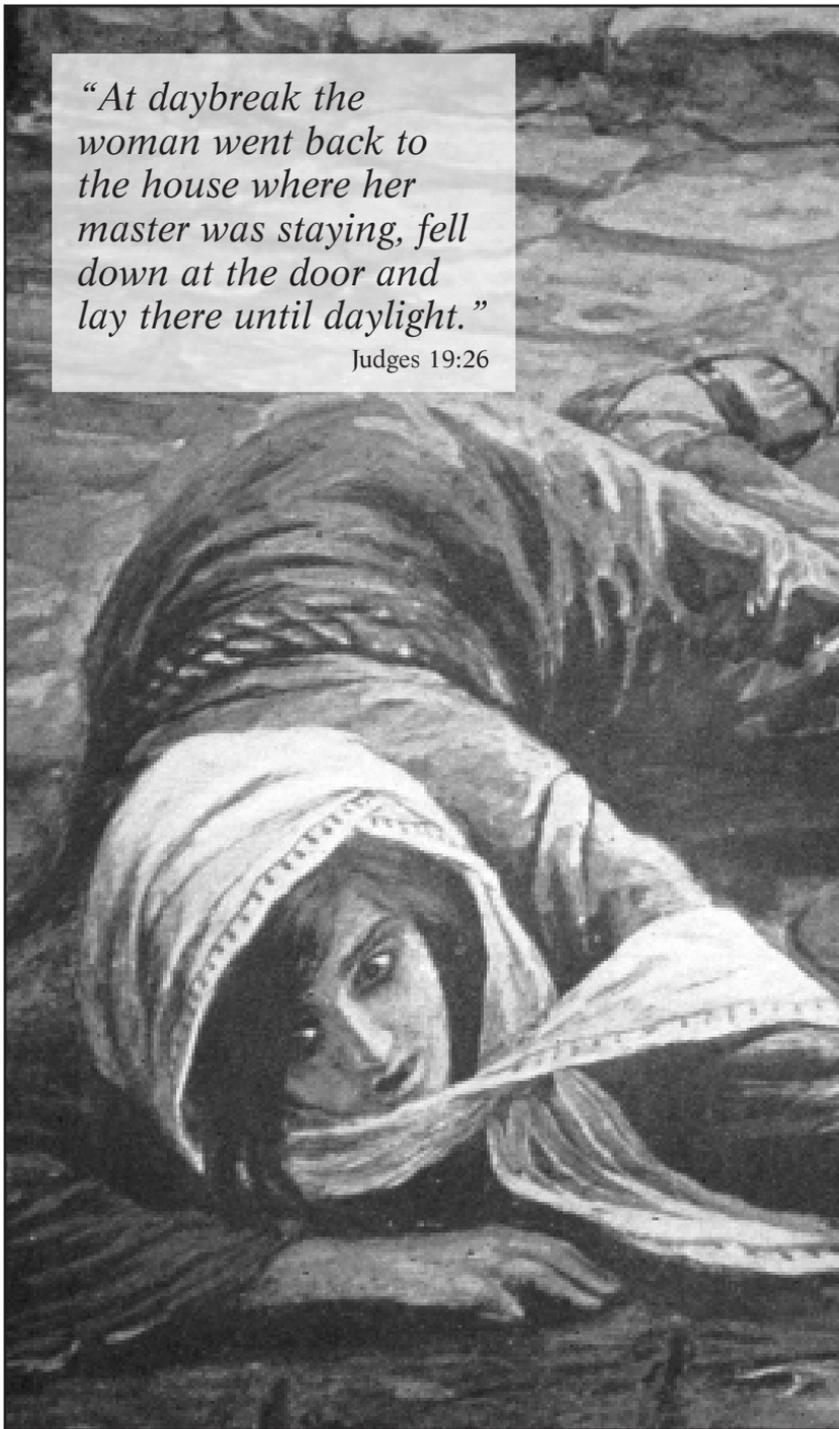


*“No. We  
won’t go into  
an alien city,  
whose people  
are not  
Israelites. We  
will go on to  
Gibeah.’”*

Judges 19:12

*“At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight.”*

Judges 19:26



Artwork by James Tissot

# How Dare You?!

DAY 24

Judges 19:22-30

Think of a time when your community or nation was outraged over some horrendous act.

