



## ***LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES***

### **The Book of Ruth: LESSON 3**

Welcome to our third week studying the Book of Ruth. I hope you're enjoying it as much as I am. Chapter 3 promises to be a good one, that's for sure. Everyone likes a good love story, right? 😊 In last week's lesson, Ruth had been gleaning in Boaz's field, and 2:23 lets us know that she gleaned through barley harvest, and then straight into the time of wheat harvesting. There is about a 2-3 month time gap between chapter two and three. Ruth worked diligently every day. The Law of Moses allowed widows to work the corners of the field during harvest, but the task could be dangerous. Remember though, that Boaz took great measures to protect Ruth during that time. What a gentleman, right?

I think my favorite part of chapter two is verse 12, when Boaz commends Ruth for placing herself under God's wings for refuge. I love it! I thought about that all week. Shepherd's Notes has a beautiful summary of that thought. I quote, "The imagery of an eagle spreading its protective wings over its young is used symbolically of God (Deut. 32:11). In the same way, the Lord protects His people. They find protection 'under His wings' as the young eagles do under their mother's wings. The psalmists often spoke of the refuge and shelter to be found in the 'shadow' of God's wings (Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 61:4). By choosing Naomi's God as her own, Ruth indicated her desire to seek safety and security under God's wings, thus forsaking the Moabite deities (Ruth 2:12)."

We have seen Boaz treat Ruth with favor since the first day they met. Now Naomi has a plan. I wonder how long she'd been pondering this?

#### **First Day**

1. Read Ruth 3:1-18. Observe the facts you find. Any repeated thoughts or phrases? What's the main point of this chapter?
2. Is there anything that seems strange or surprising to you?

3. Do you think Naomi cares for Ruth's welfare and future? What evidence do you see that supports your opinion?
  
4. What does Naomi call Ruth? In verse 2, what pronoun does Naomi use when talking about the kinsman-redeemer? What does that tell you?
  
5. Describe Ruth's attitude throughout this chapter. How does this line up with what we've already learned about Ruth's character?

It's difficult to understand some of the things that happen in these next two chapters. Our cultures are so different that it's easy to make assumptions or form opinions about this "plan" when we really don't "get it." Let's pray that the Holy Spirit helps us to understand these differences, so we can better see the significance in every little detail of what's happening. Even the fact that Naomi was trying to set the two of them up is a little strange. In the ancient world, the father was the head of the household, and he normally was the one who arranged the marriage for his son. Mothers, in the absence of a father, could also assume this role, as did Ishmael's mother, Hagar, in Genesis 21:21.

6. What specifically speaks to your heart from this chapter upon first reading? Or what do you find significant?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a near kinsman.” Ruth 3:9

### **Second Day**

**Work on your memory verse. It will soon become very significant!**

Like I mentioned, I wonder how long this plan had been brewing in Naomi’s mind. It’s obvious she loves and cares for Ruth’s future. I personally don’t think Naomi is being selfish, I think she truly loves Ruth as a daughter. When she calls Boaz “our” kinsman in verse two, it certainly seems like she sees Ruth as one of her own. What a sweet relationship they have. And when Ruth made that vow to Naomi in chapter 1, she aimed to keep it.

1. Read Ruth 3:1-5. List the instructions, in order, that Naomi gives to Ruth.
2. We’ll look at the cultural significance of this in a moment, but how do you think Ruth may have felt about doing this? I mean, even if it was cultural, there must be a potential for rejection, right? Write your thoughts.
3. Do a bit of research on your own. Can you briefly explain what it means to “winnow barley”? What is a threshing floor?
4. Why do you think Boaz was sleeping on the threshing floor instead of in his bed?

5. Ruth was told to “prepare” herself before she “presented” herself to Boaz, according to the ceremonial law found in Genesis 35:1-3. How are we to “prepare” ourselves before “presenting” ourselves to the Lord? Give verses for your answers. (Some good ones are James 4:7-8:2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Isaiah 1:16; Psalm 51:2,7)

I love what Warren Wiersbe says about her change of clothes. He wrote, “Salvation is pictured as a change of clothes (Luke 15:22; Isaiah 61:10), and Christian living means ‘taking off the grave clothes’ of the old life and putting on the ‘grace clothes’ of the new life (Colossians 3:1-17; John 11:44). We can’t come into His presence in our own righteousness, for when we display ‘our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags’ (Isaiah 64:6). We can only come in the righteousness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), for we belong ‘to His dear Son’ (Ephesians 1:6).”

