



Ruth 4:1-11

(1) Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down. (2) Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, "Sit here," and they did so. (3) Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. (4) I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line."

"I will redeem it," he said. (5) Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property." (6) At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, "Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it." (7) (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.) (8) So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal. (9) Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. (10) I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!" (11) Then the elders and all those at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

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This scene is typical of how most cultures, not only the Hebrews, have understood the

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idea of witnessing. These ten elders of the city—and, if we read between the lines in verse 11, all the people who were drawn to this event that Boaz set up—observed the negotiations and the transaction of the sandal between Boaz and the unnamed near kinsman. If there were ever a need for proof that Boaz had indeed jumped through all the legal hoops through which he needed to jump to procure the land of Elimelech and the hand of Ruth, he had ten expert, irreproachable witnesses from among the elders of the people. In fact, he had probably dozens more who had seen all this take place because it most likely took place at the gate of the city.

So, many people were able to see what had transpired and could testify that everything had been done above-board. In a way, these people functioned like today's notaries who witness a legal transaction, put their seal on a document, and sign it, verifying that, "Yes, I indeed saw this transaction take place, legally and above-board, etc." This is how witnessing is done, and this is what many, if not most, of the occurrences of the Old Testament Hebrew words for "witness," *'ed* and *'ud* (the noun and the verb, respectively), connote.

What happened here in Ruth 4 is very interesting in the fact that Boaz is a type of Christ. Boaz here chooses ten elders—Jews—respected men of the town to witness what he did. Remember, since this took place in Bethlehem, these Jews were probably kin of [David](#). In fact, Boaz himself was David's great-grandfather, but these people were all one big extended family, the family of Judah. Boaz took ten of them, ten men whose eyewitness testimony could not be gainsaid in any way, and these men then witnessed his redemption of the land and Ruth.

What is interesting is that [Jesus](#) did exactly the same thing, except that He chose twelve men of Judah from Galilee. They would do the same for Him, telling all who would hear that He had indeed redeemed His people. [Luke 24:44-49](#) shows that this is exactly what He did. While the normal, legal idea of witnessing appears in the New Testament, Jesus makes use of it to confirm the facts of His life and death to the whole world through His witnesses, the apostles.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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[Principled Living \(Part 5\): Witnessing of God](#)



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