



“This is the Story...”

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## **Week 14: The Unexpected Gift of Steadfast Love**

Ruth

**Intro Video:** <https://youtu.be/nRflqKtW1es>

**Review the big story:** God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God gives the people a new leader, Joshua, and through miraculous works brings the people through the Jordan River and into the promised land. Once there, they had to learn again how to be God’s people. They missed the mark a lot, and God sent judges like Deborah to guide and lead them.

- **Key verses:** Ruth 1:16-17; Ruth 4:14-15

**Tell the story:** A famine came to Judah, and Elimelech and Naomi took their two sons to a different country, Moab, to find food. Their sons married Moabite women. Eventually, Elimelech and the two sons died, so Naomi got ready to return to Judah. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, was determined to go with her, so the two of them, remnants of the family, traveled to Judah. These two women now need to figure out how to survive, and because of some of the same laws that the daughters of Zelophehad struggled with, Naomi and Ruth have to get creative. The story ends happily, with Ruth marrying a kinsman and their ancestral land being redeemed for their descendants. Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

- Read Ruth 1-4
- Read pages 79 in the *Shine On* story Bible

**Prime the pump:**

- **Things to notice:**
  - Notice the emotions of this story. It is such a compelling story. Why do we still identify with it today?
  - The adoption theme re-emerges here. Ruth’s speech in Ruth 1:16-17 has often been used as wedding scripture, but we see here that it is bigger than romantic love.
- **Background information:**
  - There is a recurring theme of “steadfast love” in this story. The Hebrew word is *hesed*, and it shows up three times (in 1:8, 2:20, and 3:10). It is interpreted in words like “kindness” and “loyalty.” Elsewhere in the Bible, it is interpreted as “steadfast love” or “loving kindness.” How is this a story of *hesed*?
  - “Feet” is a euphemism for genitals. Now read Ruth 3.
  - There are several parts of this story that seem strange without explanation. For example, Naomi’s words in Ruth 1:11 are talking about Levirate marriage (if a man died, his brother was to marry his widow so that she would be protected and the man would have someone

to inherit). Ruth 4:17 also makes reference to a similar practice. If you're intrigued, look it up on [wikipedia](#), or look more specifically for customs like this in the Old Testament.

- **Conversation starters:**

- Ruth is a Moabite. She is a foreigner, forbidden from many customs. Yet she is in the line of David, the messianic line - the line of Jesus. She is held up in rabbinic tradition as an example of virtue. Think about this in the broader story. How does God work through outsiders, even today?
- This is also a story of immigration. Read it with that lens.

**Microsong:** "The Unexpected Gift of Steadfast Love" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Lpmg330IQhI>)

In the days of the judges another famine comes

Naomi and her family leave and settle far from home

Naomi's sons and husband die but Ruth will not leave her. God restores her property and keeps her name alive.

Ruth's worth more to her than seven sons; the unexpected gift of steadfast love.

Ruth's worth more to her than seven sons; the unexpected gift of steadfast love.

**Sing the big song:** (Listen: <https://youtu.be/s8kwtEtWIk>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and flood

and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,

*And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh*

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.

God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

*Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhh*

The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says, "Yes, amend the law!"

*Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"*

Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.

God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.

Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love

*God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.*

**Go do your household project!**