The "Gospel" of Ruth

By Brent Armstrong

The word "Gospel" means good news. The book of Ruth is good news. Redemption is all over the place. The Lord not only rescues Naomi from her despair but redeems Ruth and blesses Boaz with an excellent wife.

I don't think Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are one bit jealous of us calling it the "Gospel" of Ruth. They would be ok with it. The truth is, there is no other Old Testament book that tells the story of a future redeemer quite as well as Ruth. Isaiah gets a nomination but focuses on too many other things as well. Ruth stands alone as purely foreshadowing Christ Jesus our Redeemer and His relationship with His bride, the church.

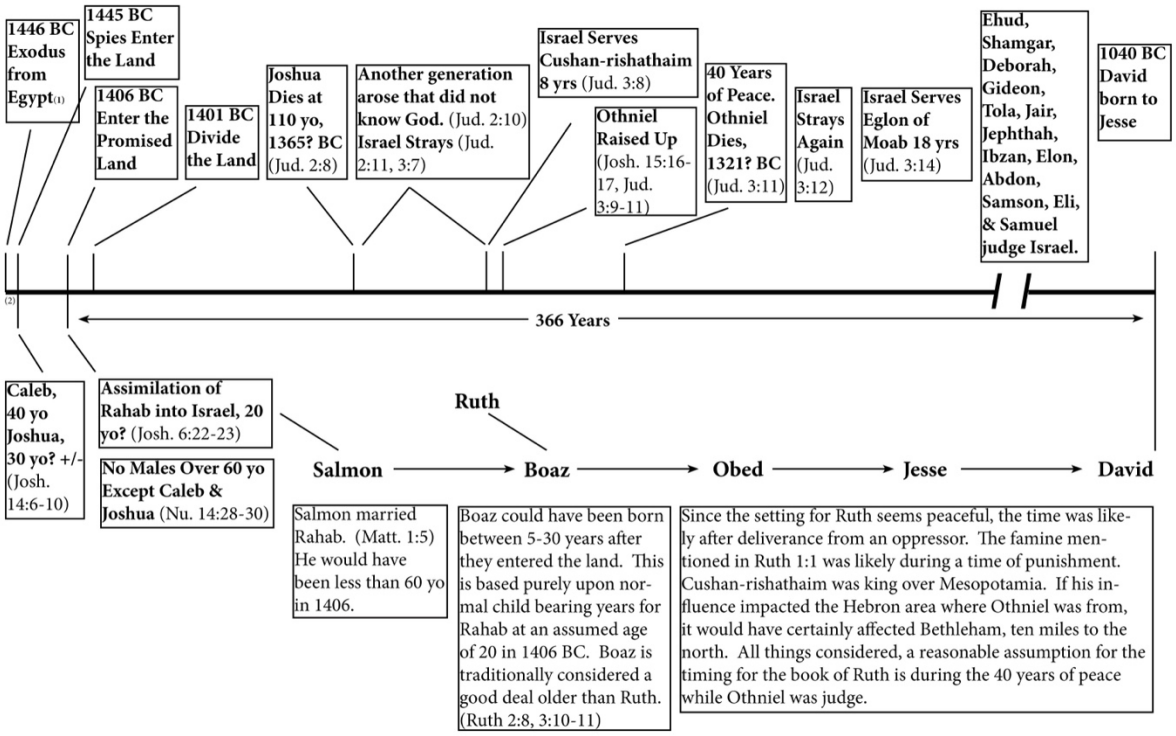
The writer of the book of Ruth is unknown. Many have speculated that it was Samuel, but I don't agree. Its authorship seems to have been after the time that David became king (Ruth 4:17, 22). It carries the refinement of a story told hundreds of times before being written down. The story of Ruth and Boaz was probably told to Obed by Naomi and handed down from Obed to Jesse. Jesse told the story to his sons, including David, who could have been either the author or conveyed the story to his scribes.

The story takes place during the time of the judges and at a time when there seems to have been a measure of peace in the land. The last phrase of the book of judges sums up the times. *"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 21:25). These were not the greatest days of Israel.

Simply from the location you are given a hint of a greater message hidden within the story itself—it takes place in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, our Redeemer. The name Bethlehem means "house of bread." The perfect birthplace for One who claimed to be the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35).

The return of available food and crops after a famine suggests it was close to the beginning of a cycle of repentance when the nation had been delivered and their hearts were turned toward God. Based upon the timeline below, that would indicate somewhere in the range of one hundred years after they possessed the land, possibly during the time of the judge Othniel.

Possible Timeline for the Book of Ruth



(1) Biblical archeologists have traditionally assigned 1440 BC as the approximate date of the Exodus. Recent work by Dr. Frank Turek promotes a more accurate date of 1446 BC. https://youtu.be/ceguwdviGGo?si=PwGBpCPZGfvEpW9R

(2) Not to scale

As we continue to build our context, let's look at the names of the characters in this story.

Elimelech—My God is king (Husband to Naomi, dies in Moab)
Naomi—My delight (Wife of Elimelech. The Lord proves His delight in her.)
Mahlon—Sick (First husband to Ruth. Both Mahlon and Chilion likely die from sickness)
Chilion—Pining (Husband to Orpah)
Orpah—Gazelle (Wife of Chilion. Given the first opportunity, she runs)
Ruth—Friendship (She proves what true friendship means)
Boaz—Fleetness/quickness, in him is strength (He acts quickly in matters of importance)
Obed—Serving (Son of Boaz and Ruth)

How appropriate are those names? Let's look more closely at one of them—Boaz. In this story, he represents Jesus, our Kinsman Redeemer (we'll talk more about that later). The only other time in history this name makes it into God's word is in the construction of Solomon's temple (2Chron. 3:17). Why on earth would King Solomon, the great, great grandson of Boaz choose to name the enormous pillars at the front of the temple Jachin (yaw-keen') and Boaz.

There had to be some strategic reason for naming the pillar on the right Jachin and the one on the left Boaz. According to Strongs, Jachin means "He will establish" and Boaz means

“Fleetness/quickness.” Other scholars believe the name Boaz means “in him is strength.” But Solomon had grown up hearing the story of his great, great grandparents Boaz and Ruth and knew the prophetic significance of Boaz as the kinsman redeemer. It takes no stretch of the imagination to see how Solomon would have thought of Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, more as “redemption” than “quickness or in him is strength.”

Tradition says the story of Boaz and Ruth was read to the people every Pentecost. The people standing in the courtyard as they viewed this magnificent structure would have seen a pillar on the right named Jachin. On the left they saw Boaz. As Hebrews they would read right to left instead of left to right. What they saw was “He will establish redemption (quickly).”

No one can be certain that the tradition of reading Ruth to the people on Pentecost overlapped the first temple period. Those bronze pillars were smashed to pieces by Nebuchadnezzar’s army when they destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC (2Kings 25:13-17). Regardless, Solomon knew exactly what he was doing.

Another key to understanding Ruth is the concept of the levirate marriage and the process of redemption. The levirate marriage is first seen in Gen. 38:6-8, where Judah’s son Er dies and his brother Onan is expected to raise up a child with his brother’s widow.

We later see better ground rules for it in the Law of Moses, Deut. 25:5-10. Although, by the time of Ruth they weren’t following it as strictly. In the case of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion, there apparently were no brothers left in the family and the unwilling redeemer was likely a cousin. Normally, all the inheritance of the deceased brother would go to the son and not the uncle who raised him. This was to keep property ownership in the same family line. Since Boaz had no other children that we know of, Obed became heir to all the property of Elimelech and Boaz.