As far as what Ruth actually put on isn’t clear, but it’s obvious she was to look and smell her best. I read that the translation “your best garment” isn’t really accurate. The Hebrew word was “simla,” which normally referred to an outer garment that covers virtually everything except the head. Some believe it could have been a type of wedding garment, but no one really knows. We do know; however, it was to signify a new day was dawning! Daniel Block writes, “It appears that Naomi is hereby advising Ruth to end her period of mourning over her widowhood and get on with normal life. It may well be that until this time Ruth had always worn garments of widowhood, even when she was working out in the field. Perhaps this was the reason for Boaz’s inertia. As an upright man, he would not violate a woman’s right to grieve the loss of her husband, nor impose himself upon her until she was ready. We know too little about how long widows would customarily wear their mourning clothes, but it may be that Naomi is now telling Ruth the time has come to doff her ‘garments of widowhood.’”

Only some of you have experienced the tragic loss of a husband, but most all of us have experienced loss of some sort, whether it be of a relationship, a dream, or something we were simply hoping and praying for. Has God ever asked you to take off your “mourning clothes” and move forward? Perhaps you’re facing a transition that is making you fearful, or you’re simply having trouble letting go of the past. There’s a time for mourning, but there’s a time to move forward and embrace the “new” that God has for you. I am not trying to tell you to put a time limit on your mourning or your grieving process. But I know the Lord loves you, has plans for you, and wants to heal your heart. Though your hearts may ache forever, we can’t stay in our “mourning” clothes forever. I love this quote by Kelly Minter, “When we’re wrapped in garments of mourning, we’re unavailable for whatever else God has for us.”

6. Is the Lord asking you to throw off some weighty garments? Maybe not mourning, but anger, bitterness, or jealousy? Read Hebrews 12:1 and Philippians 3:12-14. What does Paul tell us to do? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you anything you're holding on to that's keeping you from moving forward.

7. Read Isaiah 43:16-19 and Ephesians 4:20-24. How do these verses encourage you? What are we called to do?

Just in case you couldn't find the definition of winnowing or what a threshing floor is, I thought I'd briefly explain. Winnowing is the process of separating the grain from the chaff. The stalks of grain were thrown into the air so the wind could blow away the light scaly chaff, allowing the heavier pure grain to fall back on the ground. Winnowing left a pile of clean grain ready for grinding into flour. This would be done at the threshing floor, taking advantage of the evening breeze to help winnow the crop. The threshing floor is a level area, trodden into hardness, where the kernels of grain are first separated from the stalk by dragging a heavy slab over it or by the trampling of cattle, crushing the dried stalks and husks. The owner of the crops and his hired hands would usually sleep at the threshing floor because robbers would often come and try to steal the grain. This is how Naomi knew that Boaz and his men would be sleeping there. 😊

8. According to verse 5, does Ruth commit to the plan? Do you think she understood it all?

What Naomi was asking Ruth to do was very significant. Let's not miss that in the "weirdness" of it. She's simply asking her to let Boaz know that she wanted him to be her redeemer. When he wakes up, he immediately knew what she was communicating. We'll read more about it tomorrow, but for now, don't think Ruth was being promiscuous. Attractive, yes. Sleazy, no. I love Ruth; she's my friend. She'd never do anything like that!

### Third Day

#### **Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Ruth 3:1-9, focusing on 6-9. Why do you think Naomi told her to wait until he had eaten and finished drinking?
  
