

## Lesson 3 Commentary

# Day 7: Ruth and Boaz

Ruth 2–4

### Ruth, the Willing Worker

God's care for Naomi and Ruth was evident. They arrived in Bethlehem during the barley harvest. Ruth went to work immediately. She went out to collect the grain left in the fields after harvest. Harvest gleanings were left for the poor to gather (Leviticus 23:22). Everyone benefited. God blessed landowners as they shared their harvest (Deuteronomy 24:19). The gleanings fed the poor. In God's providence, Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz, a wealthy relative of Elimelech. Boaz was closely related to Naomi through marriage. Because of this, Boaz (or another closer relative) was obligated to take care of them (see Leviticus 25:25).

Boaz was a godly man. He greeted his workers with a blessing and received a blessing in return. Boaz treated Ruth with kindness. The fact that she was a Moabite did not matter to him. He knew of Ruth's good reputation even before he met her. Her attractiveness went beyond outward appearance. She had a humble, grateful spirit that reflected an inner godly beauty. She had the courage to trust God and to go into an unknown situation. Her confidence was in Israel's God. Although her circumstances seemed bleak, she believed she could find refuge in God. Boaz was apparently much older than Ruth. He treated her protectively and with respect. He offered her lunch with his servant girls. He told his workers to let her glean among them. He even instructed them to drop grain for her to pick up.



**Think about** how Ruth had proven herself to be a “worthy woman.” The townspeople of Bethlehem had watched this foreign woman love her mother-in-law. She loyally devoted herself to Naomi's welfare. And the whole community noticed. The women even declared that Ruth was “more to [Naomi] than seven sons.” Ruth faithfully kept the promise she had made to Naomi and God. Ruth's motivation probably wasn't to influence people. Yet her humble, loving disposition had an effect on everyone. Although we should not live our lives to impress others, our attitudes and actions have an effect on the people around us.

### Ruth's Loving Obedience

Ruth and Naomi shared a close relationship. Ruth kept some lunch to share with Naomi and confided in her everything that happened in the field. Naomi was concerned about Ruth's uncertain future. She asked her, “My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?” In spite of her sorrow, Naomi was concerned for Ruth's welfare.

In that culture, the nearest kinsman was responsible to care for a widow by marrying her and providing for her. This man was called a “redeemer.” Deuteronomy 25:5-10 states that if a brother died childless, his widow should not marry outside the family. Boaz was in the line of potential redeemers. Naomi's instructions to Ruth were not a way to trap Boaz into marriage. They were intended to remind him of their situation and his possible duty to help them.

Ruth agreed to her mother-in-law's plan. She knew that Naomi's plan could help her fulfill the Jewish legal requirement of perpetuating her dead husband's name. She washed and anointed herself with perfume. She went to the threshing floor and waited until Boaz was sleeping. Why did she uncover his feet? Perhaps so he would awaken because he was cold and notice her. He did wake during the night and was shocked to see her. Ruth identified herself and asked him to spread the corner of his garment over her. In biblical times, this symbolic action was really proposing marriage. This action signified a man's readiness to marry a woman. This was a significant moment for them both. Boaz responded warmly to Ruth, but said there was a closer redeemer who must have the first opportunity to wed her.



**Think about** how Boaz, as Ruth’s kinsman redeemer, reminds us of Jesus. Boaz redeemed Ruth when she had no way of saving herself. His love for Ruth took her from a sorrowful past to a future she never could have imagined. Jesus redeemed us when we had no way to save ourselves. Jesus’ love for us—as many as received Him (John 1:12)—gives us a new family and a glorious future. Jesus made it possible for us to leave the sin and sorrow of our past behind. As His dearly loved ones, we walk with Him into a future beyond anything we could ever dream of.

### Ruth’s Reward

Boaz showed care for Ruth. Before dawn he sent Ruth from the threshing floor with six measures of barley. When Naomi heard Ruth’s report, she wisely advised her to wait patiently. That day Boaz discussed the situation at the town gate. In the presence of the 10 elders (town leaders), he met with the redeemer who was “nearer.” A family’s welfare was the concern of the entire community. They wanted to help Naomi as well as settle legalities with regard to Ruth. Boaz invited his relative to buy Naomi’s property. The man agreed—until he learned that he would also have to marry Ruth. Then he refused because he did not want to share his inheritance.

So Boaz became the redeemer. He reviewed the transaction with the elders. They approved Boaz’s intention. They asked God to bless him and Ruth as He had blessed Rachel and Leah. They wanted God to build up their house so it would be renown in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6).

The statement “the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son” (Ruth 4:13) reflects the Hebrew belief that children are a gift from God (see Psalm 127:3-5). Obed’s birth caused great joy among the women in Bethlehem. Naomi was especially happy. She had already been blessed with a daughter-in-law who was “more to [her] than seven sons.” Now she had a secure home and a baby to love. She loved Elimelech; now she could help rear a child who had come from his line. God had indeed been good to Naomi.

God was good to Ruth, too. He blessed her by placing her in the lineage of King David, her great-grandson, and eventually the Messiah, Jesus.



### Personalize the TRUTH!

When Naomi and Ruth left Moab and set out for Bethlehem, they did not know how their story would end. Would they remain widows and scrape for food and shelter all their lives?

Like Ruth and Naomi, we cannot see how our lives will turn out. We may not see God working. We may not see how circumstances could change. Yet, we need to move forward trusting that God, our faithful Redeemer, has not wavered in His love and commitment to us. Just as He planned to bless and restore Ruth and Naomi, so He plans to redeem our difficult circumstances too.

Where have your circumstances crippled you? How can you move forward, trusting God, even though you don’t know the outcome?