1. Sexual predators surrounded the house hosting the Levite and his concubine. What was their demand?
2. What was the host's response (vs. 23-24)? Who was finally sent out to gratify the sexual desires of the men of the city?
3. When the Levite discovered his concubine's body, he was so enraged that he cut it into 12 pieces, sending one to each of the twelve Israelite tribes with an account of what had happened. Yet the Levite shared responsibility for her death by offering her to the mob. Do you think the Levite was angry out of grief and concern over the woman, or merely because he had lost a "piece of property"?
4. Would a king over Israel have been able to prevent this horrific crime? How?

1. Have you been outraged by any recent inhumane treatment of people? Did you take any action? When we thirst for revenge, are we following the life and teachings of Jesus?
2. Is moral leadership reserved for politicians and religious institutions, or can God work through individuals?
3. Why do you think this story is included in the Bible? What lessons does it offer us, from a New Testament, Christ-centered perspective?

While the **rape of a woman** was normally considered "disgraceful" in Hebrew culture (Ge 34:7), the Levite's host here only referred to the potential rape of his male guest as "disgraceful," offering his own daughter as a substitute. Lot responded in a similar way under similar circumstances (Ge 19). This suggests that the Israelite citizens of the town of Gibeah had adopted the morals of Sodom, perhaps after having adopted the Canaanite religion of Baal worship.

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

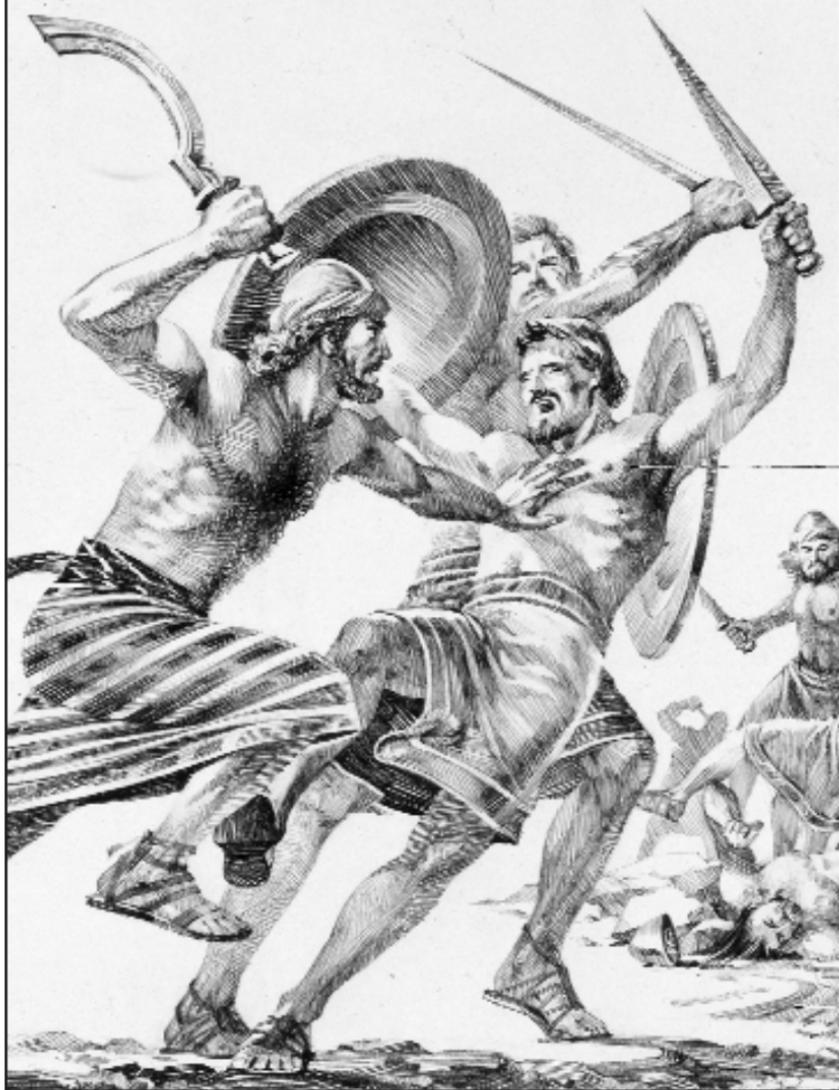
**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*“Then ten thousand of Israel’s finest men  
made a frontal attack on Gibeah. The  
fighting was so heavy that the Benjamites  
did not realize how near disaster was.”*

Judges 20:34



# Here We Go Again

DAY 25

Judges 20:1-48

Think of parts of the world where there have been civil wars. What do you remember about the suffering, devastation and loss in such conflicts?