The Law also states that the firstborn will assume the deceased brother’s name so his name would not be wiped out in Israel. That was not the case with Ruth and Boaz. They named the offspring Obed instead of Mahlon. Apparently, that aspect of the levirate marriage was no longer observed or found necessary.

Even in Jesus’ day the levirate marriage was still practiced. In Matthew 22:23-30, the Sadducees tried to trap Jesus and ended up getting an education in the resurrection (which they disbelieve) and relationships in the Millennial Kingdom.

A closely related practice in those days was the Law of redemption found in Lev. 25:25-34. When a Jew became poor and had to sell their property, his closest redeemer could buy it back to keep it in the family. If that did not happen, then the property reverted to the original owner in the year of jubilee.

In this story, Boaz appears to be a good bit older than Ruth, of course young enough to sire children, but still the first generation born in the Promised Land. This is based upon the lineage

in chapter four. As an older man he calls her “daughter” in verses 2:8 and 3:11. He also praises her wisdom for not chasing after much younger men in 3:10.

Some scholars believe there were some generations left out between Salmon and Boaz to span the 366 years between entering the promised land and the birth of king David. However, Luke and Matthew’s genealogy is consistent with Ruth; so, we’ll stick with that.

Some have also taught this as a love story with Boaz pursuing Ruth. I can’t approach it that way. He was a godly man of character providing protection and blessing. I believe Boaz was treating Ruth like any other woman who had come under his care in some way. I don’t believe he entertained the idea of redeeming her until she asked. At that point he was all in!

It is easy to say, “Elimelech’s lack of faith led him to move his family to the land of Moab where there was food.” What would you do? Can you imagine the pressure? You have a wife and two kids. There is nothing on the grocery store shelves to buy. They are hungry and you hear that there are jobs and food in Moab. Though this didn’t end well for him or his sons, the Lord used the situation to bring Ruth, the widow of his son Mahlon, into the picture through her relationship with his widow Naomi.

The foreshadowing and parallels between Ruth and the church, and Boaz and Jesus are stunning.

1. There had to be a death before we could be married to Another (1Cor. 6:17, Rom. 7:1-4, Ruth 1:5). You cannot be joined to Christ and still married to the Law. The part of you married to the Law had to die first (Rom. 6:1-6, Gal. 2:20). The death of Mahlon freed Ruth to marry Boaz.
2. While she was in Moab (Ruth 1:6), Naomi heard that in Israel God had visited His people. That visitation resulted in redemption for Ruth. In Luke 1:68, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and said, *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people.”* God visited His people again through Jesus, the Bread of Life (John 6:35 & 48), Who later fulfilled the story of Redemption.
3. Naomi shares with Ruth an intended benefit of the marriage relationship—rest (Ruth 1:9, 3:1). Ruth represents the church in its relationship to Christ as the groom, who offers Sabbath rest to His beloved (Hebrews 4:9, John 5:19, 30, 14:10, 1Cor. 15:10).
4. Ruth left her father and mother proving her love for Naomi. Jesus said, *“The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me…”* (Matt. 10:37, Ruth 1:8-18)
5. Boaz tells Ruth to keep her eyes on the field/harvest (Ruth 2:9) as Jesus does to His disciples in John 4:35.
6. Boaz offers Ruth water to drink (John 4:13, Ruth 2:9) as Jesus offers the woman at the well (and us) living water.
7. Boaz serves Ruth bread, vinegar, and roasted grain along with his servants (Ruth 2:14). Jesus said He *“did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”* (Matt. 20:28)

8. When Ruth receives the roasted grain her redeemer offered, she was satisfied (Ruth 2:14). Likewise, only what Jesus (the Bread of Life, John 6:35 & 48) offers us will bring satisfaction. All that the world offers comes up short and will always leave us empty.
9. Boaz is a kinsman redeemer for Ruth and Naomi as Jesus is to all who believe (Eph. 1:7, Ruth 3:9).
10. Boaz welcomes Ruth and treats her with favor but waits for her to request his salvation as Kinsman Redeemer (Ruth 3:9). All those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Rom. 10:13, Rev. 3:20).
11. We were lost and undone—in spiritual poverty—like Naomi and Ruth until Boaz redeemed them, and until Jesus redeemed us (Eph 2:4-7, Ruth 4:14).
12. The Moabites were enemies of the Jews, but Boaz redeemed his supposed enemy. While we were yet enemies, our Redeemer reconciled us to God (Romans 5:10).
13. We have been seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ruth 2:7, Eph. 2:6) as Ruth was seated in the house of her redeemer.
14. When Ruth, a gentile, married Boaz, she became part of God's household (Eph. 2:12-19, Ruth 4:17). The inclusion of Ruth in the lineage of David through Boaz shows the plan of God for Gentiles to be part of His kingdom (Eph. 2:19, Ruth 4:17).
15. Boaz was the only one willing to redeem Ruth (Ruth 4:6). Likewise, there was no one else willing or capable of redeeming us besides Jesus.

Ruth Chapter 1

> *1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to reside in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man [was] Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons [were] Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. So they entered the land of Moab and remained there.*

He was not only leaving his promised land and inheritance, but he was leaving the tabernacle, the feasts, and the presence of God in Shiloh. Under the Law of Moses, every able-bodied man in Israel was supposed to attend three feasts per year—Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacle (Deut. 16:16). We have no indication Elimelech or his sons did so.

Elimelech and his family are called Ephrathites of Bethlehem. 1Chronicles 4:4 tells us who the Ephrathites were. Ephrathah was the father of Bethlehem—the founder of the city. That means they were direct descendants of the original inhabitants of Bethlehem.

> *3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. 4 And they took for themselves Moabite women [as] wives; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other, Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. 5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.*

God can take your tragedy and make it His strategy. (Ruth 1:5, 21, 4:14-15)

Believers have the assurance that *"all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose"* (Rom. 8:28).

On a surface level, it may appear Elimelech's decision to move out of Israel into Moab to seek relief from the famine was a wise choice. So, a man whose name means "my God is king" took his wife and two sons from a place called the "house of bread" and the land of promise to an idolatrous nation to look for food. That does not sound like faith unless God directed him to leave. And we have no indication that was the case.

On the contrary, it appears Elimelech is in survival mode, leaving his homeland to pursue a better life. Survival mode is a terrible position from which to make wise decisions because it involves fear—the "what if?" Abraham did the same thing. He fled to Egypt when there was a famine (Gen. 12:10). He even let his wife be taken into Pharaoh's harem. Abraham didn't know how to walk by faith at that time either.

Decisions made from a position of faith mean either the Lord will deliver me from the circumstances at what He determines is the perfect time or He will have me tackle them head on in His abundant grace. God delivers you in your circumstances before He delivers you from them.

Elimelech had chosen to take care of his circumstances on his own and for unknown reasons it cost him his life and the lives of his two sons.

But God, in His grace and sovereignty, took Naomi and Ruth's tragedy and made it His strategy. Elimelech's poor decision didn't mess up God's plan. His plan is always infinitely greater than our ability to mess it up. Is He really God if we can do anything to mess up His plan? God used the poor choice of Elimelech to foreshadow bringing the Gentiles into the household of faith through the Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus.

The Lord too what looked like an impossible situation and tragedy—the loss of her husband and two sons and placed Naomi and Ruth squarely into the lineage of the Messiah. Ruth became a forerunner, like Rahab, of how the Gentiles are now invited into the family of faith (Eph. 2-3).

