

Women in the Lineage of Christ

Week 6 – Ruth 3

Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

You may want to use this prayer, based on Hebrews 4:12

God, your Word is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing my soul and spirit, my joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of my heart. I want to hear you through your word now.

Begin...

Read through the text twice. First read to gain a general understanding of the passage. Read a second time slowly, looking at each verse in detail.

To make sure you have understood the story in Ruth, answer the following questions (in your head or on paper).

1. What does Naomi instruct Ruth to do in verses 1-4?
2. Where does this take place?
3. What was Boaz doing there?
4. What was Ruth's response to Naomi in verses 5-6?
5. How does Boaz respond to Ruth's actions?
6. Notice his further generosity in verse 15.
7. What are the instructions Naomi gives to Ruth at the end of chapter 3?

Memory Verse for the Week...

Matthew 6:8

"Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Historical background

Winnowing barley at the threshing-floor: In this process grain was separated from the husks by being trodden out by animals. Then the mixture was thrown into the air against a stiff breeze, so that the wind blew the chaff away while the heavier grain fell more or less straight down. According to the weather and wind conditions, work at night might have been preferable. Possibly the workers took turns in guarding the grain after the work ceased.

Some scriptures for contemplation...

Ezekiel 16:8

"Later I passed by, and 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. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine."

Matthew 6:8

"Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Matthew 7:7

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 21:22

"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Luke 12:22-32

"Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! [...] Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown in the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! [...] Your Father knows that you need such things. Seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

Study Questions

1. At the beginning of chapter 3, Naomi asks Ruth to initiate a relationship with Boaz, to assume his role as kinsman-redeemer. What does Ruth's response to Naomi tell you about her?

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If you were Ruth, how would you feel about Naomi's plan? What would be your apprehension?

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2. Ruth prepares herself as if a bride. She goes to Boaz and lies at his feet. She asks him to spread the corner of his garment over her. This was a customary request for marriage. (See Ezekiel 16:8) Boaz's response to Ruth further exemplifies his outstanding character. How does he react when he finally discovers Ruth at his feet?

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Write down the positive words Boaz uses towards Ruth in verses 10-14.

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What part do you think his prayer for Ruth in 2:12 might play in his decision? Ruth 2: 12 "May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

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Ruth's loyalty to her deceased husband in marrying a middle-aged man to perpetuate his name and inheritance instead of seeking a husband from among the younger set was great evidence of her devotion to Naomi.

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3. Compare Boaz's response to Ruth with Judah's response to Tamar in Genesis 38.

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4. In verse 14, Boaz is concerned about Ruth being recognized. How do you think people would have interpreted a woman on the threshing floor?

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5. Boaz not only blessed Ruth and protected her reputation, he sent her back to Naomi with 6 measures of grain. "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to you mother-in-law empty-handed'."

We are reminded here of the theme of emptiness and fullness from Ruth 1. Ruth 1:21 "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty." Naomi is about to be made full again. Read the scriptures in the side box. What do you most need in your life right now?

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6. Reading these Scriptures, why do you think we often worry about being empty or full? What makes it so hard to come to God with our requests and needs?

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7. In verse 18, Naomi says, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today." The two women did all they could; now matters were out of their hands. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to depend greatly on somebody else to provide for your needs? What happened?

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8. Even though Ruth and Naomi made their petition clear to Boaz, there is no suggestion of manipulation in their actions. How easy or how hard do you find it to refrain from controlling events to provide for your own well being?

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9. How does God's provision for Ruth and Naomi through Boaz strengthen your faith? How does it help your determination to keep your integrity no matter what?

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10. How do Ruth and Boaz fit into our social world today? Would this be a love story fit for Hollywood? What in this story is appealing to you?

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More scriptures...

Psalm 27:6-7

"Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplication. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped."

Personal Application