1. Who gathered at Mizpah and how many were there? What information did they seek before acting?
2. Before the rest of Israel declared war on Benjamin, what alternative was offered to them (v. 12)? How did the Benjamites respond?
3. How many battles were required before the Benjamites were conquered? How many lives were lost?
4. Why do you think the Benjamites defended the wicked actions of the Gibeonites?

1. Have you ever been involved in a family or church battle? Over what? Did the battle resolve the problem, or did the battle end up doing more damage than the original problem?
2. Have you ever been present at a “call to arms” gathering?
3. How do you think Jesus felt about this civil war?

*Although placed at the end of the book, these events probably occurred **early in the period of the Judges**, since Phinehas the grandson of Aaron was still high priest (v. 28). Also, the tribes were still relatively unified (v. 1). Verse 27 is the only place in the book of Judges where the Ark of the Covenant is mentioned, indicating the extent to which paganism and secularism eclipsed the worship of the true God in the later period of the Judges.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

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on the Word

## An Unhappy Ending

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Judges 21:1-25

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever experienced an unhappy ending?  
Can it be resolved or transformed?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What was the result of Israel's bitter civil war? How did the larger, surviving tribes feel toward the tribe of Benjamin?
2. What two "solutions" were devised in order to perpetuate the tribe of Benjamin?
3. How is verse 25 an appropriate ending to the book of Judges? Is it ironic, or appropriate that Israel's first king was a Benjamite?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Recall a time when you've acted irrationally or out of anger. What was the result? Did you have repair work to do?
2. In this chapter, former enemies had to learn to work together in order to perpetuate the common good. Are there any groups in our culture that could benefit by working together rather than against each other?
3. Now that you have completed your study of the book of Judges, what one Christ-centered statement could sum up your understanding of this book?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

The **tribe of Benjamin** eventually recovered from the civil war. Saul, Israel's first king, was from this tribe, as was queen Esther and the apostle Paul.