> *6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the land of Moab, because she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them food. 7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 "May the LORD grant that you may find a place of rest,*

each one in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they raised their voices and wept.

Naomi realized how difficult life would be in Israel for a Moabite woman. In her mind she was doing them a favor, protecting them from discrimination and hostility.

Marriage is designed to be a place of rest. (Ruth 1:9, 3:1)

This is a foreign concept to most couples. Couples often express their desire for happiness, joy, etc. in their marriage. Rarely is rest among them.

God designed marriage to reflect both our relationship to Him and how Father, Son and Holy Spirit interact and relate to each other. The covenant of marriage provides the structure for peace and rest to flourish in a relationship. Within the framework of marriage, a couple can find security and rest.

We've already talked about the Sabbath rest available to every believer—it's about trusting God. Rest in marriage is no different. It is all about trusting one another and constantly reinforcing that to deeper levels. Rest is about feeling perfectly comfortable with and protected by one another.

Husbands are to oversee rest for wife and family, and to guard it at all costs. Wives, likewise, you are to value rest in your marriage and guard it at all costs. Rest is easily destroyed and difficult to regain.

Having rest in your marriage does not necessarily mean no conflict. As long as you are taking in air, food, and water, there is opportunity for conflict. Rest is not the absence of conflict, but how it is handled. Rest is a position of faith amid conflict—letting the Lord fight those battles for you, and He will.

Rest in your home, in your relationships, in your job, in your walk with the Lord is directly related to faith. The children of Israel did not enter into rest because they refused to believe (Heb. 3:12-19). They still got to the promised land, but they never enjoyed the rest that could have been theirs through faith. Go back and read the book of Judges. That was not rest. Because of their lack of faith, they chose to coexist with their enemies.

When Naomi spoke of a hope of rest for Orpah and Ruth, I don't believe it was something she had experienced in her own home. The very reason they were in Moab was because Elimelech moved his family out of fear, not faith. Rest cannot coexist with fear.

10 However, they said to her, "[No,] but we will return with you to your people."
11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12 "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I were

even to have a husband tonight and also give birth to sons, 13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is much more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has come out against me."

Naomi already had a mindset toward the Levirate marriage for her daughters-in-law, but it was not physically possible, nor did it seem feasible. She was too old to have more children.

14 And they raised their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. 15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not plead with me to leave you [or] to turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you sleep, I will sleep. Your people [shall be] my people, and your God, my God. 17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do so to me, and worse, if [anything but] death separates me from you."

Nothing is more valuable in this life than our relationships. (Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth has one of the most refreshing perspectives on relationship found in the Bible. She was willing to leave everything to stay connected with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Her commitment to Naomi outweighed any risk of poverty or discrimination, and all the unknown variables of moving to a foreign (and possibly hostile) country.

Many of us travel through our entire life without ever realizing something Ruth knew was a priority as a young woman—relationships. Yes, she may have had other reasons for wanting to stay with Naomi, but I must believe it was because of the friendship they shared. That friendship was so unique and precious that nothing or no one was going to dislodge her from following Naomi back to her homeland.

Her relationship with Naomi was indeed unique since she abandoned her mother, father, sister-in-law, and gods to perhaps never see them again (Of course she couldn't see Moab's false god anyway.). Her connection to Naomi was something vastly more fulfilling and worth the sacrifice. She counted the cost and chose Naomi. Orpah counted the cost and chose her people and gods and comfort.

In Matthew 19:21-22 Jesus asks the rich young ruler to sell all that he has and come follow Him. Jesus offered relationship without the encumbrance of riches. But the rich young ruler wanted eternal life without relationship. He counted the cost, and it was higher than he was willing to pay. His riches had blinded him to true wealth—relationship with the Messiah.

No one has ever laid on their deathbed at the end of life and wished they had bought that vacation home, or taken one more cruise to the Bahamas, or had a bigger diamond ring. No,

most everyone by the end of life realizes that the only things that truly matter in life are the people you love and the people who love you.

> *18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her [about it.] 19 So they both went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 "I went [away] full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?"*

When she left Israel, she had two sons. Having sons was the epitome of matriarchal fulfillment in her culture. When she returned, she had nothing but her daughter-in-law. Later through God's favor she finds out she was far from empty because she had Ruth.

A friend of this ministry was asked recently in an interview to define a godly man. (It fits a godly woman, too.) With a deep understanding of all the things that have been taught on this hill for over forty years, he said, "A godly man knows who he is in Christ, is living by the life of Another, and sees things from God's perspective."

In case those three things are foreign to you, allow me to chase those fat rabbits. What he meant by knowing who you are in Christ is understanding your identity as a new creation after believing in Jesus: holy and blameless (Col. 1:22), justified (Rom. 5:1), complete (Col. 2:10), righteous (2Cor. 5:21), forgiven (Col. 2:13), perfected (Heb. 10:14), alive to God (Rom. 6:5), and dead to sin (Rom. 6:11). That's the abbreviated version.

Living by the life of Another is virtually the same as walking in/by the Spirit. Living by His life requires surrender, yielding, or a forfeiture of control in favor of the Spirit of God living in you as a believer. It is not simply listening to the voice and leading of the Spirit then responding accordingly; it also requires a total dependence upon the power of His life inside of you to accomplish the work.

Living by the life of Another is living from the unlimited eternal life dwelling inside each believer, while abandoning efforts completed in one's own strength or power. The operative element is faith—trusting the Father through Jesus with every circumstance, issue or situation that crosses our path, no matter how insurmountable or insignificant it may seem.

Seeing things from God's perspective is rejecting the worldly response on situations, circumstances, problems, and people in favor of truth from God's word. Fear and doubt are the reigning emotions when you live from anything other than God's perspective.

I'm not saying that Naomi was not a godly woman, but in that moment, like all of us at times, she had stepped outside the realm of seeing God's perspective on her situation. She was not perceiving her circumstances the way He did.

The women of Bethlehem were not even sure it was Naomi when they saw her. She was physically wearing the disappointment of failure, ten wasted years, and the deaths of her husband and two sons. She truly saw herself as coming home empty.

Never underestimate the creativity of God's solution to your crisis. (2-4)

Naomi's situation was dire. She found herself widowed and childless in a foreign country. Hearing there was food back in Israel after the famine had subsided, she decided her best option was to return to her homeland. Although her hope for any kind of life there was wrecked by the death of her husband and two sons, she did have the faithful companionship of her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Even with that, she knew life would be hard—two widows trying to survive in a male dominated society.

At least in Israel there were provisions for the poor and widows to get food: they could glean the leftovers from fruit harvests (Deut. 24:20-21), they could eat of the tithe of produce stored up in their town for the Levite, orphan, widow, and stranger (Deut. 14:28-29), she could follow the reapers of barley and wheat and pick up what they dropped or missed (Deut. 24:19), she could also pick from what was left by the landowners in the corners and edges of their fields (Lev. 23:22).

This was nowhere close to ideal, but at least they could eat. It seemed like the only solution to survive. But wasn't survival the reason they chose to leave Israel in the first place?

With the death of Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon, everything seemed to go wrong for Naomi. She even asked the women back in Bethlehem to call her Mara because she felt like God had treated her very bitterly. Despite the bitterness, coming home seemed right and at least in Israel God makes provision for widows and the poor.

Perhaps this was different from the move to Moab. They moved there out of fear—fear of dying from starvation. They were afraid the Lord would not provide for them. They were afraid the Lord had forgotten them. The move back to Bethlehem was in faith—faith that God would provide for her and Ruth. Naomi knew God loved the poor and the stranger, the widows and orphans.

