Handfuls of Purpose
The Book of Ruth – The Romance of Redemption

A Bible Study
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In this classic “rags to riches” story, the Book of Ruth opens with the words: “Now it came to pass in the days when…” It immediately reminds us of our childhood and the fairy tales of “Once upon a time, long, long ago.” The good news is that this is more than just an imaginary story, with a happily ever after ending, but that it can be a reality for us in Christ Jesus. H.V. Morton called it a rare combination of “literary art” and theological insight.”

There are two Books in the Bible that are named after women, the first is the Book of Ruth, which begins with a funeral and ends with a feast. The other is the Book of Esther, which begins with a feast and ends with a funeral. For some other contrasts, please note the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruth</th>
<th>Esther</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Gentile woman</td>
<td>A Jewish woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lived among the Jews</td>
<td>Lived among the Gentiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married a Jewish man in the royal line of David</td>
<td>Married a Gentile man who ruled an empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>A story of faith and blessing</td>
<td>A story of faith and blessing</td>
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Ruth’s name means “comely” or “friendship.” She is also listed in the genealogy of Christ with these other women:

1. Tamar
2. Rahab
3. Ruth
4. Bathsheba
5. Mary
The Book of Ruth contains only four chapters, just 85 verses, 2,578 words and takes less than fifteen minutes to read. Yet, it is one of the most profound books of the Old Testament.

It is part of the Megilloth or scrolls that would be read annually during the feasts of the Jews.

- **Song of Solomon** – Passover.
- **Ruth** – Pentecost.
- **Lamentations** – Anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem.
- **Ecclesiastes** – Feast of Tabernacles.
- **Esther** – Purim.

W.G. Heslop writes

The book of Ruth consists of less than 100 verses, and yet it would be impossible to exhaust it during the lifetime of a minister preaching from it every Sunday... It is a garden enclosed, a mine filled with the rarest and richest gems and rubies, a treasury of illuminating truths.

MacDonald expounds the charm and beauty of this book by relating the following incident from history.

Benjamin Franklin, the American statesman and inventor, while serving at the French court, overheard some of the aristocrats “putting down” the Bible as being unworthy of reading, lacking in style, and so forth. Though, not personally a believer himself, his youth in the American colonies had exposed him to the excellence of the Bible as literature. So, he decided to play a little trick on the French. He wrote out Ruth longhand, changing all the proper names to French names. Then he read his manuscript to the assembled elite of France. They all exclaimed on the elegance and simplicity of style of this touching story. “Charmant! But where did you find this gem of literature, Monsieur Franklin?” “It comes from the Book you so despise,” he answered—“la sainte Bible!”
BACKGROUND: "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled...." (Ruth 1:1). The story of Ruth takes place during the time of the Judges, known as “the Dark Ages” of the Hebrew people. Just as a jeweller displays a diamond against a dark velvet background, so God shows the beauty of this book against the dark background of Judges. It has been called an addendum to the Book of Judges, an oasis in the midst of the desert, a beautiful lily in a stagnant pool.

Pastor, Ho Soo Kam, from Singapore writes

Here instead of unfaithfulness is loyalty, instead of immorality is purity, instead of battlefields are harvest fields, instead of the warrior's shout is the harvester's song, instead of hatred there is love; instead of war there is love, courtship and marriage, and instead of army life there is family life.

Yet, it is important for us to notice that even during the ungodly time of the Judges, a period in which "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25; 19:1; 18:1; 17:6), we find a godly couple in Ruth and Boaz. It is also interesting to note, that the word “love” does not occur in this "love story."

Before we leave the background of Ruth, I would like to mention that the Book of Judges is the book of “no king.” I Samuel is the book of “man’s king,” as the nation of Israel chooses Saul as their king. In II Samuel, we find “God’s King,” a man after God’s heart. Currently, we are living in a world of “no king,” everyman is doing that which is “right in their own eyes.” Soon the world will be clamouring out for “man’s king,” the antichrist, to solve the problems we are facing. But thank God we are looking forward to the day when “God’s King,” the Lord Jesus Christ, will come and set up His Kingdom.

Final note, the Book of Ruth is the eighth book of the Bible, the number of beginning again.
KEY WORDS: As mentioned earlier it takes less than 15 minutes to read the Book of Ruth and I want to share with you some key words to notice as you read. Remember, these key words will help unlock the text as you study this section of Scripture.

- God – 23 times
- Kinsman (‘s, men) – 14
- Redeem (ing) – 9
- Grace, Favour – 3
- Rest – 3
- Kindness – 3

WRITER: The Book of Ruth was probably written during the time-period of David since he is mentioned at the end of the book and before the reign of Solomon. We also know that some of the former customs were no longer in practice at the time of writing (Ruth 4:7).

