

The Book of Ruth, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: The Appeal at the Threshing Floor

Ruth 3:1–18

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This chapter sits at the doctrinal center of the whole book, because here the word redeemer steps onto the stage. Boaz is the “near kinsman,” the relative with both the right and, as the story will prove, the willingness to redeem Ruth: to marry her, restore Naomi’s land, and secure a future where there was none. This is not sentiment; it is covenant law (Leviticus 25:25) becoming covenant love. The teaching stakes are high because the kinsman-redeemer is one of the clearest Old Testament portraits of Christ. Like Boaz, Jesus is our near kinsman who took on flesh to stand in our family; like Boaz, He redeems at cost to Himself; unlike any earthly redeemer, He purchased us with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18–19; Ephesians 1:7). Handle the threshing-floor scene with dignity: this is the account of an honorable woman making an honorable appeal, answered by a man of unbending integrity.

Two doctrines must stay in balance. First, the providence of God, who is quietly arranging every step, the field, the harvest, the timing, the nearer kinsman, without a single miracle on display. Second, the responsibility of godly character, seen in Boaz’s refusal to take a shortcut even when his own heart was engaged. Providence is not fatalism. God’s purposes move forward through, not around, the integrity of His people. Press your students to see that waiting on God (“sit still,” 3:18) and walking in obedience are not opposites; they are partners.

The formational aim is this: that each student would learn to obey immediately like Ruth, to wait patiently like Naomi, to act with integrity like Boaz, and above all to behold and treasure Christ the true Redeemer who spreads His covering over the unworthy and claims them as His own. We want them to leave not merely admiring an ancient love story but worshiping the Redeemer it foreshadows, and resolving to walk in purity, patience, and trust before Him.

Question 1

Student Question:

Naomi’s whole aim is to seek “rest” for Ruth, a settled home and security (3:1). What does this reveal about God’s design for marriage and family as a place of covenant protection, and how does Naomi’s selfless concern for Ruth’s future model the love we are to have for one another (Philippians 2:4)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Naomi opens the chapter with a question that is really a vow: “My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?” (3:1). The Hebrew idea of “rest” here is a settled home,

the security and shelter of a covenant household. In that world, a widow without a husband or sons was desperately exposed. Naomi is not merely arranging a marriage; she is seeking Ruth a place of refuge and belonging.

Notice the reversal. In chapter 1 Naomi was so emptied by grief that she renamed herself Mara, bitter. Now that same woman is pouring herself out to secure another's good. Grace has begun to heal her by giving her someone to love. This is how God often restores us: not by removing every sorrow at once, but by turning our hearts outward toward the good of another.

God's design from Eden is that marriage and family be a place of covenant protection, one man and one woman bound for life, a shelter where the vulnerable are cherished (Genesis 2:24). Naomi's concern reflects that design. She is not chasing romance; she is seeking a home where it will "be well" with Ruth.

Naomi's selflessness models Philippians 2:4, looking "not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." She who had the most reason to be consumed by her own loss spends herself on Ruth's future. This is the love the church is called to embody.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- "Rest" (3:1) means a secure, settled home, not mere relaxation.
- Naomi seeks Ruth's good above her own comfort.
- Marriage as God's design for covenant protection and belonging.
- Contrast with Naomi's bitterness in chapter 1 shows healing grace.
- Loving others' interests as our own (Philippians 2:4).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: what does godly 'rest' look like, and how is it more than comfort?
- Have someone read Genesis 2:24 on God's design for marriage.
- Discuss whose 'rest' you are currently seeking besides your own.

Question 2

Student Question:

Naomi told Ruth to wash, anoint herself, and put on her best garment before going to Boaz (3:3). When you prepare to come before God, in worship or in prayer, do you come carelessly or with reverent care of heart? What would it look like to "prepare" yourself to meet Him this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Naomi's instructions begin with preparation: "Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee" (3:3). After a long season of widowhood and mourning, Ruth is to lay aside the garments of grief and present herself with care and dignity for this honorable appeal.

There is a principle here that reaches beyond the threshing floor. Preparation is an act of reverence. How we ready ourselves to meet someone reveals how much that meeting means to us. The same is true when we come before God.

Scripture repeatedly links outward preparation with inward readiness of heart. The point is never mere ceremony; it is that the heart, like the hands, should be made clean before we draw near (Psalm 24:3–4; Hebrews 10:22). Carelessness in approaching God betrays a low view of Him.