# Introduction to Ruth

**Authorship:** The author of Ruth is unknown, but Jewish tradition holds that Samuel was the author.

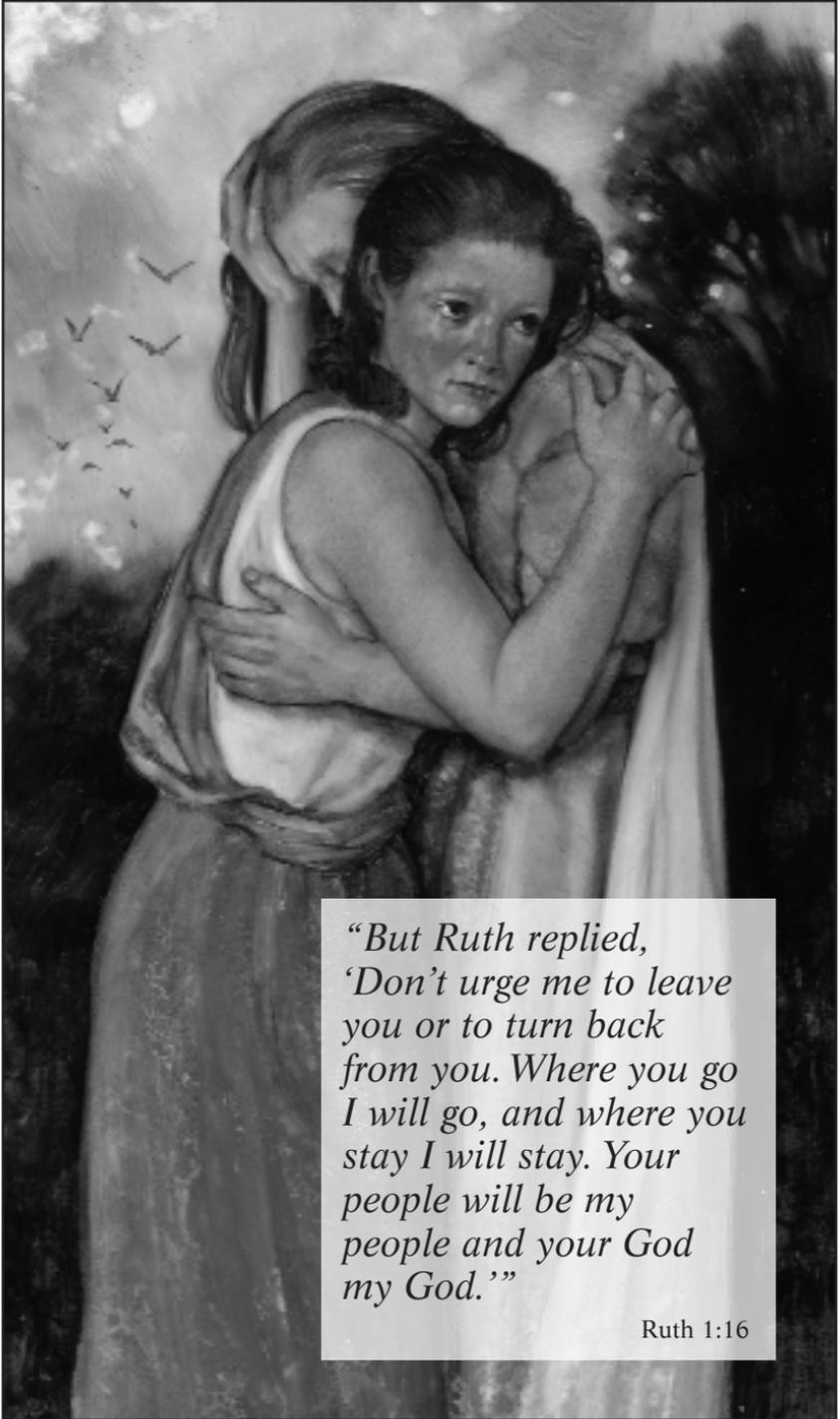
**Date:** The book of Ruth gives a clue to its date—“In the days when the judges ruled . . .” (1:1). Those words suggest the book was written after the period of Israel’s judges (about 1380-1030 B.C.).

**Setting and purpose:** The book of Ruth is a short story that traces the fortunes and misfortunes of a family—their problems, concerns, desires and experiences. With deep sensitivity the book of Ruth portrays human need and how that need is met through the grace of God. The story concerns a family in Bethlehem, a widow by the name of Naomi and her gentile daughter-in-law, Ruth. When Ruth is also widowed, the friendship between the two women is forged even deeper. As the story unfolds, the hand of God is clearly seen at work through their trials and tribulations.

**Distinctive features:** This was a spiritually low time in the life of the nation of Israel—“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Jdg 20:25). Yet, in spite of spiritual anarchy, the book of Ruth is an eloquent reminder of God’s transforming power. This short book traces Ruth’s transformation from widow to wife, barren to fertile, outsider to insider, emptiness to fullness. Pay special attention to Boaz, the third main character in this book. God uses Boaz to give Ruth and Naomi a new life and a bright future. In addition to the major theme of God’s power to transform people and circumstances, there is an important minor theme—encouraging the people of Israel to be more open and tolerant of foreigners in their midst.

## **Reading outline:**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Theme</b>
27	Ruth 1	Time of Tears
28	Ruth 2	Time of Toil
29	Ruth 3	Time of Trust
30	Ruth 4	Time of Triumph



*“But Ruth replied,  
‘Don’t urge me to leave  
you or to turn back  
from you. Where you go  
I will go, and where you  
stay I will stay. Your  
people will be my  
people and your God  
my God.’”*

Ruth 1:16

## Time of Tears

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DAY 27

Ruth 1:1-23

Has there been a time when your losses seemed insurmountable and hope seemed nonexistent? Consider ways in which Jesus would have helped and comforted you.

1. What sad events took place in verse 3? What were the immediate consequences for Naomi? Why was it necessary for her to leave her adopted country?
2. What were Naomi's instructions to her daughters-in-law? What was the response of Orpah? Of Ruth?
3. Verses 16 and 17 are considered to be the key verses in the entire book of Ruth. What do these verses say about Ruth?
4. Upon arriving in Bethlehem, who greeted the two women? How did Naomi react? What was the symbolism of her name change?

