

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
6-26-24

Ruth 3

Security For Ruth Through A Kinsman – Verses 1-2

¹ One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. ²Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor.

3:1-2 As widows, Ruth and Naomi could only look forward to difficult times. But when Naomi heard the news about Boaz, her hope for the future was renewed (2:20). Typical of her character, she thought first of Ruth, encouraging her to see if Boaz would take the responsibility of being a “guardian-redeemer” to her (2:20).

3:1-2 A guardian-redeemer was a close relative who volunteered to take responsibility for the extended family. When a woman’s husband died, the law (Deuteronomy 25: 5-10) provided that she could marry a brother of her dead husband. But Naomi had no more sons. In such a case, the nearest relative to the deceased husband could become a guardian-redeemer and marry the widow. The nearest relative did not have to marry the widow. If he chose not to, the next nearest relative could take his place. If no one chose to help the widow, she would probably live in poverty the rest of her life, because in Israelite culture the inheritance was passed on to the son or nearest male relative, not to the wife. To take the sting out of these inheritance rules, there were laws for gleaning and guardian-redeemers.

3:1-2 We have a guardian-redeemer in Jesus Christ, who, though he was God, came to earth as a man in order to save us. By his death on the cross, he has redeemed us from sin and hopelessness and thereby purchased us to be his own possession (1 Peter 1:18-19). This guarantees our eternal inheritance.

3:2 The threshing floor was the place where the grain was separated from the harvested wheat. The wheat stalks were crushed, either by hand or by oxen, and the valuable grain (inner kernels) separated from the worthless chaff (the outside shell). The floor was made from rock or soil and located outside the village, usually on an elevated site where the winds would blow away the lighter chaff when the crushed wheat was thrown into the air (or winnowed). Boaz spent the night beside the threshing floor for two reasons: (1) to prevent theft and (2) to wait for his turn to thresh grain. (Threshing was often done at night because daylight hours were spent harvesting.)

Naomi Instructs Ruth As To How To Petition Boaz – Verses 3-5

³Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.” ⁵“I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered.

3:4 Naomi’s advice seems strange, but she was not suggesting a seductive act. In reality, Naomi was telling Ruth to act in accordance with Israelite custom and law. It was common for a servant to lie at the feet of his master and even share a part of his covering. By observing this custom, Ruth would inform Boaz that he could be her guardian-redeemer— that he could find someone to marry her or

marry her himself. It was family business, nothing romantic. But the story later became beautifully romantic as Ruth and Boaz developed an unselfish love and deep respect for each other.

3:5 As a foreigner, Ruth may have thought that Naomi's advice was odd. But Ruth followed the advice because she knew Naomi was kind, trustworthy, and filled with moral integrity. Each of us knows a parent, older friend, or relative who is always looking out for our best interests. Be willing to listen to the advice of those who are older and wiser than you are. The experience and knowledge of such a person can be invaluable. Imagine what Ruth's life would have been like had she ignored her mother-in-law.

Ruth Lays Down At Boaz's Feet – Verses 6-7

⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do. ⁷When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down.

3:6-7 He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain: There was a good reason why Boaz slept at the threshing floor. These were the days of the Judges when there was much political and social instability in Israel. It wasn't unusual for gangs of thieves to come and steal all the hard-earned grain a farmer had grown. Boaz slept at the threshing floor to guard his crop against the kind of attacks described in 1 Samuel 23:1. She came softly: Ruth did just as her mother-in-law Naomi had recommended. She heard the advice, she said she would do it, and she did it.

Ruth's Request – Verses 8-9

⁸In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet! ⁹“Who are you?” he asked. “I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”

3:8 It happened at midnight that the man was startled: This was an amazing scene. We can well imagine that Boaz was indeed startled, waking up in the night as he turned in his sleep, knowing that someone was out there but not being able to see clearly because of the darkness and the sleep in his eyes. But his shock quickly turned to wondering when he found out the visitor was a woman.

3:9 For you are a close relative: This shows that this was not an inappropriate thing for Ruth to do towards Boaz. It was bold, but not inappropriate. Ruth understood this as she identified Boaz as her close relative (literally, you are a goel, a kinsman-redeemer). Though deceased, Elimelech had the right to have his family name carried on and as goel, Boaz had the responsibility to do this for Elimelech. This could only happen through Boaz marrying Ruth and providing children to carry on the name of Elimelech. Ruth boldly, yet humbly and properly, sought her rights.

Boaz's Response – Verses 10-11

¹⁰“The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.

3:10 Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter... you did not go after young men: Apparently, there was a considerable age difference between Ruth and Boaz. It also seems that because of this, Boaz

considered himself unattractive to Ruth and had therefore ruled out any idea of a romance between them. It also shows something else wonderful about Ruth: She based her attraction to Boaz more on respect than on image or appearance. Tragically, many people fall in love with an image or an appearance, rather than with a person we can really respect.

3:11 All the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman: Boaz was also attracted to Ruth because of her character. We don't really know how Ruth looked, but we do know that she was a woman of godly character.

A Potential Problem: A Nearer Kinsman – Verses 12-13

¹² Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. ¹³ Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.

3:12 Ruth and Naomi must have assumed that Boaz was their closest relative. Boaz, too, must have already considered marrying Ruth because his answer to her shows he had been thinking about it. He couldn't have considered marrying Naomi because she was probably too old to bear any more children (1:11-12). One man in the city was a nearer relative than Boaz, and this man had the first right to take Ruth as his wife. If he chose not to, then Boaz could marry Ruth (3:13).

Boaz Sends Ruth Home – Verses 14-15

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor." ¹⁵ He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

3:14-15 Do not let it be known: Boaz and Ruth were not trying to hide anything scandalous; it was just that Boaz didn't want this nearer kinsman to learn that Ruth was now demanding her right to marriage to a goel before Boaz could tell him personally.

Ruth Tells Her Mother-in-Law Naomi All That Happened – Verses 16-18

¹⁶ When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?" Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her ¹⁷ and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" ¹⁸ Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

3:16-18 Naomi implied that Boaz would follow through with his promise at once. He obviously had a reputation for keeping his word and would not rest until his task was completed. Such reliable people stand out in any age and culture. Do others regard you as one who will do what you say? Keeping your word and following through on assignments should be high on anyone's priority list. Building a reputation for integrity, however, must be done one brick, one act, at a time.