OUTLINE: Several outlines have been offered for the Book of Ruth. They have been correlated and condensed into the chart below.

**LOVE'S RESOLVE**
*Famine - Tears - Weeping - Sorrow - Gloom - Widow - Decision*

**LOVE'S RESPONSE**
*Field - Toil - Working - Service - Grace - Worker - Devotion*

**LOVE'S REQUEST**
*Floor - Trust - Wait - Submission - Goel - Woman - Desire*

**LOVE'S REWARD**
*Feast - Triumph - Wedding - Satisfaction - Glory - Wife - Destiny*
**PRIMARY LESSONS**: While there are many lessons and applications to learn from this Book, five basic themes are:

- **Christ – Our Kinsman Redeemer** (Ruth 3:13). Gleason Archer notes that "the little book of Ruth is one of the most instructive in the Old Testament concerning the meditorial work of the Lord Jesus."

- **The Story of Grace** – How God can take a Gentile, condemned by the law, and bring her into a covenant relationship with Himself and His people.

- **Godly Living** – It is still possible to live a Godly life in an ungodly world.

- **The Providence of God** – How God can work out the tiniest details of our lives to accomplish his purpose.

- **The Dangers of Backsliding.**

- **Establishes the Genealogy of Christ.**
The first chapter of Ruth opens with a **famine** in Bethlehemjudah and then later extends to Moab with the deaths of Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion. We also see Ruth’s becoming a **widow** with **tears, weeping, sorrow** and **gloom** because of the death of her husband and the thought of being separated from Naomi. Finally, her **decision** to stay faithful to Naomi and to Naomi’s God.

**Desperate Circumstances** – As we mentioned earlier in our notes, the Book of Ruth is taking place during desperate times.

- **The Nation was Morally Destitute** – “*the judges ruled* (Ruth 1:1). The nation of Israel is at an all-time low. God has repeatedly warned them to drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (see Deuteronomy 7:1-2). Yet, as a nation, they continually disregarded God’s instructions (Judges 1:21-33). Repeatedly, we read “*And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD*” (Judges 3:7; 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). This resulted in a four-fold cycle that is repeated six or seven times.

- **The Nation was Materially Deficient** – “*there was a famine in the land*” (Ruth 1:1). There are 13 famines mentioned in the Word of God and each of them is the result of the judgment of God.

Many believe that this “*famine*” was caused by the attack of the Midianites in Judges chapter six. We read that “*Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites...*” (see Judges 6:2-6).
**Dangerous Choices** – Notice three mistakes he and his family made during this famine experience.

- **Chose to Leave the Promised Land** – “…And a certain man …” BethlehemJudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab (Ruth 1:1b). Instead of trusting in the promises of God during the famine (Psalm 33:19; 34:9-10; 37:3, 19; 84:11; Job 5:20-22; Proverbs 10:3; Matthew 6:31-33; Luke 22:35) they chose to leave the land of promise.

  ![](image1.png)

  The word *Bethlehem* means “House of Bread” the word *Judah* means “praise,” yet they are willing to leave the place of God’s provision and praise to dwell in the land of Moab. Bethlehem was known as the “granary of the country,” the land of “milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8).

- **Chose to Live in a Polluted Land** – Twice God calls Moab his “washpot” (Psalm 60:8; 108:9). The word means that they were a despised thing, compared to a vessel containing water to be used by slaves to wash the feet of a conquering hero.

  The country of Moab and the Moabites are mentioned nearly 200 times in the Bible. The first mention of them is found in Genesis 19 where we see the birth of two nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites, the result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19:30-38). Both nations were known for their lawlessness and pride, both opposed and attacked Israel and both worshiped Chemosh and offered human sacrifices.
The chart below illustrates some of the contrasts between two countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ammonites</th>
<th>Moabites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wild and Nomadic</td>
<td>Settled and Civilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility to God’s People</td>
<td>Hospitality to God’s People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subdue</td>
<td>Seduce (Revelation 2:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curse</td>
<td>Corrupt (Numbers 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan – Lion, devour</td>
<td>Satan – Serpent, deceive</td>
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- **Chose to Linger in a Prodigal Land** – “…And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there” (Ruth 1:1b-2). Initially, they were only going to “sojourn” or live there temporarily (Ruth 1:1). In verse two we read that they “continued there.” It becomes their permanent residence and by the time you get to verse four we read, “they dwelled there about ten years.”

Sin will take you farther than you want to go!
Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay!
Sin will cost you more than you want to pay!