However, Ruth the Moabitess complicated things. She would not return to her mother's house like Orpah. She saw something in Naomi that she refused to give up; something more than friendship—something spiritual that she had not experienced anywhere or with anyone else. But that didn't mean the people of Israel would accept her. She was a Moabite woman.

A quick sidestep to Numbers 25:1 serves as a reminder of how the Moabites and Midianites used their women to entice the Jews to worship Baal-Peor and the destructive results. The stigma was real and tangible. Don't forget the encounter with Balaam being hired by the king of Moab to curse the Hebrew children (Num. 22-24).

Though committed and faithful, Ruth was a concern for Naomi that couldn't be ignored. How would she be treated? Would the people of Bethlehem accept her? Would there be a man in Israel who could overlook her nationality to take her as a wife? These were legitimate questions that could impact Naomi and Ruth the rest of their lives in Israel.

There was something Naomi failed to factor into her plans—the fathomless love of God and the immensity of His eternal purpose. She had heard all the stories from her childhood: the ten plagues God put on the Egyptians, how He parted the Red Sea and the Jordan, led them with the cloud by day, and the fire by night. But where was He now? Why did she feel abandoned by the God she loved?

Naomi's disappointment with the outcome of her life had clouded her perception of what was possible in God. She was allowing it to taint the truth that God is God of the impossible, God of the unfathomable, the God whose creativity is unlimited, Who from insignificance makes the inconceivable and the incredible from nothingness.

Don't we do the same thing? We look at the circumstances and let them dictate our outcome. Or rather I should say we let the "power of sin" dictate our outcome instead of seeking God's perspective. In those situations, if we focus on Jesus and what He says about our circumstances, we pass the test.

The "power of sin" (PoS) will take the mildest discomfort and try to make it into certain disaster. It will bombard you with thoughts that magnify the problem or situation and your inability to deal with it. Never once will the PoS remind you of God's love, grace, or limitless ability.

Naomi was repeating the very thoughts planted in her brain by the PoS: *"the hand of the Lord has come out against me"* (Ruth 1:13), *"the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me"* (Ruth 1:20), *"I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty…the Almighty has afflicted me"* (Ruth 1:21). She had given in to those thoughts so deeply it was impacting her identity—at least who she thought she was—no longer "my delight."

Unfortunately at some point, we have all bought into the demeaning lies of the PoS. I realize that we may need to chase that rabbit for a moment, especially if you've never heard of the "power of sin."

Naomi was being bombarded with all kinds of thoughts that attacked her identity as a daughter of God. And she believed them. What we don't have access to in these verses are the other thoughts that were planted there as well; like, "If we had just stayed in Israel…" or "I am such a loser," and "If the Lord loved me this wouldn't have happened," and worse!

The Power of Sin

You've had it happen, too—shocking, off-the-wall thoughts that made you question your salvation. Would a believer transformed by the power of God have such awful thoughts slithering around in their head?

You'll be excited to know you aren't alone in this. Actually, anyone still taking in air has experienced the same thing. Even the Apostle Paul writes about this dilemma in Romans seven,

> *"I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate"* (Rom. 7:15).

He goes on to say, *"So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me"* (Rom. 7:17). He is not blaming what he does on *"sin which indwells"* him, but he is blaming "sin" in his members (his body) for waging war against his mind (Rom. 7:23). That's what Naomi was experiencing, and you and I experience every day.

For the sake of clarity let's call the force that Paul talks about in our body the "power of sin" because it is a noun and we'll simply call the disobedient actions we commit with our body "sin" because it is a verb.

Before we launch into an explanation, understanding where this thing came from will help us deal with it. Paul tells us in Romans 5:12 that (the power of) sin and death entered the world through Adam when he sinned (Gen. 3). Soon after that we read of Cain in his anger contemplating the murder of his brother Abel (Gen. 4:7). Here we see the first appearance of this "power of sin."

> *"And if you do not do well, <u>sin</u> is crouching at the door; and <u>its</u> desire is for you, but you must master <u>it</u>."* (Gen. 4:7)

This power is not a demon or a being, but similar to a parasite in your brain that can't be removed. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, it is an organized power—a force every one of us inherited when we sinned in Adam. Lovely thought, huh?

As believers, the power of sin was eradicated from our soul and spirit when we put our faith in Jesus (2Cor. 5:17, Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20). Our old self was made new. Unfortunately, not much changed in our fleshly body at salvation. The "power of sin" still resides there and has access to your brain because it is part of your body.

Those sometimes vile and often subtle thoughts come from a power whose purpose aligns with the enemy of your soul, *"to kill, and steal, and destroy"* (John 10:10). The evil thoughts,

temptations and trickery are literally intended to destroy you. Much of the battle is won realizing those thoughts aren't generated by us. This truth produced an awesome amount of freedom in my life.

Paul also mentions this aspect of spiritual warfare in 2Cor. 10:5,

> *"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."* (2Cor. 10:5)

Before we believed, while our soul and spirit were still separated from God (Eph. 2:1, 5) we had little choice but to follow the suggestions of the "power of sin." It dwelled in those parts as well. Now that we have been raised in the newness of life with Jesus (Rom. 6:4-5) the "power of sin" no longer resides there, giving the new you the freedom to say "no" to its temptations, ugly suggestions, and accusations.

So, when you have thoughts of inadequacy, doubt, fear, temptation, or anything contrary to who God says you are, be aware that neither you nor He generated that idea. It came straight from the "power of sin" in your flesh (brain) trying to destroy you. I don't know about you, but it is super encouraging to know that isn't me generating those thoughts?

Back to Naomi…

It had escaped her mind that in Israel she had redeemers who would buy her land so that she could live. She had forgotten about the Levirate marriage that could change everything for Ruth. She was completely oblivious to how those things were about to change both their lives.

Father had to smile as the puzzle pieces began to fall into place that would rescue the faith of "His delight," Naomi. He alone could oversee a plan reaching into the ancient past and the far distant future that included restoring the faith of a daughter who had suffered so much loss.

So many throughout history have felt abandoned and forgotten as Naomi did. One was the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. He thought his situation was hopeless. There was no one close to help him into the water when it was stirred (John 5:1-9). He had no idea that the One who stirred the water was standing right beside him. Like Naomi, his focus was on his problem, not His answer—Jesus!

> ***An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones.*** (Prov. 12:4) (Ruth 1:20-21)

The Hebrew word used in this verse to describe the "excellent" wife is *chayil* (khah'-yil) which is most often translated "army," "wealth," and "valiant." Solomon chose to use a word he had heard in the story of his great, great grandparents, Boaz and Ruth. Boaz is described as *"a man of great 'wealth'* (chayil)" (Ruth 2:1) and Ruth as *"a woman of 'excellence'"* (Ruth 3:11).

"Chayil" is also used in the blessing spoken by the people and elders to Boaz at the city gate, *"…and may you achieve 'wealth' in Ephrathah"* (Ruth 4:11).

Naomi may have gotten a few things wrong in this story, but here is something she got right!

Expressing your disappointments about your spouse to others is counterproductive and destructive to your relationship. Like a cancer, that shaming doesn't have an immediate effect. But over time, if allowed to grow, it becomes life threatening.

Every time you repeat those things the deeper entrenched they become and the greater the gulf between you. It affects your soul. That's bad enough, but the destruction is multiplied when your spouse hears you say those things to other people. That affects their soul.

