

Ruth 3

Picture yourself at a time when you felt like an outsider in a community. Did you feel bold, or were you hesitant to talk to others? Did you feel awkward navigating the cultural differences between yourself and others?

Ruth is still an outsider, even though she came back to Israel with Naomi. She has declared, “your people will be my people, and your God my God.” Yet, everyone would know her to be a Moabite and may not expect her to follow the customs of Israel. As you read this chapter, pay attention to how Ruth acts in response to Israel’s culture.

Getting Oriented

God has been providing for Naomi and Ruth through the generosity and kindness of Boaz. Boaz has allowed Ruth to work in his fields and even told his men to leave extra grain from the harvest for her to pick up! Ruth’s faithfulness and devotion to her mother-in-law has amazed him.

Naomi, while glad to have Ruth’s company, probably still feels a little bad that Ruth did not return home as Naomi had urged. She likely feels responsible for Ruth’s well-being, and might even feel a little guilty that she didn’t have another son to take care of both of them. But now Naomi knows that Boaz has been treating her favorably! He just might be the right person to provide for them! In addition, the harvest is coming quickly to an end. They have had food up to this point, but are uncertain where their food may come from next.

Key Terms and Historical Background Notes

Winnowing...on the threshing floor (v2) Farmers separate the useful seeds of grain from the useless stalks by laying the grain on the floor and having animals walk on it. Once the seeds are loosened, they toss it in the air and the wind separates it the rest of the way.

Guardian-redeemer/Kinsman-redeemer (v9) The Kinsman-redeemer was a man legally obligated to take care of the childless widow of a member of his family. He is the nearest relation to the dead man and is required to marry the widow in order to continue the dead man’s name and family line. (You can read more about it in Duet 25:5-10)

Six measures of barley (v15) It is unclear how much this is, but shows that Boaz is continuing to provide for Ruth and Naomi

Read Ruth 3

Exploring the Passage

1. Ruth went alone at night to the threshing floor, a place where women would not be. How do you think she was feeling when she did this? What does this chapter show you about Ruth’s obedience and boldness?
2. Boaz twice refers to Ruth as “my daughter” and blesses her for not choosing to marry a young man. He says this act shows even stronger family loyalty to Naomi. Given what you

know about guardian-redeemers, why do you think he says this? What does it say about Boaz that he, knowing laws about guardian-redeemers, chose to wait for Ruth to come to him before acting upon it?

3. Reread verses 3-4. To lie down at someone's feet would be to take the position of a servant, waiting for the command of the master (something Ruth references later). Ruth also waits for Boaz to tell her what to do. She could demand his protection under the law, but instead comes in a posture of humility and servanthood. What do you learn about both Boaz's and Ruth's character from this interaction?
4. The only reference to God is in the blessing and promise Boaz gives. Do you see the action happening in this chapter more of an example of God working, or of people taking matters into their own hands? Why?

Charting Our Course

1. There are debates among scholars as to what Naomi's instructions really meant and how dishonorably things *might have gone*. What is important to note, however, is that regardless of the situation, Boaz and Ruth acted honorably and in a godly way. How will remembering their example help you no matter what situation you face?
2. Ruth showed obedience, boldness, and humility in her actions, and was praised by Boaz for her virtue. What qualities of Ruth do you most see in yourself?
3. Boaz agreed to be the guardian-redeemer, but wanted to make sure he did it legally. Are there times you want something to happen, and work to make it happen even if that means someone else deserving is passed over? What can you learn from Boaz's example?