

Embracing Responsibilities  
August 26, 2012  
Allen Power

Ruth 3 and 4

The story of Ruth is a story of SACRIFICE and RESPONSIBILITY. The story of three people who were willing to SACRIFICE and TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for the well being of those they love.

It's a MODEL for all of us in two ways: First, a MODEL for how we are to CARE for those we love and provide for their SECURITY. Secondly, it's a PARALLEL of the ULTIMATE SACRIFICE of Jesus and the RESPONSIBILITY He took to provide for our ETERNAL SECURITY.

Before we get into today's lesson in Ruth 3 and 4; let's make sure we understand the story of Ruth and Naomi so far from chapters 1 and 2. (Open your Bibles to chapter 1 and let's skim through the facts)

- The story begins with a man from Bethlehem named Elimelech.
- His wife was Naomi and they had two sons.
- Elimelech took his family and fled to Moab. Question: Why? Famine.
- When they get to Moab; the two sons take two Moabite wives.
- Question: What happened to Naomi's husband? Several years later, What happened to her sons?
- Now we have not one widow, but THREE. and no one to support them.
- Then Naomi gets some news from home. Chapter 1 verse 6:  
*6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.*
- Knowing she'd fare better back home Naomi leaves with her two daughters-in-law.
- However, Naomi knew her two daughters-in-law needed husbands so she urged them to go back to Moab. One did. The other refused.
- The daughter-in-law who "clung" to Naomi was Ruth.
- So Naomi returned to Bethlehem with her foreign daughter-in-law Ruth in tow. Naomi was a defeated woman who said "just call me Mara --- which meant "bitter" blaming her circumstances on God.
- Chapter 2 tells us in order to survive, Ruth sets out to GLEAN in the fields and as God orchestrated it, she wound up in the fields of Boaz.
- What was significant about Boaz? (2:1)
- When Boaz spotted this unfamiliar young woman what happened?

*2:10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"*  
*11 But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the*

*death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. 12 The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"*

- When Ruth went home and told Naomi what had happened with Boaz, Naomi was THRILLED. Why was Naomi so excited?

*2:20 "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.*

- What was a KINSMAN or GUARDIAN REDEEMER in that culture?
- What were the obligations of a KINSMAN REDEEMER?
  - Redeem an inheritance for a relative in poverty.
  - Redeem a relative from slavery.
  - Avenge a relative who was hurt or murdered.
  - Raise up a male descendant for a deceased brother to carry on the name.
- So, the season of the barley harvest passes as Ruth continues to glean grain from the fields of Boaz.
- We remember that Naomi had said "Just change my name to 'bitter'. The HOPE of Boaz being a KINSMAN REDEEMER for them has changed Naomi's whole outlook.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*Ever since Boaz came into Ruth's life, Naomi has been a different person. Her concern is no longer for herself and her grief but for Ruth and her future. It's when we serve others that we ourselves receive the greatest joy and satisfaction.*

- So, Naomi gets busy as with a plan to help Ruth. Let's begin in Chapter 3 verse 1:

3 One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home[a] for you, where you will be well provided for? 2 Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash and perfume yourself, and put on 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. 4 When 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. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

7 When 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. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man, and he turned and discovered 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 kinsman-redeemer. "

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. 11 And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. 12 Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. 13 Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.”

- Verse 1: According to this verse what was Naomi feeling?
- Verse 2: Question - What Naomi simply a MATCHMAKING MOTHER-IN-LAW, or was there more at work here?
- Question: Why do you think Naomi wasn’t just HATCHING HER OWN PLAN?

Jonathan Prime writes:

*Naomi’s actions in verses 1–4 (& Ruth 2:20 reveals that she knew something of the law about kinsman-redeemers, since she calls Boaz ‘one of our kinsman-redeemers’. On the basis of what she knew of God’s law, and the circumstances that God had brought about, she took the initiative.*

*Her logic is revealed in these verses. Ruth was young. She needed a husband. Boaz was a kinsman who was favourably disposed to her. That night there was an opportunity. Naomi was exercising the logic of faith. Putting God’s Word side by side with the circumstances God had brought about, she used her mind to determine a course of action in harmony with God’s revealed will.*

- Question: When we see a problem, should we pray and ask God to fix it or should we take initiative and do something?