2. In your own words, describe what Ruth does. What does she call herself now, instead of the Moabitess?

Ruth isn't doing anything immoral or wrong. (This part has always been confusing to me, but I think I get it now!) A man placing his "wing" (corner of his garment) over a maiden is a token of marriage. It means to claim a person for yourself (1 Kings 19:19; Ezekiel 16:8). Ruth had placed herself under the wings of Jehovah God, and now she was placing herself under the wings of Boaz, asking him to be her kinsman-redeemer. She was basically asking him to marry her. 😊

To uncover a man's feet and lie down was both intimate and humbling. It would also be embarrassing to the man if someone else was to witness it, so she does it secretly, leaving before morning. This certainly took courage. She had to be brave and be willing to face any fears of rejection or embarrassment.

As far as the spiritual significance of this act, it's simply beautiful. Just as Ruth requested protection and covenant with Boaz, the Lord promised that same protection to His bride, Jerusalem. Ezekiel 16:8 says, "When I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness." God offers to redeem each one of us through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer, no one else could do it! No other family member could redeem a lost world. He will cover us with His wings of righteousness (Ephesians 1:7). God has given no other name under Heaven by which we must be saved! (Acts 4:12)

3. Read 3:10-18. Boaz is startled! (Wouldn't you be?) How does Boaz respond to Ruth's request? Does he seem happy about the situation? Do you think his decision was hard or easy?

4. Naomi had told Ruth that Boaz would tell her what to do. In verse 9, who is telling who what to do? Hmm... Was Ruth following the script?
  
5. What does Boaz commend Ruth for in verse 10? What does he mean?
  
6. How do you think Ruth felt when she found out there was a closer relative than Boaz that could marry her if he was willing?
  
7. How did Boaz repeatedly show his desire to care for and protect Ruth?
  
8. Why did he tell his servants not to tell anyone?

Boaz takes steps to protect Ruth in all ways, including her character. He also gives her a heap of grain, about 2 weeks' worth. Six measures of barley was a lot! He probably helped her to position it on her head, the way many of the women carried it in that day. He was promising to take care of her in the future, but in their present circumstance as well. He was gracious and generous towards Ruth. I think this threshing floor was holy ground, don't you? I think Boaz really loved her. And then ... off she went.

9. How does Naomi respond when Ruth tells her the news?
  
10. Naomi always seemed to have Ruth's welfare in her thoughts. How did Ruth demonstrate her respect and trust for Naomi, up to this point?

11. Naomi tells Ruth basically to sit still and wait. Oh, why is waiting so difficult? God wants us to be patient and wait for His timing on everything. **Read Psalm 46:10.** Is the Holy Spirit calling you to “wait” in some situation? What can you do while you wait?

12. What application do you see for yourself in today’s lesson?

That’s it for today. Tomorrow we’ll jump into chapter four and see what happens. I might not be able to sleep tonight in anticipation!

#### **Fourth and Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory. Have you asked Jesus to be your covering?**

As I was praying and thinking about our story, an interesting thought came to my mind. When Naomi gave Ruth the game plan, I wonder how she felt. After all, Ruth was all she really had. Yes, if the plan worked out, she would benefit, but honestly, I think it was a sacrifice to “give Ruth up” so to speak. She had left full and come home empty, but in the few months they spent living together, I suspect she discovered the true blessing that Ruth was to her. I think this was a big sacrifice on Naomi’s part. Just a thought ...

1. Read Ruth 4:1-22. Are there any repeated words or phrases? Give this chapter a title that reflects the main point.
  
2. In the morning, Boaz takes action, just as he promised. In verse one, we find the word “Behold” again. What is the significance of the word in this context?

Boaz was able to sit with the elders at the gate, showing he was of good reputation. The gate was where all sorts of commercial, political, and social activities took place. Boaz wanted to settle this matter publicly. And “behold” or “it just so happened” that the relative he was looking for walked by. What a coincidence...

According to the law, if a poor Israelite had to sell their land, the nearest relative was to redeem the property by buying it back (Leviticus 25:25). We really don't know anything about Naomi's land, except that she had some, and was being forced to sell it. Again, the purpose of these laws was to preserve the name and protect the property of families in Israel. God owned the land and didn't want it exploited by rich people who would take advantage of poor people and widows.