1. Was your family poor, wealthy or something in between? Did your family's economic status ever take a dramatic change?
2. Place yourself in this story as one of the daughters. Who are you most like, Orpah or Ruth? If you suddenly became a widow or widower, would you (or did you) remain where things are familiar or leave to embrace something new?
3. In verse 20 Naomi asked for a name change to reflect her emotional and spiritual state. Is there a name that would best reflect your emotional and spiritual state today?
4. Do you have a "Ruth" in your life, a friend who is completely loyal to you? Have you been a "Ruth" to someone whose life was in turmoil?

**Intermarriage** with Canaanites was prohibited by Jewish law, but allowed for all other foreigners. Ruth was a **Moabite**—a nation whose people were regarded as distant relatives because they were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew (Ge 19:36-37). However, Jewish law did stipulate that no Moabite or their sons to the tenth generation were allowed to enter the Tabernacle (Dt 23:3).

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

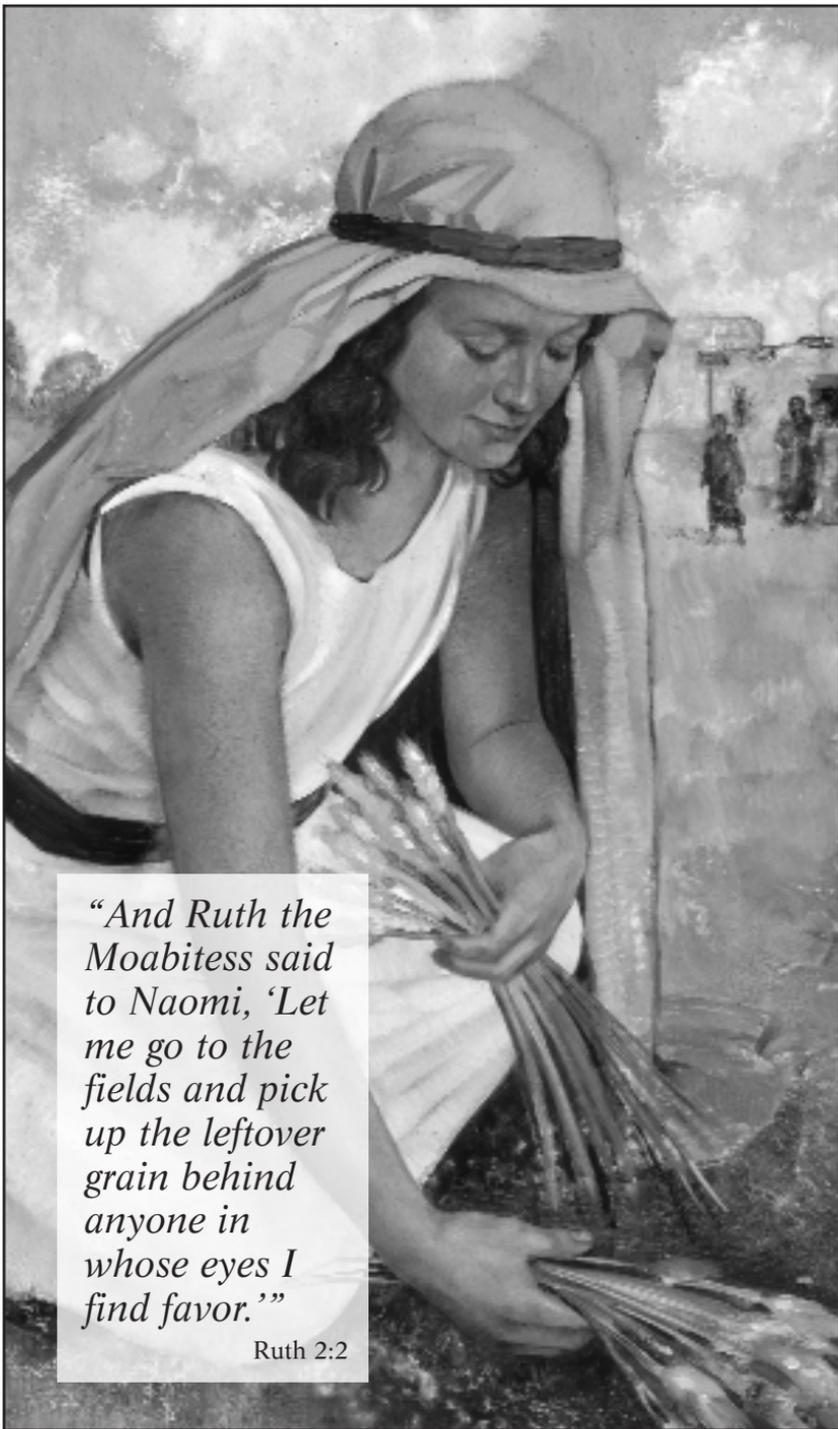
into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word