This is a searching question for worship. Do we stumble into the assembly distracted and unready, or do we prepare our hearts to meet the living God? Reverent care is not legalism; it is love expressing itself in attentiveness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Preparation as an act of reverence and seriousness.
- Ruth laying aside mourning to present herself with dignity.
- Clean hands and a pure heart in approaching God (Psalm 24:3–4).
- Drawing near with a true heart (Hebrews 10:22).
- Carelessness in worship reveals a low view of God.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: how do you ‘prepare’ your heart before worship or prayer?
- Read Psalm 24:3–4 and discuss what clean hands and a pure heart mean.
- Name one distraction to set aside before meeting God this week.

Question 3

Student Question:

Ruth’s request, “spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” (3:9), was an honorable appeal for marriage and redemption, echoing the covenant language of Ezekiel 16:8. How does this verse show us that biblical love is bound up with covenant, commitment, and protection rather than mere feeling?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The heart of the night is Ruth’s request: “spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” (3:9). This is not seduction; it is a proposal of marriage and a plea for redemption. To spread one’s skirt, or wing, over another was a recognized act of covenant covering and protection.

The same image appears in Ezekiel 16:8, where the LORD says of Jerusalem, “I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness... and entered into a covenant with thee.” Ruth is

invoking covenant language. She is asking Boaz to do for her what God does for His people: to claim her, cover her, and bind himself to her.

Beautifully, Boaz had earlier prayed that Ruth would find refuge under the “wings” of the God of Israel (2:12). Now Ruth asks Boaz to be the human answer to his own prayer, to spread his wing over her. God often answers our prayers by making us part of the answer.

This teaches us that biblical love is bound up with covenant, not mere feeling. Ruth does not ask for affection or attraction; she asks for commitment, protection, and a binding promise. That is the shape of love God designed: faithful, covenantal, and sheltering.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Spread thy skirt” (3:9) is a request for marriage and redemption.
- Covenant covering imagery, not impropriety.
- Parallel with Ezekiel 16:8, God’s covenant covering of His people.
- Boaz becomes the answer to his own prayer (Ruth 2:12).
- Biblical love as covenant commitment, not mere emotion.

Discussion Prompts

- Read Ezekiel 16:8 alongside Ruth 3:9 and compare the imagery.
- Ask: how is covenant love different from love defined only by feeling?
- Discuss how God sometimes answers prayer by making us the answer.

Question 4

Student Question:

Ruth made a courageous appeal that left her vulnerable and at the mercy of Boaz’s character. When has obedience to God required you to step out in a way that felt risky, trusting His protection rather than guarding yourself? How did He prove faithful?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Consider Ruth’s position that night. A foreign widow, with no power and no guarantee, lying at the feet of a sleeping man, about to make herself wholly vulnerable to his character. Everything depended on Boaz being who she trusted him to be. This took real courage.

Ruth’s obedience was not safe obedience. She stepped into uncertainty trusting that the God who had led her this far would not abandon her now. Faith frequently looks like this: not the absence of risk, but the willingness to obey God in the presence of it.

And God proved faithful, not by removing the risk, but by surrounding her with the integrity of a godly man and the providence of a watching Father. The vulnerable obedience of Ruth was met by the covering grace of God.

This invites honest reflection. Obedience often asks us to lower our defenses, to forgive, to confess, to step out, to trust, when self-protection would feel safer. The question is whether we will guard ourselves or entrust ourselves to the One who keeps us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Ruth's appeal left her genuinely vulnerable.
- Faith as obedience in the presence of risk.
- God's faithfulness shown through Boaz's character and providence.
- Self-protection versus entrusting ourselves to God.
- Courage rooted in trust, not in guarantees.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: when has obedience required you to feel vulnerable?
- Discuss the difference between recklessness and faith-filled risk.
- Name one area where God is asking you to stop self-protecting.

Question 5

Student Question:

Boaz blessed Ruth and praised her for not pursuing "young men, whether poor or rich" (3:10), commending the kindness she showed in seeking redemption the right way. What does his response teach us about valuing godly character and purity above appearance, wealth, or impulse (1 Peter 3:3-4)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Boaz's first words are blessing, not suspicion: "Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich" (3:10). He honors her, and he honors the godly way she has sought redemption.

Boaz commends Ruth for not pursuing "young men." She could have chased attraction, youth, or advantage. Instead she sought the path of covenant and redemption, the right thing done the right way. Boaz prizes her character far above any other consideration.