**Deadly Consequences** – The first to die was Elimelech Naomi’s husband (Ruth 1:3). Ten years later, both Mahlon and Chilion died (Ruth 1:5). Elimelech’s name means “My God is King” and while there is some debate as to the meaning of his sons Mahlon and Chilion’s name, they seem to have the connotation of “a weak song” and “pinning perfectness” (see J. Sidlow Baxter and Graham Scroggie).
When we make the wrong decisions about the world, the first thing we lose is the testimony of my God is King. Shortly thereafter we lose our joy and song and then our outward appearances of perfectness changes. Remember, while we have the freedom to choose, we cannot escape the consequences of those choices. **You make the choice and then the choice makes you.**

**DISOBEDIENCE COMMITMENTS** – Elimelech’s disobedience affected his son’s disobedience in their selection of wives. “And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years” (Ruth 1:4).

The Bible clearly forbids them from marrying Orpah and Ruth (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). Likewise, in the New Testament the Bible is very clear that a believer should only marry a believer (I Corinthians 7:39; II Corinthians 6:14-16).

**DESTITUTE CONDITIONS** – “…and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband” (Ruth 1:5b). Listen to her lament upon her return to land of Judah, “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the L ORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the L ORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? (Ruth 1:20-21). Once again, notice the meaning of names. Naomi’s name means “pleasant;” now she calls herself “Mara” or “bitter” (see Hebrews 12).

She used to be an Ephrathite, an ancient word for Bethlehem which meant “fruitful,” now she is living in a place of emptiness. She also states the Lord hath “testified” or answered against her and “afflicted” or broken her. **Remember, whenever we break God’s commandments, they always break us!**
DISCOURAGING COUNSEL – Naomi had heard “…how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread” (Ruth 1:6). After she makes the decision to return “home” she has second thoughts about taking Orpah and Ruth back to land of Judah. Perhaps she is just being pragmatic, realizing that they have a better chance of remarrying in Moab. Possibly she feels unworthy of their love and the sacrifice they would be making to return with her, or maybe she is embarrassed to be seen with them, a reminder of the mistakes of the past.

Regardless of the reasons, at least three times Naomi counsels Orpah and Ruth to return to their people in Moab.

DEFINITE COMMITMENT – It was on a dusty road inside the country of Moab that each widow had to make a decision about whether or not to follow Naomi and Naomi’s God. It was at this crossroad, that Orpah and Ruth had to count the cost and consider the risks of going to Judah and leaving everything they had ever known behind them.

- The Widow of Restoration – Naomi is a grieving widow returning to her homeland (Ruth 6:13). Perhaps William Kirkpatrick’s hymn is on her lips as she begins her journey home.

    I’ve wandered far away from God
    Now I’m coming home.
    The paths of sin too long I’ve trod
    Lord, I’m coming home.
• **The Widow of Rejection** – Orpah’s name comes from the root for “neck” and implies stiff-neckedness (Exodus 32:9). She is the leaving widow, perhaps she has set on eyes on some guy from Moab or maybe she has an interview to host a daytime talk show – oops, that was Oprah 😊 (Ruth 1:14).

1. She Returned to her Relatives.
2. She Returned to her Religion (see II Peter 2:22)

• **The Widow of Redemption** – Ruth is the cleaving widow (Ruth 1:15-18). Note her fivefold commitment:

1. New Land (16) – “Whither thou goest, I will go”
2. New Lodging (16) – “Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.”
3. New Lineage (16) – “Thy people shall be my people.”
5. New Loyalty (17) – “Where thou diest, will I die.”

**Desired Contentment** – The trip from Moab to Bethlehem would have taken between 7-10 days. It would require them crossing the river Jordan and climbing a 2000-foot-high mountain to get back home (Ruth 1:19-22). It seems so easy in backsliding, it is all downhill, but returning is always an uphill climb.

• **The Place of God’s Praise** – Remember, the word Judah means “praise.”
• **The Place of God’s Presence** – “the Lord had visited his people”
• **The Place of God’s People** – “all the city was moved about them”
• **The Place of God’s Provision** – God provides both “barley” and “corn.”
• **The Place of God’s Providence** – “the Lord hath brought me home again.”
• **The Place of God’s Perception** – While Naomi referred to herself as “Mara,” the Holy Spirit still records her as “Naomi.”
Love’s Response
Ruth 2:1-23

Chapter two the focus changes to Ruth as a worker in the field (occurs 7 times in this chapter). It is here that she works, toils and serves Naomi, it is also here that she finds grace and meets Boaz, who notes her devotion to her mother-in-law and God.