3. At first, is the relative interested? What changed his mind?

4. Describe the official sandal ceremony.

Shepherd's Notes says, “The Law of Moses did not specifically tie the redeeming of property with the custom of kinsman marriage, so the friend could decline without embarrassment. For some reason, he believed that marrying Ruth would jeopardize his own estate, so he offers the right to Boaz, publicly. The giving of the sandal symbolized the transfer to Boaz of the friend's right to redeem. Apparently, the sandal ceremony was no longer a custom at the time the story of Ruth was written, so the author informs the readers how it was done ‘in earlier times.’” The friend forfeited his right, and now Boaz had the land ... and Ruth! Some commentators believe that he didn't want the financial drain of providing for Ruth and Naomi, or that he was superstitious and thought he would die since their husbands had all died. (That's a weird one.) No one knows, but it's a win win for Boaz. Now he can be the “goel.”

5. Why do you think Boaz wanted to do this publicly?

6. Why do you think the friend's name is omitted from Scripture? Discuss your thoughts.

7. What were the people's and the elders' prayers and hopes for Boaz, according to verses 11-12? (The word "Ephrathah" means "fruitful.") Who were Rachel and Leah the mothers of, according to Genesis 35:16-29?

The people also wanted the house of Boaz to be like that of Perez (1 Chronicles 2:5; 50-54, Matthew 1:3). Boaz was a descendant of Tamar, who, like Ruth, was a childless widow, but through her father-in-law, bore twin sons, Perez and Zerah (Genesis 38:27-30). Another story for another day ...

In one single verse, the much-anticipated wedding takes place and God reverses Ruth's barrenness!

8. Read Ruth 4:13-22. God blessed them with a son! What kind words did the women speak over Naomi? What do they specifically point out about Ruth?

9. Why was Ruth "better than seven sons"? What do you think they meant?

10. What was the son's name?

To say Ruth was better than seven sons was a comment of supreme blessing in a Hebrew family. Because sons were especially important and were considered second in significance to the father, this was huge! It appears that the women were the ones who named the baby. This is the only example in the Old Testament of someone other than the parents naming the child. Very interesting.

11. Does it seem like Ruth gives Naomi a significant role in raising the child? Why?

As we read verses 17-22, we see that Ruth becomes the great grandmother of David. Obed has Jesse, who has David, putting them in the ancestry of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5-6). Boaz had redeemed the family inheritance, now Obed would continue the family line, protect the inheritance, and use it to sustain Naomi. He would live up to his name and be a “servant” to Naomi, his “foster mom.”

12. Looking back on the Book of Ruth, what impressed you the most, or spoke to your heart? Are there any changes you desire to make in how you live your life as a result?

13. In what ways can Ruth be a role model for you?

14. What are some lessons that we can learn from Naomi’s life, both good and bad?

So ... how on earth do we end a story like this? There is so much more we could discuss and meditate on. I feel we should’ve talked more about Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi, or the friendship between the women. We could have developed the thought of “mentorship” between older and younger women. Ohhhh, so much to learn! Keep studying this book on your own, ladies, for further insight. As I prayed, I decided to wrap it up by quoting Warren Wiersbe, simply because he says just about everything better than I do. And if I haven’t been clear enough, and you still don’t understand the spiritual significance of the story, here it is in a nutshell.

### Our Family Redeemer

“In Old Testament times, not everybody could perform the duties of a family redeemer. To begin with, he ***had to be a near kinsman redeemer*** (Lev 25:25). When you see this as a type of Christ, it reminds you that He had to become related to us before He could redeem us. He became flesh and blood so He could die for us on the cross (Hebrews 2:14-15).

“The family redeemer ***also had to be able to pay the redemption price***. Ruth and Naomi were too poor to redeem themselves, but Boaz had all the resources necessary to set them free. In the case of the redemption of sinners, nobody but Jesus Christ is rich enough to pay the price. Indeed, the payment of money can never set sinners free; the shedding of the precious blood of Christ has accomplished redemption.

“The family redeemer ***had to be willing to redeem***. As we shall see in Boaz’s negotiations, since the nearer kinsman was not willing to redeem Ruth, Boaz was free to purchase both the property and a wife. We have redemption through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7), because He gave Himself for us (Titus 2:14), and purchased eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12).”