This is a direct rebuke to the world's scale of values. Peter writes that beauty should not be merely "outward," but "the hidden man of the heart... a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4). Boaz sees with God's eyes.

The lesson presses on us: do we esteem godly character and purity above appearance, wealth, and impulse? Boaz teaches us to look for, and to become, people whose worth is measured by kindness, faithfulness, and the fear of the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Boaz blesses Ruth rather than suspecting her.
- Commendation for seeking redemption the godly way (3:10).
- Character valued above youth, wealth, or impulse.
- Inner beauty of great price (1 Peter 3:3-4).
- Seeing people with God's eyes, not the world's scale.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: what does our culture prize that Boaz did not?
- Read 1 Peter 3:3-4 and discuss the 'hidden man of the heart.'
- Name a person whose godly character you most admire, and why.

Question 6

Student Question:

Boaz called Ruth "a virtuous woman" (3:11), and that reputation was known throughout the town. What is your reputation among those who know you best, and what one habit could you begin this week to let your conduct adorn the gospel (Titus 2:7-8)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Boaz says, "all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman" (3:11). Ruth's reputation preceded her. The whole town knew her, not for her foreign birth or her poverty, but for her virtue, loyalty, and faithful labor.

A reputation is built quietly, day by day, in small acts seen by those nearest us. Ruth's gleaning, her devotion to Naomi, her diligence, all of it had been watched, and it had spoken. Character is what you are when the harvest is hot and no one important is looking.

Paul urges that we show "a pattern of good works," with "sound speech, that cannot be condemned" so that the gospel is adorned and its opponents silenced (Titus 2:7-8). Our reputation among those who know us best either commends or contradicts the faith we profess.

This calls for honest self-examination. What do those closest to us, our family, our coworkers, our neighbors, know us to be? Often the most powerful sermon we preach is the consistency of an ordinary, faithful life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Ruth's reputation as a virtuous woman was widely known (3:11).
- Character is built in small, daily, unseen acts.
- A pattern of good works adorns the gospel (Titus 2:7-8).
- Reputation among those nearest us as a witness.

- The sermon of a consistent, ordinary, faithful life.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: what would those closest to you say your reputation is?
- Read Titus 2:7-8 on adorning the gospel by conduct.
- Choose one habit this week to strengthen your witness at home.

Question 7

Student Question:

There was a nearer kinsman, and Boaz refused to take Ruth until that man was given his rightful first opportunity (3:12-13). What does Boaz's scrupulous honesty, even when it threatened his own desire, teach us about how godly character cooperates with God's providence rather than grasping or scheming?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Just when everything seemed settled, Boaz tells the truth that complicates his own desire: "it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I" (3:12). A lesser man would have stayed silent and seized the moment. Boaz will not.

He insists the nearer kinsman be given his rightful first opportunity (3:13). Boaz's heart is plainly engaged, yet he will not grasp by shortcut what he can only receive by integrity. He refuses to manipulate the outcome, even in his own favor.

Here is the marriage of providence and character. Boaz does not say, "God will work it out, so anything goes." He says, in effect, "I will do the right thing the right way, and trust God with the result." Godly character cooperates with God's providence; it does not scheme to override it.

This is a powerful corrective to the temptation, ever present, to cut corners when we want something badly. Boaz teaches us that we honor God not only by what we pursue, but by how we pursue it. The end never sanctifies a dishonest means.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Boaz reveals the nearer kinsman, against his own interest (3:12).
- He honors the other man's rightful first claim (3:13).
- Integrity even when the heart is engaged.
- Providence and character as partners, not rivals.
- The end never justifies dishonest means.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: where are you tempted to cut a corner to get what you want?

- Discuss how Boaz trusts God with the outcome he cannot control.
- Name a 'right thing' you must do the 'right way' this week.

Question 8

Student Question:

Naomi told Ruth to “sit still” and wait while Boaz settled the matter (3:18). Where in your life are you tempted to force an outcome instead of waiting on God to work? What would it look like for you to “sit still” and trust Him this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After the matter is spoken, Boaz sends Ruth home with six measures of barley and a word of assurance, and Naomi gives wise counsel: “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” (3:18).

Naomi knows Boaz. She knows his integrity guarantees he will not delay. So she counsels Ruth to wait, not in anxious striving, but in restful trust. There is a time to act, and Ruth has acted; now there is a time to “sit still” and let God work through a faithful man.