There are three major characters in this chapter:

- **Boaz** – A Man of Valour
- **Ruth** – A Maiden of Virtue
- **Naomi** – A Mother-in-law of Value

**Ruth’s Unseen Guidance** – Oftentimes, God is at work in our lives and we do not even realize it. Like Jacob, who “…awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not” (Genesis 28:16). In the Book of Ruth, we see God’s Guidance in at least four areas.

- **The Preparation of Boaz** – “And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz” (Ruth 1:1). The word “and” is used as a conjunction in introducing Boaz to our story. He will quickly become a prominent person in our Romance of Redemption. Note that he was:

  1. **A Man of Relations** – “a kinsman of her husband” (Ruth 2:1a). According to rabbinical tradition, Boaz was Elimelech’s nephew.
  2. **A Man of Resources** – “a mighty man of wealth” (Ruth 2:1b). It seems that he not only survived the “famine,” but he thrived.
3. **A Man of Reputation** – “his name was Boaz” (Ruth 2:1c). His name means “in him is strength.” His name is so significant that 200 years later Solomon would named one of the two pillars at the entrance of his Temple “Boaz.” The other pillar was named after Jachin, which means “to be established” (I Kings 7:21; II Chronicles 3:17).

- **The Problem of Pain** – Pain, hunger and needs are one of God primary tools to moved us. “And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter” (Ruth 2:2).

The eldest servant of Abraham testified, “I being in the way, the Lord led me” (Genesis 24:27). There is a Latin proverb that says: “Providence assists not the idle.” God often leads us through perspiration (hard work), as much as through inspiration. Someone said, “Even God won’t steer a parked car.”

Ruth starts out by looking for a field, but she finds favour; looking for some food, but she finds a feast. **She is hoping to find a meal and some work, not realizing that God has a man and a wedding planned for her** (Psalm 30:11 see Psalm 30:11).

Blaise Pascal, a famous French mathematician and philosopher, put it like this:

> There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

- **The Principles of Scripture** – God will never lead us contrary to the Bible. Israel’s welfare system of gleaning is based on several Old Testament Scriptures. We will be looking the Laws of Gleaning a little bit later.
THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD – Not just chance or circumstances. “And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:3). The word hap means “chance or happenstance.” But God has a way of making those haps His maps (Proverbs 16:33).

The word circumstance is derived from the Latin, circum, which means around and the word stance or stand, thus circumstances are the things that stand around you. The Holman Bible Dictionary defines Providence as “God’s faithful and effective care and guidance of everything which He has made toward the end which He has chosen.” Coincidence is when God is working undercover.

Ruth did not just receive a lucky break, but a loving blessing; she was not just fortunate, but favoured.

BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS?

In chapter one we read about the “barley harvest” now we are talking about “ears of corn” (Ruth 1:22 cf 2:2). Is this a contradiction of Scripture? No – we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (I Corinthians 2:13).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of “a corn of wheat,” the word corn speaks of the “kernel” or the grain of the barley (John 12:24).

Webster’s Dictionary tells us that the word corn comes from the Middle English, from Old English; akin to Old High German & Old Norse korn grain, Latin granum. And it means the seeds of a cereal grass and especially of the important cereal crop of a particular region (as wheat in Britain, oats in Scotland and Ireland, and Indian corn in the New World and Australia).

The word ear simply refers to the spike to which the corn or kernels are attached.
**RUTH’S UNMERITED GRACE** – The words “grace, kindness and favour” are used four times in this chapter (Ruth 2:2, 10, 13, 20). Grace has been defined as “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.”

Mercy has been described as not receiving what we deserve and grace is receiving what we do not deserve. As we consider grace in this chapter our attention is drawn to Boaz and his greeting to his reapers, “…The LORD be with you” (Ruth 2:4). One author mentioned that the first words that a Biblical character speaks is an indication of their true nature. Remember, we will never have a second chance to make a good first impression.

The second thing that we notice is that grace or in this case, Boaz takes the initiative both in enquiring about her and in speaking to her (Ruth 2:5, 8). As a Moabitess, Ruth was a foreigner and rejected damsel, but because of grace she is looked on as family and accepted “daughter”. Likewise, we were “aliens,” “strangers and foreigners” without “hope” and “without God;” but for the grace of God (Ephesians 2:12, 19, 8-9). “We love him, because he first loved us” (I John 4:19).

Just as grace in the New Testament leads us to works, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works…” (Ephesians 2:10); so Ruth is given instructions, protection and provisions (Ruth 2:8-9).

Finally, this grace is amazing, note her response: “Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? (Ruth 2:10 – this was an act of respect and gratitude I Samuel 25:23; I Kings 1:31). She had left home that morning, ready to work, but now she is wondering why Boaz “shouldest take knowledge” of her.