> *"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands."* (Prov. 14:1)

Naomi could have very easily blamed her husband for the stupid choice to drag them to Moab, but she didn't. Instead, she blamed God for her plight. He can handle it. He knows the outcome while we are often mired in the circumstances. She obviously loved Elimelech and didn't blame him for all that had happened to them, but she was struggling to trust God to rescue her from the current situation. I think she understood her husband was desperately trying to preserve their way of life.

At some point in preparing couples for marriage I ask them when they are sitting across the table from one another thirty years down the road, do they want to despise that person or love them more than they could have ever imagined? No one yet has said they would prefer to despise their spouse in thirty years. The problem is that none of them yet know how to get to that point or have a plan. When Lisa and I got married we hardly had a plan that went past the honeymoon!

Relationships are built through love, friendship, kindness, healthy communication, and torn down through hatred, unrealistic expectations, demeaning language and behavior; those just scratch the surface. Think of your relationship as a construction project. What do you want it to look like? How long do you want it to last? Do you want it to be something of beauty that glorifies the Lord and shows the world what living in Him is like? Or, do you want to slap something together that can't be depended upon, drafty in winter, hot in the summer, and the slightest of breeze makes it sway and creak?

Every building requires a solid foundation if it is to last. Even structures in sandy or swampy soil must have something solid to build upon. That may look like treated poles driven deep into the ground like they do at the beach, but it gives the structure something solid upon which to rest.

If you want a long-lasting, beautiful building, you must put the best materials into the project, from start to finish. That means every piece of lumber needs to be straight, every nail driven at

the right angle and of the perfect size to secure it. All the joints should be cut perfectly, the plumbing doesn't leak, and nor does the roof.

Words and actions are the construction materials of relationships. Unfortunately, a wrecking ball can tear out more in a few seconds than you can build back in weeks. That wrecking ball of a critical statement or outburst of selfish anger or a demeaning look can have lasting effects and set construction back for weeks. Careless/hateful words are like using sour cream to mud the joints in your sheet rock. Sour Cream is white like sheet rock mud but was not designed for that any more than careless words are designed to build lasting relationships.

> *22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.* (Ruth 1:1-22 NASB20)

Isn't God's plan and timing incredible? Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Not only is this a time of abundance, but this story likely takes place just after the observance of First Fruits (Exodus 34:26, Leviticus 23:9-14, Numbers 15:17-21).

On the first day of the week after Passover the Jews were to bring a First Fruit offering of their barley crop to the temple. The priest would wave it before the Lord for the offeror to be accepted. Jewish tradition says that on the day before the Sabbath or earlier in the week the owner of the crop or the priests would go out into the fields and find the ripest barley and bind it together into a sheaf with a red or scarlet cord. This allowed them to locate it easily on the morning of First Fruits. Early on the morning of First Fruits that sheaf was harvested and raised up/waved before the Lord. This could be done by the priest or by the offeror if not close to the temple.

If this tradition was observed at this time in history, it could have had special significance to Boaz whose mother Rahab was given a scarlet cord to hang out of her window to identify her house for Joshua's forces attacking Jericho (Josh. 2:15-21).

According to Numbers 15, the First Fruits Offering can be from the dough or a loaf as well as the sheaves of barley. Neither the barley grain nor the loaf could be eaten until the First Fruits Offering had been lifted up to the Lord.

Prophetic Significance:

- 1Cor. 15:20-23, Jesus is our First Fruits.
- Jesus said, *"If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me"* (John 12:32, emphasis mine). He was "lifted up" on the cross and was also "raised up" on the third day—the day of His resurrection.
- Romans 11:16 says that *"if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too."* He became like us (Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7), that we might become like Him (2Cor. 5:21).

Why it is important today:

- His resurrection guarantees that we can live by His life (Romans 5:10).
- His resurrection as the First Fruits from the dead guarantees that we will receive a redeemed body at His return (Rom. 8:23, 1Cor. 15:50-55).
- We are not made holy because our behavior is good, nor are we made holy because we don't eat certain things, dress a certain way, or go to the right church. We are made holy simply because of faith in what Jesus did for us.
- The rest of the dough or barley crop did nothing to be accepted and made holy. It was all accomplished by the First Fruit Offering. You become holy and accepted simply by putting faith in Jesus, our First Fruit.

Ruth Chapter 2

> *1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.*

The word *"wealth"* here *(chayil)* (khah'-yil) is almost exclusively translated army or valiant up to this point in Scripture. There is no doubt Boaz was a rich man—he had servants, land, and houses—but he was also a valiant warrior for the nation of Israel. If we have our timeframe correct, he would have fought alongside the judge Othniel to deliver Israel from the hand of Cushan-rishathaim (Judges 3:9-11).

> *2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain following one in whose eyes I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she left and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.*

God often uses the simplest of things to guide us into His plan. (Ruth 2:3)

A simple phrase in chapter two is one of the most powerful verses in all of Scripture:

"…and she <u>happened</u> to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech." (Ruth 2:3)

On a surface level it appears that Ruth just stumbled upon the field of Boaz who happened to be one of their kinsman redeemers. Many would say, "What a coincidence!" Really? Not a chance, pun intended. There is no such thing in the kingdom of our sovereign God.

That one single event was not only key to this story of redemption, but to the very lineage to Jesus Christ. Could He have done it another way? Of course. His plan could have been

accomplished many ways, but this one meshed well with the circumstances. After all, Boaz was a farmer, Ruth and Naomi needed food, and God wanted those around them to see how a godly man treats others, especially a foreigner.

God did not force Ruth to go into that particular field, nor did He manipulate her in any way. God did not usurp Ruth's will; she made the choice completely on her own. However, I do believe because it was His plan for Ruth to be included in the lineage to Jesus that He enticed or drew her there by opening her eyes to the abundant opportunity or by making it more appealing than any other field.

We often fret over following the Spirit and walking in God's will like He disguises it from us or makes it tricky. The truth is that no one wants us to be immersed deeper into His plan more than God. Consequently, if we are walking by the Spirit, He will make His way obvious or appealing—not necessarily to our flesh, but to our spirit and soul. If it doesn't yet seem obvious or appealing to your soul and spirit, keep doing what you are doing until it does.

> *4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 And the servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. 7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while." 8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but join my young women here. 9 "[Keep] your eyes on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have ordered the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."*

Generosity is in the nature of the godly. (Ruth 2:8-9, 12-18)

The generosity of Boaz toward Ruth is so refreshing. He invited her to join his young women in reaping grain, not just picking up the grain that got missed or dropped. He treated her like one of his own and even guaranteed her protection among his servants. On the very first day she gleaned with his women, he served her bread and roasted grain for lunch along with all of his servants; enough that she was filled and had excess so that Naomi was also satisfied.

What a beautiful picture—a man of great wealth serving roasted grain to his servants and workers. He could have had other servants do that, but he chose to do it himself, indicative of his humility and generosity. Jesus said, *"…just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28). As a type of Christ, Boaz served and nurtured her as Christ does the church (Eph. 5:29).

Again, I don't think for one minute Boaz considered her a potential bride. Since there was a closer kinsman redeemer, I believe he did what he could to help Naomi and Ruth's situation from a heart of compassion and generosity. It is a character trait of God and those whom He indwells.