This is one of the hardest disciplines of faith. We are tempted to force outcomes, to push, to manage, to fix. But some matters are taken out of our hands precisely so that we will learn to trust. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Waiting is not passivity; it is active trust. Ruth had done all she could do rightly; the rest belonged to Boaz and to God. Learning when to act and when to “sit still” is one of the marks of spiritual maturity.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Sit still” (3:18) is restful trust, not anxious striving.
- There is a time to act and a time to wait.
- The temptation to force outcomes ourselves.
- Be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10).
- Waiting as active trust, a mark of maturity.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask: where are you forcing an outcome God wants you to wait on?
- Read Psalm 46:10 and discuss what stillness before God means.
- Identify one matter to surrender and ‘sit still’ about this week.

Question 9

Student Question:

Boaz is the kinsman-redeemer: the near relative who, at cost to himself, has the right to redeem Ruth, restore her place, and secure her inheritance. How does Boaz point us forward to Christ, our Redeemer, who claimed us not with silver and gold but with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18–19; Titus 2:14; Ephesians 1:7)? Trace the parallels carefully from the text.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the great theme of the book stands fully revealed. Boaz is the goel, the kinsman-redeemer: the near relative who has the right, and the willingness, to redeem. Under the law (Leviticus 25:25), a near kinsman could buy back a poor relative's lost inheritance and restore what was forfeited. Boaz can redeem Ruth, restore Naomi's land, and secure a future where there was only emptiness.

Trace the parallels to Christ carefully, for they are exact and glorious. First, the redeemer must be a near kinsman. So the Son of God took on flesh and became our brother, "made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14–17). Jesus is our near Kinsman, one of us.

Second, the redeemer redeems at cost to himself. Boaz would spend his name and his estate. Christ spent infinitely more: "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18–19). He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us... and purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14). In Him "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7).

Third, the redeemer claims the one he redeems and gives an inheritance. Boaz will spread his skirt over Ruth and bring her into his household and lineage, this Moabite widow grafted into the family of Israel, and into the line of David and of the Messiah Himself (Matthew 1:5). So Christ claims us as His own and makes us "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). What Boaz pictures dimly, Christ fulfills perfectly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Boaz as goel, the kinsman-redeemer of Leviticus 25:25.
- The redeemer must be a near kinsman (Hebrews 2:14–17; Galatians 4:4).
- Redemption at cost: not silver and gold but Christ's blood (1 Peter 1:18–19).
- Christ gave Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14).
- Redemption brings forgiveness and inheritance (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 8:17).
- Ruth grafted into the line of the Messiah (Matthew 1:5).
- Boaz pictures dimly what Christ fulfills perfectly.

Discussion Prompts

- Have the class list each parallel between Boaz and Christ from the text.
- Read 1 Peter 1:18–19 and dwell on the cost of our redemption.
- Ask: what inheritance has our Redeemer secured for us in Christ?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter, at Ruth's obedience, Boaz's integrity, Naomi's care, and God's quiet providence. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming His own character in you through this passage, and what you will do this week in response.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Step back and take in the whole chapter at once. Ruth obeys immediately and humbly. Boaz acts with unbending integrity. Naomi loves selflessly and counsels wisely. And beneath them all, unseen but never absent, the providence of God moves every piece toward redemption. Four portraits, one Redeemer behind them.

The aim of this study is not merely to admire these people but to be changed into the likeness of the One they foreshadow. Christ is the true Redeemer who spreads His covering over the unworthy. The character we admire in Ruth and Boaz is the very character His Spirit is forming in us (Galatians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

So make it specific. Perhaps it is Ruth's immediate obedience you most need, in some command you have been delaying. Perhaps it is Boaz's integrity, in a place where you have been tempted to cut a corner. Perhaps it is Naomi's trust, learning to "sit still." Name the one thing, and name what you will do about it.

A capstone question deserves a costly answer. Do not leave the threshing floor merely moved; leave it resolved. Worship the Redeemer, and let Him press His own image deeper into your life this very week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Ruth's obedience, Boaz's integrity, Naomi's trust, God's providence.
- Christ as the Redeemer all four portraits foreshadow.
- The Spirit forming Christ's character in us (Galatians 4:19).
- Beholding His glory, changed into His image (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- From admiration to specific, costly resolve.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask each person to name one trait God is forming in them here.
- Have the class state one specific action for the coming week.
- Close by worshiping Christ our true Kinsman-Redeemer together.