

Ruth: Trusting God in the Unknown

Ruth 3: Ruth's Request | Boaz's Blessing

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

The Book of Ruth occurs during the period of the Judges, a time marked by chaos, moral decay, and a lack of godly leadership. Yet, the story of Ruth reveals a glimmer of hope in the midst of these dark times. Ruth, out of great love and kindness, against her own gain, pledges to stay with her mother-in-law Naomi as they return to Bethlehem. As the barley harvest begins, Ruth *just so happens* to go to the field of a man named Boaz, who *just so happens* to be related to Naomi's late husband Elimelek. Boaz *just so happens* to demonstrate great kindness and generosity to Ruth - a widow and foreigner. The more we read this story, the more clearly we see God's hand at work. Chapter 2 ended with Ruth gleaning with the women in Boaz's fields until the barley and wheat harvest were finished.

Before we continue the story tonight, we need to gain a deeper understanding of a guardian-redeemer (or kinsman-redeemer). This cultural practice can be found in Leviticus 25:25-28: "If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. ²⁶ If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, ²⁷ they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property. ²⁸ But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property."

You see, Naomi's family always intended to go back to Bethlehem when they first left, but after returning poor and without her husband and sons, she was unable to buy back and redeem her land. She needed someone to redeem her. A guardian-redeemer had to be willing to pay the price of the debt owed. The guardian-redeemer was responsible for the persons, the property, and their posterity. Though we will meet a hopeful redeemer in this story, consider how this story begins to point us to Jesus - the ultimate redeemer. Jesus paid the price of our sin - the debt we owed - and redeems us back to God. This is the good news for all who turn to Jesus and follow him! Let's explore more as we continue the story of Ruth.

Read: Ruth 3 (NIV)

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

1. What does Naomi want for Ruth (v. 1)?
2. Let's summarize the plan Naomi devises (v. 2-4).
 - How does Ruth respond to this plan (v. 5-6)?
3. So what happens next (v. 7)? What startles Boaz (v. 8)?
4. How does Ruth describe herself (v. 9)? What does she ask of Boaz?
5. How does Boaz respond to this request (v. 10-11)? How does he describe Ruth?
6. What potential issue do they run into (v. 12)? How does Boaz plan to solve this (v. 13)?
7. What act of kindness does Boaz show Ruth (and Naomi) before leaving (v. 15)?
8. How does the chapter end (v. 16-18)?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

1. In our culture, what are some ways people subtly express their interest to someone?
 - So, with verse 1 in mind, what does Naomi want Ruth to ask of Boaz (v. 2-4)?
 - What were the risks associated with this plan?
2. What is the basis of Ruth's interest in Boaz (v. 9)? Boaz's interest in Ruth (v. 10-11)?
 - In what ways is this similar to our culture? How is it different?
3. What is Ruth expressing to Boaz in verse 9? *The word 'garment' here is the same word Boaz used in 2:12 when he said to Ruth: "May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."*
4. What do we continue to learn about Ruth's & Boaz's character in this chapter?
Bonus: Remember in Ruth 1:16 when Ruth said to Naomi "my people will be your people?"
5. If you were Ruth - what is your answer to Naomi's question in verse 16?
 - How might you be feeling at this moment? *(What if this other relative says yes?!)*
6. In what ways do we see God at work in this story? In what ways is Jesus revealed?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

1. Boaz demonstrated extraordinary generosity and compassion to Ruth, who was in a vulnerable place. How does Boaz's willingness to go above and beyond what is required challenge your understanding of generosity? In what areas of your life are you merely doing what is "required" rather than going the extra mile with grace and compassion?
2. Just as Boaz was responsible for redeeming Ruth and her family, we as God's people are responsible to join Christ's work in redeeming all things. What areas has God called you to redeem, and what can you do to bring about his redemptive work in those areas?
3. How does Ruth & Boaz challenge or expand your understanding of love and marriage? In what ways do their interactions with each other, and the motivation behind their relationship offer you a different perspective on what you should be looking for?

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