*“And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, ‘Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.’”*

Ruth 2:2

# Time of Toil

DAY 28

Ruth 2:1-23

Have you ever been forced to accept welfare or another form of aid? What is your attitude toward people today who need some form of assistance? How do you think they feel about their circumstances?

1. Since Naomi and Ruth were destitute, what suggestion did Ruth offer to help them survive (see *Window on the Word*)?
2. Who is introduced in this chapter? What was his position and status in the community?
3. Find all the places in this chapter where Boaz expressed interest in Ruth. Notice how his interest in her grew. What kind of help did he give her?
4. What did Naomi think of Boaz, and what advice did she offer to Ruth?

1. The name *Boaz* means “in him is strength.” What kind of strength did Boaz exhibit in this chapter? Have you ever had the opportunity to be a Boaz for someone? Have you ever needed a Boaz in your life?
2. Think about the poor and needy in your community. What steps would Jesus have you take to help them?
3. It was not coincidence but providence that led Ruth into Boaz’ field. Look back over a difficult time in your life and try to identify moments when decisions you made proved to be providential.
5. When you are in distress, do you take refuge under God’s wings (2:12)?

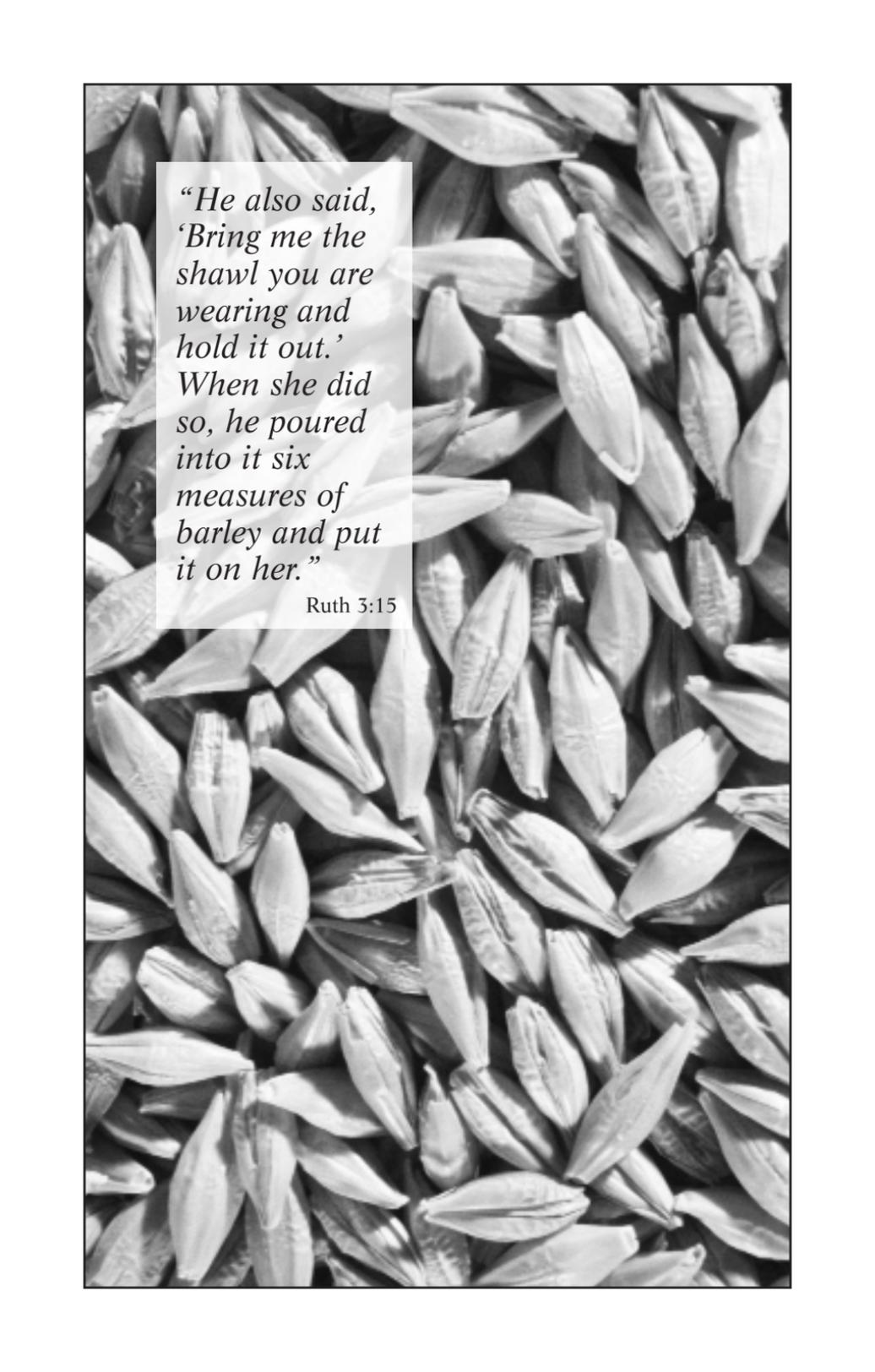
*In verse 2 Ruth suggested to Naomi that she go to the fields and **glean the leftover grain.** That reveals Ruth’s knowledge of Jewish law. According to Leviticus 19:9; 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19, Israelites were forbidden from stripping the fields completely clean when harvesting. Instead, they were to leave some of the grain as “gleanings” for the needy, for poor strangers, for the fatherless and for widows. This law of Moses was instituted as a type of welfare system.*