Without a doubt God is generous. It is His nature. The greatest gift was His only Son becoming sin on our behalf and facing our punishment so that we could be free (John 3:16, Rom. 8:32, 2Cor. 5:21, 1John 4:10). He displays generosity over and over in the Bible: He gave life to mankind, He gave His creation autonomy, He gave the Promised Land to the children of Israel along with the covenants, He gives sight to the blind, life to the dead, strength to the weary, Spiritual Gifts and ministry gifts to the church, wisdom to those who ask, the Fruit of the Spirit, eternal life, and grace to those who believe, every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, and all that we need for life and godliness. And that is a tiny sampling.

God is love (1John 4:8, 16) and that love expresses itself through generosity. It is why His children are so generous, sharing with others who have needs. Generosity is in your DNA! It is why Boaz was so generous toward his servants, Ruth and Naomi.

> *10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" 11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. 12 "May the LORD reward your work, and may your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."*

The expression "under the shadow of God's wings" is a common metaphor throughout Scripture for finding a place of security and comfort in His presence. The word for "wings" is *kanaph* (kaw-nawf') and means: the edge, wing, extremity, border, or corner. The psalmist says,

> *Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow or Your wings.* (Psalm 17:8)
>
> *Let me dwell in Your tent forever; let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.* (Psalm 61:4).
>
> *For you have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.* (Psalm 63:7)

And my favorite…

> *One who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will lodge in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I*

> *trust!" For it is He who rescues you from the net of the trapper and from the deadly plague. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may take refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and wall.* (Psalm 91:1-4)

The Lord was already providing that for Ruth and Naomi through Boaz (Ruth 2:8, 15-16, 21).

> *13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not like one of your female servants."*

A humble spirit will open doors that pride will shut and lock. (Ruth 2:10-17)

> *A person's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.* (Prov. 29:23)

Ruth did not assume it was ok to glean in Boaz's field even though that was what the poor did. She first came to the servant in charge of the reapers and asked, *"Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves"* (Ruth 2:7).

When Boaz approached her after talking to his servant in charge, she bowed to the ground and asked why she had found favor in his sight. This was a customary way in that society to demonstrate honor and acknowledge subservience to another. It was an act of humility.

Her words and actions of humility visually confirmed what he had already heard about her from others. She was a woman of excellence (Ruth 3:11).

How different this story would have been had Ruth chosen to persuade him by her beauty or through shrewd negotiations. There would be no story at all! It is a humble spirit that obtains honor (Prov. 29:23).

We see the very same type of humility in Mary when the angel Gabriel comes to her in Luke 1:28-30.

As an interesting side note, around 700 years later Jeremiah would prophesy of the destruction of Moab, Ruth's people and her homeland, because of their pride and arrogance (Jer. 48:7, 26, 29, 42). Ruth was the antithesis of Moabite arrogance.

Faithfulness to God and others does not go unnoticed. (Ruth 2:11-13, 3:11)

When the offer is made to return to their father's house, the widow of Chilion decides to stay in Moab, but Ruth refuses and clings to Naomi. The faithfulness and love Ruth displayed toward Naomi is legendary.

> *“Do not plead with me to leave you or to turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you sleep, I will sleep. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me, and worse, if anything but death separates me from you.”* (Ruth 1:16-17)

On the very day that Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz she learned that everything she had done for Naomi had already been reported to him (2:11). Word had already spread throughout Bethlehem of Naomi’s return and Ruth’s remarkable commitment to her mother-in-law (3:11).

That display of faithfulness toward Naomi may have been the thing that brought her favor instead of disdain, since she was a Moabite woman.

> *14 And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. 15 When she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. 16 "Also you are to purposely slip out for her [some grain] from the bundles and leave [it] so that she may glean, and do not rebuke her." 17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 And she picked [it] up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took [some] out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. 19 Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." 20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn His kindness from the living and from the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative; he is one of our redeemers."*

Some translations leave out an incredibly important word in that verse. The word “Kinsman Redeemer” is more descriptive than just “redeemer.” It comes from the Hebrew word *“go-el”* meaning a close relative (kinsman) redeemer—the relative who came to the rescue. Jesus became our Kinsman Redeemer because He came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Phil. 2:7, Rom. 8:3) to redeem us.

> *21 Then Ruth the Moabitess said, "Furthermore, he said to me, 'You are to stay close to my servants until they have finished all my harvest.'" 22 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, so that [others] do not assault you in another field." 23 So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law. (Ruth 2:1-23 NASB20)*

This means that Ruth gleaned both barley and wheat from the fields of Boaz past the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. Pentecost/Weeks would have been 43 working days from First Fruits. That means if Ruth gleaned as much each day as she did the first day, she would have ended up with no less than 43 cubic feet of barley and wheat.

Weeks/Pentecost, *Shavuot*

Historical Significance:

Leviticus 23:15-22

Pentecost was 50 days from First Fruits. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost is also a First Fruits Feast. During the year of Jesus' crucifixion, Thursday at twilight began Passover, Friday at twilight began the first day of Unleavened Bread and the Sabbath, and Sunday was First Fruits. So, Pentecost would have been 49 days later. The Jews were to present a new grain offering to the Lord. This would have been from the wheat harvest whereas the First Fruits offering done during the week of Unleavened Bread would have been from the barley harvest.

An interesting aspect of the offering made during this feast is that the bread for the wave offering is to be made with leaven.

We don't know for certain, but Jewish tradition says that God gave them the Ten Commandments at the base of Mt. Sinai on day 50 of their deliverance from Egypt. Thomas Lancaster, pastor of Beth Immanuel Sabbath Fellowship in Wisconsin says, that according to the Midrash, a collection of Jewish oral traditions, the people in the camp saw sound waves in the form of fiery substances. Each commandment, as it left God's mouth, circled the whole camp and eventually rested on each Jew. He also noted from the Midrash that the people heard God's voice in many different languages. Sounds very familiar, Acts 2:2-6.

Prophetic Significance:

- Jesus pointed to the fields as white unto harvest. When the Holy Spirit came and filled the believers on Pentecost, the harvest began and the church/the bride of Christ was born. This began the church age, but the harvest will continue through the tribulation and the millennial kingdom.
- The wave offering with leavened bread symbolizes the new covenant and that our old self has been dealt with through the body of Jesus, our unleavened bread from heaven (Rom. 7:4).
- Jesus said when He went back to the Father He would send the Holy Spirit whose purpose was to empower us and live through us.

Why it is important today:

- Pentecost symbolizes the church age and the Holy Spirit coming to fill every believer.
- It is ironic for unbelieving Jews to celebrate the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost because they are celebrating the harvest of Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom of God.
- It is an important contrast to the Old Testament Feast of Weeks which symbolized the giving of the Law. Three thousand died when the Law was given, but three thousand were born again on the day the Spirit came. The Law brings death, but the Spirit brings life!

Ruth Chapter 3

1 Then her mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may go well for you?

A godly man or woman trusts the Lord to put them into a marital relationship. (Ruth 2:3, 11, 3:1)

If Boaz was not already married or was widowed, his faith to wait on the Lord for the right person is a beautiful example of a life that is totally surrendered to God. If he was already married, it is a foreshadowing of how the Redeemer will join both Jew and Gentile believers into a holy temple, the dwelling of God (Eph. 2).

I prefer to think that Boaz had never been married, making this a more compelling picture of our Redeemer and His bride, the church. Jesus has waited for thousands of years and is still waiting for His bride to be made ready. The wait and long anticipation will be worth it.

Boaz had taken notice of Ruth being in his house, and having spoken to her, ascertained that she was indeed a woman of integrity. I believe his motives were pure in the way that he provided for and protected her while she gleaned in his fields. He calls her *"my daughter"* (Ruth 2:8) indicating he didn't consider her a potential bride. He was acting on compassion learned from his upbringing as the son of a foreigner named Rahab who found Jehovah in the most unlikely way.