Nor can I understand why God should take knowledge of me it’s simply amazing!
Ruth’s Unmatched Goodness – In verse 11, Boaz comments on all that Ruth “hast done” and sums them up in three points:

- Allegiance with her mother in law (2:11a)
- Abandonment of her homeland (2:11b)
- Adaptation of Bethlehem (2:11c)

Ruth’s Undeniable God – Boaz prays that "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust” (Ruth 2:12).

Australian author, Leon Morris believes that this verse is the key verse in the Book of Ruth. The word “recompense” speaks of a covenant relationship of peace (Ruth 2:11-12). When Ruth trusted in the God of Israel she entered a covenant relationship with God. Boaz comments on,

- The Covenant Reassurance – “The LORD recompense thy work,” speaks of the peace and soundness of her standing.
- The Covenant Resources – “…a full reward be given thee” speaks of the provision and supply of her service.
- The Covenant Refuge – “…under whose wings thou art come to trust” speaks of the protection and security of her shelter.

Ruth’s Unexpected Gifts – Once again we see Boaz’s generosity in his care of Ruth as he “…commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not”. (Ruth 2:15). He then further states “And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not” (Ruth 2:16).

- The Biblical Laws of Gleaning – There are several passages of Scripture defining gleaning (Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy. 24:19-22). J. Vernon McGee, believes they would leave about 30% of their harvest for the poor, he went on to say that this was not a hand-out, but a hand-up, they had to work for it.
• **The Blessed Love of Giving** – Boaz’s fields become her fields, his food becomes her food.

1. **Restrains** – He restrains his young men from touching, reproaching and rebuking her (Ruth 2:9, 15, 16).
2. **Refreshes** – He sits with her, sups with her and sufficed her (Ruth 2:14).
3. **Replenishes** – “handfuls of purpose” (Ruth 2:16). Ordinarily we would say handfuls on purpose but the Bible emphasis is on the purpose more than on the handfuls. Perhaps we give more emphasis to the Giver than to His gifts.

**Ruth’s Unlimited Gleanings** – “So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley” (Ruth 2:17). An “ephah” is about 22 litres dry capacity and weighs about 15 kilograms. It contains ten omers and one omer of manna was sufficient for one person per day, thus, Ruth gathered enough to last them five days.

According to documents from Babylon around that time, harvesters would take home about one kilogram a day, meaning Ruth was able to glean about 15 times the amount of the average reaper.

In verse 18, we read about what may be the first “take away” meal in the Bible as she brings Naomi her leftovers from lunch 😊.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).
RUTH’S UNPARALLELED GLADNESS – Before this, Naomi expressed herself with bitterness, but now she expresses blessedness. She praises the Lord for help for the present and for giving hope for the future (Ruth 1:20 cf 2:20).

Note that when Naomi asked Ruth “where” she gleaned, Ruth began talking about “whom” she gleaned with (Ruth 2:19). It not a place, but a person; not the land, but the Lord.

Note also that Ruth states who she gleaned “with,” not who she worked for. She then shares her testimony of God’s protection and provision through the man Boaz (Ruth 2:20-23).

Not only is she given new resources from the field of Boaz, Ruth also develops new relationships with the men, the maidens and most importantly with the master of the field. These relationships are vital to our Christian walk. Someone wrote that sheep are social creatures, the only time you find them alone is when they are sick or wounded. Remember Paul’s admonition in Hebrews 10:25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

“BLESSED BE THE LORD, WHO DAILY LOADETH US WITH BENEFITS, EVEN THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION. SELAH.”
PSALM 68:19
Love's Request

Ruth 3:1-18

In the third chapter, we find the woman Ruth approaching Boaz at the threshing floor. It is here where she places her trust in her Goel or “kinsman-redeemer.” She now places herself at Boaz’s feet, waiting for his response. We also see her submission as he acts on her behalf and her desire to come under his care.

Preparation – Naomi’s Resolve – For the last six to eight weeks, Ruth has “…kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law (Ruth 2:23). I am sure the weeks have flown by, harvest time is always a busy and joyful time. But what now – where does Ruth go from here? Where can she find rest? (The word “rest” in its various forms appears nearly 300 times in the Bible)

Our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee.

Augustine

• The Rest that the World Offers – Several months before in chapter one Naomi challenges both Ruth and Orpah to “find rest” in Moab (Ruth 1:9). At this point Naomi is still backslidden and her spiritual perception is wrong. Thus, her advice is mistaken, misguided and misinformed. The world can never satisfy a hungry soul.