Jonathan Prime continues:

*The knowledge that God is sovereign and will fulfill all his plans should not keep us from taking action. On the contrary, it should result in us taking initiatives on the basis of what he tells us in his Word.*

There’s an old quote that’s been attributed to St. Augustine (don’t know if that’s accurate):

*Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.*

- Let me be clear, that’s not a recommendation to GET AHEAD OF GOD with our OWN PLANS.
- Naomi told Ruth to sneak in while Boaz was sleeping; uncover his feet; and lie down at his feet. How weird is that?
- Question: Anyone have any idea what that was all about?

John MacArthur writes:

*...what Naomi advised Ruth to do was shockingly forward. (Even to enlightened twenty-first-century minds...) Naomi’s plan, in essence, was for Ruth to propose marriage to*

*Boaz! By the custom of the time, this would indicate Ruth's willingness to marry Boaz.*  
— MacArthur, J. (2005). *Twelve extraordinary women : How God shaped women of the Bible and what He wants to do with you* (81). Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books.

- Question: Do you think there was any “hanky panky” going on here?

Scholars tell us:

*There is no suggestion that anything immoral took place between Boaz and Ruth; indeed the narrator of the story seems to deliberately choose a word for lie here (verse 13) which excludes the idea of any sexual indiscretion. Indeed, Boaz probably sent Ruth away early in the morning in order to avoid any possibility of gossip about their conduct which might have hindered his plans for Ruth. Equally, he probably did not send her away in the night where she might be mistaken for a prostitute and vulnerable to attack.*  
— Dray, S. (1997). *Judges and Ruth. Focus on the Bible Commentary* (147). Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

- Look at verse 10. As a man who just turned 50 I can appreciate where Boaz is coming from.
- Boaz says: 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.”
- Though I’m a pot-belled middle aged man...you’ve chosen ME.
- But Boaz was a man of integrity. Verse 12 - What was the GLITCH in the plan?

Chapter 4 beginning in verse 1:

4 Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down.

2 Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so. 3 Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you[a] will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.”

“I will redeem it,” he said.

5 Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire[b] the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.”

6 At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.”

- Boaz wanted to marry Ruth. But he was a man of integrity so he went to the closer kinsman.
- When it was just a “land deal” how did the other KINSMAN respond?
- Verse 5: What changed his mind?

- I have a great deal for you...land AND A MOABITE WIFE. No thanks!
- So, Boaz was clear to do what God had ordained for him to do.

9 Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses!"

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

- God's plan was BIGGER than just Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.
- This wasn't about one family's welfare. But the welfare of all MANKIND. Verse 17:

17 The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." (Actually Ruth and Boaz had him) And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. (The ancestor of Jesus!).

- In this story we see a PATTERN among the key players. A PATTERN of taking RESPONSIBILITY for others.
- How did Naomi take RESPONSIBILITY for others?
- How did Ruth take RESPONSIBILITY for others?
- How did Boaz take RESPONSIBILITY for others?

*By their faithfulness, integrity, and love, the characters of the Book of Ruth mirrored the character of God. They serve as reminders that the lives of godly people are a powerful witness to God's self-sacrificing love. (Holman Bible Commentary)*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- What LESSON is there for YOU and ME from the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz?
- Here are a few thoughts:
  - No matter how bleak our circumstances or how "bitter" they makes us...God always has a plan if we are his child!
  - Also, loving others comes with RESPONSIBILITY. We need to be willing to EMBRACE those responsibilities for the WELFARE of those we love, even if it means SACRIFICE. (And it always does.)
  - Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz PRACTICED what we all should do as we live our lives:
    - Pray for God's will.
    - And, when common sense tells us to do something; and the commandments of God back it up; then TAKE ACTION to do what He's leading us to do.

Finally, lest we miss the REAL LESSON in the story of Ruth, I close with this quote from Warren Wiersbe:

*Bible students have seen in Boaz a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship to His bride, the church. Like Ruth, the lost sinner is outside the covenant family of God,*

*bankrupt, with no claim on God's mercy. But God took the initiative and provided a way for us to enter His family through faith in Jesus Christ.*