Boaz was not pursuing a wife; he was pursuing life and waiting patiently upon the Lord. God brought Ruth to him at the perfect time while he was at rest in the Lord. From all appearances, he was getting old and the possibility of having a wife waned with every passing day. But God saw his faithfulness and rewarded his patience with a truly incredible woman.

Boaz didn't try to make things work by pursuing Ruth. He simply trusted God and God worked out the details.

The security found in marriage displays to the world our security in Christ.

Naomi had a healthy perspective on marriage. She understood that security and rest are essential within the covenant relationship of marriage. We've already touched on the aspect of rest in marriage, and the Sabbath rest Jesus offers His bride. Though the words used in Ruth for "security" and "rest" are different Hebrew words, they basically mean the same thing—rest, a resting place, or a condition of rest. However, I want to take advantage of the NASB's translation of it as "security" to chase another rabbit.

The security found in a godly marriage relationship is a beautiful picture of our eternal security in Christ. The marriage relationship is designed to be a picture of Jesus and His bride—at least Paul thought so (Eph. 5:32). Both those relationships are meant to be permanent. Even though we live in an imperfect world, that does not mean what the picture reflects is flawed in any way. Sometimes the picture doesn't always display what is intended.

Unless a believer understands how eternally secure they are in Christ, it is impossible to fully trust, fully rest, or fully explore and enjoy a relationship with Jesus. And marriage is no different. If the marriage could end at any moment, there is no security in the relationship.

Just like a marriage, when you become a believer, you become a participant in a covenant. This "New Covenant" is unconditional just like most of the covenantal promises made by God. Of the five Jewish covenants, all of them were unconditional except the covenant of Law, or the Law of Moses. That simply means God takes on the full responsibility for fulfilling those covenants to Abraham, his descendants, king David, and you, with no response from the recipient except for faith.

Those who refuse to believe they are eternally secure employ several arguments to support that. The two most common pertain to a person's free will and sin; neither is greater than what was accomplished on the cross and within their soul.

If the argument has to do with sin (the biggest obstacle for most), I offer 2Cor. 5:21.

> *He made Him Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* (2Cor. 5:21)

Or, what about Hebrews 10:12?

> *But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.* (Hebrews 10:12)

Dr. Charles Stanley asks a valid question, "Does it make any sense to say that salvation is offered as a solution for our sin and then to turn around and teach that salvation can be taken away because of our sin?"

Do you see the problem? If sin is still the separator between God and man, what good was the cross of Christ? If instead one makes appropriating forgiveness the issue, he still has a problem. Forgiveness is referred to in the past tense after the cross—over and done for all who believe. Ephesians 4:32, Hebrews 9:28, Colossians 2:13 and 3:13 serve as good examples. That's what was finished at the cross (John 19:30). The penalty was paid for all mankind (2Cor. 5:19).

Beyond that defense, there is something far more compelling to me. When you repent (Greek, G3340, *metanoeo—to think differently or afterwards to reconsider)* of your sin (Acts 17:30, 2Pet. 3:9), confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10), the Holy Spirit takes the old self you inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12), which is dead to God (1Cor. 15:22, Eph. 2:1), and crucifies it on the cross (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 6:6) by baptizing you into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4, 1Cor. 12:13), sealing you in Him forever (Eph. 1:13, 4:30).

Having been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13-14) and now placed into Christ, the Chosen One (Isa. 42:1), you receive His kind of life—eternal (John 3:16, 5:24). You are predestined in that moment to adoption as a son to receive a redeemed body upon the Lord's return (Eph. 1:5, Rom. 8:23, 29), being given the Holy Spirit as a pledge on His promise (Eph. 1:14); you are called (2Tim. 1:9), given a special gift (1Pet. 4:10), and allotted a measure of faith to operate in that gift (Rom. 12:3).

He simultaneously makes you a new creature (2Cor. 5:17) and raises you up alive to God and dead to sin (Rom. 6:5 & 11) and the Law (Rom. 7:4)—born again (John 3:3); makes you righteous (2Cor. 5:21), holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4), eternally forgiven (Eph. 1:7, Heb. 10:12 & 17), justified (Rom. 5:1), complete (Col. 2:10), perfect (Heb. 10:14), and seats you in heavenly places with Him (Eph. 2:6). In that same instant you are reconciled to Him (2Cor. 5:18), He comes to dwell inside of you (Col. 1:27), and it is His life that now sustains you (Rom. 5:10, Col. 3:4).

What you won't find is a provision that forces the Holy Spirit *of promise* to break His seal and remove you from being in Christ, kill the new nature and raise the old nature back to life. It isn't there because it cannot happen.

Instead you find multiple promises like: He will never leave or forsake you (Heb. 13:5), He will keep you from stumbling and present you blameless (Jude 24), He is able to guard what has been entrusted to Him (2Tim. 1:12), He says those who believe will never, never perish and no one can snatch them out of His or the Father's hand (John 10:28-29), nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:35-39), and many more.

Once you realize it's not about your performance, but all about His, you are free to enjoy your relationship with Jesus, our Father, and the Holy Spirit without the encumbrance of falling in and out of His favor because of something you did wrong.

It is through relationship that we bring others to the Redeemer. (1-4)

Most people who come to faith in Jesus do so through the influence of someone else. Sure, there are stories of those of whom Jesus appears in a dream and they become believers. That is not the norm. The Lord prefers to use His people to convey the gospel message to those within our circle of friends.

I say friends loosely since it is a broadly defined term from person to person. However, whatever your definition of friends might be, the Lord tends to spread His gospel between people who are in some type of relationship. That is generally more connection than the person you just met while pumping gas at the Shell station.

There is no doubt Ruth met her Redeemer through her relationship with Naomi. That relationship was the vehicle that got her to the right place at the right time. It is a beautiful picture of how most people come to the Lord.

We mentioned this earlier as one of the types and shadows in Ruth. But when Ruth brought part of her grain back to Naomi, she was satisfied as well. In one sense, Naomi brought Ruth to the redeemer. In another sense, Ruth brought Naomi to her redeemer, Obed, through relationship.

People in relationship with you can see the operation of God's grace in your life. Your friends are the ones who most closely see the changes that have taken place. That transformation is a powerful witness to the power of God and the work of salvation.

> *2 "Now then, is Boaz not our relative, with whose young women you were? Behold, he is winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight. 3 "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your [best] clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; [but] do not reveal yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 "And it shall be when he lies down, that you shall take notice of the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you should do." 5 And she said to her, "All that you say I will do." 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. 7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 And it happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. 9 So he said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your slave. Now spread your garment over your slave, for you are a redeemer."*

This is a request for redemption! She was asking Boaz to be her *"go-el,"* kinsman redeemer. The security and rest Naomi sought for Ruth was found in her redeemer. The word translated *"garment"* here is the same Hebrew word used in Ruth 2:12 for wings, *kanaph* (kaw-nawf').

Nothing inappropriate happened here, but it could have. There was no ceremony required in the levirate marriage. Unless he refused, the redeemed simply became the kinsman redeemer's wife. This is where the true integrity of Boaz is revealed. He protected Ruth for the closest kinsman redeemer *(go-el).*

Some have suggested that Boaz needed prodding to make a move, but that is not the case. Actually, he seems quite surprised that she wanted him to fulfill that role. It was the woman's responsibility to approach the kinsman redeemer *(go-el).* Likewise, our Redeemer does not force Himself upon us. He reveals Himself as a kind and caring Redeemer, but we must make a move toward Him. That is simply repentance and faith. Then like Boaz, He responds immediately! Remember, his name means "quickness."