1. The Possessions of this World – “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). It has been said: “Money will buy a bed but not sleep, books but not brains, food but not appetite, finery but not beauty, a house but not a home, medicine but not health, luxuries but not culture, and amusement but not happiness.”

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Someone once said, “I just cannot understand it, she had so much to live for.” To which another replied, “No, she had so much to live on, but nothing to live for.” (see Proverbs 3:13-15).

2. **The Pleasures of this World** – Lord Chesterton once said, “I have run the silly rounds of pleasure, and by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose.” The Apostle Paul wrote: “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (I Timothy 5:6 also see James 5:5).

3. **The Popularity of this World** – Even a casual reading of the newspaper or browsing of the internet and social media reveals that popularity does not buy happiness (see the Book of Ecclesiastes).

- **THE REST THAT THE LORD OFFERS** – “Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?” (Ruth 3:1 – the phrase “my daughter appears 16 times in the Bible, 8 times in the Book of Ruth).

In chapter one, Naomi was resentful and bitter and in chapter two she was reclusive, but beginning to hope again. Now in chapter three we find that her hopes have been renewed and she seeks to be a blessing instead of a burden. Instead of feeling sorry for herself, she is focusing on the wellbeing of Ruth.

This section of Scripture reminds me of the Matchmaker from Fiddler on the Roof as she points to Boaz for “rest” (Ruth 3:2). This is known as the levirate law from the Latin levir meaning “husband’s brother” (Deuteronomy 25:5-10 cf Genesis 38). This law provided for the well-being of the widow, any offspring would be given the name of the first husband and the land would remain in the family. It was based on this law that the Sadducees questioned Jesus about the resurrection (Matthew 22:23-29).
**Roles of the Kinsmen-Redeemer**

- **In the case of Harm & Murder - The Avenger of Lost Life** (Numbers 35:19-21).
- **In the case of Helplessness & Mishap - The Deliverer of Lost Land** (Leviticus 25:25-28, 47-49).
- **In the case of Heritage & Marriage - The Redeemer of Lost Love** (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)

It is also important to note that the widow was responsible to take the initiative in this relationship.

Next notice Naomi’s advice in seeking Boaz to make “*herself ready*” (Revelation 19:7). Likewise, we should purify ourselves (I John 3:3).

1. **Cleanse Ourselves** – “*Wash thyself*” (Ruth 3:3a cf I John 1:7-9).

2. **Consecrate Ourselves** – “*anoint thee*” (Ruth 3:3b). There are two purposes for anointing in the Bible – common and ceremonial for setting someone apart for special service (I John 2:27 and I Samuel 16).

3. **Clothe Ourselves** – “*put thy raiment upon thee*” (Ruth 3:3c). I am sure that her clothing was both appropriate and attractive.

Finally, Naomi discusses with Ruth the manner of approach toward a kinsman-redeemer. “*And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do*” (Ruth 3:4). And Ruth said unto her, “*All that thou sayest unto me I will do*” (Ruth 3:5).
PRESENTATION – RUTH’S REQUEST—Ruth is about to put into the action Naomi’s plan. Note that there is nothing immoral or improper about coming to Boaz. Perhaps she approaches Boaz privately instead of publicly so that he would not be made a public spectacle if he rejects her request (Deuteronomy 25:5-10 also see Matthew 1:19).

F.B. Huey writes in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary:

Those who interpret a sexual relation in this encounter reflect their 20th century view of sexual permissiveness. They fail to appreciate the cultural taboos of Ruth’s time that would have prevented a man of Boaz’s position from taking advantage of Ruth, thereby destroying her reputation and endangering his own. Biblical writers were not squeamish about describing sexual encounters, but the writer of Ruth has deliberately refrained from saying there was a liaison between Ruth and Boaz. Both Ruth and Boaz acted virtuously in a situation they knew could have turned out otherwise.

The Mishna, a commentary on Jewish custom and law, would not allow a man to act as kinsman redeemer toward a Gentile woman with whom he had already been sexually involved outside of marriage. If Boaz would have taken advantage of Ruth, he would have forfeited his rights to redeem her.

Matthew Henry quotes the Chaldee Paraphrase or Targum concerning its interpretation of this passage:

He subdued his concupiscence, and did not approach to her, but did as Joseph the Just, who would not come near to his Egyptian mistress, and as Phaltiel the Pious, who, when Saul had given him Michal, David's wife put a sword between himself and her, that he might not touch her.
• **THE PATH THAT RUTH FOLLOWED** – “And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her” (Ruth 3:6). Full obedience brings full blessing (see John 2:7).