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word



*“He also said,  
‘Bring me the  
shawl you are  
wearing and  
hold it out.’  
When she did  
so, he poured  
into it six  
measures of  
barley and put  
it on her.”*

Ruth 3:15

## Time of Trust

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DAY 29

Ruth 3:1-18

Did your parents or family try to influence your choice of dating partners? If you married, did your family approve or disapprove of your choice?

1. What was Naomi's concern for Ruth? What advice did she offer and how did Ruth respond?
2. Why would Boaz spend the night on the threshing floor?
3. Why did Ruth ask Boaz to "spread the corner of your garment over me . . ." (v. 9)?
4. How did Boaz respond to Ruth's request? What was the reason for the delay?

1. Naomi was concerned that Ruth should find security. Is there anyone in your life who is concerned about your security and safety?
2. Boaz hesitated because there may have been a closer kinsman-redeemer (v. 12). Both Boaz and Naomi asked Ruth to wait and be patient. Can you recall a time in your life when no more action could be taken and nothing remained but to wait patiently for Jesus to work?
3. Boaz was gracious and even enthusiastic about helping Ruth. Has there been a time in your life when someone responded with a resounding, enthusiastic "yes" when you asked for help?

*A **kinsman-redeemer** was a relative to whom members of the extended family could turn for help. Because Boaz was Ruth's "kinsman-redeemer," Ruth asked him to "spread the corner" of his garment over her as his sign of matrimony. Here are some other ways a kinsman-redeemer was obligated to help needy family members: (1) he was to buy back family land sold because of financial crisis (Lev 25:25), (2) he was to buy back enslaved relatives (Lev 25:47-49), (3) he was to provide an heir for a dead brother (Dt 25:5-10), (4) he was to avenge the killing of a relative (Nu 35:19-21), (5) he was to care for relatives undergoing difficulties (Jer 32:6-25).*

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

## Time of Triumph

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Ruth 4:1-22

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Who are you most like? Naomi—working to secure the comfort and safety of others? Ruth—in need of security and stability in life? Boaz—a person with a keen sense of responsibility, integrity and willingness to help?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

