

The Book of Ruth

Lesson 3: The Appeal at the Threshing Floor -- Ruth 3:1-18

There is a kind of love that does not sit still. It is the love of a mother who, even in her own widowhood and grief, cannot rest until her daughter is safe. "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" (3:1). Naomi has watched Ruth glean through a long barley harvest, sunup to sundown, carrying home grain and never once carrying home a complaint. And now Naomi turns her eyes from the fields to the future. Ruth has given Naomi her loyalty. Naomi will give Ruth a home.

So she lays out a plan, and it is a bold one. Wash, anoint, put on your best garment, and go down to the threshing floor where Boaz is winnowing barley by the cool night wind. Wait until he has eaten and his heart is merry and he lies down to sleep. Mark the place. Then uncover his feet, lie down, and let him tell you what to do (3:3-4). To our ears it sounds risky, even scandalous. But read it with the eyes of that culture, not ours, and you will see something else entirely: a widow, with no power and no protection, preparing to make an honorable and courageous appeal for marriage and redemption to a man she has every reason to believe will treat her with honor.

And Ruth answers with the same nine words that have shaped her whole story: "All that thou sayest unto me I will do" (3:5). She trusts Naomi. More than that, she trusts the God of Naomi. At midnight Boaz wakes with a start, and a woman is at his feet in the dark. "Who art thou?" And here is the heart of the night: "I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman" (3:9). That is not seduction. That is a proposal. Cover me. Claim me. Redeem me. Be the kinsman God appointed you to be.

Watch how Boaz answers, because everything depends on it. No advantage taken. No corner cut. Only blessing, only honor, only integrity. He calls her virtuous, he protects her name, and he tells her the truth even when the truth is inconvenient: there is a nearer kinsman who must be given first claim (3:12). In this quiet barley field at midnight, two godly people do the right thing the right way, and the providence of God moves underneath them like a current you cannot see but cannot stop. By morning Ruth carries home six measures of barley and a promise, and Naomi says the wisest thing in the chapter: "Sit still, my daughter... for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day" (3:18). Let us go down to the threshing floor and learn.

Group Discussion: What does Naomi mean when she seeks "rest" for Ruth (3:1), and how is the rest she has in mind both like and unlike the rest God offers us in Christ?

Personal Reflection: Ruth said, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do" (3:5), and then she did the hard, humbling thing. Where in your life right now is God asking for that kind of immediate, unflinching obedience, and what is holding you back from giving it?

Read Ruth 3:1–18

Study Questions

1. 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)?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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)?

6. 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)?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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.
10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Ezekiel 16:8, the LORD spreading His skirt over Jerusalem as a covenant act of claiming and protecting, the same image Ruth invokes; Leviticus 25:25, the law of the kinsman-redeemer who buys back what a poor relative has lost; Titus 2:14, Christ giving Himself to redeem and purify a people for His own; 1 Peter 1:18–19, redeemed not with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ; Ruth 2:12, Boaz's earlier prayer that Ruth find refuge under God's wings, now answered through Boaz's own covering.

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