• **THE PLACE THAT RUTH FELL** – “…and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down” (Ruth 3:7). “Feet” are mentioned four times in this chapter (Ruth 3:4, 7, 8, 14) and play a very important to the picture of a kinsmen-redeemer; perhaps she is hinting about him having “cold feet.”

• **THE PERSON THAT RUTH FOUND** – verse eight we read that at midnight Boaz is startled to find a woman at his feet.

• **THE PLEA THAT RUTH FASHIONED** – When asked who she is, Ruth response with “…I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” (Ruth 3:9). This expression is a symbolic gesture for the marriage covenant (Ezekiel 16:8).

Even today, at Jewish weddings the groom will cover his bride with a fringed garment called a “talith” or a canopy to symbolize that he is taking on the responsibilities of being her husband.

With this plea, Ruth is asking Boaz to marry her.

**PROCLAMATION – BOAZ’S RESPONSE** – Notice his response to her request.

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• **His Praise** – Can you imagine Ruth’s fears as she approaches Boaz, will he reject her request? Will he publicly embarrass her? These fears are quickly cast aside as he praises God for her. He rejoices both in her “kindness” toward him and her love for God and her “virtuous” testimony in the city (Ruth 3:10-11).

• **His Pledge** – He promises that he “will do to thee all that thou require” (Ruth 3:11). This further explains all that is involved in her redemption and that he will surely do his “part of a kinsman to thee as the LORD liveth” (Ruth 3:11-12).

• **He Protects** – He protects her by watching over her during the dangers of the night and by protecting her reputation by day (Ruth 3:13-14). Notice that the Bible says that she “she lay at his feet until morning,” not that she lay with him.

• **He Provides** – He does not send her away “empty” but gives her “six measures of barley” for Naomi (Ruth 3:15). I am not sure how much barley that would be, but one author said it was 40 kilograms, now that is a lot of barley.

After returning home to her mother in law and reporting all that had happened, Naomi encourages Ruth to “Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day” (Ruth 3:18).

There is nothing more for her to do, now it is time for her to wait. I recently read a Christian blog that was encouraging Christian women to wait for their Boaz.

While you are waiting on YOUR Boaz, don’t settle for any of his relatives: Broke-az, Po-az, Lyin-az, Cheating-az, Dumb-az, Drunk-az, Cheap-az, Lockedup-az, Goodfornothing-az, Lazy-az, and especially his third cousin,...Bozo (edited).
The Book of Ruth closes in chapter four with Ruth as the wife of Boaz. In this chapter, we will note her wedding, her triumph and satisfaction in becoming a family. We also see the glory of her fulfilling of her destiny in giving birth to Obed, establishing the line of David and Christ.

**THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MERCY** – Chapter four opens with Boaz making the arrangements for Ruth’s redemption.

- **Boaz Takes a Seat** – The process begins with Boaz going to the “gate” of the city and sitting down (Ruth 4:1-2). The words “sat” and “sitt” are used 5 times in these two verses.

The “gate” would have been a short passageway through the thick wall that surrounded the city. There would be a series of small alcoves which lined the passage and would have formed both a bazaar and courthouse. It would be the primary meeting place for friends, the place to buy and sell and to settle legal matters, (Genesis 19:1; 23:18; 34:20; Deuteronomy 16:18; 21:19; 25:7 Judges 19:15; II Samuel 4:13; 15:2-6; I Kings 22:10; Amos 5:10-15).

It seems that as soon as he sat down that the “nearer” kinsman came by to whom Boaz called out “Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here” (Ruth 4:1). Teamsters used to use the word “ho” to stop their teams. Even today, we will use it to call for someone’s attention.
He then took “ten men” or elders of the city to be witnesses (Ruth 4:2 – While I agree that the “nearer” kinsman represents the law, possibly the 10 men represent the ten commandments, however, is this taking our typology too far). Although two or three witnesses would have been enough to settle the issue (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:20), Boaz is not taking any chances of anything being misunderstood. Ten elders were needed as a minyon or quorum for a lawful public assembly to settle a legal matter.

**Remember, the primary theme of the Book of Ruth is redemption.** The word *redeem* simply means “to buy back.” The words “redeem and redeeming” occurs 9 times in this chapter and the words “buy, buyest, bought and purchased” occurs 6 times. While redemption is free, it comes at a great cost.

The chart below lists the requirements of a redeemer,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KINSMANS-REDEEMER BOAZ</th>
<th>FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST</th>
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<tr>
<td>Right to Redeem – Near Relative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reason to Redeem – Grace</td>
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”Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:14
• **Boaz Tells a Story** – Explaining how Naomi “...is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech’s” (Ruth 4:3). Boaz then explains that the “nearer” kinsman has the first option and that if he did not want it, Boaz would purchase it. The “nearer” kinsman answers “I will redeem it” (Ruth 4:4). Boaz further explains that when he purchases the land, he must also fulfil the Levirate Marriage by marrying Ruth and raising “up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” (Ruth 4:5).