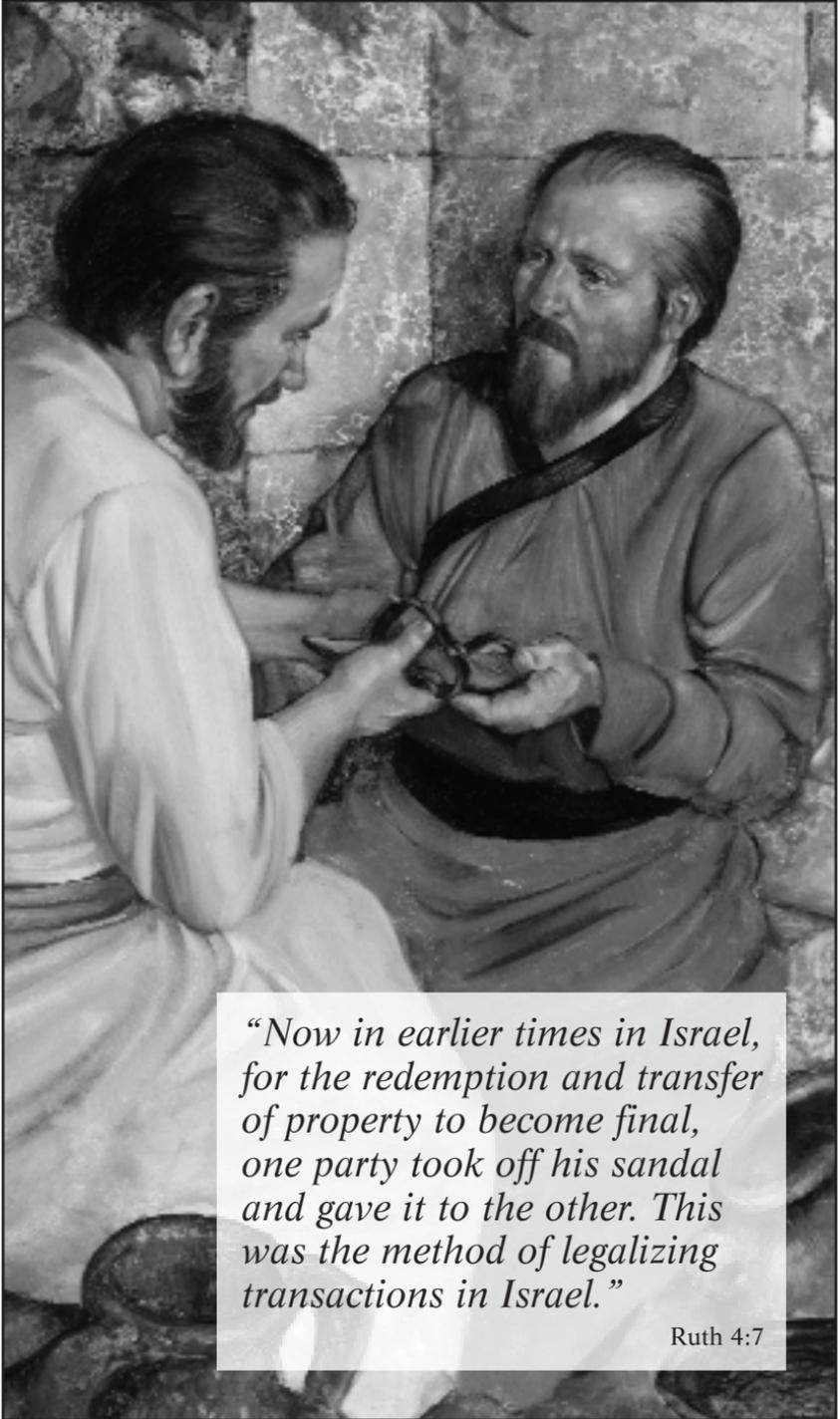
1. What did Ruth's closest living relative agree to do? What was the complicating factor that caused him to change his mind?
2. What was Boaz' announcement to the witnessing elders?
3. What two blessings were placed upon Ruth and Boaz (vs. 11-12; 13-15)?
4. How did this story end? Whose name is last on the genealogy?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. In the first chapter, Ruth had nothing to offer but loyalty to a friend and her faith in God. In the last chapter, she marries a wealthy and compassionate man and becomes the ancestor of King David and later, Jesus (see Mt 1:5). As difficult as it may be for you to perceive it, God might be working out a larger purpose in your life just as he did through Ruth's life.
2. Some see in Boaz, the family redeemer, a type of Christ. Just as Ruth lay at the feet of her redeemer seeking his help and protection, so God's grace invites us to place ourselves at the feet of our redeemer, Jesus Christ, allowing him to change our lives!

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

The **town gate** served as a type of city hall in ancient times. It was the center of activity in a community with merchants setting up their temporary shops in the vicinity. Boaz knew he could find his relative there as well as the mandatory ten witnesses.



*“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.”*

Ruth 4:7