> *10 Then he said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first, by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.*

Her first kindness was her faithfulness to Naomi. Her last kindness was in choosing him as her redeemer.

> *11 "So now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you say, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.*

When Boaz describes Ruth as a *"woman of excellence,"* he uses the same Hebrew word used to describe him as *"a man of great wealth," "chayil"* (khah'-yil). It means valor and strength, and it most often used to describe an army. That is why some attribute military valor to Boaz in Ruth 2:1. "Valor" is probably the most appropriate in both situations, especially when you consider all Ruth had done.

> *12 "But now, although it is true that I am a redeemer, yet there is also a redeemer more closely related than I. 13 Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."*

Can you imagine all the things whirling around in his head at that moment? I seriously doubt he got any sleep the rest of the night.

> *14 So she lay at his feet until morning, and got up before one person could recognize another; and he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor."*

This was spoken to the others at the threshing floor that night, not Ruth. He was doing the same thing he had been doing all along, spreading his “garment” over her to provide comfort, shelter, and protection.

> *15 Again he said, "Give me the shawl that is on you and hold it." So she held it, and he measured six [measures] of barley and laid [it] on her. Then she went into the city.*

A person of integrity will guard the integrity of others. (3:13-15)

We’ve already seen the leadership and wisdom of Boaz demonstrated in how he provides for and protects Ruth among his people in serving Naomi. When she takes the step of faith to seek him as redeemer, she becomes vulnerable and endangers her own integrity. Instead of letting that happen, Boaz takes steps to make sure she is not seen in a bad way.

Boaz is not confused in the least about his identity. No man can lead well with insecurities about himself. Such a leader will always be trying to prove something to those around him and have a need for attention, approval, authority, superiority, and position. His security comes from the authority his position grants, which is fragile at best.

Such a leader is threatened by those who are secure and know their identity. True leaders don’t see their power or authority as belonging to their position, but in Whom all authority rests.

When Ruth presents her request to Boaz he could have taken advantage of the situation, or even sent her home that night. However, had she been seen out at that time of night she would have been associated with the harlots. With her protection in mind, it was impossible to send her home at that time of night.

The next morning Boaz measured out six measures of barley so that she carried a burden, giving her reason for being at the threshing floor. Those who saw her returning from the threshing floor with barley so early would have considered her a diligent woman.

Boaz even told others at the threshing floor to not let it be known that “the” woman had been there. He wasn’t talking to Ruth. He was addressing the others present at the time. This was to further protect her reputation and integrity from slander (v.14).

> *16 When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did it go, my daughter?" And she told her all that the man had done for her. 17 She also said, "These six [measures] of barley he gave to me, for he said, 'Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'" 18 Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today." (Ruth 3:1-18 NASB20)*

Ruth Chapter 4

1 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Come over here, friend, sit down here." And he came over and sat down. 2 Then he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 And he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, has to sell the plot of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 "So I thought that I would inform you, saying, 'Buy [it] before those who are sitting [here,] and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem [it,] redeem [it;] but if not, tell me so that I may know; for there is no one except you to redeem [it,] and I am after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem [it.]" 5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance." 6 Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem [it] for myself, otherwise I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem [it] for yourself; you [may have] my right of redemption, since I cannot redeem [it.]"

The closer redeemer was good with buying the land, especially since it would more than likely be permanently his, with Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon leaving no heirs. When Ruth became part of the equation he didn't have that level of commitment.

7 Now this was [the custom] in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange [of land] to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave [it] to another; and this was the [way of] confirmation in Israel. 8 So the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy [it] for yourself." And he removed his sandal. 9 Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. 10 "Furthermore, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be eliminated from his brothers or from the court of his [birth] place; you are witnesses today." 11 And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "[We are] witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. 12 "Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the descendants whom the LORD will give you by this young woman." 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he had relations with her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a <u>redeemer</u> today, and may <u>his</u> name become famous in Israel. 15 "May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age; for your

daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

These verses call Obed Naomi's redeemer. And in a way he was.

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.

The Hebrew word translated *"nurse"* here is *"aman"* (aw-man'). It means to build up, support, to foster as a nurse or guardian, but also to trust or believe as in Genesis 15:6 where Abraham "believed" God and it was credited to him as righteousness; in Exodus 14:31 where the Hebrew children "believed" in the Lord after the Red Sea crossing; and Isaiah 28:16 where those who "believe" in the precious cornerstone (Jesus) will not be disappointed (1Pet. 2:6).

Obed was the mechanism God used to redeem the faith of His precious daughter, Naomi. Another way to look at this verse would be *"Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became* [a believer]." Her faith in Jehovah was completely restored by what He did for her and Ruth. Had she been able to see far into the future of the Lord's plan, she would have seen kings and even the Messiah as her legacy.

17 And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.
18 Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, 19 Hezron fathered Ram, and Ram fathered Amminadab, 20 and Amminadab fathered Nahshon, and Nahshon fathered Salmon, 21 and Salmon fathered Boaz, and Boaz fathered Obed, 22 and Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David. (Ruth 4:1-22 NASB 20)

Relationships are the foundation of legacy. (1-4)

Legacy is realized through relationships, not monuments, achievements, or wealth. Is anyone impressed when they read a family name on an old building downtown? Many times, the builder is long forgotten and has no connection to the current owner.

One hundred years from now your name will have vanished from the minds of all your descendants. My grandchildren are between seven and fourteen. Chances are none of them will still be alive in one hundred years. Someone else will own everything you worked so hard to buy and maintain. Any money you left your children and grandchildren somehow will have been spent multiple times over without any consideration of your wishes.

Yet, in the case of Ruth, her legacy has endured through generations because she chose relationship over comfort. She chose the companionship of Naomi above staying with her own people, in her own land.

How did she leave a legacy? She had a story of faith that transcended generations. Her story was told repeatedly to children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and on and on. Who knows how many times Naomi recounted to little Obed the story of his mother's faithfulness and commitment. Obed told the stories of his mother to Jesse, and Jesse to his sons, including David. Those stories shaped their lives.

You have stories of faith; stories where you stood firm in what you believed, and God made a way where there wasn't a way. Tell those stories, write them down, make sure your descendants know how God did amazing things on your behalf.

Leadership principles from Boaz

To end this series on Ruth, we can't skip the example of leadership we see in Boaz. Boaz displays some of the godliest traits of leadership found in Scripture. All of us as leaders can benefit from his understanding of leading people.

1. A leader sets the tone, Ruth 2:4.
2. A leader pays attention to his people, Ruth 2:5.
3. A leader delegates, Ruth 2:5.
4. A leader understands authority, Ruth 2:5.
5. A leader listens to his people, Ruth 2:6.
6. A leader is informed before acting, Ruth 2:8.
7. A leader is generous and kind to his people, Ruth 2:9.
8. A leader protects his people, Ruth 2:9.
9. A leader blesses his people, Ruth 2:4 & 12.
10. A leader never sees himself in a position too high to serve his people, Ruth 2:14.
11. A leader makes sure his people are cared for, Ruth 2:9 & 14.
12. A leader gives clear and precise instructions, Ruth 2:15-16.
13. A leader guards the reputation of his people, Ruth 3:12-15.
14. A leader acts swiftly in matters concerning his people, Ruth 3:18.