Upon hearing, as Paul Harvey used to say, “the rest of the story,” the “nearer” kinsman said: “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it” (Ruth 4:6). It seems that he wanted the land, but not the lady, he had the means to redeem but not the motivation to redeem. There is an interesting contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament – in the Old they would redeem the land before the bride, in the New the bride is redeemed before the land (I Corinthians 6:20; Revelation 5).

As we mentioned earlier, the “nearer” kinsman represents the law who can never redeem us (Romans 3:20; II Corinthians 3:6-9). The law has the power to condemn but not convert, it can “mar” but gives no miracle. The law excludes us from God’s family – grace includes us!

• **Boaz Takes a Shoe** – Here the author of the Book of Ruth explains an unusual custom that had once been practiced in Israel. Instead of changing the Scriptures we need to explain and define it.

> Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe (Ruth 4:7-8).
This custom probably originated in the fact that men took legal possession of land or property by planting their foot, or putting feet on the ground (Joshua 1; Deuteronomy 11:24).

When the “nearer” kinsman failed to redeem Ruth, he:

1. **Denied his Heritage** – When he “drew off his shoe” he rejected his right as kinsman. He is giving Boaz the authority to walk in his place.
2. **Despised his Household** – by not carrying on the bloodline of his relative’s name (see Genesis 38).
3. **Disgraced his Honour** – There was also the possibility of being publicly humiliated by being spit at in the face and known as “the house of him that hath his shoe loosed” (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

**THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE** – Listen as Boaz cries out:

> And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day (Ruth 4:9-10).

Twice he reminds both the “elders” and “all the people” that they “were witnesses” of what took place (Whenever I officiate a wedding I always remind the guests that they are witnesses of what is about to take place). These are the last words he will speak in the Book of Ruth.
THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE MARRIAGE – In verses 11-12, the “people” and the “elders” acknowledge that they are “witnesses” that the transaction was complete. They also offer a blessing that God would make Boaz’s household fruitful like Rachel, Leah and Pharez. The word Ephratah was an old name for Bethlehem and means “fruitful” (Genesis 35:19). It is interesting that Boaz was famous because of Bethlehem, but today Bethlehem is famous because of the off-spring of Boaz, Jesus Christ.

THE ANCESTRY OF THE MAN – He who had been wifeless now has a wife, she who had been childless, now has a child. “So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son” (Ruth 4:13).

So, the ladies get together to host a baby shower to celebrate with Ruth and Naomi. First, they commend Naomi in her new role as grandmother. Naomi who was once resentful, then reclusive is now renewed and restored!

Then, these ladies compliment Ruth on her love for her mother-in-law and even take the opportunity of naming the child Obed which means “servant” (Ruth 4:14-17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLES OF GRANDPARENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BLESSING GIVER</strong> – Proverbs 10:7</td>
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<td><strong>LEGACY MAKER</strong> – Proverbs 20:7</td>
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<td><strong>TORCH BEARER</strong> – Psalm 71:18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STANDARD SETTER</strong> – Psalm 92:12-15</td>
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In closing, allow me to give you a quick biographical sketch of the genealogy of David.

1. Pharez – His mother was Tamar and his twin brother was Zerah (Genesis 38). Later moved to Egypt with his father, Judah and his sons Hezron and Hamul (Genesis 46:12).
2. Hezron – Established the family of Hezronites (Numbers 26:21).
3. Ram – His name means “high.”
4. Amminadab – He also had a daughter by the name of Elisheba who married Aaron, Moses brother (Exodus 6:23). His name means “my relative is noble.”
5. Nahshon – Aaron’s brother-in-law. Leader of the tribe of Judah, 74,000 (Numbers 2:3-4; 7:12-17).
6. Salmon – Believed to be one of two spies to enter Jericho. Later married Rahab.
7. Boaz – Marries Ruth
8. Obed – There are five Obeds in the Old Testament.
9. Jesse – May have had ten children (I Samuel 17:12 cf I Chronicles 2:13-17),
10. David – His name means “beloved.”

This genealogy covers about 850 years and establishes the line of Christ. It is also important in regards to the prophecy of Micah:

\[
\text{But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting} \] (Micah 5:2, This was fulfilled in Luke 2:4).

As a result, this Christmas we will be singing “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

We began our study by talking about how the Book of Ruth opens like a fairytale with a “once upon a time” beginning, Now, we close with a “happily ever after” ending.