

RUTH, NAOMI AND BOAZ ARE BLESSED

Everything goes wrong when Naomi moves to Moab. She heads home without much hope left. But God has something else in mind for her and her daughter-in-law Ruth.

by Heather Cole

Once there was a woman named Naomi. She lived with her husband and two sons in Bethlehem in Judah during the time when judges ruled. But a famine came. Naomi's husband worried that life would be too hard in Judah.

So the family moved to Moab. The other people in Moab did not follow the true God. Naomi's sons married women from Moab, even though God had warned them not to do that. God knew that would make it harder to do the right thing. One of the wives was named Ruth. She looked up to her mother-in-law, Naomi. The other son's wife was named Orpah.

Sadly, Naomi's husband died. Then both her sons died too! Naomi, Ruth and Orpah were left alone. Life was very hard for a widow. But at least back in Judah, more people followed God's law. God told them to be kind to widows.

A NEW HOME

Naomi heard that God had blessed Judah. There was enough food again. So she decided to go back. Ruth and Orpah wanted to go with her. But Naomi said no, they should go back to where they grew up. Orpah kissed Naomi goodbye and went back to Moab. But Ruth would not let go.

Ruth said, "Please don't tell me to leave you. Wherever you go, I will go. Where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God."

She promised to stay with her mother-in-law no matter what. Ruth loved and respected Naomi that much. So they went on together to Judah.

It was spring when they got to Bethlehem. The whole city was excited about them. Naomi was not as excited. Life had been hard. But she had no idea what God had planned for her!

The farmers were harvesting barley. Barley is good to eat and use to make bread. But farmers who followed God's law were careful not to take all the barley. They left some behind for poor people like Naomi and Ruth (Leviticus 23:22).

Ruth went out to pick up the barley they left behind in a large field. (This was called gleaning.)

QUIZ TIME

What does the word *gleaning* mean?

The field belonged to a man named Boaz who was very good and very rich. Boaz came out to see how the harvesting was going. “The Lord be with you!” he said to the reapers.

“The Lord bless you!” they answered back.

Then Boaz saw Ruth. “Who is that young woman?” he asked.

“She is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi. She asked nicely for permission to glean this morning. She has been out here working hard ever since! She only took a little break.”

Boaz walked up to Ruth. He said she was welcome to glean from his fields every day. He also promised that the young men would not bother her. If she ever got thirsty, she should ask one of them for a drink.

Ruth was amazed at his kindness to her. After all, she was a foreigner and a stranger.

But Boaz explained, “I have heard the whole story of everything you did for Naomi after your husband’s death. You left your father, mother and everything you knew. Then you bravely came to a place where you did not know anyone.” Then Boaz made a beautiful picture with his words: “May the God of Israel reward you. You have come under His wings for safety!”

UNDER GOD’S WINGS

In that place and time, men wore long robes. When they stretched out their arms, the hems of these robes looked a bit like wings. So when a father gathered his wife and his children into his arms, he looked like a bird protecting its chicks under its wings. Boaz was saying that God was going to take care of Ruth just like a mother bird, and just like a father!

Boaz made sure she had something to eat at mealtime. (She saved some to take to Naomi.) He also told his reapers to let barley fall for Ruth on purpose so she would have even more!

So Ruth worked hard until evening. She had collected one ephah. That is a lot of barley. Imagine filling 10 two-liter bottles with grains like rice. That might be about how much barley she brought back to Naomi!

Naomi could tell that someone had been really kind to Ruth. When Ruth told her all about him, Naomi was very thankful! She realized that God was still looking out for them. “Boaz is a close relative of my husband,” Naomi said. “You should go to his field every day of the harvest, as he said!” So Ruth did.

A CLOSE RELATIVE

But Naomi was not just thankful for the barley. She knew God’s law. If a man died without having a son, then his brother (or other close relative) was supposed to marry the widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). The firstborn son would be the heir of the man who died. The land would stay in the family, and the widow would be cared for.

A man might not want to marry his close relative's widow. The elders would explain to him why it was a good law. But no one could force him to do his duty. If he still refused, he would have his sandal taken off. After that, everyone would call him "the man who lost his sandal." All that was very embarrassing.

But Boaz was a good man. Naomi hoped that he would marry Ruth, like the law said to. If he did, he could buy back the land that Naomi's husband had sold. Naomi and Ruth would not have to worry anymore!

So Naomi gave Ruth careful instructions. Boaz would be at the threshing floor, separating the grain they could eat from the husks and stalks. He would spend the night there, probably to protect the grain from thieves. Ruth should wear her best clothes to the threshing floor and hide until Boaz fell asleep. Next, Ruth should turn over the hem of his long robe so that his feet were uncovered. Then, she should lie down at his feet (not touching him).

Ruth did exactly that.

COLD FEET

Suddenly, Boaz woke up. Maybe his feet were cold and he wanted to tuck them back under the "wings" of his robe. He saw someone lying at his feet the way a servant would. But there had not been a servant there when he went to sleep!

"Who are you?" Boaz said.

She answered, "I am Ruth your servant. Take your servant under your wing, because you are a close relative." Ruth was asking Boaz to marry her!

Boaz was impressed. He was older than Ruth. He probably thought that she would rather marry someone closer to her age. Now she was showing even more kindness, both to Naomi and to him!

But there was a problem. He told Ruth that there was actually a closer relative. So Boaz promised to ask this man in the morning. If he did not want to marry Ruth, Boaz promised that he would marry her! Everyone knew her good character.

Ruth stayed there at his feet until early morning, before it was light. Then she went back to Naomi. But Boaz would not let her go without a gift for Naomi. He gave her six ephahs of barley!

Ruth was very excited when she told Naomi all that had happened. But Naomi said, "Sit still, my daughter until you know how the matter will turn out. You know Boaz will not rest until he has it all worked out!"

Boaz met with the closer relative. The relative was interested in the land, but not in marrying Ruth. So the deal was off. The relative took off his sandal.

A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Now Boaz had the right to marry Ruth! So he did. God blessed them with a baby boy named Obed.

Naomi loved her grandson and helped take good care of him. The women said, “We hope this baby makes you feel young and happy in your old age. After all, your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him!”

God was working with the family in a special way. Obed became the grandfather of King David. Many generations later, Jesus Christ would be born as part of this family line!

QUESTIONS

Here are some questions to think about or talk about as a family:

1. Why did God give laws about gleaning and marrying a close relative's widow?
2. Why do you think Ruth loved Naomi so much?
3. How is Ruth a good example? What are some character traits we can learn from Ruth?
4. How is Boaz a good example? What are some character traits we can learn from Boaz?

For further study on Ruth, see the articles “[Ruth](#)” and “[The Book of Ruth](#).”



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